



# The Pioneer

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**India has become a global space power, says PM Modi**



**RBI GOVERNOR URGES US INDUSTRY TO INVEST IN INDIA**




**Chiru takes charge of casting for his film with ANIL RAVIPUDI**

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

The Pioneer

The Congress admin has failed to supply seeds, purchase crops and disburse Rythu Bandhu funds. The Congress has failed in everything. However, their job is taking kickbacks and carrying bags. Contractors are saying that the Congress Government is a commission government. Ministers are taking 20 to 30 per cent commissions. They are challenging me to come to the Assembly. The government is not answering the children. The Congress was shaken in the Assembly when Harish asked them about commissions



- K Chandrasekhara Rao (KCR), BRS chief

**DON'T MISS...**

**underground Maoist tunnel discovered**

The security forces discovered a large underground tunnel structure during combing operations in the Karregatta hills along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border. The operations were intended to eliminate Maoists, who are suspected to be hiding in the thick forests of Karregatta. However, the forces found that the Maoists abandoned the tunnel before they arrived. In what is being termed the biggest operation in history, Central forces launched 'Operation Kagar', aimed at flushing out Maoists from the region under the banner of 'Bachavo ...'

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**Eleven dead as van hits bike**

A speeding van plunged into a water-filled well after hitting a bike in Madhya Pradesh's Mandasaur district on Sunday, leaving 11 persons, including a biker and a rescuer, dead, police said. The incident occurred in the Narayangarh police station area. Ratlam Range Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Manoj Singh said 13 persons were travelling in the van. "Four of them were rescued while nine others died. A villager, identified as Manohar, who descended into the well for rescue, also died," he said...

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**Reliance Retail is scaling up**

Country's leading retailer Reliance Retail, which saw 2.4x growth in the number of orders from its quick commerce/hyper local delivery in the March quarter, is significantly scaling it with plans to open dark stores to expand the coverage area. In the March quarter, Reliance Retail saw over 2.4 times growth in terms of the number of orders, which is a significant scale-up, said its CFO Dinesh Taluja during the earnings call earlier this week. "And we are seeing very strong traction with a 2.4x quarter-over-quarter..."

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**IPL: Gujarat Titans take on RR**

In red-hot form, Gujarat Titans (GT) will aim to tighten their grip on the top spot and move closer to securing a playoff berth when they take on a faltering Rajasthan Royals (RR) in the Indian Premier League (IPL) here on Monday. Perched comfortably atop the 10-team table with six wins from eight outings, the Shubman Gill-led side now needs just two more victories to book their place in the playoffs. Functioning like a well-oiled machine, the Titans have tasted defeat only twice this season, with Sai Sudharsan...

-SPORTS

## KCR blasts Cong govt's failures



Dubs the party as No.1 villain of Telangana

KCR is at it again. Fiery, forceful and penetrative in his punches. He tore the ruling Congress for failing in all respects. Addressing the BRS silver jubilee public meeting at Elkatthurthy he exuded confidence that no one can stop the BRS from coming to power in the state again. KCR reminded the people of the days before the formation of Telangana and the qualitative difference that his party brought in during its 10-year reign. From irrigation to social welfare schemes, he listed out the BRS's achievements, and said that the state lost its glitter when the Congress came to power.

**Stop 'Operation Kagar' immediately**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS supremo K. Chandrasekhara Rao has asked the BJP-led Centre to immediately stop 'Operation Kagar,' launched to eliminate Maoists.

He said the Centre is killing tribals and innocent civilians through Operation Kagar and that it is not proper for the

Centre to kill people just because it has power.

KCR said the Maoists have said that they are ready for peace talks and that the Centre should stop combing operations and come forward for talks.

He said his party would send a letter to the Centre after passing a resolution at the BRS's silver jubilee **Continued on Page 2**

- The days that were there before 2014 returned
- No one can stop BRS from coming to power again
- Addresses BRS silver jubilee public meeting at Elkatthurthy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS supremo, former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao (KCR), said the Congress is villain number one in Telangana.

He said former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru merged Telangana with Andhra forcibly in 1956, and that Congress is the party which suppressed the Telangana Movement in 1969 automatically. "The Congress is the number one villain in Telangana, then, now and at all times," he said. **Continued on Page 2**



**Govt appoints Ramakrishna Rao as CS**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



The Telangana Government on Sunday appointed the Special Chief Secretary of the Finance Department, K. Ramakrishna Rao, IAS (1991), as the Chief Secretary of Telangana in place of A. Santhi Kumari, IAS (1989), who is retiring on April 30, 2025.

As per the seniority list, six officials, including Ramakrishna Rao, were in the race for the Chief Secretary post. However, the government selected Ramakrishna Rao as the CS, considering his efficiency and experience. Ramakrishna Rao has been working in the Finance Department since 2014.

Ramakrishna Rao played a key role in taking decisions regarding finances and seeking funds from the Centre. The government issued orders appointing K. Ramakrishna Rao as the CS in view of the present financial conditions and other factors.

**Major IAS reshuffle in TG**

Smita appointed Member Secretary of TG Finance Commission

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IAS officer Smita Sabharwal has been posted as Member Secretary of the TG Finance Commission.

Many IAS officers were transferred by the Telangana Government and reassigned on Sunday.



Jayesh Ranjan, IAS (1992), the Special Chief Secretary of ITESC and Sports Department, has been transferred and posted as the Special Chief Secretary of the Industries & Commerce Department and ITESC and the Sports Department in place of Jayesh Ranjan, IAS (1992), who has been transferred.

Jayesh Ranjan, IAS (1992), has also been given FAC as the Spl. Chief Secretary of the YAT & C Department and as the Director of Archaeology in place of Smita Sabharwal, IAS (2001), who has been transferred.

Dr Shashank Goel, IAS (1990), the Director General of the Dr MCR HRD Institute, has been transferred and posted as the Vice Chairman of the Centre for Good Governance.

Dr Shashank Goel, IAS (1990), has also been given FAC as the Director General of EPTRI in place of Ahmad Nadeem, IAS (1997), who had FAC of the post.

Sanjay Kumar, IAS (1995), the Special Chief Secretary of the LET & F Department, has been transferred and posted as the Special Chief Secretary of the Industries & Commerce Department and ITESC and the Sports Department in place of Jayesh Ranjan, IAS (1992), who has been transferred.

M. Dana Kishore, IAS (1996), P.T. Secretary of the MA & UD Department, has been transferred and posted as **Continued on Page 2**



**Blood of every Indian is boiling, says PM**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that victims of the Pahalgam terror attack will definitely get justice, asserting that terrorists and conspirators behind the killings of 26 civilians will be served the harshest punishment.

Blood of every Indian is boiling by looking at the pictures of the attack, he said in his monthly Mann Ki Baat address.

Modi said the country's unity and solidarity of its 140 crore citizens is its biggest strength in this war against terrorism.

"This unity is the basis of our decisive fight against terrorism," he said.

The prime minister said the attack in the famous tourist town in Kashmir reflected the desperation **Continued on Page 2**

**'Indian Navy combat ready'**

Demonstrates readiness for long-range 'offensive' strikes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy on Sunday said its warships have successfully carried out multiple anti-ship firings, revalidating their readiness for long-range precision 'offensive' strikes.

The demonstration of the Navy's combat prowess came amid heightened tensions between India and Pakistan over the dastardly Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 civilians.

Citing "cross-border linkages" to the horrific attack, India has already promised severe punishment to those involved in the strike that trig-



gered widespread outrage within India and abroad.

"Indian Navy ships undertook successful multiple anti-ship firings to revalidate and demonstrate readi-

ness of platforms, systems and crew for long-range precision offensive strike," the Indian Navy said in a brief statement.

"Indian Navy stands combat ready, credible and future ready in safeguarding the nation's maritime interests anytime, anywhere, anyhow," it said. The Indian Navy also released videos of the live firings at sea but did not provide details like when the exercise was carried out.

As the tensions between the two countries soared, it is learnt that Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chouhan called on Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

Though there is no official word on what transpired in the meeting, it is learnt that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir figured in the discussion.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani military continued to resort to unprovoked firing along the Line of Control in the areas opposite Tutmari Gali and Rampur Sectors Saturday night, military sources said. **Continued on Page 2**

**Pakistanis failing to leave India face 3 yrs jail or Rs 3 lakh fine or both**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Any Pakistani, who fails to leave India as per the deadlines set by the government, will be arrested, prosecuted and may face a jail term of up to three years or a fine of a maximum Rs 3 lakh or both.

The 'Leave India' notice to the Pakistani nationals was issued by the government after 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed by Pakistan-linked terrorists at Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir on April 22. The deadline for exiting India



for those holding SAARC visas was April 26. For those carrying medical visas, the deadline is April 29. The 12 categories of visas whose holders have to leave India by Sunday are -- visa on arrival, business, film, **Continued on Page 2**

**'Historical' changes in the new NCERT books**

Mughals, Delhi Sultanate dropped; 'sacred geography', Maha Kumbh added

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

All references to Mughals and Delhi Sultanate have been dropped from class 7 NCERT textbooks, while chapter on Indian dynasties, 'sacred geography', references to Maha Kumbh, and government initiatives like Make in India and Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao are among the new additions.

The new textbooks released this week have been designed in line with the new National Education Policy (NEP) and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCSE) 2023, which emphasises incorporating Indian traditions, philosophies, knowledge systems, and local context into school education. When contacted, NCERT officials



When contacted, NCERT officials said these are only first part of the book and second part is expected in coming months. They, however, did not comment on whether the dropped portions will be retained in the second part of the book

said these are only first part of the book and second part is expected in coming months. They, however, did not comment on whether the dropped portions will be retained in the second part of the book.

While NCERT had previously trimmed sections on the Mughals and Delhi Sultanate — including

detailed account of dynasties like Tughlaqs, Khaljis, Mamluks, and Lodis and a two-page table on Mughal emperors' achievements as part of its syllabus rationalisation during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022-23, the new textbook has now removed all references to them. The book now has all new chap-

ters with no mention of Mughals and Delhi Sultanate throughout.

The Social Science textbook "Exploring Society: India and Beyond" has new chapters on ancient Indian dynasties like the Magadha, Mauryas, Shungas, and Satavahanas with a focus on "Indian ethos." Another new edition in the book

is a chapter called "How the Land Becomes Sacred" that focuses on places considered sacred and pilgrimages across India and outside for religions like Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. The chapter introduces concepts like "sacred geography" detailing networks of such places as 12 jyotirlingas, the char dham yatra, and the "Shakti pithas." The chapter also details such places as river confluences, mountains, and forests, which are revered.

The text includes a quote from Jawaharlal Nehru, who described India as a land of pilgrimages — from the icy peaks of Badrinath and Amarnath to the southern tip at Kanyakumari.

**Kaleswaram ENC Hari Ram remanded to 14 days custody**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has arrested Kaleswaram Project ENC Bhukya Hari Ram in a disproportionate assets (DA) case.

The ACB searched 14 places connected to the ENC and unearthed massive amounts of unaccounted assets.

After the searches, the ENC was produced before a Judge on Sunday, and the judge remanded Bhukya Hari Ram to 14 days of custody.

The ACB investigation concluded at the house of Kaleswaram Project Engineer-in-Chief (ENC) Hari Ram. ACB officials found that the ENC had illegal assets worth around Rs 200 crore. Along with Hari Ram's house, ACB officials searched the houses of his relatives too. There were allegations since a

long time that there was massive corruption behind changing the design of the Kaleswaram Project, in which Hariram had a key role.

The National Dam Safety Agency (NDSA) report on the Kaleswaram Project was released recently.

ACB teams searched Hari Ram's house, his Jalasaudha office, and the houses of Hari Ram's relatives and friends from Saturday morning.

The ACB statement said Hari Ram has 28 acres of agricultural land in Markook mandal, where KCR's farmhouse is located. He has a commercial property in Amaravati, the capital of Andhra Pradesh. He also has villas in Shaikpet and Kondapur in Hyderabad, flats in Madhapur, Srinagar Colony and Narsingh. He also has 20 acres in Patancheru and two independent houses in Srinagar Colony.

## Monday Mirchi

**YOURS TRULY GETS IT RIGHT AGAIN - FROM CS POST TO SPECIAL CELL**

Back in February, yours truly had reported that Ramakrishna Rao would be the next Chief Secretary - and here we are, right on target again. Buzz is, if everything goes well, Ramakrishna Rao will not only take charge but also get a six-month extension post his retirement in August. We had also tipped off that a special cell under the CMO would be created to fast-track investment projects, with Jayesh Ranjan heading it. The orders are officially out — another one we got spot on. And yes, we had reported that Dana Kishore and Sangeetha Sarvey would be moved out from their positions. That, too, is now public. Here's hoping all our little birds keep flying high and keep the corridors of power buzzing with more scoops!

**AP CHIEF SECRETARY VIJAYANAND SETS RECORD WITH ZERO FILE PENDENCY**

Talk in Andhra Pradesh Secretariat is that Chief Secretary Vijayanand has quietly achieved what many thought was impossible — zero pendency of files at the Chief Secretary's level. Both e-files and physical files have been systematically cleared, setting a new benchmark for administrative efficiency. For the first time in recent memory, there are reportedly no pending files lying with the Chief Secretary. Insiders say that file clearance has picked up remarkable speed ever since Vijayanand took charge, with daily monitoring and a sharp focus on timelines. Officers are abuzz about how the CS is personally ensuring that not even a single file gets stuck on his table. The atmosphere, it seems, has shifted — with departments now moving swiftly, matching the pace set at the top.

**S HARISH ON LEAVE AMID STRAINED EQUATIONS**

Buzz in the corridors suggests that all was not well inside the I&PR Department in recent weeks. S Harish, who was serving as the Commissioner, reportedly faced daily pressure over pending payments to agencies. Despite repeated efforts, he was unable to resolve the issue, leading to mounting frustrations on all sides. Sources say the Minister's tone during internal reviews turned increasingly rough, often disregarding official courtesies. Harish's inputs were allegedly brushed aside, and conversations sometimes took a belittling tone, making the environment difficult. With payments stuck, respect lacking, and no im-

mediate alternative posting available, Harish is said to have opted for long leave. Those close to the developments say he preferred to step away rather than continue under strained working conditions. In his absence, T Vinay Krishna Reddy has been given charge as the in-charge Commissioner. Now he is being transferred as CMD GENCO with FAC of Spl Commission I&PR.

**AWKWARD SCENES AS YOGITA RANA STEERS KRISHNA ADITYA AT RESULTS PRESS MEET**

At the Intermediate results press conference, the real buzz wasn't just about the pass percentages — it was about the dynamics on stage. Reporters who gathered expected Education Secretary Yogita Rana to address them, but to everyone's surprise, she instead asked Krishna Aditya, Secretary of the Telangana Board of Intermediate Education, to take over the briefing. What caught even more attention was what happened next. As Krishna Aditya began explaining the PowerPoint presentation, Yogita Rana was seen repeatedly instructing him — telling him what to say, how to say it, and directing the flow even while he was mid-explanation. On the outside, it made for an awkward visual, with many reporters quietly noting that the whole scene didn't come across very well, whatever the internal equation might have been. In the end, the results were not the only thing people left talking about.

**KTR FIRES SALVO AT TOP COPS, DEFENDS BRS CADRE**

BRS working president KTR didn't mince words while taking a swipe at the police machinery. At a recent interaction, he remarked that Shikha Goel seems to have just one job these days — filing cases against BRS karyakartas. The comment raised quite a few eyebrows, especially coming at a time when tensions between BRS and the government are at an all-time high. KTR went a step further, hinting that even police officers are under the scanner. He suggested that some officers are busy building villas and indulging in questionable activities, and made it clear that they too are being tracked. Interestingly, he also reacted to senior IAS officer Smita Sabharwal's notices in repost on UoH case. KTR diplomatically said that as an IAS officer, Smita would handle the situation herself. But he pointedly asked — who will stand by the ordinary cadre, against whom Shikha Goel is allegedly going all out? One repost has costed her the post of tourism secretary.

