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Islamist terrorists, Pak handlers need to be destroyed:
Tharoor



COME TOGETHER TO BUILD A RESILIENT, STEEL-STRONG INDIA: PM



Samantha and Raj Nidimoru fuel relationship RUMOURS

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

Why didn't these so-called secular intellectuals fail to respond to the incident that shook the nation? The terror attack in J&K was shocking. Why are the so-called secular intellectuals not speaking out about this attack? Do they not have any love for this country? Why isn't Stalin, Kamala Hassan and Prakash Raj speaking about the Jammu and Kashmir incident? The Modi Government will take action against terrorists. Priyanka Gandhi's husband Robert Vadra should stop slandering the BJP. Vadra's comments are strongly condemned

— Raghunandan Rao, BJP MP

DON'T MISS...

Speedy development only with PPP: Naidu

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, on Thursday, directed the officials to see to it that all the developmental projects in the State are taken up under Public Private Partnership (PPP) method. The Chief Minister said that PPP mode is the best way to achieve the Swarnandhra-2047 goals and to attract investments to the State on a large scale. Chandrababu said that various administrative reforms were implemented during the earlier tenure of the TDP and achieved excellent results with the PPP method. During a meeting with officials at the State ..

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'Pak handlers need to be destroyed'

Asserting that this is not the time for a domestic blame game over the Pahalgam terror attack, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Thursday said Islamist terrorists and their Pakistani handlers need to be destroyed and that "we must all support our government" in doing whatever it judges best to achieve this. He also asserted that India's commitment to Kashmiri integration and communal harmony must not be diluted. At least 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed and several...

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Stock markets break 7-day rally

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty reversed their seven-day uptrend and settled lower on Thursday amid profit-taking and disappointing fourth quarter earnings of Hindustan Unilever. Selling in blue-chips ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel and a largely muted trend in Asian and European equities also dragged the markets down. The 30-share BSE benchmark declined 315.06 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 79,801.43. During the day, it dropped 391.94 points or 0.48 per cent to 79,724.55...

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CSK vs SRH: Battle of survival

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) will eye a crucial turnaround at home when they face an equally desperate Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in a battle of survival in the Indian Premier League here on Friday. Both sides have endured a turbulent season, notching just four points from eight games, and must now win all remaining fixtures to keep their slim qualification hopes alive. Known to make the most of home conditions, five-time champions CSK find themselves in uncharted territory...

-SPORTS



Return home immediately, India asks Indians in Pak

Revokes visas issued to Pak nationals

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday announced revoking all visas issued to Pakistani nationals from April 27 and advised Indian nationals residing in Pakistan to return home at the earliest as tensions between the two countries escalated over the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people. New Delhi also announced suspending visa services to Pakistani nationals with immediate effect as part of the retaliatory measures over the cross-border links to the worst terror strike on civilians in India since the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack.

The latest move came a day after India announced a raft of measures against Pakistan including expulsion of Pakistani military attaches, suspension of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 and immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post.

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India briefs envoys of G20 nations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday briefed New Delhi-based envoys of almost all G20 nations and those from its strategic partners on the dastardly Pahalgam terror attack and its link to cross-border terrorism, people familiar with the matter said.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri apprised the diplomats about various aspects of Tuesday's terror attack that killed 26 innocent people and India's firm policy of "zero tolerance" against terrorism, they said.

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AI must power governance with a human touch: CM

STATE STANDS AT THE THRESHOLD OF AN INSPIRING ERA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu launched Andhra Pradesh into a bold digital future on Thursday, asserting that Artificial Intelligence (AI) must become the backbone of governance—powered by smart systems and grounded in human empathy.

Inaugurating a two-day workshop on 'AI and Emerging Technologies for Government Digital Transformation' at the Secretariat, the CM said the State stands at the threshold of an "inspiring era" of AI-led governance. The workshop, held in collaboration with the Wadhvani Centre for Government Digital Transformation, is aimed at equipping senior and mid-level officials with AI-driven governance tools.

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Govt hosts AI workshop to transform governance

Commendable step aimed at integrating technology into public services: CS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has launched a groundbreaking two-day workshop on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies, aimed at revolutionising governance and enhancing public service delivery. Held at

the State Secretariat, the event is being organised in collaboration with the Wadhvani Centre for Government Digital Transformation and brings together senior bureaucrats, department heads, and technology leaders.

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand, speaking at the inaugural session, lauded the initiative and emphasised its potential to transform governance across departments.

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HUNT DOWN

LEADERS SEEK DECISIVE ACTION AGAINST TERROR CAMPS
EXTEND FULL SUPPORT FOR 'ANY ACTION'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leaders across party lines on Thursday called for decisive action against terrorism and terror camps, and assured the government of their full support, even as some opposition parties flagged security lapses in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam, where 26 people were gunned down by terrorists.

During an all-party meeting to discuss the April 22 Pahalgam attack, the government said it was taking all measures to ensure security and assured the leaders of action against terrorism and its backers. It noted that the Pahalgam attack was aimed at vitiating the atmosphere at a time when the economy was on the upswing and tourism in Jammu and Kashmir was booming. The government did not spell out any action against terrorism during the meeting and the



All-party meet on Pahalgam: Leaders seek action against terror camps, assure govt of full support

opposition also did not seek any such details. After the meeting, all leaders assured their full support to any government action against the perpetrators of the terror attack, including Pakistan.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju said everyone agreed that India should fight terror unitedly and all parties said they are with the government in this fight.

All political parties have given this message and their leaders

have said in one voice that whatever step the government takes, they will support it. Rijju said the government assured leaders of action against terrorism and its backers.

"All the political leaders have in unanimous voice supported the action taken by the CCS with regard to Pakistan and also unambiguously expressed support for any future action the government will take to fight terrorism.

Continued on Page 2



Pak pauses Simla pact, talks tough on Indus Treaty

PNS ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Thursday put Simla Agreement and other bilateral accords with India on hold, suspended all trade, closed its airspace for Indian airlines and said any attempt to divert the water meant for it under the Indus Water Treaty will be considered an Act of War.

Islamabad also closed the Wagah border post, cancelled visas given to Indians under the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES) and asked military advisers at the Indian High Commission to leave -- mirroring steps taken the previous evening by India over the terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Pakistani announcements followed a meeting here of its National Security Committee chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in response to the Indian decision on Wednesday to suspend the Indus Water Treaty and downgrade diplomatic ties with Islamabad.

Continued on Page 2

Will punish terrorists, their backers

PNS ■ MADHUBANI (BIHAR)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday declared that the killers of Pahalgam will be pursued "to the ends of the earth" and promised to "identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backers".

In his first speech after the April 22 attack in Pahalgam in which 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed, the prime minister vowed to punish terrorists behind the strike and said India's spirit will never be broken by terrorism.

Modi spoke briefly in English and

said, "Friends, today from the soil of Bihar, I say to the whole world India will identify, track, and punish every terrorist and their backers. We will pursue them to the ends of the earth. India's spirit will never be broken by terrorism. Terrorism will not go unpunished."

In the stern message, he said, "Every effort will be made to ensure that justice is done. The entire nation is firm in this resolve. Everyone who believes in humanity is with us. I thank the people of various countries and their leaders who have stood with us in these times."

In a message to Pakistan without

naming the country, Modi said he will state it categorically that the terrorists who carried out the attack and those who hatched the conspiracy, they will be punished beyond their imagination. "Punishment will definitely be served."

The prime minister said the willpower of 140 crore Indians will break the back of patrons of terrorism.

Paying condolences to the victims and their families, he said citizens across the country are in mourning over the brutal manner in which terrorists killed 26 innocent civilians in Kashmir on April 22. The nation stands with their families, he said.



Modi, other leaders on the dais and the crowd observed silence to pay homage to the victims of the attack at the beginning of the prime minister's speech.

He said people lost their sons, brothers and husbands and noted that the victims belong to different parts of India, be it Bengal, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha and Bihar.

CM set to meet PM Modi

Discussions to focus on State-Centre collaboration for AP's development

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is set to visit New Delhi on Friday for a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This visit marks another crucial step in the State's ongoing efforts to revive and accelerate development projects, particularly the capital city project of Amaravati.

During the visit, the Chief Minister is expected to discuss a range of important issues concerning the State, including pending Central assistance, infrastructure development, and policy support from the Union Government. Sources close to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) indicated that the discussions would primarily focus on collaboration between the State and the Centre for the comprehensive development of Andhra Pradesh.

Continued on Page 2

Minister Narayana reviews arrangements for PM's visit

90 PER CENT WORKS COMPLETED

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Municipal Administration Minister Ponguru Narayana, along with top officials, reviewed the preparations at the venue for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to Amaravati. The Prime Minister is scheduled to visit Amaravati on May 2, and will restart development works in the capital region.

Speaking to the media, Minister Narayana stated that 90 per cent of the arrangements for the PM's visit have been completed. Key access roads to the event venue have been identified, along with 11 designated parking zones and eight main approach roads to facilitate smooth logistics.

He stressed the significant support from farmers, highlighting that within just 58 days, 34,000 acres of land were voluntarily pooled by farmers for the capital's development. Chief



Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has instructed that these farmers should be honoured during the PM's public meeting.

The Minister revealed that three stages are being constructed at the venue for various segments of the event. On the issue of additional land pooling, Narayana mentioned that discussions are ongoing with local public representatives. He clarified that land pooling will only proceed with the consent of the people, and if not, land acquisition may be considered as an alternative.



Gollapudi gram panchayat receives national award

Secretary Swaroopa and PR Additional Commissioner Sudhakar Rao receive award from PM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day 2025, Gollapudi gram panchayat of Vijayawada Rural mandal was conferred with the Atma Nirbhar Panchayat Special Award under the National Panchayat Awards by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The accolade adds a new chapter to Gollapudi's ongoing journey toward becoming a model self-sustaining panchayat in the country. The award ceremony was held on Thursday in Madhubani, Bihar, where Gollapudi Gram Panchayat Secretary M Swaroopa and Panchayat Raj Department Additional Commissioner Dr M Sudhakar Rao received the prestigious honour on behalf of the panchayat.

Measles, malaria dual outbreak hits tribal hamlets

13 kids tested positive for measles in Neredu Bandha village; 12 cases of malaria reported in past week

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLE

A serious public health emergency has gripped Neredu Bandha, a remote tribal village under Cheemalpadu panchayat of Ravikamatham mandal in Anakapalli district, following a dual outbreak of measles and malaria. Thirteen children have tested positive for measles, with one of them, Kilo Prabha, currently undergoing treatment at Narsipatnam Area Hospital.

The unfolding crisis has been exacerbated by the village's absence from official revenue records—a technical oversight that has effectively excluded it from the purview of routine healthcare services and government interventions. The lack of

mosquito control measures, disease surveillance, and sanitation activities has created fertile ground for the outbreaks to spread unabated.

Twelve new cases of malaria have been reported in the past week, deepening fears of a wider epidemic. The absence of fogging operations and public health outreach has drawn sharp criticism from the local tribal community and health activists alike.

Particularly concerning are reports from adjacent tribal hamlets, home to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), where children have been running high fevers for the past three days. These settlements lack Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) and

Anganwadi centres, leaving children deprived of basic health and nutrition services.

Compounding the crisis is the lack of educational infrastructure. Children from Neredu Bandha are compelled to walk over six kilometres each day to reach the nearest Zilla Parishad school in Jaggampeta.

K. Govinda Rao, District Executive Committee member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and a prominent tribal leader, has raised a strong voice against official apathy. "We will not remain silent while our children suffer. If the government does not respond, we will be forced to organise a symbolic protest to highlight our plight," he warned.



Compounding the crisis is the lack of educational infrastructure. Children from Neredu Bandha are compelled to walk over six kilometres each day to reach the nearest Zilla Parishad school in Jaggampeta.

Online DSC coaching launched for marginalised communities

APP-BASED COACHING WILL BE AVAILABLE 24/7: MIN SAVITHA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a step aimed at empowering marginalised communities, Minister for BC and EWS Welfare S Savitha has launched a free online DSC coaching programme for aspirants belonging to BC, EWS, Kapu, SC and ST categories. The initiative, implemented through BC Study Circles and powered by the Acharya app developed by Kakinada-based Shyam Institute, aims to provide high-quality, accessible coaching to all eligible candidates.

Speaking at the launch event held at the State Secretariat, Savitha said the app-based coaching will be available 24/7, with expert-led classes, subject-specific materials and previous DSC question papers. The app also features a live chat box for doubt resolution and dedicated technical support teams across all districts via WhatsApp groups.

Highlighting the government's commitment to education and employment, she



recalled that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu fulfilled his election promise by releasing a notification for 16,347 teacher posts. She added that the very first file signed by the CM after assuming office was related to this mega DSC recruitment drive.

The initiative includes free offline coaching across 26 dis-

tricts, with stipends of ₹1,500 per month and an additional ₹1,000 for books. Over 3,189 applications have been received so far, and the programme is open to all eligible candidates, especially benefiting homemakers, rural youth and working professionals who cannot attend physical classes.

Savitha encouraged more

candidates to make use of this opportunity and download the Acharya app for instant access.

"Our goal is to see maximum representation of BC, EWS, Kapu, SC, and ST candidates in this recruitment drive," she said.

Senior officials from the BC Welfare Department and representatives from Shyam Institute also attended the event.

Vidadala Venugopinath held in ₹2.2 crore extortion case

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), Andhra Pradesh, has arrested Vidadala Venugopinath (Gopi), the brother-in-law of former Minister and ex-MLA Vidadala Rajini, in connection with a major extortion case involving a stone crusher unit in Palnadu district.

According to a release by the ACB's Central Unit in Vijayawada, the case dates back to 2020, when officers from the Guntur Vigilance and Enforcement Department conducted inspections at Sri Balaji Stone Crusher located in Yadlapadu mandal. The inspections were allegedly orchestrated under the pretext of irregularities at the unit.

The owners of the stone crusher Nannapaneni Chalapati Rao and his business partners were threatened with a government penalty of ₹50 crore for alleged violations. It is now alleged that Vidadala Rajini, her brother-in-law Venugopinath, and the then Additional SP Joshua of the Vigilance and Enforcement Department, conspired to extort money from the unit's owners.

Gross financial indiscipline in APMDC borrowing move: YSRCP

Objects direct debit clause from the State's Consolidated Fund

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA/HYDERABAD

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has raised serious concerns over what it calls "gross financial indiscipline" by the ruling coalition government in Andhra Pradesh. Former Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath criticised the government's decision to raise ₹9,000 crore through Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs) issued by the Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation (APMDC), calling it a "blatant violation of constitutional principles" and a dangerous precedent of fiscal mismanagement.

Speaking to the media on Thursday, Buggana expressed strong objection to the move, particularly the inclusion of a direct debit clause from the State's Consolidated Fund, which allows private NCD holders to draw funds directly from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in the event of a default. "It bypasses the legislative processes outlined in Articles 203 and 204 of the



Constitution and violates Articles 293(1) and 293(3), which govern State borrowings," he said.

He further stated that mortgaging APMDC's future revenues and the entire portfolio of minor mineral rights across Andhra Pradesh was an unprecedented step that puts public resources at risk. "APMDC, which has limited capital expenditure needs as mining operations are largely outsourced, is being pushed into unsustainable debt to finance the government's revenue expenditure," he said.

The former minister noted that following this issuance, APMDC's total debt will exceed ₹10,000 crore, and its debt-to-EBITDA ratio will surpass 8.25x, raising red flags about the corporation's long-term financial health and autonomy. "The government is essentially using APMDC as a proxy to raise off-budget liabilities while bypassing constitutional safeguards," Buggana added.

Buggana pointed out the irony that when the previous YSRCP government pledged properties for borrowing, the now-ruling coalition parties had strongly criticised it.

CM to disburse Rs 258 cr to fishermen

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will visit Budagatla Palem village in Etcherla mandal of Srikakulam district on Saturday, during which he is expected to distribute Rs 258 crore to beneficiaries under the Matsyakara Bharosa (MB) scheme.

Ahead of the Chief Minister's visit, State Agriculture Minister K. Atchannaidu has instructed officials from all relevant departments to ensure smooth and coordinated execution of the programme. The Minister, along with MLA Nadukuditi Eswararao, Srikakulam MLA G. Shankar, District Collector Swapnal Dinakar Pundkar, and Superintendent of Police K.V. Maheshwara Reddy, reviewed the preparatory arrangements at the venue on Thursday.

Speaking to the media, Atchannaidu took a swipe at the previous government, accusing it of failing to adequately support the fishing community. "The earlier regime extended minimal assistance—barely Rs 10,000 to a few individuals—and did not even provide essential equipment like boats and nets," he alleged. "In contrast, the current government is determined to offer meaningful and sustained support to the community."

The Minister also underscored the importance of comprehensive security arrangements during the CM's tour, calling for meticulous coordination among departments including Police, Revenue, Power, and Fire Services.



DGP hands over ₹1 crore cheque to ASI's wife

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) Harish Kumar Gupta has handed over a compensation cheque of ₹1 crore to the family of ASI D Kondayya, who died in a road accident while on duty. The cheque was presented to Kondayya's wife, P Paparani, at the DGP's office on

Thursday. This compensation was provided under the SBI Police Salary Package, which offers financial support to the families of police personnel who lose their lives in the line of duty.

ASI Kondayya, who was serving in Bapatla district, lost his life in a road accident that occurred in December 2024.

The cheque handover event was attended by IGP (P&L) M Raviprakash, IPS, CAO Rajan, and officials from the State Bank of India.

The DGP expressed condolences to the bereaved family and reiterated the Police Department's commitment to supporting the families of personnel who make the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

Jagan pays tributes to terror victims

Vows to restore people's governance

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party president and former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has paid heartfelt tributes to the victims of the recent terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir. Before beginning his meeting with YSRC's local body representatives, he observed a two-minute silence along with party leaders in memory of those who lost their lives in the tragic incident.

While addressing the representatives from Proddatur in YSR district, Venkatagiri Municipality in Tirupati district, Kambadur in Anantapur district, and Tirupati Rural, YS

Jagan praised the courage shown by YSRC's grassroots leaders. He said their commitment during recent by-elections and no-confidence motions was a testament to the strength of the party. "You've shown the people what courage truly looks like," he said, saluting the party's women and youth leaders. Criticising the current TDP-led coalition government, Jagan said Andhra Pradesh was being pushed into a war-like atmosphere under a Red Book regime that thrives on oppression, fear, and suppression of democracy. He warned the government that people will not remain silent if manifesto promises are not fulfilled. "Only YSRC has the spine to demand accountability," he said.

Jagan pointed out that the TDP lacked real strength but still contested by-elections out

of greed for power. He cited examples of the party's failed attempts to influence elections in areas like Kambadur, Proddatur, and Chandragiri. Even when faced with intimidation and violence, YSRC leaders stood firm. In many cases, the TDP couldn't even field candidates or resorted to underhanded tactics like delaying elections by citing health emergencies of officials.

