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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

Former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's family is not in any way less harmful than terrorists, and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is more dangerous than the KCR family. KCR executed the Kaleshwaram Project, spending around Rs 1 lakh crore for the sake of the 2018 elections and tried to hike the project outlay. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who had declared that he would probe the corruption in the Kaleshwaram Project and would send KCR to jail, should explain why he is silent now

— Dharmapuri Arvind, BJP MP

P4

DON'T MISS...

'Fishermen are the real heroes'

Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha has stated that fishermen are the 'real heroes' and assured that the NDA government stands firmly with the fishing communities. She made these remarks during the 'Matsyakaarulu Sevalo' programme held on the MPDO office premises in Nakkapalli on Saturday, organised by the District Fisheries Department. District Collector Vijaya Krishnan also attended the event. Speaking on the...

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'Install CCTVs at sand stock points'

District Collector K Vetrivel directed the officials to take steps to install CCTV cameras to monitor the process and erect fencing and round the sand stock point. On Saturday, Collector K Vetrivel, along with Unguturu MLA Pathsamatra Dharmaraju, inspected the sand stock point located at Chebrolu in Unguturu mandal of Eluru district. She directed the officials to install CCTV cameras at the sand stock point, to secure the stock point by fencing it and to set up a gate for vehicular traffic. The local Tahsilidar and revenue...

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Police question Rana for 8 hours

A Mumbai crime branch team questioned Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a key accused in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, for over eight hours in New Delhi where he is in National Investigation Agency's custody, officials said on Saturday. The crime branch team comprising four officers questioned Rana on Wednesday for his alleged role in the conspiracy of the terror attacks, an official said. During the questioning, Rana gave evasive answers and did not cooperate, the...

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Govt to unveil fisheries projects

Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh will on Monday inaugurate and lay the foundation for key projects for seven coastal states and union territories with a total outlay of Rs 255.30 crore under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). The minister, at the coastal states meet to be held in Mumbai, will also launch a set of key initiatives aimed at strengthening marine fisheries and promoting sustainable practices including Marine Fisheries Census Operations, Turtle Excluder Device (TED) project and release of Standard Operating Procedure for Vessel Communication and Support System. Ministers of State for Fisheries and Animal Husbandry S P Singh...

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Govt's aim is to uplift the poor

SAYS CM, LAUNCHES 'MATSYAKARULA SEVALO' SCHEME

PNS ■ ETCHERLA/SRIKAKULAM

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, on Saturday, gave a call to those who have become financially stable with the help of government policies to assist the poor in society and support them to grow strong.

The Chief Minister launched the 'Matsyakaarula Sevalo' (in service of the fishermen) scheme at Budagatkapalem of Etcherla Assembly segment in Srikakulam district. Later, addressing the Praja Vedita programme on Zero Poverty-P4, Chandrababu Naidu said that poverty should be eliminated completely. "We have launched the programme for the uplift of the poor in every way by not only providing government schemes, but also by extending assistance through Margadarsi (mentors)," he said.

Making it clear that regular reviews will be conducted on how the mentors are extending help to the families which they have adopted, the Chief Minister said that his sole aim is to see to it that the State gets rid of poverty completely by 2029. He felt that there will be no economic imbalances if those who have come up financially come to the rescue of the poor. Later, the Chief Minister felicitated the Margadarsis.

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CM meets fisherfolk families in Budagatlapalem

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

As part of the launch of 'Matsyakaarula Sevalo' programme, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu visited Budagatlapalem village on the coast and interacted directly with several local fishing families to understand their lives and challenges.

The Chief Minister first met with Maddi Polesu and Ramalakshmi, a family dependent on traditional sea fishing, and enquired about their issues and struggles.

He then spent time conversing with other villagers, including Kari Rambabu, Uppada Seethogya and Chintapalli Erraiah, discussing

their day-to-day lives and fishing activities.

The CM also visited areas where fish are dried, and interacted with women engaged in the activity. He spoke with Maddi Lakshamma, Kari Seethamma and Varadhi Paidamma to understand the fish-drying process and their methods. He asked about their daily earnings and how the process contributes to their household income.

At the local community hall, the Chief Minister met with boat repair workers Maylapalli Pothuraju and Kari Rambabu, learning about the maintenance challenges they face. He also inspected ice boxes used for fish storage and fishing nets, taking note of the equipment and support needed to improve their operations.



DGP Harish Kumar Gupta distributing laptops to the NTR District Police Commissionerate officials in Vijayawada on Saturday

DGP distributes laptops to cops

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Director General of Police (DGP) Harish Kumar Gupta, along with Control S Data Centre Director and Retired DGP Rajiv Kumar Trivedi, distributed laptops to 50 officials and staff members of the NTR District Police Commissionerate during a ceremony held in the conference hall of the Commissionerate in Vijayawada on Saturday. The initiative was taken up at the request of Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhara Babu, with support from the Suraksha Committee, aiming to strengthen the technological capabilities of the police force.

Officials stated that the distribution of laptops is expected to assist officers in cracking crucial cases more effectively through the use of advanced technology and digital tools. Enhancing the department's access to modern equipment will significantly boost their efficiency in investigations and cybercrime prevention, they added.

Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhara Babu, Control S Data Centre representatives Gopal Agarwal and Manisha, Telangana Facility Management Council Chairman Satyanarayana, and NTR District Police Commissionerate DCPs KGV Saritha, Tirumaleswara Reddy, ABTS Udaya Rani, Krishna Murthy Naidu, SVD Prasad, along with ADCPs G Ramakrishna, AVL Prasanna Kumar, M Raja Rao, K Koteswara Rao, and others, were present.

FIGHT AGAINST ILLICIT LIQUOR

Special raids across border villages

Second joint operation this month between AP and Odisha enforcement agencies

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM/SRIKAKULAM

As part of the government's Navodayam 2.0 programme to eradicate illicit liquor in Andhra Pradesh, the Prohibition & Excise Departments of Vizianagaram division and Srikakulam district conducted special inter-State raids along the Andhra-Odisha border. This marks the second joint operation this month between Andhra Pradesh and Odisha enforcement agencies.

In Vizianagaram division, large-scale raids were conducted in Rayagada district, Odisha. About 60 personnel from Prohibition&Excise and Police Departments of Parvathipuram Manyam and Vizianagaram, and Odisha's Excise Department participated in the raids. Raids targeted villages such as Sandubadi, Tambalabai and Pansarta. Drone surveillance under the supervision of Parvathipuram Manyam Superintendent of Police aided in detecting hidden illicit liquor pockets.

Similarly, in Srikakulam district, eight teams with 37 members conducted raids in villages like Singupuram, Nerediguda, Sirada, and Gurusingiguda. Around 40 personnel from Odisha's Excise and Police Departments, along with executive magistrates, participated in the coordinated operation.

The raids resulted in the detection



of eight cases and the arrest of two individuals. Authorities seized 1,480 litres of illicit distilled (ID) liquor wash, 18,300 litres of raw materials, 3,000 kg of Mahua flowers, 2,400 kg of black jaggery and 3,900 kg of ammonia.

The success of the operations is credited to the proactive leadership of Principal Secretary Mukesh Kumar Meena (Excise and GAD-Political), who provided continuous guidance and daily monitoring. Excise Commissioner Nishant Kumar and Enforcement Director Rahul Dev Sharma also played key roles in coordinating the enforcement efforts, ensuring the drive remained focused and result oriented.

Review of arrangements for PM Modi's visit

Modi will lay stone for relaunch of the Amaravati capital city construction project

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In preparation for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Amaravati, a review meeting was conducted on Saturday at the public meeting venue being set up behind the State Secretariat. The PM will formally restart the long-awaited capital city construction works on May 2.

G Veerapandian, the nodal officer overseeing the Prime Minister's visit, held a coordination meeting with other nodal officers and officials



responsible for the event arrangements. He instructed all task-assigned officers to expedite their work to ensure that all arrangements are completed on time.

According to the tentative schedule, Prime Minister Modi is expected to arrive at Gannavaram Airport by 3 PM on May 2. From there, he will fly by helicopter to the State Secretariat

and then proceed via a 1.4-km roadshow to the event venue located behind the Secretariat. At the event, the Prime Minister will lay the foundation stone for the re-initiation of the Amaravati capital city construction project, which is estimated to cost nearly ₹1 lakh crore. He will also inaugurate various other development works.

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Putin doesn't want to end Ukraine war: Trump

Hints at further sanctions against Russia

PNS ■ ROME

President Donald Trump said Saturday that he doubts Russia's Vladimir Putin wants to end his war in Ukraine, expressing new scepticism that a peace deal can be reached soon.

Only a day earlier, Trump had said Ukraine and Russia were "very close to a deal."

"There was no reason for Putin to be shooting missiles into civilian areas, cities and towns, over the last few days," Trump said in a social media post as he flew back to the United States after attending Pope Francis' funeral at the Vatican, where he met briefly with Ukrainian President



Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Trump also hinted at further sanctions against Russia.

"It makes me think that maybe he doesn't want to stop the war, he's just tapping me along, and has to be dealt with differently, through "Banking" or "Secondary Sanctions?" Too many people are dying!!!" Trump wrote.

Mighty and meek bid farewell to Pope Francis

PNS ■ VATICAN CITY

World leaders and Catholic faithful bade farewell to Pope Francis in a funeral Saturday that highlighted his concern for people on the "most peripheral of the peripheries" and reflected his wishes as pastor.

Though presidents and princes attended the Mass in St Peter's Square, prisoners and migrants will welcome him at the basilica across town where he will be buried.

Some 2,50,000 people flocked to the funeral Mass and tens of thousands more lined the motorcade

route, clapping and cheering "Papa Francesco" as his simple wooden coffin travelled aboard one of his old popemobiles to its final resting place at St Mary Major Basilica on the other side of the city.

It was then carried into the church, escorted by Swiss Guards.

Earlier, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, the 91-year-old dean of the College of Cardinals, eulogised Francis as a pope of the people, a pastor who knew how to communicate to the "least among us" with an informal, spontaneous style.

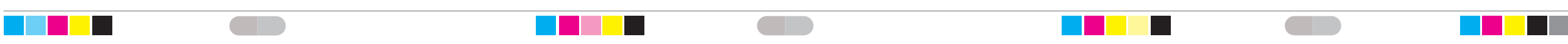
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Murmu attends funeral Mass of Pope Francis



VATICAN CITY: President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday attended the funeral Mass of Pope Francis at St Peter's Square here. Francis, who was the first non-European Pope in nearly 1,300 years, died on Monday. He was 88. Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs, Kiren Rijju, Minister of State for Minority Affairs, George Kurian and Deputy Speaker of Goa Legislative Assembly,

Joshua De Souza, who are part of the official Indian delegation led by the President, also attended the ceremony. "President Droupadi Murmu attended the funeral Mass of His Holiness Pope Francis at Saint Peter's Square in Vatican City," her office said in a post on X. Murmu reached here on Friday on a two-day visit to offer condolences on behalf of the government and people of India.





Minister Nimmala lays stone for various development works

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Minister for Water Resources Development Nimmala Ramanaidu laid the foundation stone for various development works at three places on Saturday. The development works will be carried out at a cost of Rs 1 crore in Palakollu mandal.

Minister Ramanaidu laid the stone for the construction of a road on the Digamarru channel at Kothapeti village at a cost of Rs 37 lakh, laid the foundation stone for the construction of a road at Drain Bridge at a cost of Rs 17.69 lakh.