—Yours truly

## 'KCR tried to portray Cong as the villain'



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy refuted the criticism of BRS chief KCR against the Congress Government at the Elkathurthy public meeting.

Addressing the media at the CM's residence on Sunday, Revenue Minister Ponguleti said that KCR had tried to portray the Congress as a villain by filling minds with poison. KCR, made Telangana a state with a debt of Rs 8 lakh crore. is he portraying the Congress that gave Telangana state as a villain? KCR, who saluted Sainia Gandhi, tried to portray the Congress as a villain in Telangana state, he alleged.

KCR, who did not make a Dalit the Chief Minister, at least he can give the status of the Leader of the Opposition to a Dalit, right? KCR is spreading the lie that the Congress Government is not

providing schemes and is looting the state treasury. If KCR gives good suggestions, we will see if we can correct them. You fix the date, let's discuss all issues in the Assembly, Ponguleti said.

"Contractors had dues and arrears during KCR's rule. They say that sarpanches also had dues. The tenure of sarpanches was changed during KCR's rule," he said.

The arrears due to sarpanches were incurred during KCR's tenure, he said.

## It is ridiculous KCR now wants to save democracy: Ramchandra

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Government Whip Ramchandra Naik said that it is ridiculous that KCR, who murdered democracy for 10 years, is now saying that democracy must be saved.

"People are laughing at KCR, who used government departments as he liked and plundered the resources of Telangana, as he is now preaching ethics," he said.

Countering KCR's criticism, Ramchandra said the KCR family is the BRS party, the brand ambassador of inquiry commissions. Commission Kaleshwaram, Commission Kakatiya, Commission Bhagiratha. KCR should remember that the sins committed during the BRS rule resulted in the last election results, he said.

"The KCR regime made a mockery of the word questioning in democracy. From village to city, it is KCR who used the police as he liked and filed false cases against those who questioned him," he said.

The people of Telangana know who is behind the suicide of sarpanches. They were made to do public works and did not pay their bills for a year and a half. The proof is the words of a sarpanch who committed suicide for bills during KCR rule, he said.

People have not forgotten that KCR made Telangana bankrupt by illegally mortgaging government assets. People have not forgotten that he misused public money in the name of Rythu Bandhu and gave money to ponds, non-agricultural lands, brick kilns, roads and other lands, he said.



Peace Talks Committee Convener Justice Chandrakumar, Professor Anwar Khan, Durga Prasad, Jampanna, Ravi Chander submitted a memorandum to CM Revanth Reddy on Sunday

## PTC asks CM to mediate peace between Centre, Maoists

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Peace Talks Committee (PTC) appealed to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to take the initiative to hold peace talks between the Centre and Maoists. The Committee also requested the CM to convince the Centre to agree to a ceasefire.

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy held a meeting with the Peace Talks Committee on Sunday. The members of the Peace Talks Committee met the Chief Minister at his Jubilee Hills residence.

Committee Convener Justice Chandrakumar,

Professor Haragopal, Professor Anwar Khan, Durga Prasad, Jampanna, and Ravi Chander submitted a memorandum to the CM.

The Chief Minister told the Committee that his government is looking at Naxalism from a social perspective and does not consider it a law and order issue. The CM told the committee that the government will seek the advice of senior leader K. Jana Reddy, who had held talks with Maoists in the past. The Cabinet will also discuss the issue and take a decision soon, the Chief Minister said.

## Is Kaleshwaram money being used to fund BRS's Warangal meeting: Kiran

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress's Bhongir MP, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, asked BRS leaders to explain whether money pocketed through corruption while executing the Kaleshwaram Project is being used to fund the BRS's Warangal public meeting.

In a post on X on Sunday, Kiran wondered at BRS leaders spending huge amounts of money to make the Warangal public meeting a success.

"It is not that easy for a political party in the opposition to spend such huge amounts. The BRS's silver

jubilee public meeting arrangements are glittering, making it clear that hundreds of crores are being spent. Otherwise, it is not possible to conduct a public meeting like this," Kiran said, and asked

BRS leaders whether the money came from Kaleshwaram, Mission Bhagiratha, Hyderabad builders, Formula E-car race event, the Dharani Portal or from the lands of Khanamet, Neopolic, and Kokapet or by selling ORR.

He appealed to BRS leaders to explain to the people of Telangana where the money came from.



## Major IAS reshuffle...

Continued from page 1  
The PRT. Secretary of the LETBF Department in place of Sanjay Kumar, IAS (1995), who has been transferred.

M. Dana Kishore, IAS (1996), has also been given FAC as the Commissioner of Labour, the Director of Insurance Medical Services and as the Director of Employment & Training. M. Dana Kishore, IAS (1996) will continue to have FAC of the post of PRT. Secretary to the Governor.

Dr TK Sreedevi, IAS (2004), the Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration, has been transferred and posted as the Secretary of the Municipal Administration Department (HMDA).

Dr TK Sreedevi, IAS (2004), has also been given FAC of the post of Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration, M.A.

Department (for Municipalities & Corporations outside ORR limits).

Ilambarathi K., IAS (2005), the Commissioner of GHMC, has been transferred and posted as the Secretary of the Metropolitan Area & Urban Development Department (HMDA).

RV Karan, IAS (2012), the Director of Health & Family Welfare, has been transferred and posted as the Commissioner of GHMC in place of Ilambarathi K., IAS (2005), who has been transferred.

K. Shashanka, IAS (2013), the Commissioner of the State Flagship Projects, has been transferred and posted as the Commissioner of the Future City Development Authority (FCDA). K. Shashanka, IAS (2013) will continue to have FAC of the post of Director of Mines & Geology. S. Harish, IAS (2015), the Spl. Commissioner of ISPR & EO Spl. Secretary, GA (ISPR) Department, has been transferred and posted as the

CMD of GENCO in place of Sri Sandeep Kumar Sultania, IAS (1990), who had FAC of the post.

S. Harish, IAS (2015), has also been given FAC of the post of Spl. Commissioner of ISPR & E.O. Spl. Secretary, GA (ISPR) Department.

S. Harish, IAS (2015), will continue to have FAC of the post of Joint Secretary (DM) of the Revenue Department.

K. Nikhila, IAS (2015), CEO, TGIRD, has been given FAC of the post of Secretary & CEO of the Telangana Human Rights Commission. S. Sangeetha Satyanarayana, IAS (2015), Joint Secretary to the CM, has been transferred and posted as the Director of Health & Family Welfare in place of Sel R.V. Kaman, IAS (2012), who has been transferred.

S. Sangeetha Satyanarayana, IAS (2015) has also been given FAC of the post of CEO, Aarogyasri HealthCare Trust, in place of RV Kaman, IAS (2012), who had FAC of the said post.

## Stop 'Operation ...

Continued from page 1  
public meeting being held at Elkathurthy near Warangal city on Sunday. KCR said the Centre

did not give even Rs 11 to the state even though it came to power 11 years ago. Moreover, the Centre took seven mandals from Telangana.

He also said the Centre did not give national project tag to

even a single TG project. Moreover, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had commented that the Congress government had killed the mother and kept the child alive, KCR said.

## KCR blasts Cong ...

Continued from page 1

Addressing the massive BRS silver jubilee public meeting held at Elkathurthy in Hanamkonda district on Sunday, KCR said that he had freed the region from colonists by launching the Telangana Movement alone.

"After achieving Telangana, I transformed it into 'glittering Telangana,' by working hard for 10 years after the people gave me power. We made the state run on the path of development. We increased cultivable lands by constructing irrigation projects. We constructed the Kaleshwaram Project in just three years. We made Telangana overtake Punjab in agriculture," KCR said.

Targeting the Congress, KCR said that it had assured many things before the elections. "The fake Gandhis came to the state from New Delhi and gave many assurances. They said that they will increase the pension from Rs 2,000 to Rs 4,000 monthly. Congress leaders said that they will increase Rythu Bandhu from Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000. They assured that they will give scooties to girls. They assured that they will implement a Rs 2 lakh farm loan waiver scheme. They assured that they will give 10 grams of gold along with

Kalyana Laxmi. However, the pension has not been increased, and the farm loan waiver is not complete. Congress leaders said many things to deceive the people," KCR said.

"Congress leaders are saying that KCR is behind all the bad things. Congress leaders are saying that no one believes them. Congress leaders are saying that they are not getting loans. I am crying for Telangana. We see that power cuts and farm motor burning days have returned. We are asking what happened to the power, which was given 'perfectly' well during BRS days. Why did land prices decrease? Where has the water gone? There is no one to purchase paddy. Farmers are crying. The days that existed before 2014 have returned," KCR said.

KCR said that good schemes should be continued, whoever may have introduced them.

"I did not stop YSR's Arogya Sri Scheme as it was a good scheme. BRS social media warriors are working well and asking the government questions on social media. However, the police are filing false cases against them. I am telling the police. Write in your diaries that the BRS will come back to power in the next elections. Why are the police intervening in politics? Nobody can stop the BRS from coming to power. Our legal cell will help BRS activists," he said.

## BJP will form govts in TN, K'taka & Telangana: Kishan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Minister for Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy has reiterated his confidence that the BJP will come to power in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Telangana.

The BJP is organising 10-day celebrations across the nation to mark the 135th birth anniversary of Dr B R Ambedkar. As part of the celebrations, a programme was held at a private function hall here on Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, Kishan Reddy expressed confidence that the BJP would form governments in the southern states in the next elections. He



praised Dr Ambedkar, stating that despite being born into an underprivileged family, he rose to become an intellectual and a tireless fighter against untouchability, becoming an inspiration to all.

Kishan Reddy alleged that for-

mer Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had campaigned for Dr Ambedkar's defeat in the Parliamentary elections. He recalled that the Congress party had created circumstances that led to Dr Ambedkar's resignation from Nehru's Cabinet.

## India has a robust health system, never think it's weak: Nadda

PNS ■ CHHATRAPATI SAMBAHAJINAGAR

India has a robust health system capable of taking care of a large population, and the country is also catering to international needs, Union Health Minister J P Nadda said on Sunday.

He was speaking after inaugurating the 'Kaushalyam' lab, which is a part of the medical college started by the Hedgewar hospital in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar in central Maharashtra.

"We have a robust health system.

We should never think it's weak. People often talk about developments in foreign countries. I ask them about the population there, which is just 10-20 million. A district here could have that many people," he said. India is known for its unity in diversity, and such comparisons don't hold much weight, said the Union minister.

"If comparisons are to be made, then it has to be over the administration of 220 crore COVID vaccine doses, including boosters. If India can conduct vaccination on such a massive scale while maintain-

ing the cold chain supply, it tells us that our health system is robust," he said. Nadda said 200 million children are born every year in India and are given various vaccines, which are recorded as well.

He also highlighted the government's efforts to produce more doctors. "We are the ones who give doctors to the world. The number of medical seats (MBBS) has increased from 50,000 to 1.18 lakh, while PG seats have gone up from 3,000 to over 65,000," he said, without specifying the period.

## Blood of every ...

Continued from page 1

and cowardice of the patrons of terrorism, a reference to Pakistan, at a time when peace was returning to the Valley and there was vibrancy in its schools and colleges.

He said construction work had gained unprecedented pace, democracy was getting stronger, the number of tourists was increasing at a record rate, people's income was increasing, and new opportunities were being created for the youth.

Modi said, "Enemies of the country, the enemies of Jammu and Kashmir did not like that. Terrorists and the masterminds of terror want Kashmir to be destroyed again and hence they executed such a big conspiracy."

The prime minister said his heart is in deep anguish over the biggest terror attack on civilians in Kashmir in a long spell of time, and said the incident has hurt every citizen of the country.

## Pakistanis failing ...

Continued from page 1

journalist, transit, conference, mountaineering, student, group tourist, pilgrim and group pilgrim. According to the Immigration and Foreigners Act 2025, which came into effect on April 4, overstaying, violating visa conditions, or trespassing in restricted areas could lead to three years in jail and a fine of up to Rs 3 lakh.

"Whoever,—(a) being a foreigner, remains in any area in India for a period exceeding the period for which the visa was issued to him or stays in India without a valid passport or other valid travel document in contravention of provisions of Section 3 or does any act in violation of the conditions of the valid visa issued to him for his entry and stay in India or any part thereunder;

"(b) contravenes any other provisions of this Act, other than sections 17 and 19, or of any rule or order made thereunder or any direction or instruction given in pursuance of this Act or such order or direction or instruction for which, no specific punishment is provided under this Act, shall be punishable with an imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with a fine which may extend to three lakh rupees or with both," the Act says.



### CITY EVENTS

**World Safety & Health Day**  
By National Safety Council Telangana Chapter  
Venue  
Ravindra Bharathi  
April 28, 9 am.

**Cultural Programmes**  
By Sri Raaga Ramya Cultural Organisation  
Venue  
Ravindra Bharathi  
April 28, 6 pm.

**Live Musical Orchestra**  
By Ghantasala Gana Sabha  
Venue  
Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha  
April 28, 4:30 pm.

**Painting exhibition**  
The Eternal Mesmeriser  
Inauguration by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy  
Venue  
Chitramayee State Gallery of Art Road, No. 1, Kavuri Hills, Madhapur, Hyderabad April 28 (till May 4), 12.10 pm

## CM urged to waive students' fees hit by college closures

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

National BC Welfare Association President and Member of Rajya Sabha R Krishnaiah has appealed to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to immediately intervene and waive fees for students who were forced to discontinue their studies due to the closure of deemed universities, private universities and private colleges.

In a press release issued, Krishnaiah stated that thousands of students were left stranded after the closure of deemed universities and private colleges like Sai University, Manav Bharti and Aligarh Muslim University's Hyderabad campus.

These closures came after the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) found them non-compliant with regulations. Krishnaiah pointed out that students had paid huge sums - ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 14 lakh - for engineering, law, pharmacy, MBA and other courses, only to have their degrees rendered worthless. Many of these students have now lost three to five crucial academic years and their future remains uncertain.

He demanded that the government provide relief to the affected students by reim-



bursing their fees and facilitating their transfer to recognised institutions without any additional financial burden.

He stressed that similar action had been taken in other states to protect students' interests.

Krishnaiah further criticised the National Medical Commission for cancelling MBBS seats in 14 private medical colleges, citing inadequate facilities and faculty. He urged the government to ensure that innocent students are not penalised for institutional failures and that they be provided opportunities to complete their education.

Highlighting the plight of students from weaker sections, Krishnaiah insisted that the Chief Minister should personally oversee this matter and ensure immediate redressal to safeguard the academic and financial futures of these students.

## OGH performs first intestine transplant

DEEPIKA PASHAM  
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com  
■ HYDERABAD

In a major medical breakthrough, Osmania General Hospital (OGH) has successfully performed Telangana's first-ever small intestine transplant, marking a significant advancement in the State's healthcare capabilities.

The transplant was performed on a 40-year-old male patient who was suffering from short gut syndrome and was dependent on total parenteral nutrition (TPN) due to repeated central line infections and major central vein thrombosis.

His condition stemmed from an earlier massive small bowel and right colon resection, necessitated by acute superior

mesenteric artery (SMA) occlusion that caused gangrene.

At the time of admission, only 30 cm of the patient's jejunum remained. On April 19, 2025, a cadaver small intestine transplant was successfully carried out by the skilled team at OGH.

Post-surgery, the patient is now able to tolerate a soft diet orally and his ileostomy is functioning well. A protocol endoscopy conducted on the seventh day showed healthy, pink mucosa in the transplanted bowel and a biopsy confirmed there were no signs of rejection, said the team of Surgical Gastroenterology of Osmania General Hospital (OGH).