Highlighting the dismal state of governance, Jagan stated that the coalition is completely dismantling systems across agriculture, education, and healthcare. "Four lakh pensions have been cut. Belt shops are mushrooming next to temples and schools. Liquor is being sold at inflated prices with no revenue benefit to the State," he said.

He alleged that land in Visakhapatnam worth thousands of crores was handed over to anonymous companies for prices as low as 99 paise per acre. "Not even an idli can be bought for that amount. Yet, public assets are being looted," he remarked. On Amaravati construction, he alleged gross corruption, noting that tenders once valued at Rs 36,000 crore under his government were now revalued at Rs 78,000 crore despite lower material costs.

YS Jagan assured party workers that the YSRC will return to power with a massive majority. He promised full support and recognition in the upcoming Jagan 2.0 government. "This time, I will stand firmly with every single worker. You won't be alone," he declared, urging them to stay strong until the people's verdict is restored.

AI must power governance with a human...

Continued from Page 1

Calling for an AI champion in every department, Chandrababu stressed the need for each unit of government to identify and implement relevant AI use cases. "Hard work is no longer enough. We must focus on smart, flexible work," he said, advocating for a shift from outdated systems to real-time, digital governance.

The CM elaborated on plans to build a massive State-run Data Lake to unify datasets across departments, enabling predictive and integrated governance. "We will integrate all data, and the Planning Department must use it to prepare for the future," he said.

The Chief Minister highlighted practical examples of technology's power, from drone surveillance to prevent illegal cultivation to Aadhaar-linked home deliveries during natural

Govt hosts AI workshop to transform...

Continued from Page 1

"This workshop on AI and related technologies is a commendable step toward integrating technology into public services," he said. "Over 200 capacity-building programmes have already trained more than 9,000 officers and staff across the State. The next frontier is applying AI across every department to foster innovation and efficiency." Katamneni Bhaskar, Secretary, Information Technology, Electronics & Communications (ITE&C) Department, welcomed the participants

and underscored the practical impact of the event. "Training is a continuous process, and this workshop is structured to ensure interactive, two-way communication. More than 300 use cases will be discussed, allowing officials to resolve doubts and understand AI applications deeply," he said, adding, "This will significantly improve the quality of services delivered to the public."

Prakash Kumar, CEO Wadhvani Centre for Government Digital Transformation, highlighted the centre's long-standing commitment to digital transformation and skill-building.

al disasters. He said every family should have someone capable of developing or applying such use cases, reinforcing that technology must always serve people. Reflecting on the journey of innovation, he recalled struggling to secure a 2 Mbps

internet connection during his early governance days. "Today, we talk about gigabits. That's how far we've come," he said, crediting past telecom reforms and early e-governance initiatives.

Reiterating the importance

of infrastructure in catalyzing growth, the CM said Andhra Pradesh is targeting full saturation of essentials like housing and sanitation by 2028-29, with the help of Public-Private-People Partnerships (P4).

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
 Tithi: Dwadashi: Apr 24 02:32 PM to Apr 25 11:45 AM
 Trayodashi: Apr 25 11:45 AM to Apr 26 08:28 AM

Nakshatram: Purva Bhadrapada: Apr 24 10:49 AM to Apr 25 08:53 AM
 Uttara Bhadrapada: Apr 25 08:53 AM to Apr 26 06:27 AM
 Rahukalam: 10:40 AM to 12:14 PM
 Yamagandam: 3:22 PM to 4:56 PM
 Varjyam: 05:31 PM to 06:57 PM
 Gulika: 7:31 AM to 9:05 AM
 Amritakalam: 02:08 AM to 03:34 AM
 Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:48 AM to 12:39 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny
 Temp: 38°
 Humidity: 63%
 Sunrise: 5:56 AM
 Sunset: 6:25 PM
 Updated: April 24, 2025 5:00 PM

CM set to...

Continued from Page 1

A key agenda item for the meeting will be the relaunch of construction and development works in Amaravati, the State's capital city. The CM is expected to formally invite Prime Minister Modi to participate in the official relaunch ceremony scheduled for May 2. The Amaravati project, which had been stalled in recent years, is now being prioritised by the Chandrababu Naidu-led administration, which envisions transforming it into a world-class capital city.

This visit is being viewed as a significant political and administrative move, underscoring the State government's renewed commitment to its capital city project and its strategy to garner Central support.

HUNT DOWN...

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"I feel that after this all-party meeting, we will succeed in this fight against terrorism and will act against Pakistan and its supporters who are behind this terror attack and remain united," Rijju said. Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said everyone at the meeting unequivocally condemned the terror attack and offered full support to the government. "The opposition has given full support to the government to take any action," he said.

Gandhi raised the issue of security lapses at the tourist spot, asking why no security personnel were deployed there, Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said. The issue was later raised by several opposition leaders during the meeting. There has been a security lapse and the government did not act promptly after the attack, some of the opposition leaders claimed. "We will support the government decision in the best interest of the nation," Kharge said.

Some leaders, including Kharge and AAP's Sanjay Singh, questioned the absence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the meeting.

Pak pauses Simla...

Continued from Page 1

That call was taken by India after the attack Tuesday in Pahalgam that killed 26 people, mostly tourists. The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy of the banned Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba claimed responsibility for the attack.

On Thursday, without naming Pakistan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at a public meeting in Bihar that the killers of Pahalgam will be pursued "to the ends of the earth" and promised to "identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backers".

A statement issued after the Islamabad meeting, which included key minister and the three services chiefs, said Pakistan's armed forces "remain fully capable and prepared to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity against any misadventure".

Return home...

Continued from Page 1

The punitive measures against Pakistan were decided at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said all existing valid visas issued by India to Pakistani nationals stand revoked with effect from April 27.

It said medical visas issued to Pakistani nationals will be valid only till April 29. The MEA said all Pakistani nationals currently in India must leave the country before the expiry of visas. It also "strongly advised" Indian nationals to avoid travelling to Pakistan. "In continuation of the decisions made by the Cabinet Committee on Security in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack, the government of India has decided to suspend visa services to Pakistani nationals with immediate effect," the MEA said in a statement.

India briefs envoys...

Continued from Page 1

The briefing was held a day after India announced a raft of measures against Pakistan including expulsion of Pakistani military attaches, suspension of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 and immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post.

The Cabinet Committee on Security headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi firmed up the punitive measures against Pakistan in view of the cross-border links to the Pahalgam attack.

Envoys of G20 member nations such as the US, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, Australia, Indonesia and China attended the briefing. Envoys of India's close strategic partners including the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Malaysia also joined it.

Civil Supplies Dept procures 35,158 MT Rabi paddy in NTR Dist

Manager says there is no shortage of gunny bags in district

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Civil Supplies Department has successfully procured 35,158 metric tonnes (MT) of Rabi paddy in NTR district, marking a major step toward the season's target of 50,000 MT. The procurement is being carried out through 107 Rythu Seva Kendras (RSKs) operated by Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) and District Cooperative Marketing Societies (DCMS), he said.

Speaking to the media on Thursday, NTR District Civil Supplies Manager TV Satish stated that 2,645 farmers have benefited from the procurement so far. The total value of paddy procured is Rs. 72.37 crore, out of which Rs. 66.87 crore has already been credited to the respective farmers' bank accounts. The remaining Rs. 65 lakh is ready for disbursement, he added.

Satish further explained that PACS operate 77 RSKs, while DCMS manage 30 in the district. As per the Minimum Support Price (MSP) fixed by the Central government, farmers are receiving Rs. 2,320 per quintal for Grade-A paddy and Rs.

2,300 per quintal for the common variety.

Meanwhile, Satish said that to support uninterrupted procurement, the department has supplied 12,28,584 gunny bags across the district based on the demand from RSKs. Of which, 4,37,280 bags were supplied to the Tiruvuru Division, 5,84,700 bags to the Vijayawada Division, and 2,06,604 bags were supplied to the Nandigama Division.

The Civil Supplies Manager assured that there is no shortage of gunny bags and that procurement operations are proceeding smoothly. The department is currently procuring the MTU 1010 variety of paddy, a popular choice among farmers in the region. Additionally, 1,000 tarpaulins have been made available in the district to protect paddy from unexpected weather, considering the ongoing seasonal conditions, he explained.

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha is closely monitoring the day-to-day progress of procurement and payment settlements. Farmers with any concerns or queries can contact the control room at 7702003571, the official noted.



Publicise tourism packages: Collector

Suggests identification and training of local guides

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of an initiative to transform NTR district into a vibrant tourism hub, District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha has emphasised the importance of publicising customised tourism packages to attract and impress visitors. He instructed officials to make brochures visually appealing and informative, ensuring tourists are well-informed about the available offerings.

Dr Lakshminsha convened a review meeting at the Collectorate in Vijayawada on Thursday, with officials from the Tourism Department, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC), and other stakeholders. The Collector reviewed the

two-day, three-day, and four-day tourism packages, analysing the destinations included, pricing, and tourist amenities.

He provided key suggestions for improving the documents, including enhancing the content with more descriptive details of tourist spots, refining package pricing, and highlighting the facilities provided. Dr Lakshminsha emphasised the need for widespread awareness about these tourism packages through strategic engagement with hotel and travel associations, and the preparation of comprehensive publicity materials.

Highlighting the potential of the district's historical, cultural, and spiritual destinations, the Collector also called for the identification and training of local guides who can effectively

communicate the significance and uniqueness of these places to visitors.

District Tourism Officer A Shilpa, APTDC CRO Suhasini, and other key officials were present at the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Collector, along with political party leaders, inspected the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) secured in the godown at the Agricultural Market Yard in Gollapudi. He provided appropriate directions to the officials regarding security, which included CCTV cameras.

District Revenue Officer (DRO) M Lakshmi Narasimham, Collectorate Election Cell Superintendent Chandramouli and others attended the meeting.

APEPDCL unveils eco-friendly training centre

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh Eastern Power Distribution Company Limited (APEPDCL) has inaugurated an energy-efficient training centre at Sagar Nagar, marking a significant step towards sustainable public infrastructure. Designed to reduce power consumption by nearly 50 per cent, the facility is expected to serve as a benchmark in eco-conscious construction within the government sector.

Covering APEPDCL's operational belt from Srikakulam to Eluru, the ground-plus-two-storey building has been developed at a cost of Rs 13.5 crore. Of this, Rs 5 crore was sanctioned by the Central Government under its energy efficiency initiatives, while the remaining 8.5 crore was met by APEPDCL. The structure complies with the Super Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) framed by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), integrating cutting-edge technologies to promote energy



conservation. The building features cavity wall construction using Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (AAC) blocks with wool and thermocol insulation to restrict heat ingress. Its roof employs cool roof technology with reflective foil and double sealing to reduce heat absorption. Double-glazed windows ensure natural daylight and regulate indoor temperatures, while a centralised air-conditioning system, supported by a single outdoor unit, enables efficient automated climate control.

Of the 1.5-acre campus, only the ground floor is used for training activities. The upper floors have been leased through

a competitive tendering process managed by the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA). Lemon Tree Hotels secured the lease and has agreed to maintain the ground floor—excluding staffing costs—offering financial relief to the utility.

"This is a self-sustaining model that eliminates recurring maintenance costs," said Prithvi Tej Immadi, Chairman and Managing Director of APEPDCL. "The leasing revenue will run into crores annually. Additionally, the 50-kW solar plant installed on-site reinforces our commitment to clean energy."

Collector stresses support for entrepreneurs

Resolve issues confronting existing industrial units soon

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

District Collector M.N. Harendhira Prasad has directed officials to extend wholehearted support to emerging entrepreneurs and prospective industrial investors, underscoring the necessity for a proactive and responsive administrative machinery. Chairing the District Industrial Export Promotion Committee (DIEPC) meeting at the Collectorate on Thursday, Harendhira Prasad emphasised the expeditious resolution of issues confronting existing industrial units and the swift processing of new proposals.

With preparations underway for the 2025-26 annual plan, the Collector stressed the importance of synergy between government departments and the industrial sector to facilitate the establishment of new industrial units. He also reviewed the progress made on concerns raised during previous committee meetings.

Highlighting infrastructure as a critical enabler of industrial expansion, Harendhira Prasad called for innovation and optimal utilisation of resources to achieve sustainable development.

Among the key infrastructure initiatives discussed were the proposed Road Over Bridges (ROBs) at Gajuwaka and Autonagar, the development of flat factory complexes at Pedagantyada, Aganampudi, and Autonagar, and the implementation of the PM Vishwakarma Yojana. The Collector instructed the officials to ensure timely supply of water for industrial use, expedite land acquisition processes, and fast-track the construction of society buildings and necessary clearances through the single-window system.

He further urged departments to invigorate the MSME sector, act decisively on legal and vigilance matters, and initiate stringent measures against land encroachments.

Collector felicitates SSC top scorers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The NTR District Collector felicitated top scorers of the SSC Public Examinations during a special ceremony held at the Collectorate in Vijayawada on Thursday.

Among the honoured students were Pasupuleti Nandini from MBM Zilla Parishath Girls' High School, Mylavaram, and Gadamsheeti Sai Charan from TB High School, Vijayawada, both of whom secured 593 marks. Also, they are the top scorers in the district among the government management schools.

Also recognised was Kompilli Praneeth Kumar, a student of AKTP Municipal High School, Satyanara yanapuram, Vijayawada, who achieved 592 marks, making him one of the top performers from government schools in the district. He stood in the second rank among the government management schools in the NTR district. In addition, Kolli Swathi from the private Navodaya High School secured an impressive 598 marks and was felicitated by the Collector for her remarkable achievement. Dr Lakshminsha also appreciated the dedicated teachers and school principals of the respective institutions, acknowledging their role in nurturing academic talent.

SCRWWO donates advanced physiotherapy equipment to Railway Hospital

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a move towards enhancing healthcare services, the South Central Railway Women's Welfare Organisation (SCRWWO), Vijayawada Division, under the leadership of Dr Varsha Patil, president, SCRWWO Vijayawada, has donated a state-of-the-art physiotherapy machine Intellect Mobile Combo to the Divisional Railway Hospital, Vijayawada.

The advanced physiotherapy unit, worth 4.5 lakh, integrates Interferential Therapy (IFT), Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS), and other pain management modalities. This cutting-edge equipment is designed to significantly improve post-operative rehabilitation and physiotherapy outcomes for patients.

The Divisional Railway Hospital currently serves approximately 60 physiother-

apy patients daily, many recovering from both major and minor orthopaedic surgeries. "Physiotherapy is an essential component in the recovery process of inpatients. This donation will greatly aid in accelerating patient rehabilitation and pain relief," said Dr Varsha Patil.

Dr GMD Chary, MS, Orthopaedic Surgeon at the Railway Hospital, noted that the facility performs around 300 major and 750 minor orthopaedic surgeries annually. "Physiotherapy is indispensable in ensuring successful recovery. This new machine is a welcome addition to our department," he added.

Ch Srinivasu, Chief Medical Superintendent, Vijayawada Division, stated, "This contribution will make a tangible difference in our ability to treat patients more effectively and comfortably." K Prabhavathi, Physiotherapist, too, expressed her gratitude to SCRWWO.



Subhash emphasises support for farm sector at DRC meet

Officials asked to meet farmers to discuss modern agriculture practices and crop varieties

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Labour Minister, Vasamshetti Subhash, highlighted the government's commitment to the welfare of the agricultural sector during the District Review Committee (DRC) meeting held in Machilipatnam, Krishna district on Thursday. He stressed that the coalition government is placing strong emphasis on supporting farmers, who are the backbone of the nation.

Subhash urged district officials to organise meetings with farmers to discuss modern agricultural practices and crop varieties. He highlighted the need for educating farmers about various government subsidies available to them, noting that many are unaware and thus unable to take full advantage of these benefits.

The Minister noted that marginalised communities such as SCs, STs, and BCs are often left out of subsidy benefits due to a lack of awareness and directed officials to ensure that all eligible farmers, especially from weaker sections, receive full access to subsidies and are informed about them thoroughly.

Discussing crop insurance,



the Minister stated that only 3,500 farmers had registered in this season and emphasised the importance of enrolment, pointing out that crop insurance can act as a safety net in adverse weather conditions. He warned that there should be no negligence regarding this matter and directed officials to raise awareness about crop insurance schemes.

Regarding the fisheries sector, the Minister instructed fisheries officers to coordinate with MLAs and provide timely updates before conducting village meetings. He also asked for proper execution of both aqua and non-aqua activities in sync with public representatives.

Highlighting progress in

livestock insurance, the Minister expressed satisfaction that Krishna district ranks first in terms of claims, with a 95 per cent claim rate. He also called for awareness campaigns about the benefits of the e-Shram portal registration for unorganised workers.

Additionally, the Minister raised concerns about labour contractors failing to make proper ESI contributions for workers. He urged district administration to take this issue seriously and ensure strict compliance.

District in-charge Minister Kollu Ravindra, District Collector DK Balaji, MLAs and several district officials participated in the DRC meeting.

CM unveils book by Minister Narayana's daughter

Actor Chiranjeevi received the first copy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu attended the launch of Mindset Shift, a book authored by Sharani, daughter of Municipal Administration Minister P Narayana. The event also saw the presence of actor Chiranjeevi, who received the first copy of the book.

Speaking at the event, the CM praised the author and highlighted the power of determination in overcoming challenges. "Strong willpower can turn any challenge into an opportunity. NT Rama Rao is a great example of how determination leads to extraordinary success," he said.

The CM also lauded Chiranjeevi's journey, attributing his stardom to a positive mindset and relentless effort. "Chiranjeevi's rise in cinema was powered by focus and discipline. With a positive mindset, he turned his goals into achievements," he added.

Congratulating Sharani, the CM expressed admiration for



her early accomplishments. "I'm amazed to see how Sharani and her sister have grown. I've always seen them as children, but now they're taking on leadership and contributing meaningfully. Writing such an insightful book at a young age is commendable," he said.

Chandrababu also shared personal anecdotes from his political journey, emphasising how ambition, focus and clarity of thought shaped his career. "When I was a student, I was offered a lecturer's job, but I

chose to contest as an MLA instead and won," he recalled.

Touching on Amaravati's future, the CM announced plans to establish a 'Quantum Valley', a technology hub centred on next-generation computing and AI.

"By 2047, Telugu people must lead in the knowledge economy. Every household should have at least one AI professional," he stated.

Addressing national matters, Chandrababu condemned recent terror attacks and expressed solidarity with Prime



Minister Narendra Modi. "India is progressing as the fifth-largest economy. During such times, attempts to desta-

bilise the nation must be condemned by every citizen. We must stand united in support of PM Modi," he concluded.

Sand stock points are being set up in every constituency: DC

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetriselvi has made it clear that a stock point will be made available in every Assembly constituency. Collector Vetriselvi held sand with the sand committee members here on Thursday and reviewed the supply of sand and stocking points.