He also laid the foundation stone for the construction of gravel road at Pedamandipalli village at a cost of 11 lakh and also laid the foundation stone at Rayalakodu road works to be taken up at a cost of Rs 16 lakh.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Ramanaidu highlighted that during the 9 months of the coalition government, many works had been undertaken in the irrigation department in Palakollu constituency at a cost of Rs 42 crore.

"Despite the financial constraints, the government has



launched many development works which are required by the farmers. The works are being launched in a phased manner. The construction of gravel roads, required by farmers, was undertaken in the previous TDP government and today the roads are being laid again," he asserted and alleged that the Jagannathan Reddy headed previous government did not care about the farmers during the five-year rule.

Minister Ramanaidu

revealed that he is working to make Palakollu constituency an ideal constituency in the State so that he could repay the debt to the people of Palakollu constituency. He noted that with the combination of Chandrababu, Pawan Kalyan and Modi has implemented many programmes during the ten months, especially the disbursement of pensions to lakhs of beneficiaries.

He acknowledged that a programme would be launched

to provide immediate pension to the wife, in case of the death of her husband. Ramanaidu said that the financial assistance given to fishermen during the fishing ban was increased from Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000, adding that the coalition government in the State will function as a humane government. Ex-MLC Angara Ramamohan, K. V. Vijay Bhaskar, and a large number of TDP, BJP and JSP leaders and officials were present.

Uppada Fish Harbor will be completed by 5 months: Min

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Minister for Infrastructure Development and R&B BC Janardhan Reddy has made it clear that the construction of Uppada Fishing Harbor will be completed in five months.

The Minister, accompanied by officials and former MLA SVSN Varma, inspected the fishing harbor construction works at Uppada village of U Kothapalli mandal on Saturday. The officials explained to the Minister about the progress of the fishing harbor. He directed them to take steps to expedite the works and complete them by five months.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister vowed to complete the fishing harbor works by five months and hand it over to the fishermen. He reiterated the Government's commitment to extend the fishermen community the need for help and prioritize their welfare.

The Minister recalled that the Government had enhanced the allowance, being given to the fishermen during the banning of fishing in the sea, from Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000.

"The then TDP government in 2018 had sanctioned the



Uppada fishing harbor to be constructed at a cost of Rs 361 crore. The works will be expedited and the harbor will be dedicated to the people by five months," he announced.

Taking a dig at the YSRCP regime for the delay of fishing harbor works, the Minister alleged that the fishing harbor works were carried out in a tardy manner for various reasons during the erstwhile government. The present contractor Kayva Krishna Reddy is determined to complete the fishing harbor

works by five months, he revealed. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan are pursuing the works, he noted.

"When inspecting the fishing harbor, it was found that the problem arises when boats hit the backwater coming from one side because of a flaw in its design. This problem arises when the backwater returns as a force due to problems in the environment," the Minister explained.

Minister Janardhan Reddy said that the construction of this

fishing harbor will only provide employment opportunities to the people of the surrounding areas, but it also provides parking facilities for fishing boards and facilities for the repair of state-of-the-art boats," he maintained.

Kavali MLA Dagumati Venkata Krishna Reddy, Maritime Board Chairman Damacherla Satya, former ZP Chairman Jyothula Naveen, Maritime Board CEO Praveen Aditya were among those who accompanied the Minister.

Collector directs officials to install CCTVs at sand stock points

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetriselvi directed the officials to take steps to install CCTV cameras to monitor the process and erect fencing and round the sand stock point.

On Saturday, Collector K Vetriselvi, along with Unguturu MLA Pathsamatha Dharmaraju, inspected the sand stock point located at Chebrolu in Unguturu mandal of Eluru district. She directed the officials to install CCTV cameras at the sand stock point, to secure the stock point by fencing it and to set up a gate for vehicular traffic.

The local Tahsildar and revenue staff should supervise the sand stock point, she directed them. The Collector revealed that a sand stock point is being set up in every constituency in the district, adding that sand is being transported from Tadipudi to the Chebrolu stock yard.



"In this regard applications have been invited to appoint an agency through lottery for transporting the sand from the sand reach to the sand storage centers in Eluru district, storing it and loading it into transport vehicles from the storage center," the Collector asserted.

Later, the Collector reviewed the steps to be taken to improve sanitation in Chebrolu village with the village sarpanch Randhe Lakshmi Sunitha.

Vetriselvi suggested that steps be taken to control plastic, separate wet and dry waste and take necessary steps for recycling, stating that necessary cooperation will be provided for this.

Setting up a sand stock yard in Chebrolu, steps should be taken for the development of the road at the nearby tiles industry, she told the officials. The District Collector was accompanied by Tahsildar P Raghu Kumar and others.

Arrangements for PM's programme inspected

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Civil Supplies Nadendra Manohar inspected the arrangements, being made for the programme of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Capital region on Saturday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in some programmes and address a massive public meeting on May 2.

Minister Nadendra Manohar reviewed the arrangements for the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's programme along with the officials this evening.

The Minister stated that four to six lakh people are expected to attend the meeting from six districts and arrangements are being made accordingly. He said that after the SPB personnel arrive and inspect the area, they would reassess whether any further arrangements are needed.

"We are looking to fully utilize the Seed Access Road as much as possible and also use the Western Bypass Road, if necessary on that day. Since there will be a lot of transport, CRDA officials and other officials who are



supervising the arrangements for the assembly have given various instructions to ensure that all facilities are provided without any inconvenience to the people on that day," he revealed.

"Three of the capital region farmers will be invited to the dais and honored by the Prime Minister. Similarly, a short film based on the sacrifices made by the farmers will be shown on the screen. There will also be a programme to honor the farmers

who were given land by the capital by the Prime Minister," the Civil Supplies Minister acknowledged.

Minister Manohar inspected the roads required to reach the venue where Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate. He also inspected the area for about two hours, accompanied by the Collector and police officials.

As many as 8 routes are being prepared for people to reach the

venue where Prime Minister Modi will participate. Arrangements are being made at a rapid pace to start the reconstruction work of the capital Amaravati. The government is making all arrangements to relaunch Amaravati through the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Collector Nagarani, IG Sarvasrestha Tripathi and G Veerapandyan were among those who accompanied the Minister.

Teppotsavam in Devuni Kadapa will be held from May 10

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The annual Teppotsavam in Devuni Kadapa of Kadapa district will be held from May 10 to 12 in Sri Lakshmi Venkateswara Swamy Temple.

As a part of this, on May 10, Sri Krishna along with Godadevi will take three rounds, on May 11 Sridevi Bhudevi along with Sri Venkateswara Swamy will take five rounds, and on May 12 Sridevi Bhudevi sameta Sri Venkateswara Swamy will take a pleasure ride on seven rounds in the sacred waters on the finely decked float.

Snapanam Tirumanjanam will be held from 10 am to 11 am and Thiruveedhi Utsavam from 5.30 pm to 6 pm followed by Teppotsavam during these three days. On this occasion, devotional and cultural programs will be conducted under the auspices of the Hindu Dharmapanchayat Parishad and the Dasa Sahitya Projects of TTD.



7 passengers injured as private bus overturns

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

As many as 7 passengers were injured when a private bus in which they were travelling overturned at Santhi Nagar on the outskirts here on Saturday in Palnadu district.

SP Srinivasa Rao, who visited the place, told the media that a private bus was going to Chirala from Hyderabad. The bus overturned on the road in which 7 passengers suffered various degrees of injuries. As many as 25 passengers were trav-

elling in the bus when the accident took place.

DSP Nageswara Rao and MLA Chadalava Aravinda Babu rushed to the place and extricated the trapped bus passengers from the ill-fated bus. One of the passengers struck the bus and it took two hours for the police to retrieve her from the overturned bus.

The injured were admitted to the GGH. The private bus driver drove the bus at high speed in a reckless manner which led to the accident, police said.

10 workers of a private firm injured as bus plunges into canal

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

As many as 10 employees of a private firm were injured when the bus in which they were going to the factory plunged into a canal at Vembakam village in Nagalapuram mandal on Saturday.

SI Sunil said that 30 workers of a private firm were going to the factory located at Sri City in the

company bus.

The bus veered off the road and plunged into a dried up irrigation canal.

As many as 10 factory workers were injured in the accident and they were shifted to the PHC at Nagalapuram in an ambulance. The bus was going at high speed when the accident took place, the injured workers said. The police registered a case.



Four people drowned in irrigation tank

PNS ■ KADAPA

In a tragic incident, four people, including three children, were drowned in an irrigation tank at Patha Mulakala Cheruvu village of Mulakala Cheruvu mandal of Annamayya district on Saturday.

Police said that a woman, Eeshwaramma, went to the irrigation tank to wash clothes. Her daughter Lavanya and son Nanda Kishore went to the tank with her. Sometime later, their neighbor Nandita also



went to the tank. Three children Lavanya (12),

Nandita (11) and Nanda Kishore entered the tank for a

bath. They slipped and started drowning. The husband of Eeshwaramma, Mallesh (36) went to their rescue but he was also drowned.

The four bodies were fished out from the tank. Eeshwaramma, who lost her husband, son and daughter, was seen grieving inconsolably. A pall of gloom descended on Patha Mulakala Cheruvu village with the death of four people. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH for postmortem.

5000 liters of jaggery wash destroyed, 72 vehicles seized

PNS ■ BAPATLA

The police conducted a cordon and search operation in Repalle and Chirala police sub-divisions and destroyed 5000 liters of jaggery wash meant to distil illicit liquor.

On the directions of SP Tushar Dudy, the police teams conducted cordon and search operations at Ramnagar, New colony in Chirala 2 town PS limits Vellatur and SC colony in Bhattiprolu PS limits on Saturday.

DSP Moyn told the media that over 150 police personnel took part in the cordon and search operation. The police teams found 5000 litres of jaggery wash meant to brew



country-made liquor and destroyed them. The police also seized 65 bikes and 7 auto

rickshaws as the owners failed to produce the records. The DSP warned of taking string-

ent action against those who distil country-made liquor and sell it.

30 huts reduced to ashes in major fire at Kantlur

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

A major fire broke out in Ravi Narayan Reddy Nagar of Kuntlur under Hayathnagar limits, causing extensive damage to the area. The fire, which reportedly started from a hut, quickly spread aided by strong winds and engulfed nearly 30 huts within minutes.

The settlement, which houses around 300 huts, was thrown into chaos as residents scrambled for safety.

Upon receiving information from the locals, police personnel and fire brigade teams rushed to the scene with four fire engines. The blaze was brought under control after several hours. The situation became even more dangerous as multiple gas cylinders inside the huts exploded, prompting immediate evacuation measures.

KCR's family is not in any way less than terrorists: Arvind

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP's Nizamabad MP, Dharmapuri Arvind, said that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's family is not in any way less dangerous than terrorists, and that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is more dangerous than the KCR family.

Addressing the media at the state BJP office here on Saturday, Arvind said that KCR executed the Kaleshwaram Project with around Rs 1 lakh crore for the sake of the 2018 elections and tried to hike project expenditure.

He said that BRS Working President KTR tried to



throw mud, accusing the Centre of not giving funds and not recognising the project as a national project.

Arvind said that KCR executed the Kaleshwaram

Project as per his ideas before the project's DPR was approved by the Centre. He asked Revanth, who had assured people that he would launch a probe into the Kaleshwaram corruption and would send KCR to jail, to explain why he is mum on this issue.

KTR should answer that with what face they are conducting a public meeting on Sunday, he said.

He said KCR fears his family, and so he has been staying in a farmhouse, fearing that his family may kill him if they stay in one place. Arvind said that even KCR's family has to apply for appointments if they want to meet KCR.