Dr Madhu Sudhan from Surgical Gastroenterology said

## Pending TGSRTC issues to be resolved soon: Minister Ponnam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Transport and BC Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar reaffirmed the State government's commitment to the welfare of retired Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) officers and staff.

He stated that the government is cooperating with the RTC management to address the long-pending issues of retired employees in a phased manner.

Minister Prabhakar was speaking as the chief guest at the fifth annual meeting of the TGSRTC Retired Officers' Welfare Association held at a hotel in Lakdikapul, Hyderabad on Sunday.

Along with RTC Managing Director VC Sajjanar, Minister Prabhakar felicitated retired RTC employees who had completed 90 years of age.

Speaking on the occasion, Ponnam Prabhakar praised the services rendered by retired officers and employees for the betterment of the public transport system. He said that employee welfare, providing convenient transportation to the public and safeguarding the corporation are the three main priorities being pursued by the RTC.

He highlighted that over the past year, the corporation has focused on employee welfare while simultaneously taking steps like



Pending TGSRTC issues to be resolved in a phased manner: Minister Ponnam

purchasing new buses and recruiting new staff to match the expansion.

The Minister also mentioned that the implementation of the Mahalakshmi Scheme by the State government has contributed significantly to improving the financial health of the TGSRTC. He asserted that efforts are underway to make Telangana RTC the number one corporation in the coun-

try. RTC MD VC Sajjanar, in his address, appreciated the deep sense of love and attachment retired employees continue to have for the organisation. He noted that many innovative initiatives were introduced based on the suggestions and advice from retired officers and staff. Sajjanar informed that the TGSRTC Tarnaka Hospital has been upgrad-

ed into a super-specialty hospital to ensure quality healthcare for both regular and retired employees, with all types of medical services now available at the facility.

During the meeting, retired RTC officials brought their concerns to the attention of Minister Prabhakar and MD Sajjanar, who assured them that necessary action would be taken to address their issues promptly.

## HM remembers a cherished friendship with Manohar Rao

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Health Damodar Rajanarasimha grew emotional as he remembered his long-standing friendship with Manohar Rao, during a memorial service held in Hyderabad. The event was organised to honour Manohar Rao, his classmate from the 1978-83 Civil Engineering batch at University College of Engineering, Osmania University.

Participating in the tribute ceremony at the University College's Meeting Hall, Minister Rajanarasimha paid floral tributes to a portrait of his late friend. He recalled their nearly 50-year bond, sharing memories of their time together as classmates and life-long companions.

Speaking at the programme, Minister Rajanarasimha described Manohar Rao as a great humanitarian who valued friendship deeply. He



Minister for Health Damodar Rajanarasimha paying floral tributes to his friend Manohar Rao

expressed sorrow over Manohar's untimely death due to cancer, noting that the disease was not diagnosed in time.

He shared that during his final days, Manohar travelled from the United States seeking the comfort of their enduring friendship. Minister Rajanarasimha stood by him until the end, ensuring that Manohar's final days were

filled with warmth and support.

The friendship between Rajanarasimha, Manohar Rao, Colonel Bala, Kutumba Rao and Arjun, which began at Osmania University in 1978, was celebrated as a lasting legacy in the college's history. Friends attending the memorial highlighted how their bond served as a model for engineering batches that followed.

## Over 300 docs attend workshop on Dermatotomy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Highlighting the growing importance of dermatotomy within dermatology, Dr Bollineni Bhaskar Rao, Chairman and Managing Director of KIMS Hospitals, said that there is the need for continuous skill enhancement among doctors to ensure better patient outcomes. He was speaking at a national workshop on dermatotomy on Sunday in collaboration with ACS(I)EC and Academy.

The workshop, themed



Doctors from India and Nepal gathered for a conference on Dermatotomy

Evolving Dermatotomy in Daily Practice: Precision, Passion, Excellence, and Progress, attracted more than 300 dermatologists from

India and Nepal. Participants engaged in hands-on training sessions, with a special focus on advanced suturing techniques.

ACS(I) President Dr T Saleem and honorary General Secretary Dr Pradeep Kumari spearheaded the initiative, providing critical guidance and support. TS IADVL President Dr V Ramesh and Secretary Dr Ramachander Darak were also present and appreciated the efforts to promote dermatotomy skills among practicing dermatologists.



Dr Alagu Varshini, Secretary of TGSWREIS, along with Ashwini Raju

## TGSWREIS Secy steps in to help a boy get admission into Class V

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Dr Alagu Varshini, Secretary of Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TGSWREIS), showed why she is seen as a model of transparent and compassionate leadership when she helped a boy get admission into Class V after the deadline.

The incident happened at Hayathnagar Gurukul School. Nadipenna Ashwini Raju from Kothakota village in the Wanaparthy constituency arrived an hour late for admission, even though he had passed the entrance exam. Following the rules, the school principal first refused him.

Heartbroken, the boy and his family rushed to the TGSWREIS office around 7 pm. A PRO informed Dr Varshini, who immediately stepped in. After speaking kindly with the boy and hearing his hardships, she used her authority to admit him.

As a gesture of encouragement, she also gifted the boy a quality book. The child, visibly happy, thanked her warmly, receiving her blessings in return. Dr Varshini's kind act shows the real impact of caring leadership at TGSWREIS.

## Water leakage fixed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A water leakage at Mozanjahi Market was quickly fixed by officials from the Hyderabad Metro Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) O&M Division No-4, Red Hills.

The leakage was found during supply on a 350 mm diameter pipeline near the busy Mozanjahi Market area. Higher officials decided to stop the leakage immediately without disturbing water supply to about 700 houses in Malakunta Road, Risala Abdullah, Osmanganj, Shankarbagh, and Top Khana areas.

## 'Entrepreneurs increasingly using AI to automate tasks'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Entrepreneurs are increasingly using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to automate tasks, get real-time data and improve customer experiences, said Rahul Paith, CEO of DST, Machine Learning and AI Tech Hub (MATH) at T-Hub. When asked how AI is evolving from just a technology into an economic engine, he said that this shift is not only improving efficiency but also creating new business models.

Rahul said that in India, the government has recognised AI's potential in entrepreneurship. He cited the 2023 Nasscom report, noting that India's AI market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 25-35%, reaching \$20 billion by 2027. This growth is driven by a strong startup community, AI research centres and increasing demand in areas like healthcare, farming, education, finance and online shopping.

Talking about the "Smarter Foundations for New Ventures," Rahul said AI turns complexity into clarity. Founders who once relied on instinct now use AI to shape



product designs and pricing strategies with real-time data.

He explained that this shift is not just about improving processes. AI helps businesses learn, adapt, and personalise at scale, which is important for survival today.

On fintech, Rahul said India's digital payment sector is using AI for secure services. Citing that over 10 billion UPI transactions were recorded in August 2024 alone, he said digital payments are expected to grow at a 10% CAGR and contribute significantly to global payments rev-

enue by 2028.

He also said that AI is playing a bigger role in healthcare and helping spread innovation to smaller cities through low-code platforms and AI tools. The healthcare sector is one of the biggest winners of AI in India, with AI expected to add up to \$25 billion to India's healthcare economy by 2030.

Rahul stressed the need for ethical responsibility as AI becomes a key part of business. He concluded by saying, "AI will not just support entrepreneurship, but shape it into a living, evolving system."

## World Telugu Consortium discusses culture, bhakti and Literary values

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The World Telugu Consortium (World Telugu Samiti) held its 4th International Online Conference on April 26 and 27, 2025, focusing on culture, bhakti and literary values. The event started at 7 am IST each day and ran for nearly five hours, bringing together Telugu writers, scholars and cultural leaders from around the world.

The conference opened with an inspiring speech by Vanguri Chitren Raju, president of the Vanguri Foundation of America and Chief Advisor to the Samiti. He spoke about the important role of poetry, storytelling, personality and philosophy in shaping literature and society.

Chief Guest Sharada Poornashanthi, a well-known author from America, discussed the Ramayanas of Valmiki and Kamba and shared

insights on Sanatana and modern dharma, secularism and literary creativity.

Vamsi Ramraju, founder of the Samiti, stressed the need to blend tradition with modern ideas and to encourage students to join literary forums.

Meanwhile, Lalitha Ram, co-founder of the Consortium, honoured famous Telugu literary figures and encouraged youth to develop a habit of reading Telugu and world literature.

The conference was skillfully moderated by Radhika Mangipudi, Sreehavisha Kaparthi and Shameer Janaki Devi. Sessions covered themes like "Our Culture and Seven-Hued Values in Literature" and "Bhakti, The Essential Skill for Life." Experts from India, America, Qatar, Botswana, Australia and Japan made it a truly global event.

## OU assistant professors' strike enters 9th day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The indefinite strike by contract assistant professors across Telangana entered ninth day on Sunday, with faculty members gathering at the Osmania University Administrative Building from 11 am intensifying their demand for regularisation.

The protesting assistant pro-

fessors cited Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi's remarks at the Bharat Summit held at Hitec on Sunday.

Thanking Rahul Gandhi, they recalled his commitment to building a society based on justice and equality and urged Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to initiate the regularisation process in line

with the Supreme Court's equal pay for equal work verdict.

They further demanded that until the regularisation process is completed, the University Grants Commission (UGC) pay scale — which includes Basic Pay, DA, HRA, 3 per cent of annual increment, and job security — should be implemented.



### TGMC busts high-end clinics run by 'fake doctors'

PNS ■ HANAMKONDA

The Telangana State Medical Council (TGMC) has carried out inspections in Hanamkonda and found fake doctors who are performing complex procedures on patients.

The complex procedures are like hair transplantation, skin care, platelet-rich plasma and laser therapy.

The identified fake doctors were not qualified and with no proper competency in plastic surgery and dermatology were administering and following complex procedures at a high-end clinic 'Amyra' in Hanamkonda.

It has been identified in the inspection checks that the clinic is not having permission and approvals to operate from the District Medical and Health Officer (DM&HO).

The TGMC said that two persons named Imran Khan and Faz Shaik without having any medical qualification are administering the clinic illegally by providing treatments as doctors.

The detecting of unqualified individuals conducting high-end diagnostic tests without qualification were done by an inspecting team including Dr V Naresh Kumar, Dr Anwar

Mia, Dr Venkataswamy and Hanamkonda Additional District Medical and Health Officer Dr Madan Mohan

With this another two clinics were also traced, which includes SRR Diagnostic Centre, Erragattugutta X Road conducting high-end diagnostics being administered by B Anil and Srinivasa Clinic, Bheemaram, Hanamkonda was being administered by E Srinivas, who had no medical qualifications, and a lab technician said the TGMC

As per under Section 34 and 54 of the National Medical Commission (NMC) Act and Section 22 of the Telangana State Medical Practitioners Registration (TSPMR) Act. Cases will be registered against the three individuals.

TGMC Public Relations Committee Chairman Dr Narendra Kumar said, A doctor who has completed MD Dermatology or MCh Plastic Surgery should perform complex procedures like laser and hair transplantation.

A BDS degree or any individuals without valid medical recognition to perform cosmetology, hair transplantation, and laser treatments is treated as illegal and strict legal action will be taken against such individuals.



Underground tunnel

### Security forces discover underground Maoist tunnel

Top leaders of outlawed CPI-Maoist abandon the hideout before the troops arrive at the camp after arduous climbing of hill

PNS ■ MULUGU

The security forces discovered a large underground tunnel structure during combing operations in the Karregatta hills along the Chhattisgarh -Telangana border. The operations were intended to eliminate Maoists, who are suspected to be hiding in the thick forests of Karregatta. However, the forces found that the Maoists abandoned the tunnel before they arrived.

In what is being termed the biggest operation in history, Central forces launched 'Operation Kagar', aimed at flushing out Maoists from the region under the banner of 'Bachavo Karreguttalu.'

This massive operation has been ongoing for the past six days in the Karregatta hills, located along the border of the Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, and the Mulugu and Bhadradi Kothagudem districts of Telangana.

Despite intense heat reaching up to 45 degrees Celsius, the security forces have managed to identify a

key Maoist bunker, it is said. However, by the time forces reached the area, it appeared that the Maoists had already abandoned the location.

Traces indicating Maoist presence were found near the tunnel. According to available information, the tunnel was built to safely house more than a thousand Maoists for several days. The cave is equipped with a water supply and resting facilities. It even included a large open area inside. Photos and videos taken by the security forces from inside the tunnel have been shared with Telugu news channel, Swatantra.

Meanwhile, it is believed that both the security forces and the Maoists are at risk of dehydration due to extreme heat and lack of resources.

The Maoists hiding in the hills are reportedly struggling for food and water, even though they initially settled in the area with food material sufficient for four months. The government and security forces

are determined to continue the operation until it is fully successful, without backing down.

Meanwhile, the Maoist party has called for peace talks, with sources indicating that key Maoist leaders with crores-worth bounties are believed to be hiding in the Karregatta hills. Based on this intelligence, an unprecedented operation was launched.

Police believe that even if Maoist leaders and members manage to survive the operation, they may die due to dehydration. On the sixth day, combing operations continued. However, once darkness sets in around 4 pm, the visibility drops to less than five feet, which is why Maoists consider the area extremely safe.

In Galgum forest, an IED set up by Maoists exploded, injuring a DRG jawan, who was then moved to Bijapur district hospital.

By Saturday evening, forces managed to reach a part of the hills where they discovered a suspected Maoist hideout.



Fake babas, Kallam Vijay, Kallam Jeevan Lal, and Kallam Krishna, from Station Ghanpur mandal being taken into custody in Yadadri Bhuvangiri district on Sunday

### Three fake babas thrown behind bars for duping people

PNS ■ JANGAON

In a sudden turn of events, three brothers from Station Ghanpur mandal in Jangaon district was thrown behind bars on Sunday after being exposed for impersonating godmen (babas) and defrauding villagers.

Disguised in saffron robes and claiming to be holy men, the trio — Kallam Vijay, Kallam Jeevan Lal, and Kallam Krishna — roamed through villages pretending to perform prayers and rituals, targeting vulnerable people under the guise of spiritual help.

Their fraudulent activities came to light in Panakabanda village under Mothkur mandal in Yadadri Bhuvangiri district, where they introduced themselves as Hanuman devotees. The brothers approached several households, seeking donations and offerings, and promising blessings in return.

According to sources, they visited the home of Satish and Mahalakshmi, a childless couple who run a grocery store in the village. The alleged fake

babas performed a mock ritual involving water drops and amulets, charging the couple Rs 2,000. Later, they demanded Rs 19,000 more, promising that a special ritual involving the sap of trees would help the couple conceive.

However, their suspicious behavior led to Satish and Mahalakshmi informing the village's former sarpanch, and together with villagers, they devised a plan to expose the fraudsters. Pretending to agree to pay Rs 11,000, the couple asked the fake babas to come back to the village. Once the trio arrived, the villagers confronted them and found their responses inconsistent.

Upon interrogation, the three confessed they were not babas but brothers from Station Ghanpur. They admitted to collecting money from various villages — usually Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 per person — under false pretenses.

The villagers detained the fraudsters in the local panchayat office before handing them over to the police. A case has been registered, and an investigation is underway.

### Three Hyd residents die as two vehicles collide head-on

PNS ■ VIKARABAD

Three people lost their lives in a tragic road accident at Kondangal in Vikarabad district on Sunday.

The victims, all residents of Kukatpally in Hyderabad, were returning from a temple visit in Karnataka when their car collided head-on with a multi-purpose vehicle (MPV) coming from the opposite direction on the Chintapally-Yellamanda village road.

All three sustained critical injuries and later died while undergoing treatment at a local hospital. The car turned into a mangled mass of metal.