Speaking on the occasion, the Collector directed the authorities concerned to take steps on a war footing to make sand stock points available, keeping in mind the suitability of construction work during the current summer and the upcoming monsoon season. She said that a land of approximately four acres should be selected for the sand stock point. Since the Tadipudi sand reach in East Godavari district has been allotted to Eluru district, she instructed the transport department officials to allocate vehicles from there to the constituency sand stock points. "Steps should be taken to manage the Chebrolu stock sand stock point to avoid sand shortage due to the demand

for sand and the ensuing monsoon," she asserted.

The Collector stated that East Godavari district should allocate 20 to 30 GPS-connected vehicles to purchase sand for storage at the Chebrolu stock yard and supply sand to the stock point. She told the officials concerned and the members that a meeting should be held immediately with the relevant owners on this matter and the selected list should be submitted to the DD of the Mines Department. Only vehicles approved by the Transport Department authorities should be

allowed to transport sand to the stockyard, she told the committee members. "In the next three to four months, a tender notification will be issued to invite applications from various agencies for the issuance of YNDL licenses for the establishment of stockyards in each constituency for sand supply. The rates will be fixed for the selling price per metric tonne in the sand depot and the tender applications will be made available at the DD Mines office," she directed the officials.

The Collector told the officials that CCTV cameras should be installed at the stock points and other rules and regulations should be strictly followed, clarifying that there is no scope for illegal sand transportation and ordered that sand transportation activities should not be carried out at night. She ordered the Tahsildar to act as the custodian of the Chebrolu stock point in Unguturu mandal. Joint Collector P Dhatri Reddy, Mines Department DD Ravikumar and RTO Krishna Rao were among those who attended the meeting.

Ministers pay homage to Madhusudhan Rao

PNS ■ NELLORE

Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan flanked by Civil Supplies Minister Nadendla Manohar and Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav paid homage to Somishetti Madhusudhan Rao who was killed in the terrorist attack at Pahalgam in Kashmir.

The mortal remains of Madhusudhan Rao brought to his native town Kavali of the district on Thursday, Ministers Pawan Kalyan, Nadendla Manohar, Satya Kumar Yadav, Aanam Ramnarayan Reddy, MLAs Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy and D Venkata Krishna Reddy paid rich homage to slain Madhusudhan Rao. Pawan Kalyan consoled the bereaved family members and assured them of extending all support. A pall of gloom descended at the area with grieving family members.

Speaking to the media on the occasion, Pawan Kalyan vehemently condemned the terrorist attack. He said that he understood the agony and pain of the bereaved family members. Extending support is more important than



announcing compensation now, he felt.

"India will not forget the barbaric act. The terrorists behaved cruelly and it's time to eliminate them wherever they are," Pawan Kalyan stated. He asserted that he knew the sit-

uation of Kashmir as he used to go there for cinema shootings between 1986 and 1989.

"The incident of the terror attack in Pahalgam is proof that if bullets are fired in Kashmir, the impact is felt all over the country. They killed him after

asking him which religion he belonged to," he lashed out. Pawan Kalyan opined that Indians have more compassion and mercifulness. Ministers Nadendla Manohar and Satya Kumar carried the coffin of Madhusudhan Rao.



Mock drill conducted in Tirumala

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

A mock drill was conducted by the security forces in Tirumala on Thursday evening. In the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack in Kashmir, the mock drill demonstrated how to deal with terrorists' infiltration and how to protect devotees.

A mock drill was conducted at Sudarshan Choultry near Lepakshi Circle under the leadership of the Additional SP Sri Ramakrishna to demon-

strate how to repel terrorist attacks in Tirumala.

Assault Dog, Enemy Attack and Room Intervention activities were demonstrated. In this mock drill by security forces, 28 Octopus commandos, 25 TTD Vigilance sleuths, 15 police and 10 APSP personnel participated and showcased their expertise.

VGOs Ramkumar, Surendra, DSP Sri Vijaya Shekhar, AVSOs and officers from various departments participated in this event.

Nutritious food essential for pregnant women to give birth to healthy babies: RRR

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Deputy Speaker of Legislative Assembly K Raghurama Krishna Raju stated that nutritious food is essential to pregnant women to give birth to healthy babies. A programme was held in the Arya Vysya function hall, organized by the women welfare department on Thursday, in which popular film actor Ravu Ramesh and Collector Chadalavada Nagarani took part.

Speaking on the occasion, Raghurama Krishna Raju said that pregnant women should take good nutritious food and understand that it is passed on to the child through the mother.

He highlighted that the Central and State governments are spending crores of rupees to provide nutritious food to pregnant women and



children.

The deputy Speaker said that along with good rest during pregnancy, listening to melodious music and having thoughts of God will help in the birth of good and

healthy children.

He said that the Akevedu Government Hospital was developed at a cost of lakhs of rupees, he said and lamented that unfortunately there are no gynecologists

in the hospital.

The deputy Speaker said that discussions have been held with the Principal Secretary of the Medical and Health Department regarding the appointment of a doctor in the Akevedu GGH and that a gynecologist will join the Hospital within a week.

He asked the women to inform him if they face any problem in the constituency.

Collector Nagarani appreciated the ANMs and ASHA workers for the medical assistance to the pregnant women.

Raghurama Krishna Raju and Collector Nagarani participated in the anna prasana and baby showers programme and they blessed the women. Women and child welfare officer B Sujata Rani and other officials were present.



Electric Scooter donated to Tirumala temple

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Maharashtra-based Bgauss Auto Private Limited donated a Bgauss C12 Max 3.0 electric scooter worth Rs 1.40 lakh to TTD on Thursday.

The keys of the scooter

were handed over to TTD Dy. EO Lokanatham by the company's Vice President, Durgesh Gupta in front of the Srivari temple.

Tirumala DI Subramanyam also participated in the program.

Cobra slithers into pediatric ward in GGH

PNS ■ KURNOOL

A five-foot cobra slithered into the pediatric ward in the Government General Hospital in Emmiganor on Thursday and the panic stricken patients and their aids rushed out of hospital.

An aid of a patient noticed the dreaded Indian cobra in the children's ward of the hospital. The hospital staff, with the help of others, searched for the snake in the ward and later killed it.

The officials heaved a sigh of relief as the snake did not bite anybody in the hospital which is always overcrowded with the patients and their aids. If the snake had slithered into the hospital during night time, it would have bitten someone, the patients in the hospital feared.

They alleged that the vicinity of GGH is untidy and unhygienic conditions pre-



vailed on the premises, giving scope for poisonous reptiles. They appealed to the officials

concerned to take steps to remove garbage and maintain hygiene on hospital premises.



20 pilgrims injured as bus rams rock

PNS ■ ONGOLE

As many as 20 pilgrims were injured when the private bus in which they were going to the famous hill shrine Srisailem temple rammed a rock on the ghat road at Chinnarutla of Dornala mandal on Thursday.

Police said that about 35 pilgrims from Siriguppa of Karnataka state were going to

Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy temple. The driver lost control over the bus resulting in it ramming a rock.

As many as 20 pilgrims were injured in the accident and they shifted to the GGH in the 108 ambulances. If the bus had moved a few meters forward, it would have fallen into a valley, police said. The officials heaved a sigh of relief as the pilgrims escaped with injuries.

Woman, her grandson drowned in Yeleru canal

PNS ■ KAKINADA

In a tragic incident, a woman and her grandson were drowned in the Yeleru canal at Yerravaram village of Yeleswaram mandal on Thursday.

Police said that the deceased Aratlakota Satyavathi (55) and her grandson Gorsa Veera Manoj (12) went to the canal to have a bath. When Manoj slipped in the canal and was drowning, Satyavathi went to his rescue but both were drowned. The bodies were fished out of the canal.

Poignant scenes were witnessed with the grieving family members inconsolably. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH for postmortem.



Speedy development only with PPP system: Naidu

PPP mode best way to achieve Swarnandhra-2047 goals and attract investments

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, on Thursday, directed the officials to see to it that all the developmental projects in the State are taken up under Public Private Partnership (PPP) method.

The Chief Minister said that PPP mode is the best way to achieve the Swarnandhra-2047 goals and to attract investments to the State on a large scale. Chandrababu said that various administrative reforms were implemented during the earlier tenure of the TDP and achieved excellent results with the PPP method. During a meeting with officials at the State Secretariat on extending the PPP mode, the

Chief Minister said that PPP mode should be given priority in highways construction by linking all the highways taking districts as a unit, building ports, health sector, tourism and in providing basic amenities. The PPP method will help further increase the State's share capital in the total expenditure of the State government.

The Chief Minister is firm in his opinion that PPP will certainly stand in support of the goals set by the State. He told the officials that the Centre is extending support to the States to formulate PPP plans through 'India Infrastructure Project Development Fund'.

The Chief Minister is very particular that the officials should take steps to overcome the challenges like land allocation in implementing the PPP, delay in granting per-

Tell your children not to enter into water bodies: MP to parents

PNS ■ ELURU

In view of the summer holidays, Eluru MP Putta Mahesh Kumar advised parents to be fully cautious and vigilant with their children.

He stated in a press release on Thursday that parents should take necessary precautions before sending children to their grandparents' homes in rural areas.

Children naturally tend to be attracted to water bodies such as streams, ponds, and canals, so he advised keeping them away from such places. If necessary, their desire to swim can be fulfilled by taking them to secure, well-maintained swimming pools.

The MP further advised that, considering the severe heat, children should be kept



indoors during the day as much as possible. If going outside is unavoidable, precautions must be taken to protect them from heatstroke. He emphasized that summer holidays should not be wasted but should be utilized productively by guiding children in the right direction.

To promote both fun and learning, he suggested pro-

viding children training in activities they are interested in, such as sports and games, traditional dance, chess, and swimming. Summer vacations are a great opportunity to bring out children's hidden talents, and parents should focus on encouraging this development.

Due to the likelihood of children going to swim in ponds, streams, and canals during the summer holidays, MP Putta Mahesh Kumar requested the District Collector Vetriselvi to implement safety measures near water bodies. In a letter to the Collector, the MP suggested assigning supervision responsibilities to village secretariat staff and local officials. He also recommended utilizing police services to prevent any untoward incidents.

Two 10th class students drowned in tank

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Two 10th class students were drowned in a tank at Chandragiri village of Bommanahall mandal of the district on Thursday.

Police said that two students Vamshi (15) and Govindaraju (15) went to their native village for holidays. They took two oxen to the tank to feed them water. The oxen pushed the boys into the tank and the boys were drowned. One of the oxen was also drowned in the incident. One of the deceased students, Vamshi passed the examination. The police registered a case, fished out the bodies and shifted them to the GGH for post-mortem.

Why is Stalin, Kamal Hasan & Prakash Raj mum on Pahalgam slaughter: BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP's Medak MP, M. Raghunandan Rao, asked Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin and film actors Kamal Hasan and Prakash Raj to explain why they have not responded to the Pahalgam terror attack.

Addressing the media on Thursday at Siddipet, Raghunandan expressed grief over the brutal killing of 27 innocent tourists by extremists. He said that whenever AICC leader Rahul Gandhi goes abroad, there are riots in the country and that there are 150 tourists from Telangana in Jammu and Kashmir. "Why are these so-called secular intellectuals not responding to the incident that shook the nation? The terror attack in Kashmir was shocking. Why are secular intellectuals not speaking out about this attack? Don't they love the country? Why are Stalin, Kamal Hasan and

Prakash Raj not saying anything about the Kashmir incident? The Modi Government will act against terrorists. Priyanka Gandhi's husband, Robert Vadra, should stop slandering the BJP. We condemn Vadra's comments," Raghunandan said. He said the decisions of AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi have not led to development in Hyderabad, and that he is not thinking about poor Muslims.

Raghunandan said the incidents taking place in the joint Medak district over the last two days are painful and that some people from a community are disrupting law and order. He said that the Revanth Government should think about madrasas in Telangana and accused the Congress of trying to turn Telangana into an Islamic stronghold.

He demanded that Revanth Reddy should release a white paper on madrasas in the state and added that the state had become anarchic after the Congress came to power.

ACROSS THE STATES



Odisha to initiate action against infiltrators: Min

Odisha Law minister Prithviraj Harichandan on Thursday said the government will soon initiate required action against infiltrators staying for long in the state. "A discussion with the chief minister has already been made in regard to the presence of infiltrators and required action will be taken soon," Harichandan told reporters while replying to a question in the wake of the Pahalgam terror strike in which 26 people including a man from the state, were killed. Strongly condemning the Pahalgam incident, Harichandan said: "They (Pakistani terrorists) have pinned the last nail in their coffin. The consequences will be too harsh. This is for the first time that the terrorists have gunned down unarmed and innocent visitors to the valley. The central government and all the states are solidly behind the families of the victims." Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi last month had informed the state Assembly that as many as 3,738 infiltrators mostly from Bangladesh have been identified across the state.



Manipur bandh today over 'custodial death' of youth

Joint Action Committee (JAC) formed in connection with the alleged custodial death of a 27-year-old man earlier this month has called a 24-hour-long Manipur bandh from midnight of Thursday. Khoisnam Sanajaoba was arrested in Imphal East district on March 31 along with four others for their alleged association with the proscribed outfit Kangleipak Communist Party (Nongdrenkhomba). In a statement, the JAC said it had submitted a memorandum to the governor listing a charter of demands, including an impartial investigation into the "custodial death" of Sanajaoba, on April 17 but received no response from the government side. "The 24-hour bandh will start from the intervening night of April 24 and April 25," the statement said. The JAC asserted that Khoisnam was a "village volunteer" who was sent to Manipur Central Jail at Saijiwa on April 10 and was admitted to Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences on April 13, where he was pronounced dead.



BJP set to regain control of MCD after two years

The BJP is set to reclaim power in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) after a gap of two years, with the elections for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor scheduled to be held on Friday. With the AAP boycotting the election and the Congress reduced to a marginal presence, the BJP is expected to comfortably sweep the civic posts, solidifying its control over Delhi through the Centre, the nominated MLAs in the Assembly and now the MCD. Senior BJP leader and former Mayor Raja Iqbal Singh, who is the party's nominee for the mayoral post, told PTI that Delhiites have entrusted the BJP with the responsibility of fixing the city's problems. "AAP has already accepted its defeat. We will eliminate corruption and complete all the pending work that was stalled over the past two years," he said. He further stated that once the mayor is elected, elections for the standing committees will be held promptly. Meanwhile, AAP councillor and former Mayor Shelly Oberoi and Leader of the House Mukesh Goyal held a press conference on Thursday where they reiterated their party's decision to boycott the election.

India can't develop without developing its villages: Modi

PNS ■ MADHUBANI

India cannot develop without developing its villages, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday as he launched and inaugurated projects worth Rs 13,500 crore in Bihar's Madhubani, and addressed Panchayati Raj Institutions across the country.

Speaking at an event to mark National Panchayati Raj Day here, Modi also lauded the work done by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in the poll-bound state.

He said a developed Bihar is essential for a developed India, and said efforts are being made to ensure the benefits of progress reach all corners of the state. Modi said Mahatma Gandhi's idea that India cannot be developed without empowering its villages is the concept behind the Panchayati Raj system.

"Bihar is the land where Mahatma Gandhi expanded the mantra of Satyagraha," Modi said, highlighting Mahatma Gandhi's firm belief that "India's rapid development is only possible when its villages are strong".



"Today, a significant number of women from economically weaker sections, Dalits, Mahadalits, backwards, and extremely backward communities are serving as public representatives in Bihar. This is real social justice and democracy."

He said the projects launched on Thursday will boost development and generate employment opportunities in the state. "Farmers are the backbone of the rural economy, the stronger this backbone, the stronger the villages, and consequently, the nation," Modi said.

He also underscored that panchayats have strengthened social participation, remarking that Bihar was the first state in the country to provide 50 per cent reservation for women in panchayats.

"Today, a significant number of women from economically

weaker sections, Dalits, Mahadalits, backwards, and extremely backward communities are serving as public representatives in Bihar. This is real social justice and democracy," he said.

"Many steps have been taken to strengthen panchayats, and technology has also been used... More than 2 lakh gram panchayats have been linked with the internet, and more than 5.5 lakh common service centres have been established in villages," he said.

Modi said more than 30,000 new panchayat buildings have also been constructed.

He lauded the Bihar government's 'Jeevika Didi' programme and said, today, self-help groups of women in Bihar have been provided financial assistance of approximately Rs 1,000 crore.

He said this will further strengthen the economic empowerment of women and contribute to the goal of creating three crore 'Lakshpati Didis' across the country.

Modi said villages have seen the construction of houses for the poor, roads, gas connections, water connections, and toilets, bringing lakhs of crores of rupees to rural areas.

Prolonged prison sans trial can't be allowed to result in sentence: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said a prolonged incarceration without trial cannot be allowed to result in a sentence and granted bail to an accused arrested in a drugs case in UP.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih observed the petitioner was incarcerated for over 5.2 years and the trial in the case, registered in 2019, was yet to begin. The state counsel opposed the plea saying the co-accused, who was released on bail, was not attending court. "This court, in a catena of cases, has held that a prolonged incarceration without commencement of trial, cannot be permitted to result in a sentence without trial," the bench said.

The top court was hearing the accused's plea against an order of the Allahabad High Court passed in March last year rejecting his bail application.

On the argument that the co-accused in the case was not appearing in court, the bench said the state was always at liberty to take steps for cancella-



tion of the bail. "However, the petitioner cannot be penalised solely on the ground that the co-accused is not attending the court," it added.

The bench directed the petitioner to be released on bail in the case registered at Greater Noida on conditions as imposed by the trial court.

he accused was arrested in January 2019 in connection with the case under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. In the high court, the accused claimed of not being arrested at the sport from where the alleged quantity of the contraband -- 150 kilogram weed -- was purportedly recovered.

His counsel argued in the high court that all the co-accused persons were enlarged on bail and, therefore, he too deserved bail on the ground of parity.

2008 MUMBAI ATTACK

Delhi court junks Rana's plea to talk to kin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday dismissed the plea of jailed 26/11 terror attack accused Tahawwur Hussain Rana seeking to talk to his family members.

"Not allowed," special Judge Chanderjit Singh held. Rana filed the plea through his lawyer and said talking to his family members was a fundamental right and they must be worried about his well being.

The NIA opposed the application, arguing he could share crucial information if allowed to speak with his family members. The anti-terror agency said the investigation was at a crucial stage.

On April 10, the court remanded the 64-year-old Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman to 18 day custody.

The NIA alleged as a part of the criminal conspiracy, accused David Coleman Headley, had discussed the entire operation with Rana before his visit to India.

Anticipating potential challenges, Headley sent an e-mail to Rana detailing his belongings and assets, the NIA told



the court seeking his remand. Headley also informed Rana about the involvement of Pakistani nationals Ilyas Kashmiri and Abdur Rehman, who are also accused in the case, in the plot, it alleged.