ACROSS THE STATES

PM: Will ensure job chances keep growing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Saturday that his government is taking several measures to ensure that the opportunities for employment and self-employment keep growing.

Addressing the 15th edition of Rozgar Mela after distributing more than 51,000 appointment letters to recruits in different departments of the central government, he said it is a time for unprecedented opportunities for youngsters.



In the virtual event, he noted that the International Monetary Fund has said India will remain the fastest-growing major economy, asserting that employment opportunities will be rising in every sector.

The production and export in automobile and footwear industries have hit new records, generating employment in large numbers, Modi said. Citing the difference his government has made, the prime minister listed out that cargo being handled through inland water transparent has surged to 145 million tonnes from 18 million tonnes before 2014 while national waterways have increased from five to 110, and their length from 2,700 km to over 5,000 km.

Modi said his government is ensuring at every step that employment and self-employment opportunities for the country's youth continue to grow.

Mentioning initiatives like Skill India, Startup India, and Digital India, the prime minister said they are creating new opportunities for the youth and providing an open platform to showcase their talents. India's youth are demonstrating to the world through their dedication and innovation the immense potential that the country possesses, he added.

Modi asserted that the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES), to be held in Mumbai, will also be a big opportunity for youngsters to showcase their skills on a global platform.

They will also get to understand Artificial Intelligence and immersive media, and the event will infuse a new energy into the sphere of digital content, he said, adding that for innovators in the media, gaming, and entertainment, WAVES is an unprecedented opportunity to showcase their talent.



Delhi Literature Festival to open on May 2

The 13th edition of the Delhi Literature Festival (DLF) will begin on May 2 at Bikaner House bringing together a gathering of political leaders, renowned authors, and cultural figures. The three-day festival, themed "Delhi Writes: Voices, Visions and Verses," will run until May 4, DLF said in a statement. Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Gajendra S Shekawat will inaugurate the festival. Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Speaker of the Delhi Assembly Vijender Gupta, Cabinet Minister for Culture and Tourism Kapil Mishra, NDMC Chairman Keshav Chandra, and Tim Curtis, Director and Representative of UNESCO India are slated to attend the opening day. This year's edition will feature a strong political and intellectual presence, with sessions such as "Demography, Dialogue and Development" led by Member of Parliament Bansuri Swaraj, and a special conversation, "Flowing Through Time: Healing The Yamuna," featuring Delhi Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh. Political commentator and author Anand Ranganathan will engage audiences with a discussion titled "Unscripted, Unapologetic, Unfiltered."



Mob attacks police station in Bihar

Five policemen were injured after a mob attacked Dandkhora police station in Bihar's Katihar district, officials said on Saturday. Katihar SP Vaibhav Sharma said, "The incident took place when a group of people attacked Dandkhora police station in the intervening night of Friday and Saturday with an aim to free a person arrested in connection with violation of the prohibition laws. The mob entered the campus of the police station and started pelting stones on policemen who were on duty. Five policemen were injured in the incident." He added that policemen fired in self-defence to disperse the mob. "The mob could not free the arrested person from police lockup," he added. Five people have been arrested in connection with the attack, the SP said. The injured policemen were taken to the nearest government hospital where their condition is reported to be out of danger. Police have registered a case and are investigating the matter.

Border villagers steel themselves for any potential escalation

PNS ■ JAMMU

Living in the shadow of rising tensions between India and Pakistan, villagers residing near the International Border and Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu region are filled with a sense of urgency as they clear underground bunkers, harvest crops along the fence and steel themselves for any potential escalation.

Thousands of underground safe shelters have been built by the government over the years for the protection of residents from firing by Pakistani troops. Though the frequency of incidents of ceasefire violations has been low since 2021, when the two countries renewed the ceasefire agreement, the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attacks has sparked safety concerns among the border residents, officials said.

"Nobody knows what will happen next. We have decided to prepare the underground bunkers so that we can save ourselves in case there is shelling or firing from across the border," Balbir Kour, former sarpanch of Treva village in R S Pura sector near here, said. India shares a 3,323-km-long border with Pakistan of which 221 km of the IB and 744 km of the Line of Control fall in Jammu and Kashmir.



On February 25, 2021, India and Pakistan announced the implementation of a renewed ceasefire along the borders of Jammu and Kashmir, which came as a major relief to the people living along the IB and the LoC.

India and Pakistan had initially signed a ceasefire agreement in 2003, but Pakistan frequently violated the agreement with over 5,000 violations reported in 2020 – the highest in a single year.

To safeguard the border residents from Pakistani shelling, the Centre in December 2017 sanctioned the construction of 14,460 individual and community bunkers in five districts of Jammu, Kathua and Samba, covering the villages located

along the IB and Poonch and Rajouri villages on the LoC. Later, the government had sanctioned over 4,000 more bunkers for the vulnerable population.

Kour, who was supervising the bunker cleaning drive, said they are ready to face any situation and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the forces. "We want our government to act decisively against the terrorists and their handlers sitting across the border. We want the elimination of all those who carried out the cold-blooded murder of unarmed and innocent civilians," she said.



Punjab, Haryana sizzle under intense heat

Intense heat prevailed in Punjab and Haryana on Saturday with Bathinda in Punjab recording the highest maximum temperature in the region at 43.9 degrees Celsius. Met department data showed. Among the other places in Punjab, Patiala recorded a high of 42.8 degrees Celsius, followed by Ludhiana (41.3 degrees), Pathankot (40.5 degrees), Amritsar (40.2 degrees), while Mohali recorded a maximum temperature of 39.6 degrees Celsius. Rohtak was the hottest place in Haryana at 43.6 degrees Celsius, while Hisar recorded a high of 41.5 degrees Celsius. Sirsa and Bhiwani registered respective highs of 42 degrees and 41.7 degrees, Narnaul 39.2 degrees, Gurugram 40.3 degrees, Ambala 41.4 degrees while Karnal recorded a maximum temperature of 41.5 degrees Celsius. Chandigarh, the common capital of the two states, recorded a high of 41.1 degrees Celsius.

Sonowal exhorts youth to commit to nation building

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Saturday exhorted the youth to commit themselves to building a new and strong India, which strengthens its position as a global leader.



Attending a Rozgar Mela here where newly appointed candidates received their appointment letters, Sonowal said, "As you join the esteemed workforce of India through your merit, talent and hard work, I extend heartfelt congratulations to you and your families. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji's visionary leadership, India has embarked on an era of rapid development, earning global recognition."

He urged the newly appointed youth to serve the nation with devotion and pride. "Together, let us safeguard our culture, uphold our dignity, and strengthen our nation to face any challenge fearlessly, with our heads held high," he added.

The Union minister said the role of the youth joining the workforce is crucial at this juncture as the country is poised to emerge as leader in the global forum.

"With discipline, dedication and a deep sense of service, let us work to transform India into a stronger, prouder nation that stands tall on the world stage," he added.

Sonowal handed over appointment letters to 207 successful candidates from different organisations of the Central government, including Central Board of Direct Tax, Central Reserve Police Force, Assam Rifles, Contoller General of Defence Account, Employees Provident Fund Organisation, and Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs.

India, China decide to resume Mansarovar Yatra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After a gap of nearly five years, India and China will resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra from June -- a move being seen as an attempt to normalise their relationship that was severely hit by the eastern Ladakh border standoff.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Saturday said the Yatra is set to take place from June to August via two routes -- Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand and Nathu La in Sikkim.

Rozgar Mela catalyst for youth, empowerment: Suresh Gopi

PNS ■ KOCHI

Union Minister Suresh Gopi on Saturday said that the Rozgar Mela is not just a recruitment drive, but a catalyst for youth empowerment and national development.



Addressing an event organised by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) as part of the nationwide Rozgar Mela here, Gopi said: "Rozgar Mela has empowered various government organisations to fill vacancies efficiently and create opportunities for India's youth."

The Union Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Tourism was the chief guest of the event.

He handed over appointment letters to 165 newly inducted recruits at the event. Prime Minister Narendra

Modi, via video conferencing, addressed the occasion.

Rozgar mela event was also held in Thiruvananthapuram, in which Union Minister of State for Rural Development Kamalash Paswan attended.

Addressing the mela, Paswan said that this is not merely employment, but a profound responsibility.

The Rozgar Mela is a step towards the fulfilment of the prime minister to accord the highest priority to employment generation, according to an official release.

Process of expelling Pak nationals has begun: Fadnavis

PNS ■ PUNE

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday said the process of expelling Pakistani citizens from India in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack has begun and legal action will be taken against such individuals overstaying in the western state.



He condemned the killing of innocent tourists and said

Santosh Jagdale - who were killed in the April 22 terror attack.

"I met the family members of those killed in the terror attack. The description of the incident narrated by Asawari Jagdale (daughter of one of the victims) is disturbing. I don't want to say anything to those speaking out of turn on the (Pahalgam) incident. Our resolution to fight

against terrorism has become even stronger. Help will be provided to the six families from Maharashtra," he told reporters on the sidelines of an event.

Twenty-six persons, mostly tourists, were killed by terrorists at a popular meadow in Kashmir's Anantnag district. Ganbote and Jagdale were among six individuals from Maharashtra who fell prey to bullets.

'Band, baaja, baraat' but wedding in limbo

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Indian groom stuck at Attari-Wagah border

Rajasthan's Shaitan Singh got engaged to Kesar Kanwar from Pakistan's Sindh province four years ago. As the groom's family struggled for years to get visas, the cross-border wedding was hit by another hurdle when the government closed the Attari border on Thursday.

With his wedding attire ready and all set to tie the knot in Pakistan's Amarkot city on April 30, Singh along with his family and 'baraat' set out from Barmer district for the Attari border on Tuesday.

But by the time they reached there, authorities refused to let them cross the border as India on Wednesday ordered an immediate shutdown of the Attari-Wagah border as part of a series of retaliatory steps following the tragic Pahalgam terror attack.

"We've waited a long time for this day," said Singh, adding that after years of efforts, he, his father, and his brother were granted visas only recently, on February 18.

The groom's cousin Surendra Singh said the situation has left both families disheartened. "Our relatives from Pakistan

had come here but they had to return. We are very disappointed. Terror attacks cause a lot of damage. Relations get spoiled. Movement on the border stops," he said.



As the cross-border wedding remains disrupted, the visa of Singh, a resident of Indroi village in Barmer district, is valid until May 12, giving the families a glimmer of hope that the wedding might still happen if the border reopens in time. "Whatever the terrorists did was wrong. The wedding has been interrupted. What to do? It is a matter of borders," the groom said.

The cross-border marriage was arranged through family ties, a common practice among the Sodha Rajput community, which has a significant population in the Sindh province of Pakistan.

Many of them prefer marrying within the community and often seek matches across the border to preserve their cultural traditions.

Singh, who works in the finance sector, is one of many in the region with relatives in Pakistan. For now, his family waits in the hope that the situation improves and the border reopens in time for the marriage to go ahead.

India will give a befitting reply to people responsible for terror attack: Nadda

PNS ■ PUNE

BJP president J P Nadda on Saturday said India will give a 'befitting' reply to those responsible for the Pahalgam terror attack, in which 26 persons lost their lives earlier this week.

Speaking to reporters here after offering prayers to Shrimant Dagadusheth Ganapati, Nadda said the entire country hopes that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will give a strong response to the attack. At least 26 people were killed when terrorists opened fire on tourists in the popular Baisaran meadow in Pahalgam in one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Kashmir in recent years.