Police arrived at the scene, cleared the



Ill-fated car

damaged vehicle to the roadside, and restored traffic flow, which had been disrupted due to the crash.

The deceased were identified as Latha, Rama Rao and Shruti.

A case has been registered, and an investigation is currently underway.



A high end clinic 'Amyra' at Hanamkonda (file photo)

### Large number of workers travel to BRS public meeting

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

The Shadnagar constituency contingent moved in large numbers to Warangal under the leadership of former MLA Y Anjaiah Yadav to participate in the BRS party's silver jubilee celebrations.

Party workers, leaders, and fans enthusiastically gathered to attend the assembly being held at Elkathurthy in Warangal to participate in the party's silver jubilee celebrations.

Former MLA Anjaiah Yadav said that thousands of workers from the constituency had traveled to the venue in 60 special buses, 310 cars, and several other vehicles.

He expressed happiness over the overwhelming and volun-



tary participation of party fans and KCR supporters, describing the turnout as far beyond expectations.

Activists from every village in Keshampet, Kondurgu, Chaudhary Gudem, Kothur, Nandigama, and Farooqnagar mandals came together to show their support. Yadav remarked

that the Silver Jubilee Meeting would once again reinforce the self-respect and pride of the people of Telangana.

A vibrant gathering of activists, leaders, and fans from all villages marked the journey to Warangal, reflecting the deep-rooted strength of the party at the grassroots level.

### Dead rat found in curry parcel, complaint filed

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

In a horrific incident at Achampet town in Nagarkurnool district, a dead rat was found in a boti curry (the curry is made using gizzards and intestine curry) purchased by a customer from a hotel.

The customer had taken a parcel of curry from a hotel in the town. When he reached home and opened the parcel, he found a dead rat in it.

Shocked by the discovery of the dead rat, he took the parcel back to the hotel and confronted the hotel management. He also lodged a complaint with Food Inspector Manoj. The Food Inspector



inspected the hotel. He took statements from both the customer and the hotel owner.

Samples of the curry from the parcel and other meat items from the hotel have been collected to be sent to a laboratory for testing. The Food Inspector stated that if adulteration or contamination is confirmed in the food items, criminal cases will be filed against those responsible.

### Collector's wife delivers boy at Government Hospital

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

Many people mistakenly believe that government hospitals do not provide proper treatment and that patients do not receive sufficient attention. This perception often stems from the heavy patient load in these facilities, which can give the impression that care is inadequate.

In contrast, private hospitals are viewed as offering superior amenities, less congestion, and more personalized service, leading many to prefer them.

However, it is important to note that the belief is not entirely true. Government hospitals also have many dedicat-



ed and skilled doctors and staff who work with commitment. Peddapalli District Collector Koya Sree Harsha proved it.

Collector Koya Sree Harsha's wife, Vijaya, delivered a baby at a government hospital.

On Saturday night, when she experienced labor pains, she was taken to the

Godavarikhani Government General Hospital. After examination, the doctors performed a C-section delivery, and Vijaya gave birth to a healthy baby boy. It is known that she got all her prenatal care and treatment at the government hospital throughout her pregnancy. This incident is going viral on social media. The Collector's choice has become an inspiration to many and is receiving praise. People are commending the couple for reinforcing trust in government hospitals.

To address the shortage of doctors, nurses, and other staff, new recruitments are also being carried out.

### 30 kg marijuana seized

PNS ■ BHADRADRI KOTHAGUDEM

The Special Task Force (STF) B Team from Hyderabad, along with Excise Police, seized 30 kilos of marijuana which it was being transported in a lorry parked at the ITC Company

parking yard in Bhadrachalam on Sunday.

Three individuals were arrested in connection with the case.

According to officials, the lorry was carrying goods required for the ITC paper mill, and the driver, Shiva, had

brought marijuana in Odisha and transported it to Bhadrachalam.

Arjun, a dealer, accompanied Shiva.

Acting on a tip-off, STF B Team Sub-Inspector Nagaraju and other team members inspected the lorry at the ITC parking yard and found 30

kilos of marijuana, according to Sub-Inspector Balaraju.

Following the seizure, the driver Shiva, Arjun, and another person named Prahlad were arrested.

The police seized the lorry and shifted it to Bhadrachalam Excise

Station. During the investigation, it was revealed that the accused had previously smuggled contraband from Odisha and sold it in Bhadrachalam.

Authorities stated that the seized marijuana is worth approximately Rs

15 lakh, while the lorry is valued at Rs 20 lakh.

The STF B Team, which successfully carried out this operation, was commended by Enforcement Director VV Kamal Haasan Reddy and B Team In-Charge Pradeep Rao.

## BRS silver jubilee radiates hope, signals its political indispensability

Twenty-five years of existence and 10 years in power mean a lot for a regional party. If it is headed by a strong leader whose name is synonymous with the very state for whose creation it was formed and achieved, it speaks a lot for its strong political roots in every nook and corner of the state.

Many a movement was launched for Telangana, and although strong seeds of regionalism were sown, it was due to the momentous stewardship of K. Chandrasekhar Rao that ultimately the goal of a separate state of Telangana was realised.

Like Telugu Desam Party supreme NT Rama Rao coming to power in United Andhra Pradesh just nine months after its formation, KCR realised his ambition of a separate

**The whole of Telangana stood behind KCR and gave him the reins of power after his stupendous success. It was an achievement in the true sense of the word, and the people of the state rallied behind KCR and gave him power for two terms. The two terms of rule by the TRS, which later changed its name to the BRS, resulted in many milestones, like numerous social welfare measures to irrigation projects to the new secretariat and the installation of a huge statue of BR Ambedkar**

Telangana state in 2014 after a lot of pain, strain, and struggle as he had pursued his objective with the same zeal.

The whole of Telangana stood behind KCR and gave him the reins of power after his stupendous success.

It was an achievement in the

true sense of the word, and the people of the state rallied behind KCR and gave him power for two terms. The two terms of rule by the TRS, which later changed its name to the BRS, resulted in many milestones, like numerous social welfare measures to irri-

gation projects to the new secretariat and the installation of a huge statue of BR Ambedkar.

There are many similarities between NTR and KCR. After coming to power in 1983 with a huge mandate, NTR nurtured national political ambitions and played a key role in the formation of the National Front by bringing together all political parties opposed to the then-ruling Congress. Similarly, KCR also turned his TRS into a national party by changing its name to Bharathiya Rashtira Samithi (BRS).

KCR's second term as the Chief Minister of Telangana changed the very political ideology of his party, and the Telangana sentiment associated with the party was diluted with the change of the party's name, and the confusion was



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very much felt during the last Assembly elections. No party can be in power eternally, and the failure or success of any party in elections depends on many factors, notwithstanding development projects and wel-

fare schemes.

Whether in power or not, it is the party's well-oiled continuity that matters. Ideological strength and welfare schemes speak a lot about its continuous reach for the people.

Any party that loses touch with the people quickly loses its political base and ultimately goes into oblivion.

Thanks to the strong political acumen of KCR and his manoeuvring abilities, the BRS still enjoys vast support among the people, which is indicative of the seats it got in the Assembly elections.

As the man who knows the pulse of the Telangana people, KCR never failed to live up to their expectations.

As a politically well-entrenched party in Telangana, the silver jubilee public meeting at Warangal is a striking

occasion for deep introspection and retrospection. This is the only way forward for any political party to gain lost ground and surge ahead with vigour and political vitality. Politics is not only for winning. It is about sustaining, strengthening, and thereby gaining ground each day.

For a pragmatic leader like KCR, every occasion is an opportunity to strike back on the strength of properly foreseeing the future and taking remedial measures so that lost political ground can be retrieved.

This is where the jubilation in the silver jubilee lies, which also indicates the hope and political indispensability of the BRS.

(The author is a senior journalist)

### Spate of thefts keeps police on their toes

PNS ■ YADADRI BHUVANAGIRI

A series of thefts in Yadadri Bhuvangiri district has sent shockwaves among people. In a single night, thieves broke into as many as 10 houses, raising serious questions about the effectiveness of the police surveillance system. Locals are urging the police to take stricter measures to prevent such incidents from recurring.

On Friday midnight in Kolluru village under Alair mandal in the district, thieves broke into the houses of Janagam Sattireddy and Vellanki Ravinder Reddy by breaking open the locks. They ransacked the houses and made away with Rs 30,000 in cash and some silver ornaments.

ACROSS THE STATES



**Himachal govt raises stipends of medical specialists**

In a bid to attract medical specialists to work in Himachal Pradesh, their monthly stipends have been raised by 50 to 170 per cent, the government said on Sunday. The stipend of senior residents/tutor specialists has been increased from Rs 60,000/65,000 to Rs 1 lakh, while the stipend of super specialists has been raised from Rs 60,000/65,000 to Rs. 1.30 lakh, a statement issued here said. Doctors on study leave will also receive full pay, the state government announced. Currently, Himachal Pradesh has six medical colleges and one super-specialty hospital. However, of the 751 sanctioned posts across the state's medical colleges, only 375 are currently filled, leaving 376 specialist doctor positions vacant, a gap that has significantly impacted healthcare delivery. The government said it was trying to fix an urgent problem by enhancing the stipends. The raise is expected to make government service more attractive to skilled medical professionals, helping bridge this critical gap and strengthening healthcare services at all levels, the statement said.



**Rahul to visit Rae Bareilly, Amethi on April 29-30**

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi will begin his two-day trip to Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday during which he will visit his constituency Rae Bareilly and party bastion Amethi, party leaders said here. During his visit, Gandhi will inaugurate a heart unit at Sanjay Gandhi Hospital, Amethi and inspect the ordnance factory located in Munshiganj, they said. This will be Gandhi's first visit to Amethi after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Congress MP from Amethi, Kishori Lal Sharma, said that Gandhi will first visit Rae Bareilly on April 29, where he will attend a meeting of the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) and stay overnight at the Bhuemau Guest House. On April 30, the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha will travel by road to the ordnance factory in Munshiganj, followed by the inauguration of the heart unit at Sanjay Gandhi Hospital, Sharma said. Gandhi will also conduct an inspection of the Indira Gandhi College of Nursing, he said.



**CBI arrests revenue official on bribery charges**

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested a revenue official for accepting a bribe of Rs 40,000 from a man for processing an application in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Sunday. They said the 'patwari' of the Sudh Mahadev area of Chenani tehsil was arrested on Saturday after he was caught red-handed accepting the bribe. The complainant had applied for issue of 'Fard' (revenue extract -- a document containing land ownership and other details) for his land, but his online application was rejected without any valid reason, a CBI official said. The man then met the accused 'patwari', who demanded a bribe of Rs 50,000 from him for processing his application. After negotiation, the accused agreed to reduce the amount to Rs 40,000, he said. Based on the man's complaint, the official said, the CBI laid a trap and caught the accused red-handed while he was accepting the bribe from the complainant on Saturday. He was arrested and a search was conducted at his residence, he said. According to the official, the accused was produced before the court of special judge, anti-corruption (CBI cases), Jammu, on Sunday morning and the court remanded him to judicial custody for 14 days.

**Acute shortage of judges leading to cases going unheard: HC**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has highlighted the "acute shortage of judges" with respect to the population and the litigation quantum due to which several matters remain unheard.

The High Court said that on account of overflowing dockets, it was unable to decide appeals within a reasonable period of time and when some matters remain unheard, it is "extremely painful" for the judge.

The court's remarks came while hearing a plea by a cheating and forgery case convict, seeking permission to travel abroad to attend a club assembly of Rotary Club in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and Georgia for his social ties and business growth.

"In my considered view, since on account of overflowing dockets, this court is unable to decide the appeals within a reasonable period of time, the right to even leisure trips to a certain extent ought not to be declined," Justice Girish Kathpalia said.

The court permitted the man to travel abroad from May 1 to May 11 upon furnishing a personal bond of Rs 5 lakh with one surety of the like amount. It said the events like club assemblies of Rotarians, are more in the form of general get-togethers where social and business relations are developed.

"On account of acute shortage of judges as compared to the general population and the litigation quantum, for a long time, the list of regular matters does not reach till the



end of the day of hearing. "Rather, many times even beyond 05:00 pm when the courts rise for the day, some of the matters remain unheard, which is extremely painful for the judge. In such an uncertain atmosphere, depriving the applicant/ appellant of free movement, even if to enjoy leisure trips cannot be justified," Justice Kathpalia said.

The court noted that the man's appeal challenging his conviction in the cheating and forgery case was filed in the high court in 2019 and admitted by the previous judge, to be heard at its turn as a regular matter. The man's counsel submitted that he was earlier also allowed to go abroad and that being of 67 years of age, there was no scope for his fleeing from justice.

The counsel for CBI told the court on an earlier occasion, the man was denied permission to travel abroad as it was a leisure trip and contended that if he was allowed to leave the country, he might not return.

While allowing the man's plea, the high court said the court must be conscious about ensuring the return of the applicant to face the pending legal proceedings which can be done by imposing appropriate conditions on him.

**India has become a global space power, says PM Modi**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Noting that India has become a global space power, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the country is leading the most cost-effective but successful space programme in the entire world and is set to scale new heights in the future.

Many youths are attaining new milestones in the field of space start-ups, he said while pointing out that more than 325 such firms are operating in the country as against just one a decade ago.

In his monthly radio broadcast 'Mann Ki Baat', Modi also paid tributes to former ISRO chief K Kasturirangan, who passed away on April 25.

"Two days ago, we lost a great scientist of the country, Dr K Kasturirangan ji. Whenever I met Kasturirangan ji, we discussed topics like the talent of Indian youth, modern education and space science," the PM said.

"His contribution in scaling newer heights to science, education and India's space programme shall always be remembered. ISRO attained a new identity under his leadership," the Prime Minister said.

The space programmes that moved forward under his guidance brought global recognition to India's efforts, Modi said.

He also said that many of the satellites that India uses today were launched under the supervision of Dr Kasturirangan.

The Prime Minister said Kasturirangan also played a



**Modi pointed out that India has become a global space power. "We have created a record by launching 104 satellites simultaneously."**

"Today, when we look back and remember this journey of 50 years, we realise how far we have come."

Modi pointed out that India has become a global space power. "We have created a record by launching 104 satellites simultaneously. We have become the first country to reach the South Pole of the Moon. India has launched the Mars Orbiter Mission and we have reached pretty close to the Sun with the Aditya-L1 Mission."

Today, India is leading the most cost-effective but successful space programme in the entire world, he said while pointing out that many countries take ISRO's help for their satellites and space missions.

"When we see a satellite launch by ISRO, we are filled with pride. I had a similar feeling when I witnessed the launch of PSLV-C-23 in 2014. I was also present at the ISRO Centre in Bengaluru during the landing of Chandrayaan-2 in

1919. "That time Chandrayaan failed to achieve the expected success and it was a very difficult time for the scientists. But I could see with my own eyes the patience of the scientists and their zeal to achieve something," he said.

And a few years later, the whole world too noticed how the same scientists made Chandrayaan-3 a success, the PM added.

Noting that India has opened its space sector for the private sector as well, Modi said today many youths are attaining new milestones in the field of space start-ups.

"The times to come are ushering in a lot of new possibilities in space. India is going to scale new heights."

The country is busy preparing for many important missions like Gaganyaan, SpaDeX and Chandrayaan-4. We are also working on the Venus Orbiter Mission and Mars Lander Mission," he said.



**BJP-JD(S) want to remove Cong govt in Karnataka: Shivakumar**

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Sunday alleged that the BJP and JD(S) want to somehow remove the Congress government in the state and are dreaming about it, but won't succeed.

He also asserted that the Congress would once again come to power in the state in the 2028 Assembly polls.