Rana, a close associate of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks main conspirator Headley alias Daood Gilani, a US citizen, was brought to India after the US Supreme Court on April 4 dismissed his review plea against his extradition.

On November 26, 2008, a group of 10 Pakistani terrorists went on a rampage, carrying out a coordinated attack on a railway station, two luxury hotels and a Jewish centre, after they sneaked into India's financial capital using the sea route in the Arabian Sea.

As many as 166 people were killed in the nearly 60-hour assault.

NOT TIME FOR DOMESTIC BLAME GAME

Islamist terrorists, Pak handlers need to be destroyed: Tharoor

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that this is not the time for a domestic blame game over the Pahalgam terror attack, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Thursday said Islamist terrorists and their Pakistani handlers need to be destroyed and that "we must all support our government" in doing whatever it judges best to achieve this.

He also asserted that India's commitment to Kashmiri inte-



gration and communal harmony must not be diluted.

At least 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed and several injured when terrorists

opened fire at a meadow near Pahalgam town in south Kashmir's Anantnag district on Tuesday afternoon.

Tharoor said the responsibility for the horrors endured this week lies more with those who planned and carried out the killings than those who failed to prevent them. He made the remarks in a post on X as he could not return from Lakshadweep in time for the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting here. He said

he was adding his endorsement to the "strong and constructive" statement issued by the CWC.

Making four additional, inter-related points, Tharoor said the objectives of the Pahalgam attack are clear -- stop peace, derail "normalisation", destroy tourism, wreck the Kashmir economy to increase discontent there, add to the mistrust of Kashmiris, among other Indians, and increase communal polarisation in India.

Indian naval warship test-fires surface-to-air missile

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Navy's guided missile destroyer INS Surat successfully test-fired a medium-range surface-to-air missile.

The missile has a range of around 70 km, it is learnt. "The Indian Navy's latest indigenous guided missile destroyer INS Surat has successfully carried out a precision cooperative engagement of a sea-skimming target, marking a significant milestone in strengthening the Navy's defence capabilities," the Navy said.

Pahalgam attack masterminded by Pak: Cong

Says BJP exploiting tragedy to promote polarisation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday said the cowardly Pahalgam attack masterminded by Pakistan is a direct assault on the values of our republic, even as it accused the BJP of exploiting the tragedy to promote discord and polarisation at a time unity is most needed.

The Congress Working Committee (CWC), chaired by party chief Mallikarjun Kharge, asserted that it is



imperative that a comprehensive analysis is conducted into the intelligence failures and security lapses that enabled such an attack in a Union Territory, which is directly under the purview of the Union home ministry.

The CWC, which was attended by former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, general secretaries K

C Venugopal, Jairam Ramesh, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, among others, stated that the deliberate targeting of Hindus was done to inflame passions across the country.

The meeting at the party's 24, Akbar Road office here started with leaders paying homage to the victims of the attack by observing a moment of silence in their memory.

Teachers continue sit-in in front of the SSC office

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Around 1,000 protesting teachers, who have laid siege to the West Bengal School Service Commission (SSC) headquarters here, continued their sit-in for the fourth day on Thursday. The agitators, who launched the demonstration on April 21, vowed that their sit-in would continue till they were officially reinstated on a permanent basis in their respective educational institutions.

One of the office-bearers of Deserving Teachers Forum, Chinnoy Mandal, told PTI, "We will not withdraw our agitation till the state presents the full list of tainted/untainted



candidates before the Supreme Court by moving a review appeal and we are reinstated till we attain 60 years of age, not up to December 31 as recently ordered by the Supreme Court." "We will not withdraw till we

get written assurances that the eligible teachers won't have to sit for a fresh round of SSC recruitment test after May 30 and are permanently reinstated with their heads held high," Mandal added.

Rajasthan ex-minister held in money laundering case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate Thursday arrested Congress leader and former Rajasthan minister Mahesh Joshi in a money laundering case linked to alleged irregularities in the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme, officials said.

Joshi was taken into custody under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) by the federal probe agency in Jaipur, they said. The ED's money laundering case stems from an FIR registered by Rajasthan's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) into the scheme that aims to provide safe and adequate drinking water through household tap connections.

PAHALGAM ATTACK



Drunk auto driver sends Delhi Police on wild goose chase

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An investigation involving various security agencies was launched after an anonymous caller claimed he knew a terror attack was going to take place in Pahalgam.

The call, it was later discovered, was made by a 51-year-old auto driver and a flummoxed Delhi Police by and by realised that the man was drunk and had been nettled by a challan.

"He was drunk, but different security agencies questioned him. Later, we got to know that he was annoyed over a challan issued against his vehicle," an officer told PTI on the condition of anonymity. "Preventive action has also been taken against

him. But it was clear from his questioning that he made the hoax call because of a pending challan that he was angry about," he said.

No FIR has been registered against the man so far. Security has already been tightened across the national capital following Tuesday's terrorist attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam.

Terrorists opened fire at the Baisaran meadow near the resort town of Pahalgam in Anantnag district, killing 26 people, mostly tourists, in the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019.

Delhi Police beefed up security across the city, especially around tourist hotspots and border checkpoints.

Pahalgam's terror victims cremated - with flowers, tears, and resolve

PNS ■ JAIPUR/AHMEDABAD/BALASORE

Flames leapt from funeral pyres, suppressed sobs and anguished cries mingled with the sound of mantras and the fragrance of flowers and incense lingered. It was the final adieu for the families of those killed in Pahalgam and also for a country in mourning with them.

On Thursday, the last rites of several of the 26 gunned down by terrorists in Baisaran in the upper reaches of Pahalgam were held -- from Odisha to Gujarat and from Rajasthan to Karnataka. A snapshot as it were of the prime holiday destination that Kashmir has been

for people across the country and indication of the belief that all was well in the volatile Valley.

The dead in Tuesday's terror strike were all men, 26 lives of promise that ended in a hail of bullets. And back in their homes, families grieved for the sons, fathers and husbands they had lost, some stoic and others inconsolable.

A hush fell over many villages and towns as funeral corteges wound their way to crematoriums and shops downed shutters.

In Ishani village in Odisha's Balasore district, nine-year-old Tanuj Kumar Satpathy lit the pyre of his father Prashant. It was just two days ago that



the family -- 41-year-old Prashant, an employee of the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology, his wife Priya Darshini and Tanuj -- were in Pahalgam.

A distraught Priya Darshini

did not allow anyone to touch the body of her husband, hugging it till she crumpled in a faint.

Hundreds of people gathered in Ishani to pay their respects to Prashant, lining up on both sides of the road as the fune-

ral procession proceeded to the crematorium a kilometre away. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Balasore MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi were among those who accompanied Tanuj from his home to the crematorium. Amid chants of "Jai Hind" and "Prashant Satpathy Amar Rahe", young Tanuj lit the pyre, a sight that seared the consciousness of everyone who was watching, whether in Ishani or on their mobile and television screens.

The Satpathy family's story found tragic echo in many other parts of the country.

In Jaipur, the flower-bedecked bier of 33-year-old Neeraj Udhwani made its way down a quiet street with

Editor's TAKE

Pope Francis: A Pope of the people

As the world awaits his funeral, it is time for the Catholic world to reflect on his legacy

The death of Pope Francis on Easter Monday marked the end of an era in the Roman Catholic Church, one shaped by humility, joy, and profound efforts to bridge divides within the Church and beyond.

His decision was more than symbolic — it reflected his core message: that the Church should be close to the people, particularly the poor and marginalised.

Central to Francis' leadership was his theology of joy. He often warned against a Christianity devoid of joy — likening such faith to being "pickled in vinegar."

As thousands queue to bid farewell in person, and millions more watch the funeral unfold across screens worldwide, the atmosphere in Rome is less one of despair and more of sacred remembrance.

Images of the Pope flash across digital billboards with a simple message: "Grazie." His final resting place, Santa Maria Maggiore — a church he visited before and after nearly every papal journey — underscores his identity as a pilgrim pope, always walking alongside the faithful.

As tradition dictates, white smoke will soon signal their decision to the world. But even as attention turns to the question of succession, the legacy of Pope Francis will remain etched into the conscience of the Church.

As the world bids farewell, his legacy offers both comfort and challenge, a reminder that faith must engage the realities of the world with love.

The conclave will choose his successor, but his influence will endure, not only in Church doctrine but in the hearts of millions who found hope and dignity through his leadership.

Soft power in retreat

For decades, the US won hearts and minds not with tanks or fighter jets, but with scholarships, foreign aid, immigration opportunities, and cultural exchange. But Donald Trump has upended the soul of America

Soft power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment — Joseph Nye.

In diplomacy, not every war is fought with guns, and not every ally is won with treaties. Some of the most lasting alliances, perceptions, and influences are built in classrooms, libraries, hospitals, and open-minded immigration desks.

From the end of World War II to the close of the 20th century, the US balanced hard power with soft persuasion.

After Pearl Harbour and the end of the Monroe Doctrine's inward-looking policy, America stepped decisively into the global theatre. Initially, it flexed its military muscle — from Hiroshima to the Cold War nuclear stand-offs — but soon realised that tanks and warships couldn't alone win hearts.

But Trump's reign of ultra-nationalism, ultra-capitalism, and ultra-conservatism diluted this global goodwill. Places like Harvard, MIT, and Stanford weren't just American educational brands; they were world laboratories of innovation, cross-cultural dialogue, and diplomacy by proxy.

When Trump questioned the utility of such universities and threatened to cut their funds, he wasn't just aiming at liberal professors or elite academia; he was hacking away at the roots of America's global intellectual tree.



thinkers, diplomats, artists, and professionals, saw restrictions and stagnation under Trump's regime. This wasn't just about budget lines; it was about breaking bridges that had taken decades to build.

The shift wasn't limited to academia. Trump's "America First" translated into America alone. US foreign aid took a hit, including humanitarian and development assistance that had long been a lever of influence in fragile regions.

Perhaps the most damaging was the policy on immigration and visas. By clamping down on H1-B visas, Trump stifled the inflow of skilled professionals — especially from India. This move hurt not only the American tech industry but also tarnished its reputation as a land that rewards merit.



SANTHOSH MATHEW

and professionalism, were once the unsung heroes of the American healthcare system. They became unintended victims of a policy that seemed more guided by xenophobic rhetoric than economic sense.

It's ironic. America gained its comparative cost advantage and global dominance in various sectors precisely because it welcomed the world's best minds. The openness to foreign students and workers was not just humanitarian — it was deeply pragmatic.

Soft power, unlike hard power, does not rely on fear, force, or finance alone. It thrives on attraction. A country that welcomes, educates, and employs foreigners becomes a hub of admiration. The world's image of America, diverse, democratic, and dynamic — was always more powerful than any military base.

The consequences are already visible. International student applications to American universities have dropped. Countries that once looked to America for inspiration are now

turning elsewhere. China's Confucius Institutes, European Union scholarships, and India's neighbourhood outreach are stepping into the vacuum left by the US. And this matters. In a world of multipolar influence, losing moral and cultural leadership is as fatal as losing a war.

When nations drift towards ultra-nationalism and away from global collaboration, they don't just lose allies — they lose identity. The America that helped rebuild Japan and Germany, which welcomed Einstein and later Sundar Pichai, is being replaced by an America that shuts doors, silences debate, and shuns difference.

(The author is Professor, Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies and Social Sciences, Pondicherry Central University, India. Views are personal)

New moon Race: Private sector takes the lead

SECOND Opinion

BY RAJNEESH BHANDARI

This year will be a landmark year for lunar exploration, with three moon landings scheduled in quick succession that demonstrate humanity's renewed enchantment with our closest celestial neighbour.

Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost lunar lander has achieved a soft landing on Mare Crisium, a vast basaltic plain on the moon's near side. An upright and stable landing makes Firefly the first private company to put a spacecraft on the moon without crashing or falling over — a feat where only five countries have been successful: Russia, the US, China, India, and Japan.

Private Sector Involvement: A New Paradigm The success of startups like Firefly Aerospace, space and Intuitive Machines marks a shift from Government-led exploration to a commercial model.

This could pave the way for producing life-sustaining resources on the moon, essential for long-term human presence. The third landing, Intuitive Machines' IM-2 mission, will carry a 1 — metre drill to probe for water ice. This mission aims to map subsurface ice deposits, which are crucial for NASA's Artemis programme, which plans to have a sustainable base on the moon by 2030.

NASA's CLPS programme exemplifies this by outsourcing lunar delivery to firms for a fraction of traditional costs. Private sector agility accelerates mission timelines, fosters innovation, and reduces cost.

India, too, is at the cusp of developing the startup ecosystem for space technologies. Startups like Dhruva Space, Pixxel, Agnikul Cosmos, Bellatrix Aerospace, and Skyroot Aerospace are developing a host of technologies, including end-to-end satellite solutions, a constellation of high-resolution hyperspectral imaging satellites, electrical thrusters for satellites, a small satellite launch vehicle, etc.

These startups are driving India's private sector, leveraging Government support and global interest. The lunar landings will provide a wealth of scientific insights and lay the foundation for future lunar bases.

For the first time, private companies and startups are leading the charge, conducting pioneering experiments like water extraction and ice drilling. These missions will bring us closer to a future where humanity not only visits the moon but thrives there and beyond.

(The writer is an alumnus of IIT Delhi and founder of NeuroEquilibrium. Views are personal)

Leaderspeak



Every country wants to partake, even countries that have ripped us off for many, many years. China is an example, but it's not just China, European Union. They ripped us off for many, many years, and those days are over... We'll be able to lower taxes substantially.

US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

A wake-up call for National security

Madam — The brutal killing of 26 innocent people, most of them tourists, in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, has left the nation stunned. Militants disguised in army uniforms opened fire while the victims were enjoying pony rides and scenic views.

It stands as one of the most diabolical acts of terror in recent times. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi in response, questions arise about the Government's repeated claims of normalcy in the region. How did such a well-coordinated attack go unnoticed? Was this not a failure of our intelligence and security apparatus?

Reports suggest that the attack may have been carried out by 'The Resistance Front,' an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Taiba. If so, how were they able to infiltrate a tourist hotspot without triggering any security alerts? Where were the patrols? Why was there no surveillance in such vulnerable areas? The Government must give answers to all these questions. It is not the time for rhetoric but for real action; nab the culprits and give them an exemplary punishment. These questions demand urgent answers.

BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE | FARIDABAD

The transformative power of reading

Madam — Reading is more than a skill — it is a gateway to lifelong learning, personal growth, and academic success. On World Book Day, we celebrate the vital role that reading plays in shaping young minds and inspiring curiosity.

A child's attitude toward reading greatly influences their motivation to read. When children enjoy reading, they naturally want to read more.

This enjoyment, nurtured from a young age, forms the foundation of strong reading habits. Reading not only enhances vocabulary and communication but also sharpens analytical thinking and improves writing skills.

Parents play a critical role by reading with their children regularly. These shared moments help children experience the joys of storytelling, cultivating a lasting love for books.

Every child learns differently — while some may take to reading naturally, others need encouragement and exposure to find their spark. Let us instil the value of reading early, so the next generation grows up with the tools they need to succeed and the imagination to dream big.

Let us nurture a love for reading from an early age, guiding children toward knowledge, creativity, and success. With consistent encouragement and shared reading moments, we can empower young minds to embrace books, build essential skills, and unlock their full potential. As they books are our best friends. Let this friendship begin!

CK SUBRAMANIAM | MUMBAI

Nation stands united against terror

Madam — India stands united in sorrow following the horrific terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, on Tuesday, April 22, which claimed the lives of 30 innocent civilians. The nation mourns with the affected families who are enduring unimaginable pain. As countless voices across the country express solidarity, many are also demanding the severing of all sporting ties with Pakistan in the wake of the tragedy.

"This heinous act has caused irreparable harm, destroying families and striking at the heart of our society," many said in their condolences. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims. May they find peace and strength in these dark times," many people said in their emotional posts. It is a moment when we can destroy all the gains humanity has made till date and plunge into negativity. But let us be sane and not spread hate. Interestingly, while bilateral cricket matches between India and Pakistan have not occurred since a one-off ODI series in 2012–13, their clashes in ICC tournaments remain the most anticipated events in global cricket. The recent ICC Champions Trophy faced turbulence, with India declining to send a team to Pakistan due to security concerns. Matches were eventually hosted at a neutral venue in Dubai. Moving forward, both the BCCI and PCB have agreed to avoid playing on each other's soil for at least three years.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Letters to the Editor

WORLD MALARIA DAY: REIGNITING THE FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA

Malaria is a life-threatening parasitic disease transmitted by the female Anopheles mosquito. Despite being preventable and treatable, it remains a major global health challenge. Since the late 1990s, the international community has renewed its commitment to eradicating malaria, preventing an estimated 2.2 billion cases and 12.7 million deaths over two decades.

These challenges leave millions with limited access to preventive, diagnostic, and treatment services. If not treated promptly, malaria can quickly become a severe and life-threatening illness. World

Malaria Day 2025 Theme: This year, World Malaria Day, observed annually on April 25 since 2008, is themed "Malaria Ends With Us: Reinvest, Reimagine, Reignite." It is a global call to action that urges individuals, communities, and leaders to intensify efforts, champion innovation, and ensure sustained investment in the fight to end malaria. Common symptoms of malaria include fever, chills, sweating, headache, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, muscle and joint pain, anaemia, cough, and abdominal discomfort.

Preventive measures such as using insect repellents, wearing long-sleeved clothing, using mosquito nets, and eliminating stagnant water around homes are vital in reducing mosquito bites and keeping communities malaria-free. We have the knowledge and tools to end malaria. The choice is ours — act now. Ending malaria is not only a health necessity but also a step toward a fairer, safer, and more prosperous future for all.

BURRA M REDDY | KARIMNAGAR

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

Terror in Pahalgam shatters India's diplomatic high

As world leaders lauded India's geopolitical ascent, the attack marked a chilling reminder that terror in Kashmir remains a calculated lever in the regional and international balance of power

FIRST Column

JD Vance, the Vice President of the United States, arrived in India on 19 April, following a solemn stop at the Vatican, where he became the final high-ranking official to meet the late Pope Francis — an emblematic rebel of the modern Church whose death this week marked the end of a transformative papacy.

Vance's arrival was framed as an endorsement of India's ascendant geopolitical status, punctuated by public tributes to Prime Minister Modi and the deepening of the Indo-American strategic alliance. This diplomatic spectacle was further amplified by the April 9 extradition of Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a Pakistani — origin Canadian linked to the 2008 Mumbai attacks, representing a rare convergence of legal triumphs between the two nations in their fight against terrorism.