The Union minister said, "I came here to seek blessings of Ganpati Bappa. The way a cowardly attack took place in Jammu & Kashmir, the entire country is angry, and they are hoping that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will give a strong reply to this attack." He said that he sought blessings that the country should face the situation strongly and give a 'befitting' reply to those responsible for the attack.

"LIFE IS UNCERTAIN.
EAT DESSERT FIRST"
— ERNESTINE ULMER



THE VEGETARIAN THALI HAD THE LEBU PATA BHAAT, BENGALI ALOO DUM, CHHOLAR DAL, GOLDA CHINGRI, MALAI KARI AND MORE TO ENJOY.

BHURI BHOJ Comes Alive In Delhi

Bringing the stories and spices of Bengal to life, Chef Ananya Banerjee curates an unforgettable menu for the Delhiites, for ten days, that celebrates the region's rich love for the food culture, writes ABHI SINGHAL



Chef Ananya Banerjee — The mind and magic behind the creativity and fusion of the Bengali food.

The Bengali culture always makes you feel so alive and the Bengali feast is to die for in the case of food lovers. So, for ten special days, the essence of Bengal will be live at the *The Surya*, New Delhi with "Taste of Bengal", that is a grand celebration of food, flavour and nostalgia. The heart behind the entire finger-licking food is Chef Ananya Banerjee, whose love for Bengal's food traditions shines through every plate.

The buffet spread showcases an impressive lineup of Bengali classics. Start with *Bhetki Paturi*, where mustard-marinated fish is gently wrapped in banana leaves and pan-fried to perfection. For the savours of the non-vegetarian you can try the ever-popular *Keema Egg Devil*, a favourite from Kolkata's street food scene that wraps

THE SWEETEST GRAND FINALE

The dessert spread is a poetic end to the Bengali feast. You will get to relish the *Makha Shondesh* served in a crisp kunafa basket — soft, kneaded, and delicately sweet. Then, surrender to the charm of *Kheer Komala*, a silky milk pudding laced with fresh oranges and citrus zest. A gentle, flavourful finale that lingers on the palate long after the last bite.

spiced minced meat around a boiled egg, fried until golden and crisp.

In the starters you also have *Ghugni tart* — a contemporary take on Kolkata's classic yellow pea curry, served in a delicate tart shell, *Beetroot Croquette cylinder* — a crisp, deep-fried beetroot and potato croquette with subtle spice, served with delicate garnish. These will not let you keep up the space for the upcoming main course.

The main courses feature the much-loved *Kosha Mangsho*, a slow-cooked mutton dish rich with

spices. Pair it with puffed *Luchi* or the fragrant yellow *Basanti Pulao* for a truly satisfying plate. And for those with a sweet tooth, the *Baked Rasogolla* is a must — a gentle twist on Bengal's iconic sweet that's both comforting and indulgent.

The *Vegetarian Thali* had the *Lebu pata bhaat* — fragrant gobindobogh rice infused with citrusy gondhoraj leaves for refreshing aroma, *Bengali Aloo Dum* — baby potatoes slow-cooked in lightly spiced tomato cumin. The taste of *Chholar Dal* with Narkel & Kishmish made with thick Bengal gram dal cooked with coconut slivers and sweet raisin will become your favourite eventually.

The desert is the last and the best. You will have the sweetness of *Makha Shondesh* in kunafa basket — Soft, Kneaded Bengali sandesh delicately in a crisp kunafa nest. *The Kheer Komala* — A velvety milk pudding infused with fresh oranges

and citrus zest will make your taste buds feel weak on food.

But this festival is about more than just what is on the plate. *The Surya* has turned its dining space into a little slice of Bengal with Live kitchen counters let diners watch dishes come to life, while traditional music adds a soothing background, completing an atmosphere that feels like stepping into a Bengali home.

FACT SHEET -

Taste of Bengal
Where: The Surya, New Delhi
When: 25th April - 4th May 2025
Timings: 7:00 PM - 11:00 PM
Price: Dinner Buffet at INR 2399++



From street snacks to heirloom recipes, "Taste of Bengal" brings Kolkata's kitchen to Delhi under the culinary guidance of Chef Ananya. It promises a meal to remember and is an invitation to connect with a part of India that is rich in warmth, tradition, and taste. So, prepare for a nostalgic food journey as The Surya.



Passport to World's Street Food



From Tokyo to Mexico, it's a flavourful food world tour at Cafe Delhi Heights, writes ABHI SINGHAL

Street food is an extra happy taste buds experience, a cultural adventure that brings together the flavours and traditions of distant lands. Imagine embarking on a food journey around the globe, all without leaving your seat. With the *International Street Food Festival 2025 at Cafe Delhi Heights*, you can do just that, as this exciting celebration of global cuisine unfolds across all their outlets from April 15 to May 1.

Step into the warm and aesthetic atmosphere of Cafe Delhi Heights, where the scents of sizzling spices, grilling meats, and fresh ingredients fill the

air, setting the stage for a food adventure. The festival's specially formed menu promises to take you on a whirlwind tour across continents, offering a unique twist on iconic street food dishes from around the world.

You can start your journey in Asia with a steaming bowl of Japanese ramen, its rich, savoury broth paired perfectly with tender noodles and a medley of fresh toppings. If you're craving something with a bit of heat, the spicy, tangy kick of Mexican tacos will leave your taste buds dancing. For a touch of Middle Eastern warmth, savour the juicy, flavourful shawarmas, packed with a delicious mix of meats and spices that transport you straight to the bustling streets of Beirut or Cairo.

But the adventure doesn't stop there. Want to travel more? Now, CDH takes you to Spain with a bite of the crispy, sugar-dusted churros, or you can sink teeth into a tender Turkish kebab that captures the essence of Turkey's street food culture. For those who prefer something lighter, the Vietnamese spring rolls offer a refreshing crunch with a burst of herbs

and dipping sauce that's simply irresistible. And for the perfect comfort food, there are American sliders, mini burgers packed with bold flavours that are both familiar and exciting.

The festival adds an interactive twist to the experience with the *Dart World Board* — a fun, paid activity where you throw a dart at a world map that highlights the countries featured in the festival menu. Wherever the dart lands, that's the street food dish you must try. It's an adventurous way to discover new flavours, bringing an element of surprise to your dining experience.

Taste the global street food and something new with the *International Street Food Festival at Cafe Delhi Heights*. Hours of spending time and savouring food will take you through culture, flavour, and the joy of sharing a meal.

FACT SHEET
Location - All Outlets
Cafe Delhi Heights
Availability - 15th April - 1st May



A Night of Artful Mixology

Bangkok's Rabbit Hole Brings Cocktail Magic to Gurugram at The Leela Ambience, writes GYANESHWAR DAYAL



The art of mixology extends far beyond simply combining drinks — it's a creative craft that merges flavour, balance, technique, and storytelling. A superb cocktail is a sensory journey, where each ingredient is selected with intention and precision to evoke a mood, a memory, or an emotion. From the clink of ice to the swirl of citrus oils, mixology is where culinary science meets artistic expression, turning a simple sip into a memorable experience.

In a dazzling display of global mixology, The *Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences* hosted one of Asia's most iconic cocktail destinations for an unforgettable evening. On 23rd April, the celebrated *Rubicon Bar & Cigar Lounge* opened its doors to a special bar takeover by *Rabbit Hole* — Bangkok's legendary speakeasy known for its inventive cocktails and chic, understated charm.

Tucked away behind a nondescript wooden door in Thonglor's vibrant nightlife district, Rabbit Hole has earned a reputation for pushing the boundaries of mixology while maintaining a relaxed elegance. For one night only, this distinctive Bangkok spirit was brought to Gurugram, infusing the capital region's cocktail culture with an international flair.

At the heart of the takeover were Rabbit Hole's star talents — Depp, the Group Beverage Manager, and Bite, a master mixologist known for

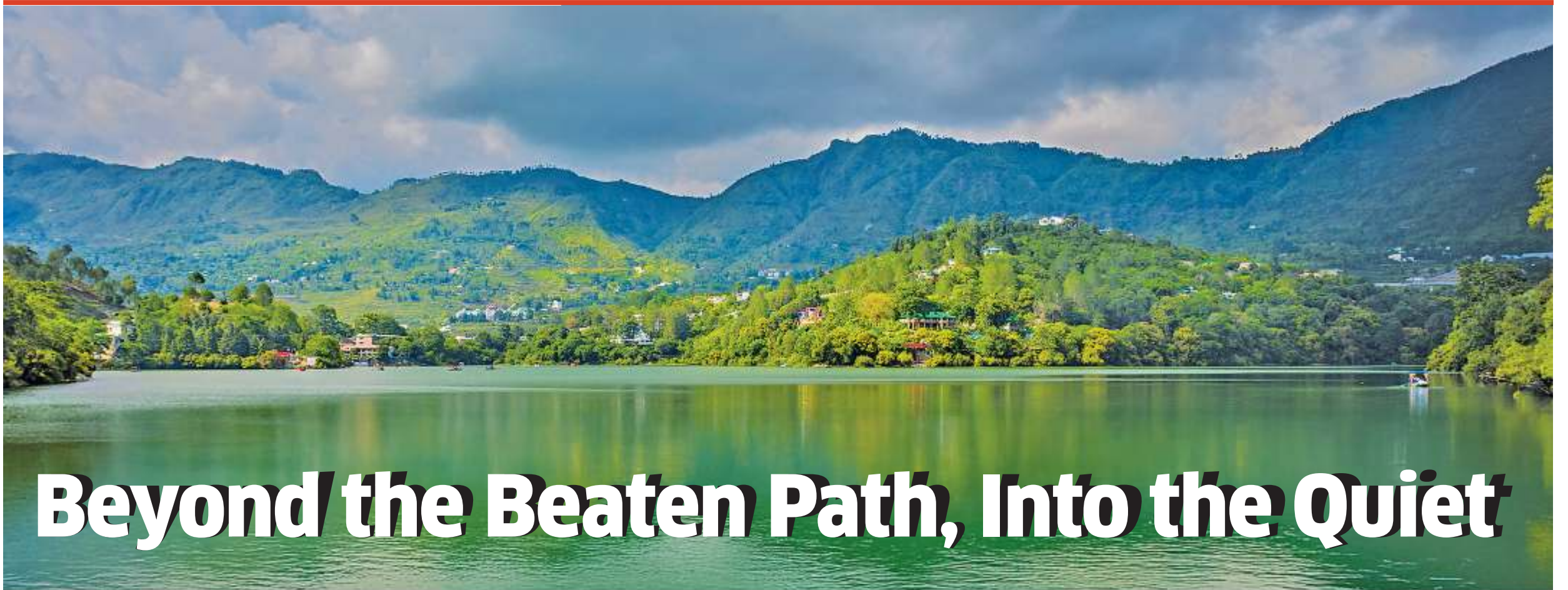
RABBIT HOLE'S SIGNATURE STYLE

Tucked away behind a nondescript wooden door in Thonglor's vibrant nightlife district, Rabbit Hole has earned a reputation for pushing the boundaries of mixology while maintaining a relaxed elegance. For one night only, this distinctive Bangkok spirit was brought to Gurugram, infusing the capital region's cocktail culture with an international flair.

his flair, finesse, and storytelling. The duo took over the bar with a menu of meticulously curated cocktails that highlighted their signature creativity, precision, and deep understanding of flavour. Each drink told a story, bridging cultures and delighting the senses of everyone in attendance.