The Karnataka Congress chief was addressing a gathering at an event organised to commemorate the government's achievements in the two years since coming to office and to launch various developmental works in the Bengaluru rural district.

"We cannot forget the strength you (the people) have given us. The Karnataka government is today known for its administration. We have presented a budget of over Rs 4 lakh crore, and with the motto of equal rights and equal life for all, we are taking everyone together and implementing programmes," Shivakumar said. Addressing the event, he asked the BJP and JD(S) what they had done for the welfare of people, women, farmers, youth, and job creation, adding that they were unable to speak about it and were "jealous".

**Modi to inaugurate first WAVES summit on Thursday**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the first World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) in Mumbai on Thursday, a four-day event that will bring together the entire spectrum of the media and entertainment industry.

The prime minister is also expected to interact with top leaders of the media and entertainment industry during the summit, which is also aimed at giving a boost to the creator's economy taking shape across the world.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw will also address the inaugural session of the summit, which is expected to witness participation from top actors such as Amitabh Bachchan, Rajinikanth, Mohanlal, Hema Malini, and Chiranjeevi, among others.

The summit will feature theme-based plenaries and discussions aimed at shaping the future of the audio-visual industry in India and beyond.

The first two days will focus on cinema, filmmaking, and marketing, while the next two



days will witness business meetings and participation from the general public.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is expected to chair the Global Media Dialogue which will see participation from ministers, leaders of the media industry and policymakers from across the world.

The first WAVES Awards to winners of 32 challenges announced in the run-up to the summit will also be given away at the event organised at the Jio World Centre in Mumbai.

Mumbai is expected to be the permanent venue of the WAVES summit, billed as the biggest gathering of the media and entertainment industry, similar to what World Economic Forum meeting at

Davos is for the business and economy sectors, officials said.

Day one will open with a high-profile panel discussion titled 'Legends and Legacies: The Stories That Shaped India's Soul', featuring Amitabh Bachchan, Hema Malini, Mithun Chakraborty, Rajinikanth, Mohanlal, and Chiranjeevi. The session will be moderated by actor Akshay Kumar.

Another highlight will be 'The New Mainstream: Breaking Borders, Building Legends', a panel with filmmaker S S Rajamouli, actors Anil Kapoor, Alia Bhatt, and Vicky Kaushal, and music maestro AR Rahman, moderated by producer-director Karan Johar.

**PAHALGAM ATTACK**

**Gen VK Singh urges patience, says govt taking action**

PNS ■ UJJAIN (MP)

Mizoram Governor General VK Singh on Sunday appealed to the public to be patient over the Pahalgam terror attack, stressing that the government is taking action.

Singh, a former Union minister and ex-chief of Army Staff, was in Ujjain to address a function at Vikram University.

Asked about the cold-blooded killing of tourists in Pahalgam, Singh told reporters, "... the government is taking some action on it. We should all be patient and remain alert in future, so that if we notice anything unusual, we can detect it beforehand."

Responding to a question about Pakistan's reaction amid

the tension between India and the neighbouring country, Singh said, "Why are you talking about Pakistan? Talk about our country."

Referring to the students of the university, Singh said that he has communicated to the youth, who will run the country in the future, that they need to empower themselves.

After the programme at the varsity, he also offered prayers at the famous Mahakaleshwar temple here.

Twenty-six persons were gunned down by terrorists in Pahalgam in Kashmir's Anantnag district on April 22, following which the Centre took a host of measures to punish Pakistan, including keeping the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 in abeyance.



**Eleven dead as van hits bike, lands in water-filled well in MP**

PNS ■ MANDSAUR

A speeding van plunged into a water-filled well after hitting a bike in Madhya Pradesh's Mandsa district on Sunday, leaving 11 persons, including a biker and a rescuer, dead, police said.

The incident occurred in the Narayangarh police station area.

Ratlam range Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Manoj Singh said 13 persons were travelling in the van.

"Four of them were rescued while nine others died. A vil-



lager, identified as Manohar, who descended into the well for rescue, also died," he said, adding that the body of a victim of the accident is yet to be

pulled out of the well.

Prima facie, the van driver lost control of the wheel after the vehicle hit a bike and fell into the well.

The bike rider was also killed, he said.

A rescue operation, involving the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and personnel of other units, is underway.

Deputy Chief Minister Jagdish Devda, who rushed to the site, said the driver apparently lost control of the vehicle, causing it to veer off the road and land into a well.

Are we alone in this universe? A study led by the University of Cambridge provides a flicker of hope that it may not be so, and the answer may lie 120 light-years from Earth.

The study, published in the Astrophysical Journal Letters last week, found hints of life in the distant planet named K2-18b. But astrophysicists are sceptical and say the study's results and the methodology need to be cross-checked by other researchers.

According to the research, fingerprints of dimethyl sulphide and dimethyl disulphide molecules have been detected on the exoplanet's atmosphere. On Earth, these molecules are known to be produced by marine organisms.

Interestingly, the most common hypothesis is that life on Earth originated in the ocean.



The study provides evidence of 'three-sigma' significance - a 99.7 per cent confidence that the results are not fortuitous -- about the strongest-yet of signs of life outside the Solar System, asserts the research team led by Nikku Madhusudhan, a professor of astrophysics and exoplanetary

science.

In an interview with PTI Videos last week, he said that given scope of the study's implications, his team was looking to increase the robustness of the results in future researches.

Jayesh Goyal, a reader at the School of Earth and Planetary

18b's atmosphere highlight the extent to which this class of sub-Neptune or super-earth exoplanets could be characterised as these targets are extremely challenging to study," he told PTI.

The exoplanet is 8.6 times massive than Earth, but smaller and less massive than Neptune. Hence it has been classified as a 'sub-Neptune' exoplanet.

Scientists who study exoplanets contest the interpretation of the observations, saying the results are not statistically sound, given the immensity of claims of detecting biological activity outside the Solar System.

"It is not a 'detection' according to the usual standards of exoplanet science," Ryan MacDonald, NASA Sagan Fellow at the University of Michigan in the US, told PTI.

Editor's TAKE

Honouring the bravehearts

Metro murals for Param Vir Chakra winners must be replicated for the next generation

The Delhi Metro has put up murals to honour Param Vir Chakra winners, transforming urban spaces into canvases of culture and history. Among the most poignant of these are murals dedicated to the Param Vir Chakra (PVC) winners, the highest military decoration awarded to Indian soldiers for their acts of exceptional valour during wartime. These murals not only serve as artistic tributes but also as a powerful reminder of the bravery and sacrifice of these unsung heroes.

The Param Vir Chakra is awarded to those soldiers who display extraordinary courage in the face of adversity, often paying the ultimate price for the safety and sovereignty of the nation. From the Indo-Pakistani Wars to the Kargil conflict, the valour of these soldiers has always been at the forefront of India's military history.

But while their bravery is celebrated in military circles, it is essential that these heroes are also remembered in the heart of the public's consciousness. The decision to honour Param Vir Chakra winners through murals is a step in the right direction — ensuring that their legacies are etched not just in the history books, but in the very spaces we live in.

These murals are not just decorative but hold deep significance. They act as visual landmarks in metro stations — places that see thousands of commuters pass by daily. In their fleeting moments of travel, these individuals are exposed to the murals, reminded of the heroes who defended the nation with unparalleled courage. By embedding these murals in the daily lives of citizens, the brave hearts who earned the Param Vir Chakra are given the attention and respect they deserve.

It is always crucial to honour bravehearts, as their sacrifices are the foundation of national pride and security. They fought not for fame or recognition, but out of a deep sense of duty. By commemorating them, we also emphasise the values of patriotism, sacrifice, and honour — values that are essential for the growth of a nation.

Moreover, such tributes provide an educational aspect to public art. Younger generations, who may not be familiar with the history of these gallant warriors, are exposed to their stories in a non-traditional format. A mural, rich with symbolism and imagery, can tell the story of a Param Vir Chakra recipient far more vividly than words can, offering a visual narrative that resonates deeply with those who may have never encountered these histories in textbooks. Honouring such brave soldiers in public spaces also sets an example. It helps instil a sense of respect for service members and the dedication required to protect one's country. It teaches the value of courage and sacrifice, ensuring that these principles continue to inspire future generations. The concept of using metro stations as platforms for public art has gained significant traction in India over the last decade. As urbanisation grew and metro systems expanded in major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, authorities recognised the power of art to transform sterile, utilitarian spaces into cultural hubs.

Metro murals are not a new phenomenon, but their focus on historical figures and national heroes is a relatively recent development. Prior to this, murals mostly depicted abstract art or symbolic representations. As the push for greater recognition of national heroes grew, so did the idea to place these figures at the forefront of public consciousness through art.

Today, metro murals dedicated to Param Vir Chakra winners are part of a larger movement to preserve the history and valour of India's armed forces in a visually accessible way. For instance, the Delhi Metro, one of the busiest metro systems in the world, has a long history of commemorating India's heroes through art. Murals celebrating figures from the Indian independence struggle, as well as the brave soldiers of post-independence wars, have become a common sight. These murals are a testament to India's commitment to never forget its warriors, regardless of how much time has passed. Murals have the power to communicate in a way that transcends words. Unlike statues or plaques, which can sometimes feel distant or formal, murals exist in the everyday life of a city. They engage people on their way to work, school, or while simply waiting for a train. These works of art are a bridge between history and the present, making it easy for anyone to reflect on the bravery of soldiers and the sacrifices they made.

Moreover, metro murals are also an important form of urban storytelling. They speak to the identity of the city and, in many ways, reflect the values of its people. By painting the faces of Param Vir Chakra winners on the walls of bustling metro stations, the cities are not only recognising their importance but also making sure their legacies live on.

No Indus water for Pakistan

In a decisive shift, the Government of India has suspended the Indus Waters Treaty, marking a bold recalibration of its strategic doctrine

The recent terrorist ambush in Pahalgam of innocent tourists once again has exposed the rot of cross-border terror and has brought into sharp focus the question of proportionality and response. Each time blood is spilt on Indian soil by forces emanating from across the border, the nation mourns, reacts with diplomatic outrage, tightens security, and moves on. But this cycle must be broken. At some point, restraint becomes complicity.

In the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack, the Government of India has taken a bold and long-overdue step — it has moved to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), one of the most generous and lopsided water-sharing agreements in the world. This is not just a policy shift; it is a recalibration of India's strategic doctrine. Signed in 1960, in an era far removed from today's realities, the Indus Waters Treaty was an act of remarkable generosity by an upper riparian India. It granted Pakistan near-exclusive rights over the waters of the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab — rivers that originate in Indian territory.

For decades, India honoured the treaty even during full-scale wars and covert proxy conflicts. But the age of automatic magnanimity is over. The suspension of the IWT marks a decisive turn — where cooperation is no longer unconditional, and dialogue is no longer disconnected from deeds. The Jhelum River, whose headwaters lie in India, flows directly through the region where Pakistan — backed militants gunned down Indian soldiers in Pahalgam. That water, nourished by Indian glaciers and mountains, eventually sustains Pakistan's economy and agriculture.

In return, what India receives is infiltration, radicalisation, and relentless bloodshed. The symbolism is stark — and so is the imperative. The Government's decision to suspend the IWT is not an act of retaliation; it is an assertion of sovereign logic.

This move comes after years of diplomatic exhaustion. India has been patient. It has absorbed attacks in Uri, Pulwama, and now Pahalgam, while choosing to respond through global forums, dossiers, and restraint. But when a treaty becomes a strategic liability — when it empowers a belligerent neighbour with economic lifelines while they export terror — it ceases to be a diplomatic instrument and becomes a moral failure. It is important to understand that this suspension is not an arbitrary breach of international norms.

Under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, a fundamental change in circumstances — such as the continued use of terror as state policy — provides legal ground



for renegotiation or withdrawal. India has exhausted the dispute resolution mechanisms under the IWT. Pakistan's habitual misuse of arbitration panels and neutral experts to stall Indian projects has made the treaty unworkable. The Government's move is legally defensible, diplomatically deliberate, and strategically astute.

What does this suspension mean in operational terms? It means that India will now assert its full entitlement over the eastern rivers, accelerating long-delayed projects like the Shahpur Kandi Dam and Ujh multipurpose project.

It means that hydropower infrastructure on western rivers will be scaled up rapidly. It means that water flowing unutilised into Pakistan will now be directed to support irrigation, industry, and drinking water needs in Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh. This is not water as a weapon.

This is water as a national right. Critics may raise concerns about international backlash or ecological consequences. But the reality is that global sentiment has shifted. The global community, increasingly aware of Pakistan's double game, is unlikely to be swayed by cries of victimhood. Moreover, India's position can be bolstered by highlighting how the IWT, signed in a pre-climate-

change, pre-terrorism era, is now outdated. The treaty does not account for glacial melt, increased water variability, transboundary hydro-politics or asymmetric warfare. A revised framework — rooted in sustainability, reciprocity, accountability and hard realism — is both logical and necessary. If anything, revising the treaty offers an opportunity to integrate climate resilience, data transparency, and regional sustainability into a 21st-century water framework. Domestically, the benefits are immense. Jammu and Kashmir, long denied full utilisation of its riverine potential due to international sensitivities, can now develop large-scale hydropower that generates jobs, stabilises grids, and improves infrastructure. Ladakh, with its unique water needs and altitude challenges, can benefit from controlled storage and adaptive distribution. Even Punjab and Haryana, battling agrarian distress, can gain from better irrigation planning. This is a national interest in action not at the cost of others, but in fulfilment of what was always rightfully ours.

By suspending the Indus Waters Treaty, India is also rewriting the rules of engagement. The message to Islamabad is clear: treaties require trust. When that trust is systematically eroded by proxy war and cross-border terrorism, the framework of cooperation cannot hold.

If Pakistan wants the privileges of diplomacy, it must first uphold the principles of peace. The days of one-sided patience are over. This is a new water doctrine: princi-

pled, powerful, and unapologetically Indian. This decision also sets a precedent for the broader region. It signals that India will no longer allow historical inertia to dictate present vulnerability. Whether it is trade, visas, culture, or water, reciprocity is the new baseline. It also reminds the world that sovereignty is not merely about borders — it is about resources, resilience, and refusal to be taken for granted.

The terrorists who struck in Pahalgam sought to destabilise the Valley. What they have done instead is awaken a deeper resolve. India has responded not just with weapons and diplomacy, but with the reassertion of control over its natural capital. Rivers, like nations, must flow with dignity. Dignity cannot coexist with duplicity.

As the Indus flows through the mountains of Kashmir and into the plains of Pakistan, let it now carry a message — not of hostility, but of hard realism. India will share what is fair, but it will no longer suffer what is unjust. The Indus Waters Treaty was forged in hope. Today, it flows through hypocrisy.

If Pakistan wishes to continue enjoying the privileges of a water-sharing agreement, it must renounce the politics of bloodshed. Until then, India has every moral, legal, and strategic right to turn the tide. The suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty is not the end of diplomacy; it is the beginning of a new equilibrium, forged in the waters of resolve.

(The author is an IAS officer. Views are personal)



BHUPESH CHAUDHARY

Leaderspeak



In 2013 Waqf Bill was passed unanimously by both houses of Parliament. As per the theory of separation of powers, the judiciary, the legislature, and the executive are all independent. If the Government misuses its powers or any article of the Constitution, the judiciary will intervene. Where else will we go?

ASADUDDIN OWAI, MEMBER OF THE LOK SABHA

SECOND Opinion

BY SANJEEV DE

The Indian industrial landscape is undergoing a seismic shift. As products grow more complex, markets demand faster turnarounds, and sustainability becomes non-negotiable, businesses face a pressing challenge: how to communicate value effectively while keeping costs low and engagement high. Traditional tools like static brochures, PowerPoint decks, and physical demonstrations are increasingly falling short. Immersive technologies such as 3D product animation, Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and Extended Reality (XR) are stepping in to redefine how Indian industries market, sell, and train.