Yet, this orchestration of diplomatic victories quickly unravelled, as within days of these high-profile engagements, Kashmir — a region central to India's evolving image — was once again thrust into global headlines, not by progress, but by tragedy. On April 22, a massacre in the idyllic meadows of Baisaran near Pahalgam once heralded as the face of Kashmir's resurgence, accentuated a brutal paradox: the strategic narrative of peace and prosperity was violently interrupted by terror, forcing the world to confront the enduring volatility of the region at a moment when India appeared poised for diplomatic consolidation.

On April 22, 2025, a massacre unfolded in the meadows of Baisaran near Pahalgam, often romanticised as "India's Switzerland." What had become a symbol of India's Kashmir renaissance—a picturesque site of family vacations, film shoots, and summer retreats — was reduced to a field of carnage as unidentified gunmen opened fire on a group of tourists. At least twenty-eight civilians, mostly men, were methodically executed, while women and children were reportedly spared.

The attack was not merely an act of terror, but a deeply choreographed intervention in India's domestic and international narrative regarding Kashmir. It sought not just to kill, but to provoke, destabilise, and symbolically mutilate the emerging image of a peaceful, integrated, and economically flourishing region. The timing of the attack is far too conspicuous to be dismissed as arbitrary. Beyond coinciding with the visit of the American Vice President and coming a few days after the extradition of a high-profile terror suspect, the attack occurred against the backdrop of growing international recognition of India's Kashmir policy post the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. Since that constitutional transformation, Jammu and Kashmir have experienced what some argue is the beginning of a socio-economic metamorphosis. The region recorded a significant uptick in tourist arrivals, over 3.5 million in 2024 alone and notable improvements in infrastructure, per capita income, and public order, especially relative to other northern Indian states. Critics of New Delhi's policy feared a resurgence of insur-



gency post-2019, but such forecasts had not materialised at the scale predicted. Instead, the Indian Government appeared to have successfully restrained militant mobilisation through strategic military presence, economic incentives, and political integration. In this context, the Pahalgam attack functions as a violent punctuation—an abrupt and bloody interruption in a gradually stabilising narrative. Its deliberate orchestration, selective targeting of non-Muslim male tourists, and execution-style killings point to a calculated act of psychological and political warfare. Intelligence sources have attributed the operation to the Resistance Front (TRF), a group often described as a proxy of Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Pakistan-based organisation responsible for the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Although the Pakistani state has officially denied any involvement, the attack bears the hallmarks



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Pakistan-based organisation responsible for the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Although the Pakistani state has officially denied any involvement, the attack bears the hallmarks

FROM THE CHATTISINGHPORA MASSACRE IN MARCH 2000, WHERE 36 SIKH VILLAGERS WERE EXECUTED DURING PRESIDENT CLINTON'S VISIT, TO THE 2001 JAMMU AND KASHMIR ASSEMBLY BOMBING, THE 2003 NANDIMARG MASSACRE OF KASHMIRI PANDITS, THE 2017 AMARNATH YATRA AMBUSH, AND NOW THE 2025 PAHALGAM KILLINGS, THE PATTERN IS UNMISTAKABLE

of asymmetric warfare, characteristic of entities that, though ostensibly autonomous, often operate under the shadow and sanction of foreign state apparatuses. This week, newly declassified US intelligence documents, released by the National Security Archive, highlight a chilling historical continuity with the current crisis.

A 1981 memorandum warned of catastrophic consequences from an Indian strike on Pakistan's Karachi Nuclear Power Plant, with up to 20,000 latent cancer cases in Karachi due to Iodine-131 exposure. The document reflected Washington's concerns about how quickly a conventional South Asian conflict could escalate to nuclear war. This was echoed in a 1989 report by the US State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, which deemed a full-scale war between India and Pakistan "improbable," yet stressed the high risk of escalation through miscalculation, especially in the event of strikes on Pakistan's nuclear sites. By 1993, a National Intelligence Estimate suggested a one in five chance of war, noting that nuclear rivalry, cross-border militancy, and rising extremism could turn even minor skirmishes into a regional disaster. What emerges from these archival assessments is a grim continuity: terror

in Kashmir has consistently been a strategic tool wielded not merely to express ideological dissent but to force geopolitical recalibration. This is not a theatre of mindless extremism; it is a crucible of meticulously calibrated violence. From the Chattisinghpura massacre in March 2000, where 36 Sikh villagers were executed during President Clinton's visit, to the 2001 Jammu and Kashmir Assembly bombing, the 2003 Nandimarg massacre of Kashmiri Pandits, the 2017 Amarnath Yatra ambush, and now the 2025 Pahalgam killings, the pattern is unmistakable. Civilian targeting escalates in moments of diplomatic progress, suggesting an ideological commitment by militant actors to challenge not only the Indian state but also its evolving position within the global order.

The present attack comes at a moment when India is enjoying heightened diplomatic engagement with the Arab Countries and the West. Saudi Arabia, traditionally a close ally of Pakistan, has in recent years pivoted towards India as a key economic and strategic partner. The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and even Iran have signalled similar recalibrations.

This realignment was most visible during the 2019 India-Pakistan standoff when the Gulf states played a critical role in de-escalation, and again when they muted their responses to India's abrogation of Kashmir's autonomy. The Kashmir issue, once a central rallying cry in Islamic internationalism, has lost its salience in the Gulf's strategic calculus. For militant organisations and their state backers, this diminishing global sympathy poses an existential challenge. Reinvigorating the Kashmir discourse through acts of horror appears to be the chosen mode of revival.

It would be naïve to view the Pahalgam massacre in isolation. The possibility of future attacks targeting soft civilian clusters—tourists, religious pilgrims, migrant workers — across other regions in South Asia cannot be discounted. Nepal's porous borders, Sri Lanka's post-conflict fragilities, and India's Northeast remain potential theatres for replication.

In the wake of this attack, Prime Minister Modi faces a dilemma reminiscent of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's conundrum following the Hamas assault in October 2023. A tempered response could be construed as weakness, emboldening adversaries and fuelling domestic political critiques of failed security assurances. Conversely, a muscular retaliation—especially if aimed at Pakistan or its proxies—risks internationalising the Kashmir dispute once again, undoing years of diplomatic effort to position it as an internal Indian matter. Moreover, in the context of escalating global multipolarity and emergent regional axes, a misstep could precipitate a broader crisis, pulling in actors far beyond South Asia.

(The writer is a columnist based in Colombo. Views are personal)

Mental Health: A silent crisis demanding urgent action

Mental well-being can no longer be treated as secondary to physical health. As Government initiatives take shape and public awareness grows, the time has come for a collective, compassionate response to protect our nation's mental health and with it, our future

There is an old saying that a healthy mind leads to a healthy body — I could not agree with it more! Ever since the pandemic, we are witnessing a steep rise in mental health related conditions. It's a matter of grave concern that a large number of people are today suffering from what is termed as unmanageable stress, depression and anxiety. It is equally concerning to note that these ailments are impacting across the age spectrum, be it students, young adults or the elderly.

When we look at the data pertaining to mental health, it is like being hit by a ton of bricks. Such is the extent of this issue that one student is committing suicide every hour in India.

Taking note of the growing suicide deaths in higher educational institutions across the country, the Supreme Court recently formed a National Task Force for a mechanism to prevent student suicide deaths on campuses and address their mental health issues.

The bench said that the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for 2021 highlights the grim reality that over 13,000 students lost their lives by committing suicide in the country.

According to the World Health Organisation, depression affects over 300 million people globally, and it is predicted to be the leading cause of disability by 2030.

In 2024, studies in India continue to reveal a significant burden of depression, with estimates indicating that over 56 million people are affected and research points to a rising trend, particularly in rural areas and among certain demographics.

Factors like rapid urbanisation, economic pressures, social isolation, and the pandemic have contributed to the increase. The Bipolar disorder landscape in India is also quite serious, about 1 in 150 persons in the country suffer from it, and quite disturbingly, 70 per cent remain untreated.

It is characterised by low mood, decreased energy, loss of interest, sleep problems, thoughts or acts of self-harm, along with episodes of mania. Research is now shedding light on the fact that 60 per cent of the people who lose their life to suicide have had a mood ailment such



as depression or bipolar disorder. This finding is significant as it points to a series of progressions before this most tragic final step.

When we look deeper into the mental health scenario in India, multiple issues that have a profound impact on mental health — come to the fore.

In the case of the students and the young, many are too busy searching for material things as the entire space for them has become extremely competitive, there is reduced focus on relaxation and unwinding, and as a result burn outs and depression encircle their lives.

In all this, the impact of the internet and social media in aggravating pressures

and setting unattainable and overambitious goals — courtesy of peer pressure, is also creating a havoc in the lives of the youth.

In the case of the elderly, we are witnessing the rise in loneliness as their children are either not living with them, due to studies or jobs, or spending much less time because of preoccupations and inability to detach from their busy schedules. There is therefore, a fear of growing old, along with increasing insecurities — about who will take care of them, when they reach their physical limits due to advancing age.

Since the pandemic, we are witnessing a renewed focus and much greater emphasis on mental health issues. They are now being increasingly considered as much of a priority as many physical issues.

The Indian Government has launched several initiatives to address mental health, including the National Tele Mental Health Programme (Tele

MANAS) and the Ayushman Bharat, HWC Scheme.

Tele MANAS provides free, 24/7 mental health support through a toll-free helpline, while the Ayushman Bharat scheme integrates mental health services into primary healthcare. Additionally, the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) and the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) are key components of India's mental healthcare services. For the elderly, the Government has launched the National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE) and the Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY).

The NPHCE provides comprehensive healthcare, including mental health services, to senior citizens. AVYAY supports various welfare initiatives for senior citizens, including grant-in-aid for mental health services and awareness programs. Additionally, the National Helpline for Senior Citizens (Elderline) offers support and guidance, including emotional sup-

port for those struggling with mental health issues.

It is extremely reassuring that the highest levels of our nation — are aware and alive, to the seriousness of the situation. In fact, our hon'ble Prime Minister has led from the front with his views and possible solutions that can go a long way in addressing this critical subject. In his popular monthly program 'Mann Ki Baat', he highlighted the importance of mental health, especially among the youth in the current era, and spoke with crystal clarity about the role of physical activity, diet, yoga, along with the use of technology like artificial intelligence to elevate mental health.

This should be seen as a nudge, and it requires a collective approach that involves the families, academia and the community to create an enabling ecosystem that safeguards our students and the generations to follow. These guardrails should both protect and strengthen—protect against the perils of social media,

the pressure that it can unleash on the young and innocent, strengthen the two-way communication (candid and unreserved) between the students and their parents/families, strengthen the role of the friends, peers and the community in creating a positive environment that accepts average performance as not the end of the world, and instills the spirit of optimism.

All of these, will ensure, that the deflection from failure or pressure of excelling, are dealt with most effectively. The educational institutions and their leadership also have to provide an environment where students feel motivated, encouraged and appreciated. Grades and excellence alone are not what life is all about — it's about an honest to self and best possible effort.

It's for all this, that suitable conditions have to be created. This can include counselling, dedicated presence and round the clock availability of experts who can spot the red flags and identify those who need psychological support and guidance in a timely manner, thereby, ensuring that a decline in mental faculties of the students in their institutions is drastically reduced.

This will play an impactful role in the creation of a quintessential complete establishment — one that focuses not just on the studies but also creates avenues of growth for the all-round development of its students.

In the end, we have to be mindful of the ground realities. Our journey has just started on this very long and arduous path, and it will take multiple approaches to address this key health aspect, that has a huge bearing on our country.

Mental health is a significant component of a 'Swastha Bharat' dream, and has a direct and crucial impact on national creativity and productivity. While factors that contribute to mental ailments will only increase in the coming times, it's our proactive and head-on engagement, that will ensure effective remedies.

I do believe, that well begun is half done, and that we are indeed headed in the right direction — one of hope and promise of a bright future!

(The writer is President — Corporate Affairs, ITC. Views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Rupee gains 16 paise to settle at 85.29 against US dollar

After a two-day pause, the rupee gained 16 paise to 85.29 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, on weak greenback and overnight decline in crude oil prices. Forex traders said the rupee strengthened on the weak US dollar and overnight decline in crude oil prices amid slowing US business activity. The US Treasury yields also declined with the 10-year yield falling 3 basis points to 4.35 per cent. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.60 and moved between the intra-day high of 85.25 and the low of 85.67 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.29 (provisional), registering a gain of 16 paise over its previous closing level. On Wednesday, the rupee depreciated 26 paise and settled for the day at 85.45 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias as weakness in the US dollar is likely to remain intact amid trade tariff uncertainties. However, risk-on sentiments in the global markets and FII inflows may support the rupee at lower levels."

Govt working to reduce regulatory issues in logistics sector

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is working to reduce the regulatory issues in the logistics sector to enhance ease of doing business, and attract more investments, a senior government official said on Thursday. Addressing an event here, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) joint secretary Pankaj Kumar said discussions are underway to make the PM Gati Shakti data more accessible to the private sector. "We are working to further reduce the regulatory issues (in the logistics sector) to enhance ease of doing business and attract more investments," Kumar said.

Observing that India is a complex and geographically huge country, he said logistics is all about transporting both people and goods from one place to another quickly so that lives can be saved, and businesses thrive, leading to a

better quality of life. "You can get groceries delivered to you in 10 minutes, but cannot reach the hospital in 10 minutes," Kumar said. He said there are several other initiatives being taken by the government to enhance the ease of doing business, and attract more investments. "But it is not easy, and the government alone can not achieve the targeted goals. Every stakeholder, including the industry and business community, must participate to further boost the logistics sector in the country," Kumar said.



Also, speaking at the event, Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) chairperson Anita Praveen highlighted India's progress in logistics and warehousing. "The process of warehousing licensing is being streamlined and expedited to ensure faster approvals and greater ease of doing business," she said.

Come together to build a resilient, steel-strong India: PM

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asked the industry to come together to build a "resilient, revolutionary and steel-strong India".

Speaking at the India Steel 2025 event, the PM also said that the country needs to strengthen its global partnerships for securing raw materials and called on the industry to start extracting iron ore from unused greenfield mines to increase steel production. Terming steel as a "sunrise sector", Modi underlined the need to up production of the commodity which is the "backbone" of development, adopt newer processes, undertake innovation, exchange best practices within and also look at import substitutions in coal.

"Let us come together to build a resilient, revolutionary and steel-strong India," Modi said in his address to the steel industry participants. He acknowledged that getting raw materials is a "major concern" for the steel sector, and urged all to strengthen global partnerships and secure supply chains.

"One major concern is raw material security. We still depend on imports for nickel, coking coal and manganese. And hence, we must strengthen global partnerships, secure supply chains, and focus on technology upgrades," Modi said in a virtual address at the event.



Stating that there are unused greenfield mines, Modi said it is very important to their proper and timely utilisation, and warned that both the country and the industry will suffer due to this. He said the country also needs to explore alternatives like coal gasification and better utilisation of its reserves to reduce coal imports. The industry must be future ready, and adopt new processes, new grades and new scale, the Prime Minister said.

Modi said the country is aiming to increase the steel production capacity to 300 million tonnes by 2030, from the 179 MT in FY24, and added that the per capita steel consumption is also targeted to grow to 160 kg from 98 kg at present in the same time period.

He said the country is also "advancing" the USD 1.3 trillion national infrastructure pipeline and there is "extensive work underway" to transform cities into smart cities on a large scale.

Unprecedented pace of development in roads, railways, airports, ports and pipelines is creating new opportunities for the steel sector," Modi said, adding

that the growing number of mega projects will increase the demand for high grade steel. He also noted that the steel used in the maiden indigenously built aircraft carrier Vikrant and the Chandrayaan mission was manufactured locally.

The PM said the country aspires to build modern and large ships with an eye on the export market, and added that high grade steel will be needed for such initiatives. Stating that the goal should be "zero imports and net exports" when it comes to steel, Modi pointed that the country aims to increase the exports to 500 MT by 2047, from the present 25 MT of steel.

India is not just thinking of domestic growth, but also "global leadership" in the sector, Modi said, pointing out that the world looks at India as a trusted supplier of high grade steel.

Apart from that, welfare schemes like the PM Awas Yojana and also the Jal Jeevan Mission are also helping create opportunities for the steel sector, he said.

Govt help to push growth of domestic comics industry: ICA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government's support such as providing funding and strengthening distribution infrastructure will help the domestic comics industry achieve healthy growth, ICA said on Thursday. Indian Comics Association (ICA) President Ajitesh Sharma said at present the domestic comic creators face challenges in distribution, financial viability, and cultural acceptance.

Initiatives like the formation of this association and Comics Creator Championship (CCC) are aimed at addressing these challenges by providing a formalised structure for creators, fostering collaboration, and promoting innovation. The CCC provides a platform for aspiring and professional creators to showcase their talents.

The ICA's efforts aim to nurture new talent and position Indian comics as significant players on the global stage. Sharma said that estimating the exact market size of the industry is challenging due to the unorganized distribution system.

'India, Pak trade small; now will come to halt'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With Pakistan suspending all trade ties with India, including that routes through third countries, the two-way commerce will now come to a complete halt, apex exporters' body FIEO said on Thursday. Following the terror attack in Pahalgam on Tuesday, which killed 26 people, mostly tourists, India took a series of measures including immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post, used for movement of certain kinds of goods.

Besides, India has announced expulsion of Pakistani military attaches, and suspension of the Indus



Water Treaty of 1960.

In retaliation, Pakistan announced suspension of 'all trade' with India, including that routes through third countries. Commenting on the decision of the neighbouring country, Federation of Indian

Export Organisations (FIEO) President S C Ralhan said India's bilateral trade with Pakistan is minuscule and is just 0.06 per cent of India's total trade. "We have minuscule trade with Pakistan, which is constantly declining. During

April-January 2024-25, the same was not even USD 500 million as against the overall trade of over USD 800 billion in the same period. The trade will now come to a complete standstill affecting supply of some key products to Pakistan, hitting their economy further," Ralhan said. Terrorists opened fire in Pahalgam in the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019.

India's exports to Pakistan in April-January 2024-25 stood at USD 447.65 million, while imports were meagre USD 0.42 million. The exports and imports in 2023-24 were USD 1.18 billion and USD 2.88 million, respectively.

Databricks to invest \$250 mn in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US-based data and AI company Databricks on Thursday announced its plans to invest over USD 250 million (about Rs 2,134 crore) in India over the next three years to accelerate innovation in data and artificial intelligence (AI). The investment will fuel training, R&D, and marketing efforts, including a 50 per cent headcount boost to over 750 local employees by the end of this fiscal year, a company statement said.

The company follows a February-January calendar. India is one of the key growth markets for Databricks, with the company's clientele, including CommerceIQ, Freshworks, HDFC Bank, Swiggy, TVS Motors, and Zepto, said Ed Lenta, Senior Vice President & GM for Asia Pacific & Japan at Databricks.