The *Rubicon Bar & Cigar Lounge*, with interiors designed by Japan's renowned Studio Spin, provided an opulent yet intimate backdrop for the evening. Featuring rich wood panelling, maroon leather seating, warm ambient lighting, and the refined atmosphere of a private cigar lounge, *Rubicon* served as the perfect stage for Rabbit Hole's artistic libations.

This collaboration marks yet another milestone for The *Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences* in its mission to deliver world-class hospitality experiences. By partnering with global tastemakers such as Rabbit Hole, the hotel continues to elevate Gurugram's luxury scene, offer-



Beyond the Beaten Path, Into the Quiet

A peaceful getaway in the hills, perfect for relaxing, exploring nature, and enjoying quiet moments

Tucked away in the lush folds of the Kumaon hills lies a lake of nine corners, **Naukuchiyatal** — an emerald secret that still shimmers in its serenity, away from the better-trodden paths of Nainital and Bhimtal.

And now, it has a luxurious new address: Naukuchia House, a recently renovated 42 — room property by the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL), the custodians of the iconic Taj brand.

Standing elegantly by the lake, Naukuchia House is not just a hotel — it's a sanctuary. Designed with understated charm and heritage echoes, the property offers panoramic lake views, with a private entry that takes you straight to the shimmering waters. Step out of your room, and you can hop directly onto a boat. I did. A slow ride in the morning mist, a fishing line tossed casually into the glassy lake surface — this isn't just vacationing; it's soul-deep unwinding.

For those chasing rejuvenation rather than adventure, I recommend their signature full-body spa therapy. My masseur was a magician with years of training in her fingertips, and the steam bath that followed was the kind of cleansing city souls long for.

But Naukuchia House doesn't stop there. On one of the afternoons, the hotel arranged a guided walk into the forest, leading to an enchanting village clearing where warm tea and quiet conversations replaced Wi-Fi signals and screens.

And then there's **Kainchi Dham** — just a scenic 30-minute drive away. This modest ashram has turned into a magnetic spiritual hub, drawing global figures like **Mark Zuckerberg**, **Julia Roberts**, and closer to home, **Virat Kohli** and **Anushka Sharma**.

Whether you're a believer or a curious wanderer, the calm of **Shri Neem Karoli Baba's** temple will stay long after you leave. Back at the hotel, there's plenty to indulge in. The temperature — controlled pool makes a dip possible even when the air gets crisp.

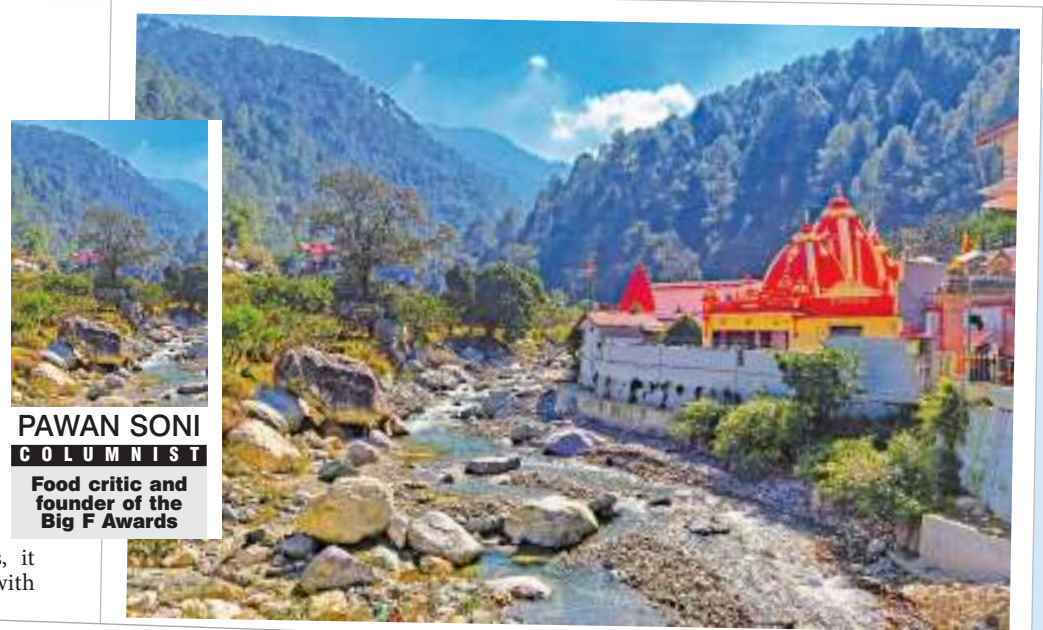
The food?

Their Asian fare is well-balanced, and the Indian kebabs-succulent, smoky, and served with Himalayan charm-are memorable. A chef's nod to modern tastes without losing sight of tradition at Ija, their all — day dining restaurant that means 'Mother' in Kumaoni, is worth a praise. Naukuchiyatal is just 5.5 hours by road from Delhi, making it ideal for a 2-3 night escape. Unlike its over-touristed cousins, it offers silence, stars, and stories. And with Naukuchia House now writing its own, there's never been a better time to visit.



NOT TO MISS

The Kumaoni thali is a flavourful ode to the hills. It features **aloo ke gutke**, **lahsuni palak** and hearty **gehat dal**, paired with the region's signature **lal bhaat**. The tangy Kumaoni raita and spicy bhaang ki chutney add layers of taste. For meat lovers, there's tender chicken and a rich shikari mutton curry. The meal ends with a comforting bowl of rice kheer — soulful and satisfying.



PAWAN SONI
 COLUMNIST

Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards

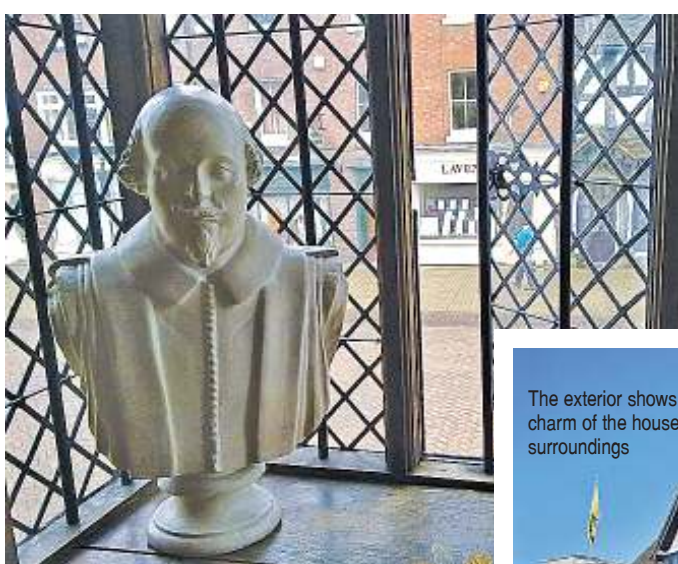


REJUVENATION

Naukuchiyatal Lake, with its nine serene corners, offers peaceful boating and fishing. Nearby, **Kainchi Dham** — home to **Shri Neem Karoli Baba** — draws seekers and celebrities alike for its calm, spiritual aura. Surrounded by pine forests and misty hills, the lake is a hidden gem for nature lovers. Birdwatchers often flock here to spot rare Himalayan species in the tranquil surroundings. Cozy homestays and lakeside cafés add charm to the quiet retreat.

Footsteps in the Halls of Genius

A literary journey in an English town unites two voices across continents and centuries



BY SEEMA ANAND CHOPRA

Trying to take a step backwards into history, on a cool September autumn afternoon I stood looking at the birthplace of Shakespeare and wondered what it was that had drawn me here at this time of the year.

It is just another English house, but for its resident who made it extraordinary — this was home to one of the greatest English writers who hold a universal appeal. His plays and poems continue, till times today, to entice readers and audiences, transcending borders of countries and languages. Undoubtedly, this celebrated author is remembered even after 450 years, for his literary works have proudly, since ages, been imbibed in most school and university syllabuses. So, I went visiting the English town of Stratford-upon-Avon where the historic and skilfully restored house of William Shakespeare is located.

Shakespeare's Birthplace Museum

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust was founded in 1847, almost three centuries after his birth, and has been able to preserve his legacy and the five Tudor houses associated with Shakespeare's lifetime. By the 19th century, the house had decayed and was falling apart, but the timely restoration attempts by the famous writer — Charles Dickens, helped to save it. He organised performances in towns of England to raise funds to renovate the memorial house! We gathered this information and a lot more at the vivid, engrossing Shakespeare Museum, through which is the entry to Shakespeare's birthplace!



The exterior shows the historic charm of the house and its surroundings



Shakespeare's Birthplace

Subsequently, we reached Shakespeare's birthplace, which is quite lively with radiant colours welcoming all who enter it, echoing the lifestyle of the 16th century. Shakespeare lived here with his parents and many more brothers and sisters. The par-

lour, hall, workshop, bedrooms and the furnishings have been reinstated too.

Also noteworthy is Shakespeare's bedchamber and birthing room from the year 1564, recreated to perfection! We were informed that he sometimes wrote the description of his personal domestic items, furniture etc. in his plays, which has helped the restoration work to a great extent!

Discovery in the Gardens

In the 16th century, the garden of the house was used for various purposes by Shakespeare's father — like wool-dealing activities, glove-making, growing vegetables, herbs and medicinal plants, a barn for pigs, hens and more and also as a storage area. Wandering through one of the five gardens attached to Shakespeare's house, we made a discovery that added excitement to our visit and it was an icon of a true tribute to the 'Voice of India'.

AU REVOIR

It's amazing how such a humble space gave rise to one of the greatest writers ever. Quiet but meaningful. The setting adds to the magic — it's like the whole street tells a story. We drove back with memories of two great poets and writers — William Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore, born centuries and continents apart, yet brought together by little effort and fate at Shakespeare's Birthplace! No wonder that Rabindranath Tagore is referred to as the Shakespeare of India! Rabindranath Tagore's birth anniversary — 7th May is celebrated annually at Shakespeare's Birthplace by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.



Shakespeare's House on Henley Street. This timber — framed house is where Shakespeare was born

Tagore at Shakespeare's Birthplace

On the occasion of the upcoming birth anniversary of Nobel Laureate Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore on 7th May, I recall my visit to Shakespeare's Birthplace House fondly. After the Shakespeare house tour, we stepped out through one of the back exit doors, wandered through its five gardens attached to the main house, and spotted the bust of Rabindranath Tagore — the great Indian poet and writer — it stood there majestically, as a true homage to him. We were at a quiet garden corner of the house and there it was — a fine sculpture on a stone plinth carved with Tagore's poem to Shakespeare, which he wrote on the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death — completion of 300 years in 1916 — titled 'In Honour of William



Shakespeare's Birthing Room. A small, modest room believed to be where Shakespeare was born

Shakespeare'. In the poem, he praises Shakespeare as an English poet as well as a world poet — an accolade to Shakespeare's work that inspired Tagore's literary work too! Little did he envision that less than 50 years later, the poem would be back in the limelight when the Calcutta Art Society presented an ivory tablet of the poem at the newly opened Shakespeare Centre in 1964!

— The author is a travel writer and researcher



CUCUMBER & MINT COOLER

A light and refreshing drink perfect for hot summer afternoons.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cucumber (peeled and chopped)
- 1/2 cup fresh mint leaves
- 1 tablespoon honey or agave syrup (optional)
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 2 cups cold water
- Ice cubes

METHOD:

Blend cucumber, mint leaves, lemon juice, and honey (if using) in a blender until smooth. Strain the mixture into a jug to remove pulp. Add cold water and ice cubes. Stir well and serve chilled, garnished with a sprig of mint.