The rapid evolution of India's industrial sectors has exposed the limitations of conventional approaches. Companies now need ways to simplify product demonstrations, accelerate sales cycles, cut operational costs, and boost digital engagement. Immersive technologies address these needs by offering dynamic, interactive ways to showcase offerings — whether it is a heavy-duty machine, a cutting-edge vehicle, or a consumer lifestyle product. A standout example of this transformation is XploR, a new immersive tech vertical launched by BizConnect, designed to bring these cutting-edge solutions to Indian businesses. The disruptive solution was born from this very demand, aiming to make industrial marketing

smarter, faster, and more sustainable by leveraging 3D and XR tools to deliver powerful product stories. Across various industries, immersive tech adapts to unique demands and transforms operations. In manufacturing and heavy engineering, complex machinery often requires detailed explanations of internal mechanisms and workflows. 3D animations illustrate these intricacies with precision, while XR tools allow companies to replace bulky physical demos with portable, interactive kits. The goal is to empower manufacturers to showcase entire product portfolios at trade fairs using compact XR-based solutions, eliminating the need for costly shipping and setup. In the automotive and new mobility sector, from passenger cars to electric vehicles (EVs), immersive tech brings products to life. 3D modelling reveals engine functionality or vehicle interiors without dismantling anything, and virtual showrooms enable global presentations and dealer training. These immersive technologies customise presentations for diverse vehicle categories, slashing logistical challenges. For energy, power, and infrastructure companies, visualising equipment like transformers or wind turbines changes the game. XR simulations demonstrate installation, maintenance, and performance remotely.

XploR supports this by enabling energy firms to simulate smart grids or solar plant systems dynamically, streamlining sales, training, and even Government tender processes. In the lifestyle and retail space, AR-powered virtual try-ons for clothing, accessories, or furniture help shoppers see products in their own homes or on themselves, boosting confidence, cutting return rates, and bridging the gap between physical and dig-

ital shopping. Beyond innovation, immersive tech delivers measurable gains. Reducing the need for physical demos and event logistics can slash expenses by up to 70 per cent, eliminating freight, installation, and handling costs. Less reliance on printed materials and product shipping lowers carbon footprints and promotes greener practices.

Globally, immersive tech is already standard practice. In Germany, Japan, and the US, B2B Expos feature 3D displays, OEMs use VR for training, and retailers leverage AR to enhance online shopping. India, with its burgeoning industrial and retail sectors, is ripe for this shift. Indian businesses are now well-positioned to compete on this global stage, offering customised immersive solutions that modernise marketing and training responsibly. The proof lies in real-world results.

Companies worldwide have slashed costs by replacing machinery shipments with XR demos, engaging buyers faster with interactive displays, and streamlining training with virtual simulations. One industry leader points out, "We used to haul entire units to expos; now, a headset does the job better." Immersive technology is not just a glimpse into the future, it is a tool for the present.

For Indian industries, it is a chance to sell with confidence, train with clarity, and communicate with creativity. With the adoption of immersive technologies, India has the tools to lead, not follow. By harnessing 3D and XR, the industry can now meet its unique challenges and ambitions.

(The writer researcher and expert on immersive technologies and founder of BizConnect. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Adieu Dr Kasturirangan

Madam — Any discussion on the odyssey of India's space and research history is incomplete without making the mention of Dr Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan. He bade adieu to all of us at the age of 84, due to illness.

From holding the peculiar chairmanship of ISRO from 1994 to 2003, he held the basket of accolades and honours to his name. From the satellite missions like Bhaskara I and II, his excellent leadership has given India its first remote sensing satellite, powerhouse launch vehicle technologies like PSLV and GSLV, INSAT-2, and also chaired Earth Observation Satellite committees.

India will never forget his contribution in making Indian space and research capable of attaining self-reliance. He extended his versatile contribution to his nation's service during his entire life. From the space apex of ISRO to Rajya Sabha to Planning Commission to chairing many other committees on environment, higher education and technology, his list of national contribution is really long. India can never forget her son, who has used his academic power to revolutionise the nation in the path of progress and development. He will remain the beacon of inspiration for the upcoming generations to initiate stellar contribution in national service. As India reaches for the stars, his spirit will always shine amongst them.

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR

The war against Naxals

Madam — The anti-Naxal operations in Chhattisgarh are at their peak. Naxal hotbeds Bijapur and Sukma have never witnessed such an unprecedented "war" against the Maoists. Combing operations by more than 10,000 security personnel, drawn from various forces — including the dedicated Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) — have gone hammer and tongs at Naxal dwellings and explosives by working day in and day out at unfamiliar terrains.

Amidst the ongoing operations against the Naxals, Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma has proposed a dialogue with the Maoists. Quickly acting on the proposal, the Communist Party of India (Maoist) has, instead, asked for a month-long ceasefire in anti-Naxal operations to come to the negotiating table. It has to be noted that plenty of Naxals have laid down arms and surrendered before the Government. Therefore, the ceasefire request of the Naxals has to be taken with a pinch of salt by the Chhattisgarh Government.

In a serious war against any kind of terror, aimed at the State, the Government cannot let its guard down by agreeing to a truce. The dangerous Naxals may seize the ceasefire period to regroup. The Government must tread very carefully in responding to the Maoist offer. While the prospect of dialogue is welcome, it must be backed by clear surrender and accountability.

CK SUBRAMANIAM | MUMBAI

Trade tariffs are counter-productive

Madam — Trade tariffs are intended to protect domestic industries and promote local production. Taxes on imported goods make local products cheaper and more attractive, which boosts the economy and employment.

However, high import prices of raw materials increase the cost of production, burden consumers and increase inflation. Exports can become expensive and lose competitiveness in the global market.

Trade disputes around the world have affected economies, as seen in the Trump era, where some countries have benefited and others have been affected.

India should maintain its export potential despite rising costs, explore new markets, support local industries and train its youth so that the economy becomes self-sufficient and can withstand trade pressures.

While trade tariffs aim to protect domestic industries, they can also increase production costs, burden consumers, and impact global competitiveness. India must focus on maintaining export potential, exploring new markets, and strengthening local industries.

By investing in workforce training and fostering self-sufficiency, the country can better withstand global trade pressures and position itself for sustainable economic growth in an evolving global landscape.

MOHAMMAD ASAD | MUMBAI

RAHUL GANDHI GETS WARNING FROM SC FOR SAVARKAR REMARKS

Belonging from a freedom fighter family, I agree with the Supreme Court (SC) that it is not good for anyone to make disparaging remarks about freedom fighters. SC's stern warning to the Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi stated that Vinayak Damodar Savarkar is revered in Maharashtra. Not only this, the SC, pointing out that Gandhi's grandmother, former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, had written a letter praising Savarkar. Pardon me, for SC to have credibility in their views, but they must first identify freedom fighters, and their actions. It is not about whether Rahul Gandhi has any obligation to accept the actions of his grandmother (or great-grandfather, or great-great-grandfather), but whether any defamation of someone who espoused the ideology of Hindu Mahasabha led to Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. Moreover, was it not part of history that Savarkar did write at least six petitions of mercy between 1911 and 1920 for his release from the notorious Cellular Jail? Or did he not

receive a pension of ₹60 per month (which was higher than the salary of a District Collector) from the British Government, after his release from imprisonment in 1924, when Savarkar was placed under surveillance and had restrictions on his movements? Not only these, was Savarkar not supposed to have supported Mahatma Gandhi's call for the Quit India Movement?

But instead of support, he was recruiting Indians for the British Army. Parivar (many among them worship the first terrorist in India, Nathuram Godse, who killed the Father of the Nation) and the people of Maharashtra, majority other Indians have not recognised Savarkar as a freedom fighter, because he was the original propounder of the two-nation theory — the theory ("there are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India") which led to the partition of India. My humble request to the Honourable Justice of the SC, the above points also need to be examined.

BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE | FARIDABAD

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

# Regaining Pahalgam's lost paradise

A brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam's Baisaran Valley has shattered dreams, reignited fear, and exposed the fragile calm, threatening Kashmir's hard-earned progress and hopes for lasting peace

FIRST Column

Holidaying in happiness turned into a nightmare at the idyllic landscape of Pahalgam, often described as a 'heaven on earth', as a scene of unimaginable horror broke open on April 22, 2025.

A brazen terrorist attack on a group of tourists in the Baisaran Valley — mainly men being killed based on their religious identity — resulted in the tragic and unfortunate loss of at least 28 lives and left over 20 others critically injured.

This barbaric act, claimed by 'The Resistance Front' (TRF), a shadow outfit of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), has not only devastated families and shattered dreams but has also ripped apart the fragile veneer of normalcy that authorities had been attempting to bring back in the Kashmir Valley.

The gruesome incident unfolded in the afternoon of 22 April when a group of four to six heavily armed militants, disguised in military — style uniforms, emerged from the dense forests surrounding Baisaran Valley (a meadow accessible only by foot or pony and an open area with no hideouts for safety). According to eyewitness accounts, the assailants systematically targeted non-Muslim tourists after checking their identities and religious affiliations.

This selective targeting underscores the malicious intent to sow communal discord and further destabilise the region. The victims included 24 tourists from various parts of India, two local residents, and two foreign nationals from Nepal and the UAE. The serene meadow erupted into chaos and grief in the attack's immediate wake.

Social media feeds flooded with harrowing videos — terrified cries for help mingled with the grim sight of lifeless bodies scattered across the once-picturesque landscape.

The emotional wounds inflicted on the bereaved families are immeasurable. While the Government's offer of ₹20 lakhs for information on the terrorists' location is one step to involve citizens' participation in nabbing the culprit, it cannot erase the haunting memories of this devastation.

The image of the young woman beside her fallen Navy officer husband, a honeymoon tragically cut short; the local pony owner's family, now without their sole provider after his courageous son tried to shield tourists; the woman forced to witness the brutal murder of her husband and son; the recently married IAF officer from Arunachal Pradesh on vacation — these stories of unimaginable loss and despair paint a stark and enduring picture of terrorism's human cost, shattering the illusion (read deception) of calm in this vulnerable region.

Following the Pahalgam attack, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) recommended a set of five decisive actions against Pakistan — that included holding the 'Indus Waters Treaty of 1960' in abeyance until verifiable cessation of cross-border terrorism; immediate closure of the 'Integrated Check Post Attari' with a grace period until 1 May for those with valid endorsements to return; the cancellation of all 'SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme'



(SVES) visas for Pakistani nationals with a 48-hour deadline for those currently in India to depart; the declaration of Pakistan's Defence/Military, Naval, and Air Advisors in New Delhi as 'Persona Non Grata' with a week to leave (and a reciprocal withdrawal of Indian counterparts from Islamabad along with five support staff from each mission); and a significant reduction in the overall strength of High Commissions from 55 to 30 personnel by May 1, 2025.

The Pahalgam attack has triggered widespread condemnation across India, with many viewing it as a direct assault on the nation's unity and secular fabric. Many countries, including the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, and several European



RAJDEEP PATHAK

HIS REVERSES THE REMARKABLE GROWTH FROM 1.62 CRORE TOURISTS IN 2019 TO 2.36 CRORE IN 2024, WHICH HAD SIGNIFICANTLY BOOSTED LOCAL ECONOMIES AND LIVELIHOODS DEPENDENT ON THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY, INCLUDING HOTELS, HOUSEBOATS, GUIDES, AND ARTISANS, THEREBY REIGNITING FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY.

and Middle Eastern nations, especially the UAE, issued strong statements condemning the attack.

They emphasised the need for international cooperation to eradicate terrorism and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. This incident has added a new dimension to Kashmir's intricate geopolitical scenario.

For decades, this region has been a fiercely contested territory between India and Pakistan, leading to repeated conflicts and border tensions and solidifying its status as a highly sensitive area. The situation has become even more complex with China's bordering presence. Adding to this volatile mix, Bangladesh has recently emerged as a neighbour in dispute with India, further intensifying regional dynamics.

The timing of this unrest could be a calculated move to draw international attention to the Kashmir issue and undermine India's attempts to showcase normalcy, particularly as it coincided with US Vice President JD Vance's visit and the ongoing WAQF debate. Moreover, striking at the height of the tourist season — a critical period for the local economy —

is a calculated attempt to inflict maximum economic harm and cultivate an atmosphere of fear, thereby disrupting peace and stability.

Since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, the Indian Government has been actively pursuing peace-building and confidence — regaining measures in Jammu and Kashmir, while also promoting local entrepreneurship and development, recognising the practicalities of the situation on ground, which had begun to yield positive results, thereby projecting a return to normalcy in the region.

The recent attack has severely impacted its sector, specifically, the recovering tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir. Travel agencies in Delhi experienced nearly 90 per cent booking cancellations, as per media reports.

This reverses the remarkable growth from 1.62 crore tourists in 2019 to 2.36 crore in 2024, which had significantly boosted local economies and livelihoods dependent on the hospitality industry, including hotels, houseboats, guides, and artisans, thereby reigniting fear and uncertainty.

Amidst the tears of this tragedy, the response of the Kashmiri people showcased a powerful display of humanity. Immediately following the attack, residents rushed to the scene to assist the injured tourists.

They helped with evacuations, offered first aid, and provided emotional support to those traumatised by the event. A day later, on April 23, religious organisations condemned the attack and large numbers of Kashmiri citizens took to the streets in protest of this massacre, holding peaceful demonstrations with the Tricolour, besides candlelight vigils, further underscoring the rejection of violence by the local population and their desire for peace and stability.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the insidious nature of terrorism often finds fertile ground in the tilled soil of human emotions — fear, anger, and envy — emotions that are tragically amplified by the harsh realities of systemic inequalities and sometimes, forced acts of blind belief.

It is a matter of grave national concern to observe the seeds of violence taking root even in our villages, and growing children's aggressive behaviour. This early violence is often a bitter harvest of neglect, stemming from a lack of fundamental education that instils mutual respect, and the gnawing anxiety of unemployment, that darkens the horizons of their future. These interconnected issues demand serious and sustained attention to prevent the escalation of individual frustrations into larger societal threats.

While the Government is taking strong counter-terrorism measures in light of this barbaric attack, the participation of citizens in rebuilding the shaken confidence is crucial. Despite this barbaric act that threatens to undermine the hard-won progress in the Valley, rebuilding trust is now paramount. The time is now to act — in all directions, for peace is the only way.

(The writer is a programme executive Gandhi Smriti Sansthan. Views are personal)

## Co-gress i-crisis: Reform or perish

Despite the energy generated by Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo campaigns, the session offered little more than ritualistic rhetoric, exposing deep structural inertia and a status quo mindset at odds with the urgency of the political moment

Why is the Congress reluctant to change its formation in terms of organisational network, and reform the decades — old processes related to the functioning of its highest bodies — Congress Working Committee, AICC and its customary session?

Are the Congress leaders fearful of the change or intense pressure from some invisible forces that have forced them to play safe and be status quo?

These questions confronting the current Congress dispensation (read Sonia Gandhi-Mallikarjun Kharge-Rahul Gandhi powerful troika) are not new. But a refresh button pressed by the recently held non-happening Ahmedabad AICC session has once again made these questions relevant and begging for answers.

The session left all those participating or not (the party leaders rank and file, and the public) unenthused to the level of the lowest ebb, as it failed to throw an alternative vision to fight the might of Mr Narendra Modi — led well-oiled ruling network — and also to ignite the minds of the Congresspersons to make them ready for future political battles — elections or otherwise.

The abysmal affair that the AICC session turned out to be, with no clear-cut direction emerging out of it as to how the Grand Old Party (GOP) proposes to fight the politico-ideological battle on its way to strengthening its place as the premier opposition party and the unchallenged leader of the fledgling opposition combine — I.N.D.I.A. The session has ended up adding to the confusion and demoralisation rather than emanating any ray of hope.