Cisco bags networking gear deal from Vodafone Idea

Tech major Cisco on Thursday said it has bagged a networking gear deal from telecom firm Vodafone Idea to boost its 4G and 5G services. Vodafone Idea (Vi) last year announced an investment of Rs 30,000 crore in network expansion for which it has already roped in Nokia, Ericsson and Samsung. "Vi has announced its partnership with Cisco to transform its network infrastructure. As part of this collaboration, Vi will deploy a cutting-edge Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS)-based transport network powered by Cisco," Cisco said in a statement. The company, however, did not disclose the financial details of the deal. The MPLS technology helps in slicing networks into multiple layers for transmission of various services like voice, data, video etc.



NFCSF, IFGE to promote cane-based bioenergy

The National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories (NFCSF) on Thursday said it has signed an agreement with the Indian Federation of Green Energy (IFGE) to collaborate in promoting sugarcane-based bioenergy and sustainable practices in the country. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by NFCSF Managing Director Prakash Naiknavare and IFGE BioEnergy Committee Chairman and President Praj Industries (Bio Energy) Atul Mulay. According to a statement issued by NFCSF, the collaboration aims to foster innovation, policy advocacy and the adoption of practical green energy solutions, leveraging the strengths of both organisations. As per the terms of the MoU, NFCSF will share its expertise and knowledge related to the use and applications of sugarcane and its downstream by-products for green energy, facilitate access to research publications and reports, and collaborate in joint promotion and policy advocacy efforts. IFGE will actively promote sugarcane-based green energy in India and globally, organise knowledge-sharing events such as workshops and seminars in partnership with NFCSF, and facilitate stakeholder engagement with policymakers and industry leaders.

Gold climbs Rs 200 to Rs 99,400/10 gm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices climbed Rs 200 to Rs 99,400 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday following fresh buying by stockists and jewellers and a weak dollar, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity took a U-turn from the historic Rs 1 lakh mark and declined Rs 2,400 to Rs 99,200 per 10 gram on Wednesday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also increased Rs 200 to Rs 98,900 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 98,700 per 10 grams. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Wednesday said



currently in the negotiation phase might see reciprocal tariffs come in if negotiations are not going the way he wants.

According to commodities market experts, remarks by Trump and Bessent help revive demand for the safe-haven bullion following a corrective slide from the all-time peak. Meanwhile, silver prices appreciated Rs 700 to Rs 99,900 per kg on Thursday. The white metal had settled at Rs 99,200 per kg in the previous close.

In futures trade, gold contracts for June delivery bounced Rs 1,046, or 1.1 per cent, to Rs 95,768 per 10

Stock markets break 7-day rally to end lower

HUL drops 4 pc post-earnings

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty reversed their seven-day uptrend and settled lower on Thursday amid profit-taking and disappointing fourth quarter earnings of Hindustan Unilever. Selling in blue-chips ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel and a largely muted trend in Asian and European equities also dragged the markets down.

The 30-share BSE benchmark declined 315.06 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 79,801.43. During the day, it dropped 391.94 points or 0.48 per cent to 79,724.55. The NSE Nifty went down by 82.25 points or 0.34 per cent to 24,246.70.

In the past seven trading days, the BSE benchmark gauge zoomed 6,269.34 points or 8.48 per cent and the Nifty jumped 1,929.8 points or 8.61 per cent. From the Sensex firms, FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) dropped 4 per cent after the firm reported a decline of 3.35 per cent in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,475 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2025, hit by lower margins.

Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Eternal, Mahindra & Mahindra, HCL Technologies, HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tata Consultancy Services and Bajaj Finance were also among the laggards. Nestle India Ltd on Thursday reported a 6.5 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 873.46 crore for March quarter of FY25 as the FMCG industry



faceted food inflation and moderation in urban consumption. IndusInd Bank, UltraTech Cement, Tata Motors, Tech Mahindra, Titan and Asian Paints were among the gainers. "The domestic market witnessed mild profit-taking after the recent rally. Similarly, global markets too experienced selling pressures as the market participants scaled back the possibility of a quick resolution of tariff disputes between the US and China."

India Inc revenue growth to remain flat, profitability to widen

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India Inc's revenue growth will remain flat at about 5-6 per cent in the March quarter, but profitability will widen, a domestic rating agency said on Thursday.

An arm of Crisil Ratings said the operating profit margins are seen at 8 per cent, a widening of up to 0.60 per cent, when compared with the year-ago performance. The agency analysed over 400 companies accounting for over 50 per cent of NSE's market capitalisation to arrive at its estimates. Some compa-

nies, especially in the information technology sector have already announced their earnings.

Improved showing by the consumer-driven sectors excluding staples will be a key contributor for the topline growth, while the bottom line will benefit from a mixed set of aspects which are unique to a sector, it said.

Crisil Intelligence's director Pushan Sharma said consumer discretionary products, services and staple services segment is expected to see 8-9 per cent on-year increase in revenue.



"This would be led by an expected 15 per cent surge in telecom services revenue resulting from significant tariff hikes implemented in the second quarter and the introduction of premium 5G plans by telecom operators. "The retail segment likely saw a robust 17 per cent growth, led by demand in the value, and food and grocery

segments, as well as an expansion of store networks," Sharma said.

The automobile sector's revenue likely grew 6 per cent as retail momentum for passenger vehicles picked up and realisations rose owing to a change in the product mix and increasing share of exports, Sharma said.

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) segment is expected to see 4-6 per cent revenue growth led by price hikes amid subdued volume growth, it said, adding that rural demand has been resilient and urban demand

has stayed subdued. Overall exports revenue is likely to grow 4 per cent, including 2-3 per cent growth in IT services revenue following a marginal improvement in demand and project pick-ups and 8 per cent in the pharmaceutical sector.

In the agriculture sector, including fertilisers, revenues are likely to grow 17-19 per cent with consumption improving, following a stable summer crop acreage and higher disposable incomes stemming from better yields and remuneration for kharif paddy.

JANKI BODIWALA JOINS RANI MUKERJI IN *MARDAANI 3*, TO PLAY A COP IN THE GRITTY SEQUEL



The fierce and fearless Shivani Shivaji Roy is set to return — and this time, she's not alone. *Mardaani 3*, the third installment of Yash Raj Films' successful female-led franchise, is officially underway with Rani Mukerji once again donning the khaki uniform. In an exciting development, *Shaitaan* breakout star Janki Bodiwala has joined the cast in a pivotal role. The *Mardaani* franchise, which began in 2014, has consistently resonated with audiences for its hard-hitting themes and Mukerji's powerful portrayal of a no-nonsense cop tackling crime against women and children. The second chapter, released in 2019, raised the stakes even higher — and *Mardaani 3* promises to follow suit.

Now, as per reports, Janki Bodiwala has been brought on board to play a cop alongside Mukerji. A source close to the production revealed, "After her impactful performance in *Shaitaan*, both Aditya Chopra and Rani Mukerji were thoroughly impressed with Janki's screen presence. She has been cast in a significant role in *Mardaani 3* and has already begun shooting in Mumbai."

The upcoming film, directed by Abhiraj Minawala, is being touted as the most intense and socially relevant entry in the franchise yet. "YRF is handling the *Mardaani* series with great responsibility. They've made sure the third part reflects today's societal issues and cinematic sensibilities," the source added.

The film has been slated for a Holi 2026 release, marking another milestone in Indian cinema's first major female-led action franchise. With two strong women in the lead and a fresh, bold narrative, *Mardaani 3* is shaping up to be both thrilling and thought-provoking.

Akshay Kumar to headline all future *Kesari* films, director confirms

The patriotic fervor surrounding *Kesari Chapter 2: The Untold Story of Jallianwala Bagh* continues to fuel its box office momentum. The film, featuring Akshay Kumar, R. Madhavan and Ananya Panday, has struck a chord with audiences, and now director Karan Singh Tyagi has confirmed that this is just the beginning.

In a latest interview, Tyagi revealed that Akshay Kumar will continue to be the face of the *Kesari* franchise for all its future chapters. "With *Kesari Chapter 2*, we're not just retelling history—we're building a cinematic universe around the bravery of India's unsung heroes. And for me, Akshay Kumar is synonymous with that," he shared.

Tyagi emphasised that the franchise is set to expand further, with new stories waiting to be told. "There are so many untold tales of courage. We will definitely make more films, and Akshay will headline them all. He's become the embodiment of these brave men and their sacrifices."



WHY ANANYA PANDAY WAS CHOSEN FOR *KESARI CHAPTER 2*

While Akshay's casting feels like destiny, Tyagi also opened up about an unexpected but impactful choice — bringing in Ananya Panday as Dilreet Gill, a fierce young lawyer. Tyagi revealed that it was Ananya's nuanced performance in *Gehraiyaan* that caught his attention back in 2022. "I was moved by her vulnerability and depth in *Gehraiyaan*. That performance convinced me she could take on Dilreet's complexity," he said. Far from a surface-level casting decision, Tyagi highlighted how Ananya

immersed herself in the role. "She underwent dialect training for over a year and even observed real-life female lawyers to nail the mannerisms. The dedication she brought to *Kesari Chapter 2* is truly remarkable." With *Kesari Chapter 2* still climbing the box office charts and plans for future chapters underway, it looks like the legacy of these heroic stories will continue to thrive — with Akshay Kumar leading the charge and fresh faces like Ananya Panday stepping up to bring new dimensions to these narratives.

RAJKUMMAR-WAMIQA ROMANCE HEATS UP IN *CHOR BAZARI PHIR SE*

Following the soulful success of *Koi Naa*, the makers of the upcoming film *Bhool Chuk Maaf* have dropped their second musical offering — *Chor Bazari Phir Se*, and it's already creating waves across digital platforms. Showcasing the sizzling chemistry between Rajkumar Rao and Wamiqa Gabbi, the song teases the vibrant romance between their characters, Ranjan Tiwari and Titli Mishra, ahead of the film's theatrical release on May 9, 2025.

Directed by Karan Sharma and backed by Maddock Films and Dinesh Vijan, *Bhool Chuk Maaf* promises a rollercoaster of emotions — and its music is setting the tone just right.

Composed by Pritam and Tanishk Bagchi with lyrics by the ever-evocative Irshad Kamil, *Chor Bazari Phir Se* is a vibrant fusion of classic romance and modern soundscapes. The song features powerhouse vocals from Sunidhi Chauhan and Neeraj Shridhar, with fresh energy brought in by Zahrah S Khan and Tanishk Bagchi himself. Produced by Bagchi and



Ganesh Waghela, the track brings a bold, mischievous energy that mirrors the playful relationship between the lead characters. Rajkumar Rao shared his excitement about the track, saying, "This song is such a vibe! It captures the chemistry

between Ranjan and Titli so well. Shooting for it was a blast, and I'm excited for audiences to feel that same energy." Wamiqa Gabbi echoed the sentiment, adding, "There's drama, dancing, and this delicious mischief in every beat — just like Titli! It's going to

show fans a fun, magical side of the film." Sunidhi Chauhan called the composition "irresistibly catchy," while Tanishk Bagchi described the song as a mix of "fresh yet nostalgic," saying, "We wanted to recreate the emotion of old-school love but give it a bold, contemporary edge that screams 2025."

Lyricist Irshad Kamil delved into the song's storytelling layer: "The lyrics reflect that cheeky, charming kind of love. It's quirky, fun and captures Ranjan and Titli's bond beautifully." From mischievous moments to infectious beats, *Chor Bazari Phir Se* is poised to become the anthem for those navigating love, laughter and inevitable apologies. It's playful, passionate and perfectly in tune with the spirit of *Bhool Chuk Maaf*.

Turn up the volume, dance without regrets, and maybe, just maybe — say "sorry not sorry" later.



'He believed in me': Iulia Vantur reflects on Salman Khan's support

Romanian singer and performer Iulia Vantur, who has frequently collaborated with Bollywood icon Salman Khan, opened up about the impact of their association on her career — and her personal philosophy on love.

Iulia, who recently lent her voice to a new version of Lag Ja Gale for Salman's upcoming film *Sikandar*, addressed ongoing speculation that her professional journey has been overshadowed by Khan's towering presence in the industry. In an interview, she said, "I am grateful that he believed in me and trusted my abilities. Love is the reason I'm in this world."

The singer acknowledged that having Salman's guidance has been a privilege. With his decades of experience in the industry, she views his mentorship as a positive force rather than a shadow. "I've learned so much from him. It's rare to find someone who sees your potential and gives you a platform," she reflected.



Beyond the studio and screen, Iulia also touched on her beliefs around love and marriage. When asked about the nature of her bond with Salman, she reiterated that love matters more than formal labels. "What's important is the connection between two people, not just the idea of marriage," she had said in her previous interviews, brushing off marriage rumours with a laugh. With her latest musical venture in *Sikandar* and a continued presence in the Indian entertainment scene, Iulia Vantur remains focused on her creative path — one shaped by passion, resilience and, as she puts it, love at its core.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



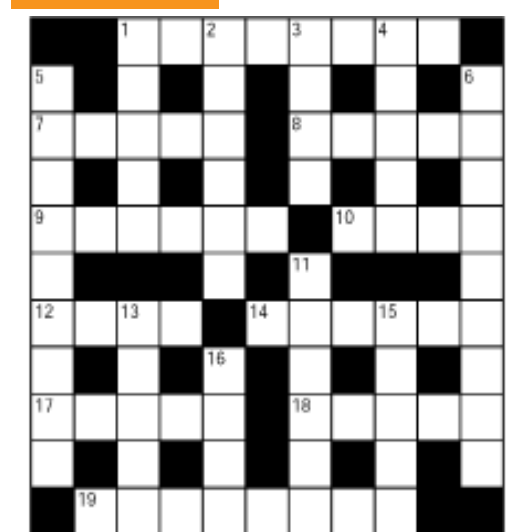
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

ACROSS

- Observing
 - A thrown weapon
 - A large stream
 - The writer of a book
 - A small green creature
 - Weapons
 - Purchased
 - Beneath
 - Railway coaches pulled by an engine
 - Soft shoes worn indoors
 - Not ever
 - A green pointy vegetable
 - Scares
 - A container for a drink
 - A soldier's award
 - Sheep eat this
 - A journey
- SOLUTION
- | | | | | | | | | |
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| W | R | I | G | L | E | D | | |
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| S | H | R | I | N | K | P | L | E |
| A | N | I | L | E | A | | | |
| M | G | E | N | E | R | I | O | U |
- DOWN
- Grind this up for flour
 - Extreme fear
 - Difficult

GINGER MEGGS





SULOGNA MEHTA
 mehta.sulogna@gmail.com

Imagine yourself walking through the numerous galleries of the Louvre Museum in Paris. From Leonardo da Vinci's painting 'Mona Lisa' to Alexandros of Antioch's marble statue of 'Venus de Milo', from Delacroix' painting 'Liberty Leading the People', to the Antonio Canova's sculpture 'Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss', from the Renaissance masterpieces of Michelangelo and Raphael to Byzantine 'Barberini Ivory' artworks and Bernini's marble sculptures, they are coming alive before your eyes one after the other.

Awestruck and overwhelmed at this never-ending display of beauty, you keep looking at the masterpieces from the world of paintings, architecture and sculptures in the world's largest art museum. And then you feel your heart rate racing, your eyes watering, you even feel a bit giddy and get goose-bumps. Perplexed? You are experiencing what is known as Stendhal's Syndrome.

From palpitations to even hallucinations, beautiful and grand works of art, architecture and museum visits can trigger strong psychological and physical reactions in people. If one experiences palpitations, goose-bumps, dizziness, strong emotions, tears in the eyes, confusion or even hallucinations while looking at certain works of art, especially paintings and sculptures, they may be experiencing an aesthetic syndrome called Stendhal Syndrome.

It is named after French writer Marie-Henri Beyle, rather known by his pen name Stendhal (1783-1842). The syndrome was first diagnosed in the early 1980s. However, there is not much awareness about it.

In psychiatry, Stendhal Syndrome is not formally classified as a men-

tal disorder but it is said to be a psychosomatic condition (physical illness or conditions influenced or triggered by emotional factors). It is marked by certain strong emotional and subsequent physiological responses when exposed to works of exquisite artistic beauty.

Stendhal Syndrome is also called 'Of Florence' because there is an interesting connection to the Italian city of Florence or Firenze. It was

The Pioneer brings to you a fascinating deep-dive into Stendhal Syndrome — a rare yet intriguing psychosomatic response to overwhelming artistic beauty. From racing heartbeats to unexpected tears, we explore how exquisite artworks can stir intense emotional and physical reactions, as explained by leading psychiatrists. Discover why some tourists faint in Florence and how art truly has the power to move — quite literally



Shorouq Motwani, consultant psychiatrist from Lilavati Hospital, Mumbai, observes, "Usually people with a strong sense of aesthetics are emotionally stimulated by artworks. Also, sometimes a person can suffer from hallucination, confusion, disorientation or even faint if there is some kind of personal connection or some deeply personal memories of life events are triggered while viewing a particular work of art."

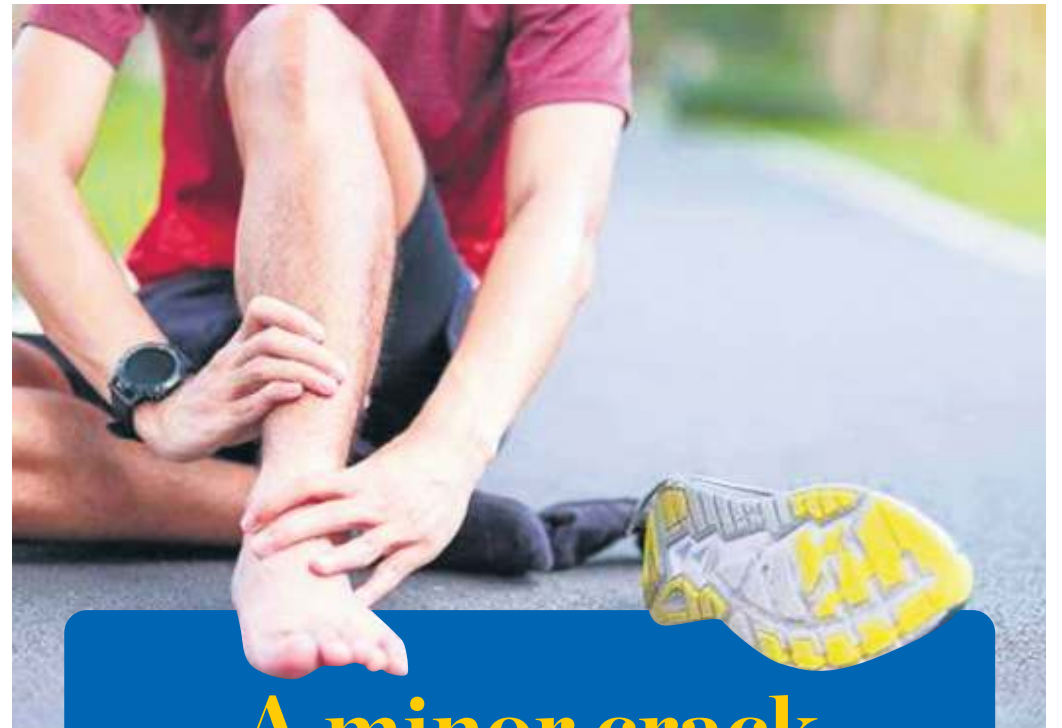
It is usually the adults who are affected by artworks but children don't display Stendhal's Syndrome given their limited understanding about a work of art. "At the most, they can feel frightened looking at a scary painting. For adults, it is the happy, mood-elevating hormones and positive neurochemicals like dopamine, serotonin, endorphin and also hormones like cortisol come into play while one admires and becomes awestruck by works of art," adds the doctor who specialises in child and adolescent psychiatry.