WATERMELON & FETA SALAD

A sweet and salty combination perfect for summer picnics.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups watermelon cubes
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- Fresh basil leaves, torn
- Salt and pepper, to taste

METHOD:

Combine watermelon cubes and feta cheese in a bowl. Drizzle with olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Toss gently to combine, then sprinkle with torn basil leaves. Season with salt and pepper, and serve immediately for a cool, tangy treat.



MANGO LASSI POPSICLES

Turn the classic mango lassi into a frozen treat for those extra hot days.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ripe mango, peeled and chopped
- 1/2 cup plain yogurt
- 1/4 cup milk or almond milk
- 2 tablespoons honey or sugar (adjust to taste)
- A pinch of cardamom powder (optional)

METHOD:

Blend mango, yogurt, milk, honey, and cardamom powder in a blender until smooth. Pour the mixture into popsicle molds. Freeze for 4-6 hours or overnight. Once frozen, run warm water over the outside of the molds to release the popsicles. Enjoy!

SPICY ROASTED CHICKPEAS

A crunchy, healthy snack to munch on during summer evenings.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 can of chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon cumin powder
- 1/4 teaspoon chili powder
- Salt to taste

METHOD:

Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Pat chickpeas dry with a towel and toss them in olive oil and the spices. Spread the chickpeas in a single layer on a baking sheet. Roast for 25-30 minutes, stirring halfway through, until crispy. Let cool and enjoy as a crunchy snack.



COCONUT LIME RICE

A tropical twist on plain rice, perfect as a side dish for summer BBQs or grilled seafood.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup basmati rice
- 1 cup coconut milk
- 1/2 cup water
- Zest and juice of 1 lime
- Salt to taste
- Fresh cilantro, chopped (optional)



METHOD:

Rinse the rice until the water runs clear. In a saucepan, bring coconut milk and water to a simmer. Add the rice, lime zest, and salt. Cover and cook on low heat for 15-20 minutes, or until the rice is tender. Remove from heat and fluff with a fork. Stir in lime juice and garnish with fresh cilantro before serving. Enjoy these light, flavorful recipes that will help you stay cool and satisfied all summer long!

WHAT'S NEW

STRAIGHT FROM KASHMIR'S SOUL

HERB HEAVEN is your one-stop destination. There is nothing quite like the saffron strands from Kashmir—deep red in color, beautifully aromatic, and rich in taste. Bringing to you the finest quality saffron, sourced directly from the renowned saffron fields of Pampore, Kashmir.



LAVIE LUXE FENNY25 SMALL BOX SLING BAG

Add a bold twist to your everyday style with a bold crossbody bag, where function meets fashion. This distinctive boxy bag is compact yet surprisingly spacious, easily fitting all your daily essentials. Its sleek design and well-crafted inner lining ensure durability and effortless accessibility. Made from premium materials, it's perfect for on-the-go styling. Whether paired with a mini-dress or casual jeans, it adds a touch of personality to any outfit. Key features include two well-organized compartments, an easy-to-carry structure, and ample space for your essentials.



INR 3799/-

CURL CARE'S 3-STEP CURL ROUTINE

Say hello to your best curls ever with Curl Care's 3-Step Curl Routine—made by a curly, for curlsies and wavies! Specially formulated for Indian hair and climate, this vegan and cruelty-free trio gently cleanses, deeply hydrates, and defines curls without sulfates, silicones, or parabens. It includes the Untangled Shampoo to cleanse without stripping, Hydrating Deep Conditioner to moisturize and strengthen, and Define & Shine Curl Cream for all-day bounce and frizz control. Perfect for two washes a week, it transforms dull, dry curls into soft, defined spirals naturally.

INR 1399/-



MAC COSMETICS STROBE BEAM LIQUID BLUSH

Cheeks are having a major moment...and everyone wants to go for the glow. Strobe Beam Liquid Blush puts you in control of the intensity so you can lean in with a cheeky pop of iridescent colour or go bold with layers for a rush of flush. With pigments that bend light for lit-from-within multidimensional luminosity, Strobe Beam Liquid Blush can be used to sculpt, highlight and underpaint any look. Inspired by sunrises and sunsets, each universally flattering shade gives cheeks an ethereal radiance for a "great lighting" effect from day to night.



INR 2900

EPRES HEALTHY HAIR 3-STEP SYSTEM STARTER KIT

This kit is a one-step spray that actively repairs broken disulfide bonds to restore hair's structure in just 10 minutes. One can cleanse with Healthy Hair Shampoo, which protects against damage as you wash, leaving hair cleaner, lighter, and shinier. Then condition with a Healthy Hair Conditioner, which instantly smooths, detangles, and leaves hair quicker to dry with a high-shine finish. Ideal for all hair types and textures, these quat-free formulas deliver high-performance care for stronger, shinier, healthier hair.

STAY COOL THIS SUMMER

Wacoal India unveils its Spring/Summer 2025 Cool Comfort Collection, crafted with revolutionary Cool Touch fabric that lowers body temperature by 2-3°C for a refreshing feel. Designed for hot weather, it features breathable perforated cups, rice-knit fabric, and serene pastel hues. Choose from three stylish bra styles—padded wired, lacy padded non-wired, and padded non-wired—with coordinating panties.

price range of starts from INR 1999

HOROSCOPE



ARIES

Siblings support you, a project gets approved, and your charm, creativity, and ambition shine. Embrace personal growth, health, and success while seeking balance, rest, and joy in challenges.



TAURUS

You'll win appreciation at work, manage financial stress, and connect with family. While craving seclusion, your loyalty and emotional depth strengthen bonds. Embrace change, new ideas and self-care.



GEMINI

Joy and fresh ideas uplift you. Support from peers and loved ones brings success. Travel and new connections boost growth. Separation brings confidence. Your charm, intellect and goodwill shine brightly.



CANCER

Frustration may arise, but resilience lifts you. Support others, stay focused and define goals. Balance emotions, health and ambition. A new contract brings career stability as you reconnect with memories.



LEO

Stay focused despite missed chances and emotional distance. Your drive and insight fuel success. Embrace unexpected love, reflect on family ties and fight setbacks. Balance humility, and ambition wisely.



VIRGO

Joy, introspection, and creativity uplift you. Your caring nature shines, earning love and trust. Support flows in, success follows effort and new experiences build confidence. Romance and fruitful trips await.



LIBRA

Your talent and loyalty win admiration, though delays may hinder progress. Balance ambition with family time. Emotional strength and smart planning help overcome setbacks and bring success in life.



SCORPIO

Your supportive nature benefits all while balancing love, work and self-growth tests you. Emotions may challenge health, but creativity revives you. Embrace recognition and self-discovery amid seclusion.



SAGITTARIUS

Your past efforts begin to pay off. Stay calm amidst all challenges. Romance, support, and clarity uplift you. Trust your intuition, avoid negativity, and embrace rewards through thoughtful actions.



CAPRICORN

New connections spark mental joy but avoid being overly critical. A job change looks promising. Emotional balance and support revive relationships. Recognition and unexpected help fuel your success.



AQUARIUS

Joy, introspection and kindness bring growth, despite feelings of restlessness or criticism. A new relationship offers stability, and a new job brings change. Embrace decisions and overcome doubts.



PISCES

Stay calm in challenging situations. Communicate openly with loved ones and spend time with your children. Trust your philosophy, avoid health risks, and guide others. Proceed thoughtfully with new ideas.



ADVENTURE

"A person susceptible to wanderlust is not so much addicted to movement as committed to transformation"
— Pico Iyer

When adventure is a way of life!



The Mechukha Adventure Race in Arunachal Pradesh blended high-octane action with national pride, showcasing the region's beauty, writes GYANESHWAR DAYAL

The greatest challenge one can face often lies within — confronting and transcending personal limitations. Pushing these boundaries becomes one of the most rewarding experiences life can offer. This notion came to life both figuratively and literally when 22 teams converged in Mechukha for the 3rd National Adventure Racing Championship, a prestigious event under the Adventure Racing World Series — Asia Series.

In a spectacular blend of adrenaline and assertion, Arunachal Pradesh played host to a high — octane adventure race set against the breathtaking backdrop of Mechukha, located in the Shi Yomi district. Spearheaded by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh, which aims to place Mechukha firmly on the global adventure sports map, the choice of location was as strategic as it was scenic.

Nestled near the Chinese border on the far eastern edge of India, Mechukha stands not only as a gateway to natural beauty but also as a testament to national pride and resilience. Pasang Dorjee Sona, the Sports Minister of Arunachal Pradesh and the visionary behind the event's conception, expressed his intent with candor and conviction: "This is our way of telling the world — we are here, waiting to be explored. What you'll find here is an India unlike any other. The race is merely a means to draw global attention and unveil this hidden paradise."

His words carry weight, for Mechukha offers boundless opportunities for adventure tourism — from soaring down one of India's longest zip lines and paragliding over pristine valleys, to braving wild rivers through rafting and kayaking, scaling rugged mountain faces, and trekking through untouched landscapes. Set against the backdrop of the Eastern Himalayas, the race included mountain biking, trail running, river rafting, and rappelling — challenging participants across some of the most



rugged and breathtaking terrain in the region. Mechukha, located near the Indo — Tibet border, offered a dramatic and fitting venue, with its raw beauty and strategic significance. The race covered a route that took participants through dense forests, across suspension bridges, over swift rivers, and into remote tribal hamlets, giving them a taste of the unique culture and unspoiled environment that defines Arunachal Pradesh.

Promoting Adventure Tourism

Organised by the state's Department of Tourism in collaboration with Nth adventure the race was a strategic move to boost adventure tourism in the region. Arunachal Pradesh, often referred to as the "Land of the Rising Sun," boasts immense untapped potential for eco and adventure tourism. Pema Khandu, the dynamic Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, is deeply committed to positioning Mechukha and the state as a whole, as a vibrant tourism hub.

"As a border state, we face certain constraints," he noted, "but significant efforts are underway to enhance infrastructure — from roads to telecommunications — which will give a major boost to the tourism industry. Arunachal Pradesh is a peaceful state with 85 percent forest cover, offering visitors a rejuvenating experience amidst nature."

Speaking at the event, Arunachal Pradesh's Tourism Minister emphasised, "This is our home, and we are proud to showcase its beauty and resilience. Adventure tourism is our bridge to the world, and Mechukha is just the beginning." "It's not just about the race. It's about experiencing India's frontier, the people, the spirit, the message," said a participant from Mumbai.



EXPLORING THE LAST SHANGRI-LA

Nestled in the eastern Himalayas, Mechukha is a pristine valley in the Shi-Yomi district of Arunachal Pradesh, India. Often described as the "Last Shangri-La," this enchanting destination remains largely untouched by commercial tourism, offering an unspoiled glimpse into nature, culture, and thrilling adventures.

A TAPESTRY OF NATURAL BEAUTY

Mechukha is a dreamscape of lush meadows, dense pine forests, winding rivers, and majestic mountains. In spring and summer, the valley is blanketed with wildflowers, while autumn offers crisp air and golden hues. Winters, though chilly, transform Mechukha into a white wonderland, with snow-draped landscapes that look like they're lifted straight from a postcard.

ADVENTURE AWAITS

While tranquility is one of Maichuka's charms, the region also promises adrenaline, pumping adventure for thrill seekers.

TREKKING AND HIKING

Mechukha is surrounded by several unexplored trails that cut through dense forests and mountain passes. The Samten Yongcha trek is a favourite among locals, offering panoramic views of the valley. Hikes to nearby ridges reveal sweeping vistas of snow capped peaks and endless forests.