The Ahmedabad AICC session was not different from the preceding ones held in the last few decades. At a time when the Congress is facing the toughest battle of its survival, with an all-round onslaught launched by the ruling dispensation — both at the political and Government levels — the session was expected to be a path-breaking one, if not revolutionising the party's thinking or strategy. But nothing of the sort happened.

Where does the Congress — particularly Mr Rahul Gandhi, whose remarkable Bharat Jodo Yatra and Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra had rekindled a fresh hope — go from here?

The Ahmedabad AICC session was a valuable opportunity to unveil the blueprint of what the party intends to do in the coming times. Most of the contentious but significant issues — such as strengthening and overhauling the organisational set-up, changing the style of working, purging the party of non-performers and the deadwood, and those conniving with the arch-political rivals — went missing from the discourse.

Those who had their eyes and ears fixed on the session and waited with bated breath for a new look



ANIL ANAND

agenda to unfold were despaired to be content with passing references (on these issues) made by Mr Kharge and Mr Gandhi in their speeches.

The scores of leaders and the delegates who travelled long distances to be in attendance, left without carrying a message to entuse the workers back home, as there was none. Under the circumstances, getting back to the grassroots and convincing the people to be back in the Congress — fold remains a tall order.

Although Mr Kharge, as the Congress president, has done commendable work despite age-related and physical constraints and has left no opportunity to go inside and outside the Parliament — without

ACCORDINGLY, THE ENTIRE GAMUT OF ORGANISING AICC SESSIONS MUST ALSO DRASTICALLY CHANGE. IT SHOULD NOT BE MERELY A CUSTOMARY FULFILMENT OF ELECTION COMMISSION REQUIREMENTS BUT AN EXERCISE THAT SHOULD BE DEEPLY INTERACTIVE AND ALL-ENCOMPASSING.

fighting back on crucial issues — the challenge is more daunting for Mr Gandhi.

It remains a fact that Mr Kharge is acting only as a guardian figure, but every policy decision in the party has Mr Gandhi's stamp affixed to it. The party president has no one in doubt about his position and candidly admitted from time to time that Mr Gandhi was the real force. A very tricky situation seems to have arisen in Congress, particularly after the lacklustre AICC session and with the next set of assembly elections approaching fast.

Normally, the onset of any election has been used as a standard excuse by the Congress strategist to ward off or postpone decisions on vital issues — to the great disadvantage of the party — which is there for everyone to see at the AICC and the state/UT levels where confusion prevails supreme. The play would not work anymore.

The clock is ticking fast and the indecisiveness is getting entrenched deeper, a situation that demands

a fast remedy.

Since Mr Gandhi has led the battle from the front, notwithstanding the personalised campaign against him to tarnish his image, with two pan-India sojourns having a dramatic effect both for the party and at the personal levels, unfortunately, the spirit has not been carried forward. A weak organisation, dotted by leaders with vested interests and at times working at cross-purposes to BJP's advantage, has been the Congress's bane and a spoke in Mr Gandhi's wheels.

With this backdrop, it has become imperative that Mr Gandhi must press the alarm bell. The image of indecisiveness has to be shed and the mask of the status quo has to be blown to smithereens as fast as possible.

The charity must begin at the AICC with a thorough change in its work culture. In most of the cases, it has become a parking place for those elevated as its office-bearers in charge of key tasks. A big casualty is that they tend to lose touch with the middle-lower rung leaders and workers.

Accordingly, the entire gamut of organising AICC sessions must also drastically change. It should not be merely a customary fulfilment of Election Commission requirements but an exercise that should be deeply interactive and all — encompassing. The Ahmedabad AICC session starkly revealed the Congress party's deep-rooted reluctance to confront its structural inertia and outdated processes.

Despite the hopes ignited by Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo initiatives, the session failed to offer any meaningful vision or reforms, leaving leaders and workers disillusioned.

The Congress's continued avoidance of internal overhaul — especially in revamping the AICC, energising the grassroots, and purging non-performers — has eroded morale at a time when clarity and decisiveness are critical.

With Mr Kharge serving more as a caretaker and Rahul Gandhi being the de facto decision-maker, the party can no longer afford to hide behind election timelines to defer reforms. The Congress must shed its image of indecisiveness and break free from status quoist tendencies.

Only a bold reimagining of its organisational network and work culture — starting at the top — can revitalise the Grand Old Party and position it as a credible challenger in the evolving political landscape. The clock is ticking.

Every missed opportunity deepens the disconnect with the electorate and empowers the opposition narrative. Time for half-measures is over — action must replace introspection.

(The writer is a political and national affairs analyst. Views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS



KPG Spices targets Rs 100 cr revenue

KPG Spices is looking to double its turnover to Rs 100 crore this fiscal on the back of new product launches and network expansion, according to a top company official. A spice brand owned by Marvel King Ltd, which offers a full range of ground spices, achieved a revenue of Rs 50 crore in the financial year ended March this year. The company has set a target of Rs 100 crore in revenue for the 2025-26 financial year, Marvel King Ltd Managing Director Gourav Jain said. To achieve the target, the company has launched a range of whole spices in markets across North India, he said. The company also plans to expand into UP and Rajasthan and the Northeast region. "Our sales and marketing team is working diligently to expand our network to reach 1 lakh retail outlets," said Marvel King Chairman Parveen Jain. "We are also exploring opportunities in the e-commerce and quick-commerce marketplaces," Jain added. KPG Spices, which was launched 14 months ago, currently has a presence in six states - Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar.



Bomb scare on Varanasi-Bengaluru IndiGo flight

Panic broke out at Varanasi airport after a foreign national aboard a Bengaluru-bound IndiGo flight claimed he was carrying a bomb, police said on Sunday. The incident took place on Saturday night, police said, adding that the passenger, a Canadian, has been detained. Security sleuths are questioning the man, officials said. Following the bomb scare, the aircraft was moved to the isolation bay for a thorough inspection, but no explosive material was found, said Puneet Gupta, Director of the airport. Gupta said the IndiGo crew promptly informed the Air Traffic Control (ATC) about the threat after the passenger's claim. The flight was grounded and inspected as per standard security protocols. After receiving clearance from security agencies, the aircraft departed for Bengaluru on Sunday morning, officials said. "Flight 6E 499 operating from Varanasi to Bengaluru on April 26 was delayed due a bomb threat received before takeoff. As per protocol, the aircraft was taken to an isolation bay, passengers were safely disembarked and all standard operating procedures were followed," IndiGo said in a statement. "We deeply appreciate the patience, understanding, and cooperation of our customers," it said. A detailed probe is on in the matter.



Kaspersky bets big on India as key growth market

Cybersecurity firm Kaspersky is betting on India as a strategic growth market, recognising the country's rapid digitalisation and increasing cybersecurity needs, and aims to expand local teams and strengthen collaborations across various sectors. General Manager for India region at Kaspersky Jaydeep Singh shared that the company has tripled its workforce in the country in the past two years, with new hires in sales, pre-sales, and support roles. He also highlighted the presence of global research teams based in India that monitor more than 900 advanced persistent threat (APT) groups daily. "In the last two years, we have tripled our employee base in India...We have part of the global research teams based out of India who do the threat hunting," Singh told PTI on the sidelines of GITEX Asia 2025.

Geopolitics, earnings to drive markets in holiday-shortened week: Analysts

Equity markets will remain closed on Thursday for 'Maharashtra Day'. Further updates related to tariffs will also be watched by investors, experts noted. Stock markets witnessed profit-taking in the last two sessions due to increased geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan following the death of 26 people in a terror attack on tourists at Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir.

RBI Governor urges US industry to invest in India

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra has exhorted the US industry to invest in India, stressing that the country continues to be the fastest growing major economy supported by policy consistency and certainty.

Addressing the US-India Economic Forum organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and US India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) here on Friday, Malhotra said that India is expected to record a growth rate of 6.5 per cent in the current financial year despite tremendous increase in uncertainty and volatility in global financial markets.

"At a time when many advanced economies are facing economic headwinds and a deteriorating economic outlook, India continues to offer strong growth and stability, making it a natural choice for investors seeking long-term value and opportunity," the governor said. India, he added, "continues to be an economy supported by stability -- monetary, financial and political; policy consistency and certainty; congenial business environment; and strong macro-economic fundamentals."

Malhotra said that India



"At a time when many advanced economies are facing economic headwinds and a deteriorating economic outlook, India continues to offer strong growth and stability, making it a natural choice for investors seeking long-term value and opportunity."

offers a policy ecosystem that is transparent, rule-based, and forward-looking -- an ideal setting for long-term and productive investments.

As the world's fastest-growing major economy, India is not just a destination for investment, it is a partner in prosperity, he said, adding, "together, we have the chance to shape the future -- not only for India but for a better world. I invite you to be a part of this journey, to collaborate, innovate, and invest in India."

Observing that the Indian economy has demonstrated remarkable resilience and dynamism, Malhotra said that over the past four years (2021-22 to 2024-25), the country recorded an average annual

growth rate of 8.2 per cent.

"It was and continues to be the fastest-growing major economy in the world. This is a significant step up from the average growth rate of 6.6 per cent in the preceding decade (2010 to 2019)," he added.

Even in the current financial year, he said that growth was expected to remain robust at 6.5 per cent. This, he added, "is despite the tremendous increase in uncertainty and volatility in global financial markets."

Although 6.5 per cent growth rate falls short of India's aspirations, it remains broadly in line with past trends and the highest among major economies, he said.

Malhotra told the gathering

over the last ten years, India has leaped from the tenth largest economy to the fifth. In terms of purchasing power parity, India is already third.

"Even nominally, we are poised to become the third largest economy shortly. We aspire to become Viksit Bharat, i.e., a developed economy by 2047, when we complete 100 years of our independence. While there is indeed a scope for India's growth trajectory to rise over the medium to long-term, I am sanguine of our continued success," the governor said.

He further said India's financial sector is strong and vibrant, efficiently catering to funding requirements of various economic agents.



India, Netherlands discuss ways to boost trade, investments

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and European nation Netherlands have discussed ways to boost trade and investments ties during the visit of Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal to Hague.

The visit assumes significance as India's exports to Netherlands are recording healthy growth despite global economic uncertainties. Commerce Secretary Mr. Sunil Barthwal & Ambassador @ktuhinv met DG Foreign Economic Relations Mr. Michiel Sweers in The Hague to discuss strengthening bilateral trade and economic ties. Discussions focused on enhancing collaboration through the joint trade and investment committee (JTIC) and advancing strategic economic cooperation," the department of commerce said in a post on X.

In 2024-25, India's exports to the Netherlands rose by 1.75 per cent to USD 22.76 billion as

against USD 22.36 billion in 2023-24. The imports during the period stood at over USD 5 billion. During this visit, the commerce ministry's Joint Secretary Saket Kumar also met senior officials in Hague to discuss advancing cooperation in the startup and innovation ecosystem.

"The meeting focused on fostering greater collaboration in entrepreneurship, tech exchange, space cooperation and scaling startup partnerships between the two countries," it said.

Barthwal also visited Zagreb, Croatia and held a meeting with Zdenko Lucić, State-Secretary for Foreign Trade and Development at the Ministry of Foreign And European Affairs in Zagreb to further strengthen bilateral trade ties and explore investment opportunities.

In 2024-25 (April-January), India's exports to Croatia stood at USD 270 million, while imports were USD 69.49 million.

Biogas sector gets Rs 200 cr investment commitments at RenewX 2025: IBA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The biogas sector has received investment commitments of more than Rs 200 crore at renewable energy exhibition RenewX 2025, industry body Indian Biogas Association (IBA) said on Sunday.

The three-day expo was held at the Chennai Trade Centre, Nandambakkam from April 23 to 25. The event, organised by Informa Markets, saw investment commitments of Rs 200 crore through various MoUs (memorandum of understandings) in the biogas industry, IBA said in a statement.

RenewX brought together stakeholders from across the bioenergy, solar, wind, energy storage, and management sectors, offering a platform for strategic collaborations and progressive discussions.

With a focus on bioenergy innovations, sustainable partnerships, and policy dialogue, the bioenergy sector attracted strong interest from industry, professionals, investors, and



polycymakers, the statement said.

"This is the first time that we have showcased biogas sector capabilities in Chennai. Our interactions here have laid the groundwork for several new collaborations and have deepened interest in bioenergy solutions, especially in southern India," Gaurav Kedia, Chairman of IBA, said in the statement.

IBA President A R Shukla noted, "RenewX 2025 showcased a unique blend of technology, grassroots innovation, and policy alignment. It is clear that bioenergy can play a pivotal role in reshaping India's energy future especially when supported by the right regulatory and financial ecosystem."

Dixon to manufacture electronic components

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Electronics manufacturing services company Dixon Technologies will foray into the electronics component manufacturing space and use them for captive requirements before looking at exports, a senior company official said.

According to sources, Tata Electronics is likely to invest Rs 2,000 crore for electronics components manufacturing under the Rs 23,000 crore incentive scheme launched by the government.

Tata Electronics declined to comment on the query sent in this regard.

Talking about the electronics component manufacturing scheme (ECMS) Dixon CEO Atul Lal said electronics component is the next phase of growth for the company.

India may seek parity with US on tech access in trade talks: Sources

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is likely to ask the US to ease export controls and grant it access to critical technologies on par with key American allies like Australia, the UK, and Japan under the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA), sources said.

They added that India may seek these easings for sectors like telecom equipment, biotechnology, AI (artificial intelligence), pharmaceuticals, quantum computing and semi-conductors.

The country is also seeking duty concessions for labour-intensive sectors like textiles, gems and jewellery, leather goods, garments, plastics, chemicals, shrimp, oil seeds, chemicals, grapes and bananas in the proposed pact with America.

On the other hand, the US wants duty concessions in sectors like certain industrial goods, automobiles (electric



vehicles particularly), wines, petrochemical products, dairy, agriculture items such as apples, and tree nuts, they said.

As part of the proposed BTA, one of the sources said, India may request the US to place it on par with other key US allies including Australia, UK and Japan regarding access to technology through easing of export controls particularly in key areas like telecom

equipment, biotechnology, and AI.

Easy access to cutting-edge technologies in these sectors would help boost India's innovation capabilities, enhance its technological infrastructure, and further push the country's economic growth.

The commerce ministry, which is leading the negotiations for the agreement, declined to comment when asked about these issues.

Reliance Retail is scaling up quick-commerce

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Country's leading retailer Reliance Retail, which saw 2.4x growth in the number of orders from its quick-commerce/hyper local delivery in the March quarter, is significantly scaling it with plans to open dark stores to expand the coverage area.

In the March quarter, Reliance Retail saw over 2.4 times growth in terms of the number of orders, which is a significant scale-up, said its CFO Dinesh Taluja during the earnings call earlier this week.

"And we are seeing very strong traction with a 2.4x quarter-over-quarter growth in daily exit orders. And this number will scale up substantially in the coming year as well. We are also starting to proactively market this proposition, our proposition



of no hidden charges, quick delivery, and no delivery fees continues to resonate very well with the customers," said Taluja.

Reliance covers hyper-local deliveries, a sub-30-minute delivery, at 4,000 pin codes across the country through its network of existing stores, which has a much wider reach than any other quick-commerce player in the country.

Through its JioMart app, Reliance Retail is offering quick and scheduled deliveries, which currently has three types of ser-

vice.

There is an under-30-minute quick service, and second is a scheduled delivery, where the assortment is much wider, and then there is a subscription service, where a customer can subscribe and everyday goods are delivered at doorsteps early morning.