Explaining why Italians themselves were not affected by the symptoms unlike other tourists, Dr Charan Teja Koganti, neuropsychiatrist at KIMS hospital, Hyderabad, says, "A possible reason is that Italians grew up watching those sculptures and paintings as the country was extremely rich in artworks right

from the Renaissance era. So, their eyes and brains got used to those unlike other tourists, for whom witnessing a plethora of colourful artworks including paintings, frescoes, mosaics etc. within a short time during their visit to Italy, became an overwhelming experience."

"It is also a proven fact that art does affect the human brain and mostly generates positive feelings. All senses are stimulated to the extent of sensory overloading. People experience a range of progressing emotions starting with enthusiasm to elation to euphoria and though uncommon, can even extend to agitation and aggression. Physically, the three parameters namely blood pressure, pulse rate and heart rate variable (HRV) are affected," adds the neuropsychiatrist.

Explaining further, the doctor avers, "When a person is exposed to multiple and colourful artworks within a short span of time, the posterior aspect of the brain or the occipital lobe gets activated. Especially bright colours like red, golden, green, orange etc. stimulate the brain. The oxygen uptake goes up and the brain utilises more glucose due to high metabolism. The person may feel hungry due to rapid utilisation of the glucose by the brain. The eyes may feel strained, the overstimulated and oversaturated brain might give rise to other syndromes like dizziness, palpitations, hallucinations etc. In the process, various hormones and neurochemicals (catecholamines) are released including dopamine, norepinephrine and epinephrine or adrenaline, stress hormone cortisol etc. And that is how aesthetically beautiful art works can affect humans."



A minor crack today, a major injury tomorrow

Experts warn against the dangers of overlooking minor bone injuries

TEJAL SINHA
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Stress fractures — often brushed off as minor discomforts — can spiral into serious, long-term health problems if left untreated, warn orthopedic experts. Though they begin as small cracks in the bone, stress fractures can escalate quickly, affecting mobility, functionality and overall quality of life.

THE SILENT THREAT: HOW STRESS FRACTURES BEGIN

"Stress fractures are small cracks in your bones that occur due to repetitive force or overuse, often in weight-bearing bones, such as in your feet or legs," explains Dr. G.V. Reddy, Consultant – Orthopedics, Manipal Hospital Vijayawada. These injuries commonly affect individuals who are active, such as athletes, dancers, or people with physically demanding routines.

At the onset, symptoms may appear mild. "Early on, the pain from a stress fracture might go away with rest and not seem so bothersome, prompting some to ignore the injury. However, this complacency can be dangerous. Without treatment, the fracture can progress, even leading to a complete break," says Dr. Reddy.

LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORING THE PAIN

Neglecting a stress fracture doesn't just delay recovery—it invites a host of complications. "Improper healing of stress fractures, which can cause malunion (improper alignment) and nonunion (failure to heal), is another major risk of leaving stress fractures untreated," notes Dr. Reddy. These conditions can result in chronic pain, decreased mobility, and functional deficits.

In more severe cases, stress fractures may even impact nearby nerves and blood vessels. "Untreated fractures can in some cases harm nearby nerves and blood vessels, causing numbness and tingling or difficulty with blood flow," he adds. Maintaining regular physical activity on a stress fracture can worsen the injury. "It can lead to a complete break of the bone, requiring surgery to remedy," warns Dr. Reddy. "It is important to rest, immobilise and evaluate the respective part of the body to avoid further health implications and even worse."

Left unresolved, a stress fracture can lead to chronic pain and hinder basic movement. "Over time it can lead to chronic pain and would prevent you from doing your daily work, meaning mobility problems and you would need to go for other

invasive treatments. It is crucial to seek prompt medical attention to ensure proper healing and overall bone health."

REPETITIVE STRESS, REAL RISK

According to Dr. Sushanth B Mummigatti, Consultant – Orthopaedic & Trauma Surgeon, Manipal Hospital Goa, "Stress fractures occur due to repeated stress at the same location, leading to bone fractures." While often associated with individuals who have weak bones, these injuries are not exclusive to them. "They can also develop in strong bones, particularly in athletes and military recruits," he explains.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS: DIAGNOSIS AND EARLY SYMPTOMS

Dr. Mummigatti emphasizes the importance of paying attention to early signs. "Patients typically present with pain and swelling in the affected region, especially during weight-bearing activities. The pain is often progressive, worsening over time." He notes that diagnostic imaging plays a key role in identifying stress fractures. "X-ray imaging is generally the first-line investigation for diagnosing stress fractures. However, in some cases, an MRI may be required for a more detailed assessment," says Dr. Mummigatti. "Interestingly, in the early MRI grading of stress fractures, the initial stages may not show any cortical break (fracture)."

EARLY DETECTION IS CRUCIAL

Delaying diagnosis and treatment can significantly extend recovery time. "It is crucial not to overlook initial symptoms, even if an X-ray appears normal," Dr. Mummigatti advises. "A high level of suspicion should be maintained, particularly in elderly individuals, athletes, and military personnel. Early diagnosis and treatment can lead to complete symptom resolution. However, if the diagnosis is delayed and a full fracture develops, bone healing takes longer, prolonging symptoms and delaying an athlete's return to peak performance."

TREATMENT APPROACHES

The good news? With timely medical intervention, stress fractures are highly treatable. "Management of stress fractures typically involves rest, bracing, crutches, and bone-stimulating medications to promote healing," says Dr. Mummigatti.

Both experts underline the need for awareness and caution. A seemingly minor crack, if ignored, can evolve into a major health setback. Recognising the early signs, seeking prompt medical care and following the right treatment plan can ensure full recovery and help prevent permanent damage.

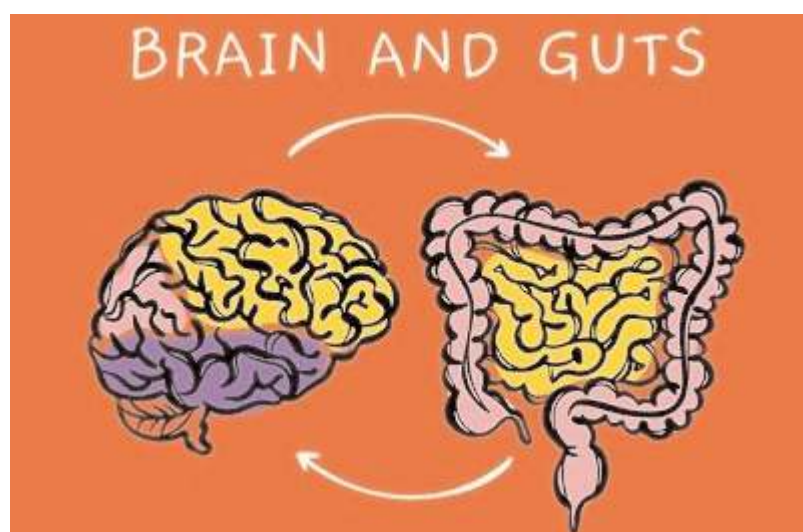
MANAGING AUTISM THROUGH GUT-BRAIN AXIS

You must've heard doctors and other healthcare professionals refer to something known as the gut-brain axis. But what is the gut-brain axis? Simply put, it's a group of nerves that connect your gut and brain and send and receive messages back and forth. So, is there a connection between autism and the gut-brain axis?

Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition, but its expression goes well beyond the brain. A lot of evidence points to the gut-brain axis, the two-way communication network between the brain and gut microbiota that influences digestion, cognition, behaviour and mood.

Children on the spectrum frequently experience gastrointestinal (GI) issues like bloating, constipation and poor appetite. These issues can lead to poor sleep, aggression and irritability. The gut microbiota, which consists of a trillion microorganisms, plays a pivotal role. These microbes produce neurotransmitters such as serotonin and GABA that regulate inflammation and even influence the brain's structure and function through endocrine, immune and neural pathways.

A latest pilot study conducted in Kerala examined the effects of probiotics on young children with autism. The two-month probiotic intervention showed



improved behaviour and gastrointestinal issues, but GI improvements were significantly higher. This matches global research that probiotics can be one tool in autism management.

Cutting-edge neuroimaging studies show that specific microbial profiles have been linked to function and brain structure changes, especially those regions associated with memory, attention and emotion. Interestingly, probiotics even modulate brain activity patterns in adults and individuals with GI disorders, showing their positive impact.

Children become more attentive, sleep better and respond more effectively to

therapy. While diet alone is not a treatment for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), it's a vital piece of the puzzle. The gut-brain axis opens a new dimension in autism care. A balanced diet with reduced processed food, an increase in fiber and the mindful use of probiotics, under professional guidance. It's a gentle reminder that sometimes, the journey to a healthier mind begins with a healthier gut.

(The author, Dr Dedeepya Puskur, is a developmental paediatrician and clinical head, at Fernandez Child Development Centre.)

CSK vs SRH: Battle of survival

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) will eye a crucial turnaround at home when they face an equally desperate Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in a battle of survival in the Indian Premier League here on Friday. Both sides have endured a turbulent season, notching just four points from eight games, and must now win all remaining fixtures to keep their slim qualification hopes alive.

Known to make the most of home conditions, five-time champions CSK find themselves in uncharted territory as they have not been able to read the wickets well at the Chepauk.

They started strong at their fortress, dominating Mumbai Indians as Nour Ahmad spun a web around the visitors. But the early promise fizzled out quickly, with three successive losses at home.

The also endured the ignominy of posting their lowest-ever IPL total at home — 103/9 against Kolkata Knight Riders.

Head coach Stephen Fleming has also voiced frustration over the Chepauk surface, which has offered more to seamers than CSK's usual spin-heavy attack.

There away form has not been any better either, with just one win in four attempts.

CSK has lacked firepower in the batting department and captain Ruturaj Gaikwad's absence due to an injury has only made it worse for the storied outfit.

MS Dhoni has returned as full-time captain. While his knee continues to limit mobility, the former Indian captain's



leadership remains invaluable.

His death-overs batting, field placements, and ability to recalibrate the bowling attack could be key in CSK's revival.

In encouraging signs, 17-year-old Ayush Mhatre made a promising debut against MI with the bat. The franchise has also roped in South Africa's Dewald

Brevis in a bid to strengthen their power-hitting department.

SRH, meanwhile, have endured an equally erratic campaign. A bright start gave way to inconsistency, with their ultra-aggressive, attack-at-all-costs strategy falling flat.

The explosive opening pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma, so vital last

season, have failed to hit the same heights this year.

While Sharma's brilliance secured a win against Punjab Kings, Head is yet to truly make his mark.

The heavy dependence on their top two has exposed the frailty of the middle order, which has struggled to absorb pressure, something head coach Daniel Vettori also conceded after the seven-wicket loss to Mumbai Indians.

"When Head and Abhishek don't succeed, then it's the responsibility of the other batsmen. Potentially that's what we haven't had this season around. The ability for partnerships, for one or two guys to step up," Vettori said.

TEAMS

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

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: MS Dhoni (c&wk), Dewald Brevis, Devon Conway, Rahul Tripathi, Shaik Rasheed, Vansh Bedi, Andre Siddharth, Ayush Mhatre, Rachin Ravindra, Ravichandran Ashwin, Vijay Shankar, Sam Curran, Anshul Kamboj, Deepak Hooda, Jamie Overton, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Ramakrishna Ghosh, Ravindra Jadeja, Shivam Dube, Khaleel Ahmed, Nour Ahmad, Mukesh Choudhary, Nathan Ellis, Shreyas Gopal, Matheesha Pathirana.



Boult backs Rohit Sharma, calls him world-class player

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hyderabad

Mumbai Indians' pacer Trent Boult has backed "world-class" Rohit Sharma to play a pivotal role in the team's pursuit for a record-extending sixth IPL title, following back-to-back half-centuries that signalled his timely return to form.

The Kiwi left-arm pacer was instrumental in dismantling Sunrisers Hyderabad's famed top order, returning with a match-winning spell of 4/26 to cap MI's fourth straight win in emphatic style.

After SRH collapsed to 143/8, MI, powered by Rohit's commanding 46-ball 70, chased down the target in just 15.4 overs. The emphatic win not only boosted their net run rate but also propelled them to third place on the points table.

"I think the whole side, the whole Mumbai Indians squad possesses some world-class players and obviously Rohit needs no introduction in that regard," Boult said at the post-match media interaction.

"I am sure everyone wants to be contributing at some points, but Rohit's doing a fantastic job of late and playing nicely just at the right time. So he's going to play a huge role for us in the remaining part of the season. I think you just need to be prepared for any role," he added.

Boult also praised captain Hardik Pandya for his leadership style, calling it a refreshing experience.

"Hardik's a passionate cricketer, obvious-

ly very skilful. He's a great leader, I think. He leads from the front.

"He's a great communicator. He's one of my favourite Indian cricketers, so to get the chance to play underneath him is a great experience."

Boult, who has adjusted seamlessly into a new role after shifting from Rajasthan Royals to MI, emphasised the importance of adaptability in a long tournament like the IPL.

"At Rajasthan I was prepared to bowl at any stage of the match. I've been lucky enough to play 10 IPL seasons where it hasn't always been the same recipe every time. So I think the first thing is you've got to always want the ball.

"There's some great players in there. Obviously, (Jasprit) Bumrah needs no introduction either, so it's great to be having ball back in hand with him."

Mumbai Indians had just one win in their first five matches, and now they have four on the trot, keeping them firmly placed for a playoff berth. But Boult is not looking too far ahead.

"Momentum wasn't on our side to start with, but to turn it around to have four wins in a row was the focus, just to get a bit of momentum, a bit of rhythm. Guys playing nice cricket at certain points. We're not going to look too far ahead.

"It can quickly change. Looking forward to getting back home, playing in some conditions that we know pretty well, but there's a long way to go in this tournament," he added.

SRH need support from middle order: Coach Vettori

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hyderabad

Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) head coach Daniel Vettori admitted that a dramatic top-order collapse coupled with a wrong "assessment" of the pitch proved decisive in their a crushing defeat to Mumbai Indians.

The big-hitting SRH top order slumped to 24/4 in the powerplay, and despite a fighting partnership between Heinrich Klaasen (71) and impact substitute Abhinav Manohar (43), the hosts could only manage 143/8, a total that proved woefully inadequate on a pitch that has

already seen two 240-plus totals this season. "The toss was important — we wanted to bowl first. The wicket was different from what we'd seen before, and while we had discussed the possibility of a 250-280 surface, the conditions changed dramatically. It was tough to assess the pitch score early on," he said at the post-match press conference.

"Once we got through two overs, the assessment was that it was not the 250-260 wicket that this has been the last couple of games. And we obviously went out of depth." He said their strategy was to go all out in the powerplay but the plan

unravelling quickly.

"We wanted to maximise the powerplay, but unfortunately we kept losing wickets and once we realised that the surface wasn't what we anticipated, then we needed to build towards that sort of 180 score, and that unfortunately became difficult to do when you're 24/4 after the power play."

Vettori said Ishan Kishan's bizarre dismissal only added pressure to the team.

Batting at number 3, Ishan Kishan stunned everyone by walking off, indicating a faint edge, even as none of the MI players appealed and the on-field umpire was on the verge of signalling a wide.

"Ishan's dismissal was obviously disappointing, and that put pressure on everyone coming in. When you are in a power play situation, you still want to try and maximise those two fielders out."

Vettori said there's a need for better game awareness and support from the middle order when the aggressive top-order duo of Head and Abhishek fail to fire.

"Travis and AB, when they go, they are very aggressive and they take the game on and it's led to a lot of success for us. And when they don't succeed, then it's the responsibility of the other batsmen."

Real Madrid beats Getafe 1-0 in Spanish league

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Madrid

Real Madrid kept pace with Spanish league leader Barcelona with a 1-0 win at Getafe ahead of the rivals' meeting in the Copa del Rey final.

Arda Güler scored a first-half goal for Madrid, which moved back within four points of Barcelona. The Catalan club edged Mallorca 1-0 on Tuesday.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti used many reserves ahead of Saturday's Copa final in Seville. Brazil forward Endrick made his first Spanish league start with the club, and Vinicius Junior was substituted in the second half. Jude Bellingham came off the bench in the second half.

Midfielder Eduardo Camavinga had to be replaced because of an apparent muscle injury in the final minutes and is doubtful to be available for Saturday's final. He had entered the match at halftime to

Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois made a couple of difficult saves late to secure Madrid's victory.

It was the third league win in a row for Madrid, which endured a Champions League elimination against Arsenal in the competition's quarterfinals.

Getafe has lost three in a row, and four of its last five league games. The club from southern Madrid sits in 12th place.

The match was briefly stopped in the second half as fans from Getafe chanted "Die (Dani) Ceballos, die Ceballos."

CELTA WINS AGAIN

Celta Vigo moved to seventh place by routing fifth-place Villarreal 3-0 at home with goals by Fer López, Borja Iglesias and Iago Aspas.

The victory ended a two-match losing streak for the Vigo team. Villarreal, winless in two matches, played a man down



replace defender David Alaba, who also is doubtful because of a muscle ailment.

"We'll see, but it's unlikely that they will be available on Saturday," Ancelotti said.

Madrid had demoralizing losses in both "clásicos" against Barcelona this season — 5-2 in the Spanish Super Cup final and 4-0 in their first league encounter at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

Güler scored the winner with a well-placed right-footed shot in the 21st minute at the Coliseum in Getafe.

"Fortunately, I scored the goal that gave us the three points," Güler said. "We knew it was going to be a tough match. It was important to give us confidence for the final (on Saturday)."

from the 37th after Eric Bailly was sent off with a straight red card.

WILLIAMS SCORES EARLY

Iñaki Williams scored five minutes into the match to give fourth-place Athletic Bilbao a 1-0 win over Las Palmas, helping the Basque Country club to open an eight-point gap above Villarreal, which remains with a game in hand.

Las Palmas, sitting in 18th place, was coming off two wins in a row after a 12-match winless streak in the league.

Alaves moved out of the relegation zone by beating ninth-place Real Sociedad 1-0 at home with a goal by Nahuel Tenaglia in the 65th.