RIVER RAFTING

The Siyom River, though calm in places, also has rapids suitable for white — water rafting, especially during the summer. For the more laid, back adventurer, angling for local fish species in the river is a peaceful pastime.

PARAGLIDING

Mechukha has also become known as a paragliding hotspot, especially during the annual Adventure Festival organised by the Arunachal Pradesh tourism department. Soaring over pine forests and rivers offers a bird's eye view of the valley's breathtaking landscape.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

With its rugged terrain and offbeat tracks, Maichuka is perfect for mountain biking. Whether you're coasting downhill or navigating rocky trails, the combination of fresh air and scenic backdrops makes every ride memorable.



A SUBTLE YET STRONG MESSAGE TO CHINA

China has consistently refused to recognise Arunachal Pradesh as part of India, referring to it as "South Tibet" in its official maps. The Indian government has repeatedly reaffirmed that Arunachal Pradesh is and will always be an integral part of India. By organising a high-profile adventure event in a border village, India sent a quiet but firm message: governance, development, and public participation in the region are thriving. The presence of Indian security forces, civil authorities, and a large number of Indian participants underlined the reality on the ground.



India's 3rd National Adventure Racing Championship came to Arunachal Pradesh for the first time. As part of the prestigious ARWS Asia Series, the championship offered an experience that combined intense competition, breathtaking landscapes, and rich cultural immersion. Held in the remote and pristine Mechukha Valley, the event lived up to its promise of providing a race like no other. Nestled high in the Himalayas, 6,000 feet above sea level, Mechukha

welcomed competitors with its untouched beauty. The participants not only faced some of the toughest terrains in the country but also had the chance to immerse themselves in the culture and traditions of the region, discovering the warmth and hospitality of the local tribes, including the Membas, Ramos, Bokars, Libos, and Tagin.

The 3rd National Adventure Racing Championship also served as a qualifier for the ARWS Asia Championship 2025, adding an extra layer

of intensity to the competition. With national and international teams coming together to compete, the event attracted some of the best in the field. In addition to the race, the championship offered a generous cash prize pool of Rs 7 lakh, 5 lakh and 3 lakhs. But beyond the competition, the event allowed participants to fully immerse themselves in Mechukha's rich culture. It was an experience that went far beyond the race itself, offering a deep connection to the land.



SHILPA RAO: I DON'T SEE EXPECTATIONS AS PRESSURE— ONLY THE NEED TO BE HONEST

In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, celebrated singer **Shilpa Rao** delves deep into the emotional landscape of her new track *Khudaya Ishq* from the film *Abir Gulal*. Known for her soul-stirring vocals and poetic sensibility, she opens up about surrendering to love, singing with vulnerability, and trusting the music to guide her. Rao also reflects on the legacy of honest music, the invisible role of pain in art, and how staying emotionally true is the key to timeless resonance

TEJAL SINHA
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Some voices are heard. Shilpa Rao's is felt. It doesn't merely glide over a melody—it pierces through the noise of the world, anchors itself in your soul, and stays long after the music ends. With *Khudaya Ishq*, her latest track from the evocative film *Abir Gulal*, Shilpa doesn't just sing about love—she dissolves into it. It's not the flutter of first crushes or the fireworks of infatuation—it's love in its rawest, most sacred form: aching, grown, surrendered. The kind that leaves you breathless, not because it's perfect, but because it's true. In this deeply personal reflection, Shilpa opens up about creating from a place of emotional honesty, why heartbreak often holds the key to her most haunting per-



It's always interesting to sing a romantic song because even in love, there are so many different shades and emotions you can show. With every new romantic track, we explore a new phase of love

formances, and how music—when it's real—has the power to become a prayer.

In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, the celebrated singer opens up about her newest track *Khudaya Ishq*, how she taps into emotions while recording, and what makes her music timelessly relevant.

Reflecting on her journey through romantic music, Shilpa shares, "It's always interesting to sing a romantic song because even in love, there are so many different shades and emotions you can show. With every new romantic track, we explore a new phase of love." She describes *Khudaya Ishq* as a song that

stands apart—not young or playful, but deeply mature. "But love is still love," she says, "You are fully involved with the other person. That's what this song is about."

Khudaya Ishq has an almost prayer-like quality to it, one that evokes longing and surrender. For Shilpa, such a song is deeply personal. "The lyrics and the composition inspire you, and your experiences of love come into play too," she explains. "Being in love is a blessing, and when you draw from your emotions while singing, it feels like you're reliving those moments."

She adds that she hopes everyone, in their own way, gets to experience a love that mirrors the soul of this song.

When asked whether pain helps bring out the best in a singer, Shilpa turns to the core emotion of the track—love. "The strongest feeling in this track was the emotion of falling in love. And when that happens, you don't hold back—you just go all in," she shares. That's exactly what she did while recording *Khudaya Ishq*: "I didn't let doubts or complicated thoughts come in; I just sang it with pure love." The song's lyrical theme revolves around surrender in love, something Shilpa

believes music helps us confront. "That's the power of art," she affirms. "When you're feeling something deeply but don't know how to express it, art gives you the words and the space to let it out. *Khudaya Ishq* helps people express that kind of love."

Her first emotional response upon hearing the composition confirmed this instinctive connection. "Occasionally, it's rare to find lyrics and music that blend so well together. I fell in love with the song the first time I heard it—and that's the feeling I carried while singing it."

On capturing the ache and longing that defines *Khudaya Ishq*, Shilpa kept her approach simple and organic. "The only thing I did was stay fully focused. No overthinking, no fear—just love."

She also touches upon the haunting Sufi undertone that subtly emerges through the track. Rather than planning it consciously, she allowed herself to surrender to the flow. "We don't really plan or compartmentalise while singing. It's best to just feel the moment and go with the flow. Some parts were more rhythmic, and I simply followed what felt natural without overthinking it."

Though the film *Abir Gulal* is visually rich and emotionally layered, Shilpa reveals she wasn't aware of the film's involvement when she initially recorded the song. "Usually, we don't know. We only ask about the character's emotion or situation," she says. However, once she learned about the context, it all made perfect sense. "It felt like the song and the film were a perfect match—like they were made for each other."

Despite her massive fan base, especially among younger audiences, Shilpa doesn't feel the pressure of expectations. "I don't think of it as a burden. The goal is always to be honest and sincere in what you sing. If you're true to the song and your feelings, that's what matters most." She believes that honesty in music leads to timelessness. "If you're musically honest, you'll stay relevant—not just today but in the future too. Many great composers and writers made music not just for their time but for generations. Music is a legacy. The ragas, the notes—they've lasted for centuries, and we're just carrying them forward."

Looking ahead, Shilpa shares her excitement for a few upcoming releases. "There are some really cool songs coming up for *Jewel Thief*. I hope people enjoy that song too. I also have a few indie collaborations releasing this year. I'm excited to share them one by one."



TRENDING

PERSON

POPE FRANCIS



Pope Francis, the 266th pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, has passed away, leaving behind a legacy of compassion, humility, and reform. Known for his progressive views and deep concern for the marginalized, his death marks the end of a transformative papacy that resonated far beyond the Vatican.

VIDEO

KASHMIRI MAN CARRYING INJURED TOURIST

In a powerful act of humanity, a Kashmiri man is seen carrying an injured tourist on his back to safety during the Pahalgam terrorist attack. Amid chaos and violence, this moment shines as a reminder that compassion transcends conflict.



MOVIE

GROUND ZERO



Emraan Hashmi's latest release, *Ground Zero*, has been met with a positive reception from audiences, who are praising his intense performance and the gripping storyline. Fans are flocking to theaters, with many highlighting the film's engaging narrative and Hashmi's compelling portrayal of his character.

SONG

CHOR BAZARI PHIR SE



The makers of the upcoming film *Bhool Chuk Maaf* have dropped their second musical offering—*Chor Bazar 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.

PICTURE

SKETCHES OF ATTACKERS RELEASED



Security agencies have released sketches of the three terrorists involved in the Pahalgam attack, following a thorough investigation. The sketches are based on eyewitness accounts and are part of ongoing efforts to apprehend the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

HOT WEATHER, COOL PARENTING

Ensure a safe summer for your child

During the summer season, children's health requires extra attention due to the rising temperatures, increased exposure to the sun, and a heightened risk of dehydration. Young children are especially vulnerable to the heat, as their bodies are still developing and can struggle to regulate temperature efficiently. Ensuring they remain hydrated, eat the right foods, wear appropriate clothing, and get adequate rest is essential for keeping them safe and comfortable. Encourage children to drink water frequently, even if they don't feel thirsty, and limit outdoor activities during peak heat hours.

One of the most crucial aspects of summer care is ensuring that children remain properly hydrated. With the heat and active play, children can lose fluids quickly through sweat, putting them at risk of dehydration. Studies show that over 50% of children do not consume enough water daily, which can impact their energy levels and overall health. Water is the most important drink for staying hydrated, but it's equally important to encourage children to consume other hydrating liquids like coconut water, lemonade, or even buttermilk. These drinks help replenish lost electrolytes, essential for proper body function during hot days. Provide a water bottle when children go outside and encourage them to take small sips frequently to stay hydrated. During outdoor activities instruct children to take 10 gulps of water after every half an hour.

In terms of food, the summer season calls for a diet that helps cool the body, provides energy, and replenishes lost nutrients. Fresh,



hydrating fruits like watermelon, cucumbers, oranges, and strawberries are not only refreshing but also packed with vitamins and minerals that help maintain healthy skin and immune function. These fruits also provide a significant amount of water, aiding in hydration. Light and easily digestible meals such as soups, salads, and smoothies are perfect for hot days as they are gentle on the stomach and help prevent the digestive system from becoming sluggish. Cooling foods such as yogurt, rich in probiotics, promote gut health and boost immunity, while leafy vegetables like lettuce and spinach add hydration and fiber. Avoid spicy, oily, or fried foods as they can increase body heat and cause discomfort.

Clothing plays a crucial role in protecting children from the intense heat of summer. Loose-fitting, lightweight clothing made from natural fabrics like cotton allows the skin to breathe and helps prevent overheating. Cotton

absorbs sweat efficiently, making it an ideal summer fabric. Light-colored clothes reflect sunlight and keep the body cooler, whereas darker colors tend to absorb heat. Protective accessories such as hats, sunglasses, and

light scarves add further protection. A wide-brimmed hat shields the face and neck from harmful UV rays, while sunglasses protect delicate eyes from the sun's glare and UV damage. Sunscreen should be applied generously to exposed skin, especially when children are outdoors, to prevent sunburns and long-term skin damage. Dress children in breathable cotton outfits, apply sunscreen 30 minutes before sun exposure and reapply every 4 hours, and ensure they wear hats when outdoors. Proper rest is also essential during the summer, as heat can make children feel more tired and lethargic than usual. Adequate sleep and daytime naps help children maintain energy levels and avoid heat exhaustion. Ensure they sleep in a cool, well-ventilated environment, and consider using fans or air conditioning to maintain comfort. Encourage children to rest during the hottest part of the day and avoid excessive physical exertion.

Outdoor play is vital for a child's development, but with the summer heat, it's important to strike a balance. Activities such as swimming, playing in shaded areas, or enjoying water-based games are excellent ways to help children stay active and cool simultaneously. In some cases, it might be advisable to take breaks indoors in a cool space to prevent overexposure to heat. Plan outdoor playtimes early in the morning or late in the evening when temperatures are lower. By maintaining these essential care practices, parents can help ensure their children stay safe, healthy, and comfortable throughout the summer months. A little extra effort in hydration, food, clothing, and rest goes a long way in making summer enjoyable while keeping children protected from its extreme effects.