Liverpool must wait to clinch Premier League title after Arsenal draws with Crystal Palace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

One more point. That's all Liverpool needs to secure a record-tying 20th English top-flight title after second-place Arsenal drew 2-2 with Crystal Palace in the Premier League.

Arne Slot's runaway leaders can take care of business on Sunday by avoiding defeat to Tottenham in what is set to be a big party at Anfield. A draw or a win would ensure Liverpool cannot be caught by Arsenal with four more rounds remaining and therefore clinch a second title in five years, tying with fierce rival Manchester United on number 20 overall.

Becoming the champion in 2020 ended the storied club's 30-year title drought but Liverpool's players couldn't celebrate in front of their fans because of restrictions during the pandemic.

They'll try to make up for it this weekend. Arsenal twice squandered the lead at Emirates Stadium, with Jean-Philippe Mateta taking advantage of a defensive

error by William Saliba to score Palace's second equaliser in the 83rd and leave Arsenal 12 points behind Liverpool.

Arsenal, which started with star forward Bukayo Saka on the bench, looked vulnerable throughout against Palace, with its players perhaps having an eye on the Champions League semifinals against Paris Saint-Germain starting next week.

"We have the most important game of the season in six days," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. "We need to get our energy back."

ARSENAL BATTLING TO HOLD OFF RESURGENT CITY

Arsenal has been runner-up to Manchester City in the Premier League the previous two seasons and is facing a third straight second-place finish.

However, an improving City — a 2-1 winner over Aston Villa on Tuesday — is only six points back in third place after Arsenal's 13th draw of an inconsistent campaign.

The hosts went ahead through Jakub Kiwior's header at a free kick in the third

minute, only for Palace to reply when playmaker Eberechi Eze met a corner with a brilliantly taken downward volley that skimmed off the turf and flew in off the post in the 27th.

Leandro Trossard wriggled free in the area and scored with a deflected shot in the 42nd minute to restore Arsenal's lead. Mateta, a second-half substitute, had the final say, though, by capitalising on Saliba's poor pass and floating a shot over stranded goalkeeper David Raya from around 40 meters.

PALACE SWITCHES FOCUS TO THE FA CUP

Palace remained in 12th place and has little to play for in the Premier League. It is, however, heading into an FA Cup semifinal game against Aston Villa on Saturday in better health.

"It's important to keep this energy and confidence for the semifinal on Saturday," Palace manager Oliver Glasner said.

"It was not our goal to decide the title, it was our goal to win the game. I think a draw is a very good result."

AC Milan ruins Inter's treble bid with derby win to reach Italian Cup final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Milan

AC Milan has not achieved much this season — except when playing city rival Inter Milan.

Milan ruined Inter's bid for a treble and advanced to the Italian Cup final with a 3-0 derby win Wednesday courtesy of two goals from Luka Jovic.

It was Milan's third win over Inter this season, having also beaten the Nerazzurri in the Italian Super Cup final in January.

"It was a very important game for us. As you know we are not that good in Serie A. We had to show the quality today. We had to show the character," Jovic said. "And we showed it and we are going to Rome." And if Milan can win another trophy, coach Sergio Conceicao might have a chance at keeping his job — despite the seven-time European champion sitting ninth in Serie A.

Winning the Italian Cup — which carries a Europa League berth — could be Milan's only route to a spot in continental play for next season.

Milan advanced on 4-1 aggregate following a 1-1 first leg. Bologna brings a 3-0 lead over Empoli into the second leg of the final semifinal on Thursday.

The final is scheduled for May 14 in Rome. Inter pressed forward early on and Federico Dimarco struck the crossbar in the 23rd. But Jovic put Milan ahead 13

minutes later with a powerful header and then doubled the advantage from close range shortly after the break.

Tijjani Reijnders added another for Milan in the 85th by finishing off a full team move.

"We have a lot of belief," Reijnders said. "We have difficulties in the league but we

If Milan can win another trophy, coach Sergio Conceicao might have a chance at keeping his job — despite the seven-time European champion sitting ninth in Serie A

know this is the fastest way to reach (Europe). And if we play like we did today we can win this trophy."

It was Inter's second straight loss after the Serie A leader fell 1-0 at Bologna on Sunday. Inter will play Barcelona in the Champions League semifinals.

JUVENTUS POSTS FIRST LOSS UNDER TUDOR

Juventus wasted a chance to move back into the Champions League places following a 1-0 loss at Parma in a rescheduled Serie A match. Parma forward Mateo Pellegrino scored

with a header in first-half stoppage time. Juventus remained fifth, one point behind Bologna, with five rounds remaining. Making matters worse for Juventus was that center forward Dusan Vlahovic came off at halftime with an apparent thigh issue. Juventus was also in fifth place when it fired Thiago Motta last month and hired Igor Tudor as its new coach for the remainder of the season. It was Juventus' first loss under Tudor, following two wins and a draw.

Cristian Chivu took over as Parma coach in February and the team is on a six-game unbeaten run that also includes a 2-2 draw with Serie A leader Inter Milan this month.

Parma-Juventus was one of four matches postponed from Monday due to the death of Pope Francis. Each game was preceded by a moment of silence to mourn the pope, who died Monday at 88.

LAZIO BACK IN 6TH

Lazio leapfrogged city rival Roma and moved back into sixth place — level on points with Juventus — with a 2-0 win at 10-man Genoa.

Valentin Castellanos and Boulaye Dia scored for Lazio after Genoa defender Sebastian Otoa was shown a direct red card in his Serie A debut for pushing down Mattia Zaccagni.

Italian teenager Federico Cina wins ATP Masters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Madrid

Italian teenager Federico Cina picked up his second ATP Masters 1000 victory by defeating Coleman Wong in straight sets at the Madrid Open, while Gael Monfils became the oldest winner in the tournament's history. The 38-year-old Monfils rallied from a poor start to defeat qualifier Borna Gojo 1-6, 6-2, 6-4 for his first win in Madrid since 2022. The 42nd-ranked Monfils is a two-time quarterfinalist at the Masters 1000 clay-court event.

"At the beginning, he served one second serve," Monfils said of Gojo. "I think he had a 94 first-serve percentage, he played great. I (let the) storm pass, then different tactics. I served more with kick and tried to play a little bit different, maybe let him go and not do so much. At the end, just run, run to the ball. It's not a pretty win, but it's a win."

The 18-year-old Cina won 7-6 (5), 6-1 to back up his victory over current No. 70 Francisco Comesaña in Miami last month, which marked his ATP 1000 debut. He saved both break points he faced against Wong and finished with 19 winners. "Before the match I was a little bit tight but after a few games I started to feel good," said the 373rd-ranked Cina, a wild-card entry who will next face American Sebastian Korda.

"It is really special to win a match at this event." Monfils next meet seventh seed defending champion Andrey Rublev, who defeated Monfils two weeks ago in the round of 32 in Monte Carlo. Alexander Bublik beat Alex Michelsen 7-6 (2), 7-6 (4), while Comesaña got past Spaniard Pedro Martinez 6-4, 6-4 at the clay-court tournament.

Nuno Borges of Portugal rallied to defeat home-crowd favorite Pablo Carreno Busta 6-7 (7), 7-6 (3), 6-3, while Arthur Rinderknech defeated Roman Safiullin 7-6 (4), 6-1. Christopher O'Connell got past Camilo Ugo Carabelli 6-3, 6-4.

RETURNING MATERS

Belinda Bencic, who returned from maternity leave last October, defeated Zeynep Sonmez 6-0, 6-2 on the first birthday of her daughter, Bella. Three-time Madrid Open champion Petra Kvitova, who was back from her maternity leave in February, lost 6-4, 6-0 to Katie Volynets.

Anastasija Sevastova, who has played infrequently since giving birth in late 2022, defeated Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-4, 7-5. Emma Raducanu had her first win on outdoor clay since 2022, coming from a break down in both sets to beat Suzan Lamens 7-6 (4), 6-4.

The 2021 U.S. Open champion had missed most of the 2023 clay season because of wrist and ankle surgeries. She then cut short her 2024 season on the surface after losing in her Madrid opener.

SAMANTHA AND RAJ NIDIMORU FUEL RELATIONSHIP RUMOURS



SURESH KAVIRAYANI
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Actress Samantha is once again in the headlines, this time for her rumoured relationship with director Raj Nidimoru, of the Raj & DK duo. Though neither Samantha nor Raj has confirmed the relationship, speculation intensified after the two were reportedly spotted traveling together on multiple occasions. Samantha was seen arriving at the Mumbai airport, followed by Raj Nidimoru just minutes later. The two avoided being photographed together, seemingly to maintain a low profile.

They were also spotted in Tirupati, where both visited the temple but once again chose not to be seen together publicly. Reports claim that they took the same flight but exited separately to avoid media attention. Raj Nidimoru co-directed *The Family Man Season 2*, which featured Samantha in a breakthrough role. The duo also collaborated on the web series *Citadel: Honey Bunny*, starring Samantha and Varun Dhawan. Sources suggest that Raj & DK are planning a Hindi film with Samantha in the lead role. Adding fuel to the fire, sources say Samantha has shifted base to Mumbai and is reportedly receiving career advice from Raj Nidimoru regarding her future projects.



Karthik Subbaraj distances himself from *Game Changer* failure

Renowned filmmaker Karthik Subbaraj, known for hits like *Pizza*, *Jigarhanda*, *Mercury*, *Petta* and *Mahaan*, is gearing up for the release of his latest film *Retro*, starring Suriya and Pooja

Hegde. The film is set to hit theatres on May 1. During the promotional events for *Retro*, Karthik Subbaraj was questioned by the media about the recent box office failure of *Game Changer*, the Telugu political drama directed by Shankar and starring Ram Charan. Karthik Subbaraj was credited with the story of the film, which was released during the Sankranti festival and turned out to be a major disappointment at the box office.

Addressing the issue, Karthik Subbaraj clarified that he was only involved in the initial conceptualization. "I just gave a one-liner idea like 'a humble and honest IAS officer'. That's all," he said, distancing himself from the final screenplay and execution of the project. He went on to suggest that multiple inputs from various people might have caused the screenplay and writing to deviate from the original idea.

While some critics view this as Karthik avoiding responsibility, others argue that his creative vision may have been diluted during the filmmaking process.

Imanvi addresses 'lies spread by trolls' about her identity amid terror attack backlash

Actress Imanvi Esmail, professionally known as Imanvi, has addressed a wave of misinformation surrounding her background, following the tragic terror attack in Pahalgam. Imanvi, who is set to star alongside Prabhas in director Hanu Raghavapudi's upcoming period drama, took to Instagram to release a heartfelt statement, condemning the baseless rumours about her heritage and standing firmly against hate and misinformation.

In her note, Imanvi began by extending her deepest condolences to the victims of the Pahalgam attack, stating, "First and foremost, I want to express my most sincere and heartfelt condolences for the tragic event that took place in Pahalgam. My heart goes out to all those who lost their lives and their loved ones. Any loss of innocent life is tragic and weighs heavy on my heart. I strongly condemn the violent acts."

Amidst the tragedy, Imanvi found herself the subject of online vitriol, with several unfounded claims suggesting links between her family and the Pakistani military. Refuting the accusations, she clarified, "Nobody in my family has ever been or is currently associated with the Pakistani military in any way. These and multiple other falsehoods have been fabricated by online trolls for the sole purpose of spreading hate."

She also criticised certain media platforms for irresponsibly amplifying misinformation: "What is especially disappointing is that legitimate news outlets, journalists and those on social media failed to investigate their source material and instead have simply repeated these slanderous statements."

Imanvi's post emphasised her deep-rooted connection to India and her cultural heritage. "I am a proud Indian American who speaks Hindi, Telugu, Gujarati and English. I was born in Los Angeles, California after my parents legally immigrated to the United States as youth," she shared.

She went on to express her gratitude for the opportunity to work in the Indian film industry—a world that inspired her passion for performance and storytelling. "As someone who has Indian identity and culture running deep in my blood, I hope to use this medium as a form of

unity and not divisiveness." Imanvi will be making her Telugu film debut opposite Prabhas in an untitled period drama directed by Hanu Raghavapudi and backed by Mythri Movie Makers. The film, set in the 1940s, blends historical fiction with alternate history, and also features legendary actors Mithun Chakraborty and Jaya Prada in pivotal roles.

An excerpt from the film's synopsis teases a gripping narrative: "This historical fiction/alternate history set in the 1940s is the tale of a warrior who rose from the shadows, emerging from a society that believed war was the only answer to the buried injustices and forgotten truths that history kept hidden from the world." Imanvi concluded her statement on a hopeful note: "I will work hard to ensure that this legacy carries on through my work and uplifts the experiences of my Indian heritage. Lots of love, Imanvi."



KARTHIK SUBBARAJ INITIALLY PENNED RETRO FOR RAJINIKANTH, NOT VIJAY OR SURIYA

With its grand theatrical release scheduled for May 1, *Retro*, starring Suriya and Pooja Hegde, is poised to be one of the biggest blockbusters of 2025. Directed by Karthik Subbaraj, the film has been making waves for its unique blend of romance and action. But in a surprising revelation, the director shared that the film was originally conceptualised for none other than Superstar Rajinikanth. Contrary to rumours linking the script to

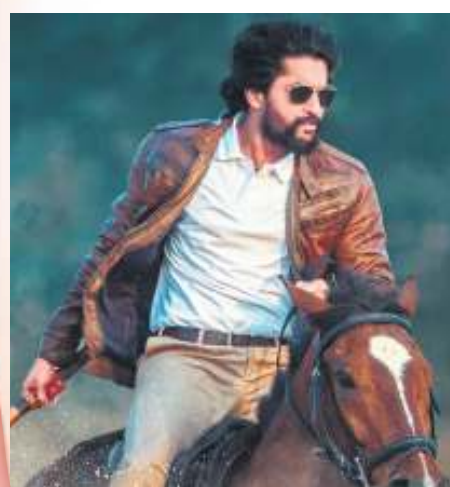
Thalapathy Vijay, Karthik clarified that the original version of *Retro* was written with Rajinikanth in mind. "This story was not written for Thalapathy Vijay sir, as being speculated. I wrote this script keeping in mind Thalaivar. Initially, it was more in the action zone to suit Thalaivar's image," said Subbaraj. The filmmaker, known for his distinct storytelling and collaborations with stars like Rajinikanth (Petta), added that the tone of the film evolved after he narrated it to Suriya. The

narrative gradually shifted from a pure action film to a romantic drama, aligning better with Suriya's on-screen persona. Interestingly, Suriya himself was curious about the film's origins. "Even Suriya sir asked me if I narrated the script to Rajinikanth sir," Karthik revealed, emphasising how strongly the original version was associated with the superstar's signature style. Previously titled *Suriya 44*, *Retro* features a

power-packed ensemble including Pooja Hegde, Karunakaran, Nassar, Prakash Raj, Joju George, Jayaram, Sujith Shankar and Singampuli. Actress Shriya Saran will also be seen in a special cameo appearance. Blending stylised romance with gripping action, *Retro* is one of the most anticipated films of the year, not only for its lead cast but also for its intriguing backstory and Subbaraj's directorial touch. While *Retro* moved on to become a Suriya-

led romantic action film, Rajinikanth fans have plenty to look forward to. The superstar is currently working on *Jaifer 2* with director Nelson Dilipkumar. He is also headlining *Coolie*, an upcoming film by Lokesh Kanagaraj, which boasts an impressive cast including Nagarjuna, Shruti Haasan, Upendra and Soubin Shahir. Though Rajinikanth didn't end up in *Retro*, his cinematic universe continues to expand with several big projects underway.

Nani teases explosive surprises in *HIT 3*



As the release date of *HIT: The Third Case (HIT 3)* draws closer, excitement is mounting among fans. Slated for a May 1 release, the third installment in the *HIT* franchise stars Natural Star Nani.

Addressing the buzz surrounding *HIT 3* in a latest interview, especially rumours about Tamil star Karthi making a cameo appearance, Nani carefully avoided giving anything away. When asked directly, he responded with a knowing smile, "There are many interesting surprises in the film, but they are meant to be experienced in the theater only. So who is it, what is it? I think it's better not to have that conversation at this point because that's the whole point. If

it's a cameo, it's meant to be a surprise."

While he didn't confirm or deny the speculation, his comments hint that audiences might be in for a thrilling surprise.

Nani also offered a glimpse into what audiences can expect from *HIT 3*, promising a mix of intense storytelling and cinematic spectacle. According to him, one of the most exciting aspects of the film is how the plot gradually unfolds while delivering adrenaline-pumping moments typically reserved for high-octane commercial entertainers.

"How the hell this is going to unfold will be the most exciting part about *HIT 3*, and also what makes it special is the kind of theatrical moments it has—you get in a mass film where you can really cheer, root, whistle and clap kind of a moment," Nani said. He emphasised that such elements are rare in thrillers, as they often struggle to include them organically without breaking realism. But in *HIT 3*, he believes the filmmakers have struck the right balance. "It's very hard for those kinds of moments to happen in a thriller organically while being realistic. I think that happened with *HIT 3*," he added.

With Nani's passionate insights and the franchise's reputation for gripping narratives, *HIT: The Third Case* is shaping up to be a must-watch this summer, promising not only suspense and intensity but also the kind of crowd-pleasing highs that fans love.

Siddu Jonnalagadda refocuses efforts on *Telusu Kada* after *Jack* setback

Actor Siddu Jonnalagadda, who found massive success with *DJ Tillu* and *Tillu Square*, faced a major setback with his latest film *Jack*. Directed by Bommarillu Bhaskar and featuring Vaishnavi Chaitanya as the female lead, *Jack* failed to impress both audiences and exhibitors.

In the wake of the film's failure, Siddu is now focusing intently on his next project *Telusu Kada*, which marks the directorial debut of popular Tollywood stylist Neeraja Kona. Produced by People Media Factory, the film was initially set for a release soon, but sources now suggest a delay

as Siddu is getting involved in every aspect of the production.

"After *Jack*, he's taking no chances. He knows the audience expects punchy one-liners and high-energy dialogues from him," a source close to the team revealed. "He's now deeply involved in the script and other departments to ensure *Telusu Kada* meets those expectations."

Siddu's *Tillu Square* recently entered the Rs 100 crore club within just seven days of release, solidifying his status as a bankable star. With *Telusu Kada*, he's looking to bounce back and continue his upward trajectory.

STANDALONE



Allu Arjun is once again making headlines, not just for his stellar box-office streak with *Pushpa 2*, but also for his fresh new look as he gears up for his much-anticipated collaboration with director Atlee. The star turned heads at a family wedding, where he appeared alongside his wife Sneha Reddy and daughter Arha. Sporting a minimalist yet striking ensemble—a brown kurta paired with black trousers—Allu Arjun exuded effortless charm, fueling speculation that his appearance might hint at his look for Atlee's upcoming project.