ESSENTIAL SUMMER CARE TIPS FOR KIDS

- Ensure children drink water and rehydrating liquids at frequent intervals.
- Include hydrating fruits like watermelon, cucumber, and oranges in their diet
- Serve light and easily digestible meals like soups, salads, and yogurt
- Dress children in lightweight, breathable cotton clothes and light colors
- Apply sunscreen (SPF 30 or above) and use hats or sunglasses for protection
- Avoid direct sun exposure between 10 AM and 4 PM
- Provide a cool, ventilated sleeping environment for quality rest
- Encourage indoor or shaded outdoor activities to prevent heat-related illnesses

(The author, Dr. Preeti Sharma, is a Senior Consultant Paediatrician, at Ankura Hospital for Women and Children.)



In the vast and vibrant landscape of Indian cinema, women music directors have been a rare presence. In the South Indian film industry, that rarity narrows even further—there has been only one iconic name: **MM Srilekha**. A true trailblazer, Srilekha made history by becoming a music director at the astonishingly young age of 12, breaking barriers in a space long dominated by men. Born into a family steeped in musical and cinematic brilliance—she is the sister of acclaimed filmmaker **SS Rajamouli** and legendary composer **MM Keeravani**—Srilekha carved her own path with remarkable grit and talent. Over the years, she has composed music for more than 75 films and lent her voice as a playback singer, winning hearts with her versatility and soulful compositions. Celebrated as one of the finest music composers in Indian cinema, Srilekha's journey is not just inspiring—it's a testament to passion, perseverance, and the power of paving the way for future generations of women in music. *The Pioneer's Suresh Kavirayani* in an exclusive chat with the seasoned musical maestro, takes you through a closer look at the visionary, who changed the tune of South Indian cinema.



CHASING SPB AT AGE OF 5

I was born in a village called Amareshwara Camp, near Raichur, in Karnataka. There is no medical center in that village, so I was born at home. I don't know how it came to me, but I was drawn to music when I was just five years old. One day, after I watched Sankarabharanam, I felt a strong desire to meet SP Balasubrahmanyam to learn music. I asked my parents to take me to SPB sir for music lessons. They said "okay," but never actually took me. I must have been five or six years old at the time. Determined, I decided to pack my bag and leave the house. I managed to catch a lorry and told the driver that I wanted to go to Chennai, to meet SPB sir. The driver took me along for a few hours and then, concerned, brought me back home. He handed me over to my parents and warned them, "Keep an eye on her—otherwise, she will leave again."



MM SRILEKHA, WHO DIDN'T JUST SCORE FILMS—SHE SCORED HISTORY

ANNAYYA'S WISE WORDS

At that time, my brother Keeravani was working with music director Chakravarthi and was quite busy. Cars from various production houses would often come to our home to pick him up for recordings. Since I wasn't going to school, my brother began taking me along with him to music sessions. I would silently observe how he worked on compositions and the kinds of discussions that happened in the studio. He always told me one important thing: "Don't copy from anyone. Do it on your own." I was deeply fond of Ilayaraja's music, and I used to play his tunes at home on the harmonium. But my brother would gently remind me — never to imitate, but to create something original.

NO SCHOOL, ONLY MUSIC

We shifted to Chennai. Ever since I can remember, even from the time I understood imagination, I knew only music — and I wanted to pursue nothing else. I didn't go to school regularly and never had any formal educational certificates. Everything I learned was at home. Though my parents enrolled me in a school near our house, I went only for a few days. The teachers started complaining because I was constantly singing songs and getting involved in music-related activities, so I left the school.

12-YEAR-OLD WHO IMPRESSED A LEGEND

When I was nearly 12 years old, my uncle, Vijayendra Prasad, went to narrate a story to the legendary director Dasari Narayana Rao. I accompanied him that day. Unlike most girls who would carry dolls at that age, I took my keyboard player with me. Dasari garu noticed this and asked my uncle about me. My uncle replied, "She is my brother's daughter." Dasari garu then turned to me and asked, "What are you studying?" I told him about myself and my interest in music. Playfully, he asked me to compose a tune — which I did, right there on the spot. He was stunned and went into his house. I assumed he was impressed and had gone in to get me a chocolate. But to my surprise, he returned with a cheque for Rs 25,000 and said, "You are the music director for my film Nannagaru, and tomorrow, I will send a car for you." I couldn't believe it. That night, I didn't sleep at all. I remember asking my brother and others how many chocolates and outfits I could buy with Rs 25,000!

REJECTED BY MY IDOL

MM Keeravani and SS Rajamouli are my brothers, and though we are technically cousins, we all grew up as part of a joint family. Keeravani annayya used to leave his harmonium free on Saturdays and Sundays, so I would take it and play by myself on those two days. During that time, I constantly asked my family members to take me to meet SP Balasubrahmanyam (SPB) sir, as I wanted to sing and learn music from him. One day, they finally took me to SPB sir and told him about my passion for music and my dream to sing. But he immediately rejected me. He told them that I was not fit for singing because my voice wasn't good. After hearing this, my family members asked me to drop the idea of becoming a singer.

SLOKAS PLANTED THE SEEDS OF MUSIC

When I was eight years old, my uncle noticed my deep interest in music. Seeing my passion, he asked me to memorize Soundaryalahari, the sacred verses written by Adi Shankaracharya. I didn't know what it meant at the time, but since my father encouraged it, I memorized all hundred slokas. Only later did I realize the spiritual depth and power these verses held — and perhaps, it's because of their blessings that I stand today as a music composer.

FLOP THAT LED TO 13 FILMS

As I mentioned earlier, Dasari garu brought me on as the music director for his film Kondapalli Rathaiah. While the songs were appreciated, the film unfortunately turned out to be a flop at the box office. However, Rama Naidu, the producer of the film, recognized my potential and offered me his next project — Taj Mahal. That film marked a turning point in my career. After that, I never looked back. I went on to work with Rama Naidu on 13 films, a journey filled with learning, growth, and memorable music.



MY FIRST FILM RECORDING

The next day, I was thrilled — especially because I too had a car waiting for me like my brother. I went to the recording studio, where Dasari garu's assistant and associate directors, other technicians, and film personalities were already present. Dasari garu narrated a situation from the story — it was for a duet song. He mentioned he would return in the evening, but I requested him to stay for just ten minutes. Within that time, I gave him the tune. He then asked me to compose the charanam (the secondary section of the song), which I completed in another ten minutes. Gangadhara Sastry and Padmapriya rendered the song, both making their debut as playback singers through it. On the same day, the muhurat (auspicious launch) of the film and the recording took place. Many industry stalwarts, including Chiranjeevi and Mohan Babu, attended the event. The film was released, and the songs became a super hit. That's how my debut film happened. Dasari garu was so impressed that he gave me a second opportunity as well — he roped me in for his film Kondapalli Rathaiah, which was produced by another legendary figure, Rama Naidu.

SINGING TO THE GODDESS WITH A TOY KEYBOARD

My uncle also introduced me to a few ragas and I began singing them in front of the Goddess. They gave me a small keyboard, and every two hours, I would sit and sing devotional songs. That became my routine. Slowly, I started catching the nuances of tunes and melodies. Whenever my brother Keeravani visited home, I would share the tunes I'd come up with. He used to say, "If you get a really nice tune, I'll buy you an ice cream." That was all the motivation I needed.

DASARI GARU DEFENDED MY MUSIC

When I worked with Dasari garu, after composing four or five songs, some rumors began to spread about my music. People claimed that the songs were actually composed by my brother, MM Keeravani, and that my name was just being used. Even Dasari garu heard about these rumors. To give a fitting reply, he decided to address the issue directly. He called a press conference in Vijayawada, inviting the media and holding a live performance to prove the truth. During the event, he narrated a song situation and asked me to compose the tune on the spot, right in front of everyone. I did it then and there, and later delivered the complete song. Dasari garu stood firmly by my side and told the gathered media, "She is very talented. Don't spread such baseless rumors again." He strictly warned everyone about making false claims and gave me his full support and encouragement. That moment meant the world to me.



FROM REJECTION TO HIT DUET: MY REDEMPTION WITH SPB

As I mentioned earlier, SPB sir had initially rejected me as a playback singer because of my voice. However, I knew music director Koti garu well and requested him for a chance to sing. He gave me an opportunity for the film 'Ayanaki Iddaru', directed by EVV Satyanarayana. SPB sir was also singing in the same project. When he saw me at the studio, he asked, "What are you doing here?" I replied, "To sing a song." He immediately told Koti that I wasn't a good singer. But Koti insisted he listen to me. I completed my portion first. SPB sir heard it and, to my surprise, complimented me, saying: "Kaki kokila eppudu ayindi" (The crow has become the cuckoo). Our duet 'Andalamma Andaalu' became a huge hit, and EVV sir even asked me to sing another song for the same film.



ANNAYYA'S ASSISTANT MUSIC DIRECTOR

At the same time, I was fascinated by the cars that came to pick up my brother for his music recordings. I once told my father, "I want a car to come for me too." He replied, "If you give good tunes and become a music director, then your car will also wait outside one day." Motivated by my family and uncle's support, my brother Keeravani eventually made me his assistant music director. I got to work on iconic films like Allari Mogudu, Allari Priyudu, Gharana Mogudu, and Kshanam Kshanam under his guidance. People began to recognize that I wasn't just passionate about music — I was serious about making it my life.



MUSICAL JOURNEY WITH RAJAMOULI

My brothers have always been great supporters of my music journey, and I share a special bond with them. I worked with Rajamouli annayya for the serial 'Santhi Nivasam', where we discussed various ideas, including background music (BGM). At that time, CDs were popular, and he would give me new ones to explore. These exchanges shaped my understanding of sound and storytelling through music. Keeravani anna was happy with my progress and praised me. I even sang many songs for his compositions. Interestingly, my first playback singing opportunity came through the film 'Little Soldiers', for which Sri was the music director.



COMPOSING FOR THE MASTER BLASTER

In 2014, I had the honor of composing the theme song for the Kerala Blasters football team, which was owned by cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar. Being a huge fan of his, it was a dream come true. Sachin was incredibly humble and down to earth. I'll never forget the moment he spoke about me on the opening day in Kerala, saying that just as he achieved 100 centuries early in life, he wished I would complete 100 films as a music director. As a composer, this was one of the most cherished moments of my life, and it still remains unforgettable.

'UNIKI' TO 'HIT 2'

I've known Sailesh Kolanu for several years now. In 2019, he created a short film titled 'Uniki', for which I composed the music. Later, I also composed a song for 'Hit 2' in 2022 — the song 'Unike Unike' remains a favorite among fans and continues to rank high on the charts.

IN THE STUDIO AND AT HOME

As a woman music director, I've never faced major struggles in the industry. In fact, I've received encouragement from all sides. I always stay focused on my work and avoid distractions. I don't usually share personal details, but I can say that I got married in 2004 and we have a child. My husband works in real estate.



DEBUT IN TAMIL WITH THALAPATHY VIJAY

My uncle Vijayendra Prasad once went to narrate a story to actor Vijay, and I accompanied him. At that time, Vijay's father, SA Chandrasekhar, was preparing to launch him as a lead actor. The film was titled 'Naalaiya Theerpu', and I was brought on board as the music director. That marked my debut in Tamil cinema with Vijay's first film. From there, my career took off and I stayed busy with multiple projects.