"All three are picking up very well. The average daily orders were up 62 per cent on a Y-o-Y basis," he said, adding, "Specifically, our under 30-minute offering, which has the widest network reach. We have almost 2,000-plus stores which are on the network, covering more than 4,000 pin codes. So this is much wider reach than any other quick-commerce player. We have kind of re-pivoted our model completely to under 30 minutes delivery."

Rank states based on case-clearance rate: CII

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CII on Sunday called for "urgent reforms" to address the burgeoning pendency of cases across India, suggesting that the National Judicial Data Grid could report real-time automated rankings of states on the basis of case-clearance rate to encourage faster dispute resolution.

With over 5 crore cases pending across various courts and case disposal rates lagging behind the new admissions in many jurisdictions, urgent reforms are required to address the burgeoning pendency of cases, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) stated.

It termed the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) an important initiative towards reducing pendency by enabling data-driven policy interventions.

Tackling cyber frauds: FinMin includes I4C under PMLA for info sharing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has authorised Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) to share and receive information from the Enforcement Directorate under the anti-money laundering law, a move aimed at detecting money trail and combating cyber frauds.

Established under the home ministry, I4C is envisaged to act as the nodal point to curb cyber-crime in the country. I4C focusses on improving coordination between various law enforcement agencies and the stakeholders, driving change in India's overall capability to tackle cybercrime.

In a notification dated April 25, the Revenue Department under the Finance Ministry included I4C under Section 66 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). This would help I4C to share and receive information from the



Enforcement Directorate (ED) and other law enforcement agencies. Amid growing instances of cyber frauds targeting common man, this information sharing would help identify the masterminds behind such frauds which are mostly trans-national.

Such online frauds are being perpetrated through fake websites, deceptive social media pages, and paid advertisements on search engines. Such fraudsters also resort to sending OTP or a weblink on an individual's phone or email, and when an unsuspecting individual clicks on the link or shares the OTP, his/her phone/computer gets hacked.

AI is about skill transformation, not job loss

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) will spur creation of new technologies, reshaping the nature of work, Ashok Krish, Global Head of AI at TCS, said, emphasising that it should be viewed as a catalyst for skills transformation, not seen through the lens of threat to jobs. Krish told PTI in an interview true high-value implementations are happen-

ing in companies that see AI not as an IT project but as a board-level transformation priority.

AI, he said, is not just a technological shift, rather a cultural transformation that requires changing how people work alongside such implementations.

The last three decades have witnessed repeated waves of disruptive technologies -- from mainframes to the internet, to

SAYS TCS GLOBAL AI HEAD



e-commerce, digital, and cloud, each shift sparking fears and, at times, "scaremongering" about future prospects.

Looking at the broader trend, he said, AI is just the next evolution, one that will ultimately lead to more technology being built, as it simplifies the entire process.

"So I think it's wrong to look at it through the lens of job loss and it is more an opportunity to transform skill," he said.

If geopolitical and macro upheavals would impact the pace of AI adoption, he said economic ups and downs are cyclical, and not new, and added that AI's unique because it is inherently self-reinforcing.

"Disruptive technologies tend to have a way of adapting. Because particularly what happens with AI is that progress in AI exponentially improves progress in AI. It is very self-referential in that sense," he said.



## GREW FROM DUST OF DREAMS, NANDINI GUPTA NOW REIGNS AT MISS WORLD



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From the golden mustard fields of Kota, Rajasthan, to the glittering spotlight of the world stage, Nandini Gupta's journey is a story woven with dreams, determination, and destiny. Crowned Femina Miss India World 2023 at just 21, Nandini is not merely walking toward a crown—she is carrying the hopes of a billion hearts as she represents India at the 72nd Miss World pageant. Rooted in the values of hard work and perseverance, this farmer's daughter has risen to become a true symbol of beauty with purpose, effortlessly balancing her Business Management studies with a meteoric career in fashion, advocacy, and soon, acting. A muse for celebrated designers like Randeep Ranawat, Bhawna Rao and Sahil Kochhar, she has also lent her voice to ethical fashion and social causes, championing handloom artisans and supporting cancer warriors. Yet, beyond the glamour, beats a heart devoted to change—through her Beauty With A Purpose project, 'Ekta', inspired by her uncle with Down Syndrome, she is rewriting the narrative for the differently-abled, one act of inclusion at a time. Adorned in the creations of Rohit Bal for the World Designer Award, *The Pioneer* sat down with Nandini for an exclusive chat ahead of the pageant, looking back at her humble beginnings and inspiring journey.

### EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW

**Nandini, you've come a long way from Kota, Rajasthan, to becoming Femina Miss India World 2023. Can you tell us about your journey and how it shaped the person you are today?**

Well, I would love to say that from the mustard fields to Mumbai's spotlight, I have transformed myself from child-like demeanor to now a woman who is representing India at the global stage, and my journey has been anything but conventional. I am looking forward to representing my country at the global platform at the 72nd edition of Miss World, which is happening in India, and that too in Telangana. My journey had all the aspects of a person where there were struggles, pits of failures, a lot of perseverance and resilience, but I kept on working harder and harder and tried my best to give my dreams their own space in the 'City of Dreams.'

**You're balancing a successful career in modeling and advocacy while pursuing a degree in Business Management. How do you manage to juggle both academics and such a dynamic career?**

I studied Masters in Management during my college, and that's where I learnt theory. The practicality came into use when it was time for me to understand the management skills that I have, and from a school-going girl to the pageantry dream, from pageant training to state typer, from Miss India title to my commercial work and now doing it with Miss World—My Beauty with a Purpose—and managing everything beautifully.

**Being a farmer's daughter, your roots are deeply grounded in hard work. How have these values influenced your approach to your career and your advocacy work?**

I only think that my foundation has not been that of a spotlight, but it has been of soil. I'm a girl raised by the land, shaped by love and children by purpose. So, I am only looking forward to being called as the nation's daughter, a farmer's daughter who had won the crown for India because a backbone of India is farmers. I carry a lot of agricultural heritage within me. My values have shaped me, have shaped my character, and everywhere I go, I make sure that I inspire all the girls who come from the rural backgrounds of India.

**Can you share with us some of the most memorable moments from your journey toward Miss World, particularly your preparation for the pageant?**

Of course, my training takes a great part in my journey to make it memorable. That's what has turned me into a woman now, from a child-like demeanor to now a woman who is an orator. I have transformed 360 degrees—from my character to my personality, to my thought process, and the way I carry myself. Even my wardrobe—I have learned a lot of great makeup skills and also I have learned to do different hairstyles on myself. That's one thing that I love to do. I love to style myself. I love to dress up, and it is often said that if you want to look good, you have to feel good, and vice versa.

**As India prepares to host the 72nd Miss World, what does it mean to you personally to represent your country on such a grand stage?**

For India to host the 72nd Miss World, it is a moment of pride and its for the second consecutive time in India, it means so much that I am getting to represent India on my home soil. What could be a better host country than India? I'm looking forward to welcoming around 120 countries to India with so much warm hospitality, which is what India is known for—our traditions, our customs. I'm looking forward for all of them to explore India, unveil the beauty, unwind the magic, and take back a load of memories with them.

**The pressure of representing India at the Miss World pageant must be immense, especially when the competition is taking place in India. How do you handle that pressure?**

Well, it's about looking towards the optimistic side of every aspect. At this time, there is more of a job to do; preparation instead of taking pressure, because if you start to take pressure, you end up ruining everything. That's what I believe. I am preparing myself for all the aspects, and I know that I do have immense

**As a global ambassador and role model, what message do you hope to impart to young women in India and around the world, especially as you take the stage at Miss World?**

Coming from a farming background, where women are often told that you are too small for your dreams or that you won't be able to reach them because you come from humble beginnings, I was also once told the same. But you know what—society's perception should not become your perception. They have their opinion about you, which is their right, but you cannot let their opinion define you. Where you come from doesn't matter, but where you want to go surely does. Keep looking forward. Don't ever look back. I know it takes the heart of a soldier to come forward and fight for your dreams, but in the end, it will be worth it. So fight with a warrior's heart and just shine. If you get the stage, make it your own.

responsibilities. With responsibilities, there come a lot of expectations from people. But apart from expectations, there's love and hope of 1.4 billion people. That's what I'm looking forward to—to receive a lot of their love, a lot of their warmth, and a lot of their blessings, because blessings are what take you further.

**Your Beauty with a Purpose project, 'Ekta', focuses on supporting the differently-abled community. Can you share more about what inspired you to champion this cause?**

My Chacha (uncle), who is a differently-abled individual, has polio and developmental delays and intellectual disability. Growing up, I saw that he's living in a world that is not made for him, where people would call him with remarks like 'madman' or 'mental.' My question was—what would happen to those who don't have family support or the financial background to even support their disability or help them? That question became my purpose, and that purpose is now my project—which was once a dream, once a vision, and now a reality. It's my firm mission to advocate for differently-abled individuals. My only aim through the project is to empower the community, to make them financially independent, to give them employment opportunities, and also to make sure that inclusivity is in our minds—not just about sympathy or charity, but about a willingness to celebrate their uniqueness. I have realized over time, while working with 3000+ students who have disabilities, engaging with 15+ faculty members, and partnering with eight NGOs, that disability is not about incapability, but about the willingness or unwillingness of society to look beyond the labels set by society itself. I hope for a world where no child would be told, "You can't," because of their disability; where dreams take place without limitations, where dignity is never questioned. I am looking forward to making that world possible through Project Ekta, with baby steps, and I am sure that, in real time, the effects will be visible.

**What does 'Ekta' mean to you beyond its literal translation of 'togetherness'? How has it redefined your idea of inclusivity and strength?**

Ekta means oneness, and it's about making one community. It's about building an incredible, inclusive, and independent community. I think inclusivity and strength are correlated. Inclusivity is not just about charity or sympathy—it is majorly about celebrating differences, celebrating uniqueness. In India, we celebrate diversity. We celebrate linguistic diversity; we celebrate diversity in all kinds of buildings. But why don't we celebrate the diversity of people who are differently-abled? I think it's overdue, and we need to change our perception—not only in how we see differently-abled individuals, but also in how differently-abled individuals see themselves through us.

**You've worked with renowned designers like Randeep Ranawat and Bhawna Rao, and you're also preparing for the World Designer Award. How important is it for you to celebrate Indian craftsmanship on the global stage?**

In India, every piece is a handcrafted heritage. When you wear an outfit, you are not only reflecting the designer or the outfit itself, but you are reflecting the hours put in by the artisans—their hard work, their years, even generations of experience. The amount of love, warmth, and care they put into making an outfit, the intricacy that goes into it, is just beautiful. When an outfit comes together on stage, when a heritage piece comes into the limelight, it's not only the designer's vision—it's the hard work of all the artisans. It's the dream of every girl to wear that outfit. With my outfit for the Miss World, I feel honoured to be wearing from Rohit Bal's last collection and it's beautiful.

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## A couture conversation across generations

PNS|HYDERABAD

An important turning point in the history of couture is reached at Azura when the renowned Sangeeta Kilachand, who is renowned for her iconic heritage designs, teams up with her son Arjuun Kilachand, a trail-blazer in contemporary menswear.

The exquisite capsule collection of finely crafted pieces that reinvent tradition for the modern era is the result of this mother-son duo. Sangeeta Kilachand created the collection, which includes a sophisticated selection of women's sarees, kurtas, belted tunics, slacks and jackets. Arjuun has produced a line of matching kurtas, bundis and achkans for men. These pieces combine to form a multipurpose wardrobe that incorporates both tradition and contemporary style!

Sangeeta expands her creative horizons while adhering to the classic workmanship that distinguishes her reputation with it, her first venture into couture with modern inspirations.

The spirit of the deep blue sea is captured by it through elaborate embellishments and elegant silhouettes, which are rooted in its fluid strength and mystery. The sea's timeless charm is echoed by pearls, floral designs conjure its poetic whispers and sequins glitter like sunlight dancing over waves. Reminiscent of bountiful aquatic worlds, the collection's primary colour scheme consists of colours of brilliant yellow, calm blues, startling reds and soothing whites.

India's renowned karigars are honoured in this collection, which highlights the artistry and dedication of craftspeople whose unmatched skill continues to influence fashion worldwide. Sangeeta Kilachand, the founder of Sangeeta Kilachand Heritage Clothing and Arjuun Kilachand, the founder and CEO of Arjun Kilachand, will tell us more about the collection and what comes next.

### EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW;

**What aspects of combining two creative visions with wildly disparate sartorial languages were the most rewarding and challenging?**

**Sangeeta:** Letting up strict definitions of tradition was the hardest part. While Arjuun offers a bolder, more minimalist, more structured look, my work has always been firmly grounded in classical design and handmade craftsmanship. We both needed to be very open-minded and trusting in order to merge these. However, the payoff has been just as potent—we produced something that neither of us could have done on our own.

**What drove you to venture into contemporary couture now?**

**Sangeeta:** It was a very personal development. I've always thought that tradition is designed to develop rather than remain stagnant. Working with Arjuun allowed me to experiment with modern forms without sacrificing the essential principles of my work. Handcrafted details, elaborate needlework and artisanal excellence—the essence of my hallmark style—remain intact. Now, things are represented differently, with lighter constructions, sleeker designs and a more flowing style that appeals to today's Indian woman who lives all over the world.

**How has your perspective on heritage and its applicability in the menswear industry changed as a result of working with your mother, who is so steeped in classical design?**

**Arjuun:** Tradition is a resource to be reinterpreted, not something to revolt against, as I learned from working with my mother. Her love of handicrafts and storytelling via clothing inspired me to go back to what I used to think of as "old-world." I now think it's really beneficial to incorporate classical components into contemporary frameworks. There are echoes of

royal elegance in but it has been reinterpreted for a man who appreciates both tradition and uniqueness. I feel stronger and more confident in my ability to translate that into menswear because of this collection.

**How did the emotional and symbolic depths of the ocean affect the clothing's movement, structure and mood beyond its visual motifs?**

**Arjuun:** I believe that the ocean is eternal because it is strong, feminine, enigmatic and always changing. Through each piece's structure and drape, it embodies that spirit. Light-catching decorations, weightless textiles, and flowing silhouettes will all be seen. On an emotional level, it stands for continuity—of memory, of craft, of culture. Our clothing should flow with the wearer, not constrict them, like the sea does. Each ensemble has a subtle elegance that reflects the calm and depth of the sea.

**Indian Karigars are a community that is sometimes left out of popular fashion narratives, yet the collection honours them. How did you make sure their work was genuinely at the heart of its story rather than just being displayed?**

**Sangeeta:** Our karigars are the essence of this collection; they are more than simply the artisans. Arjuun and I had made it clear from the beginning that it would highlight their heritage. Along with them, we co-created rather than merely commissioning stuff. Many design choices were influenced by what our craftspeople could create with traditional methods. In every thread and needlework, their names, their histories, and their local skills have been honoured. Their genius in its purest, most eminent form is celebrated in it.

**How did you strike a balance between practicality and luxury when designing a collection that is both anchored in tradition and intended for modern celebration?**

**Arjuun:** It all came down to careful moderation. While heritage crafts tend to be maximalist, we wanted it to have some breathing room. We added opulent details in tasteful, contemporary ways—fabrics that feel as beautiful as they look, shapes that flow and embellishments that accentuate rather than overpower. In addition to being wearable, breathable and multipurpose, each piece is celebratory. Because of this harmony, it is still relevant to modern women who desire style without going overboard.

**Do you see it as a one-time tribute or the start of a more thorough investigation into legacy partnerships—possibly even as a model for the intergenerational evolution of Indian couture?**

**Sangeeta:** Azura, in my opinion, is the start of a longer discussion. In the fashion industry, legacy is frequently perceived as something static that is passed on unchanged; yet, as a result of this collaboration, we have learned that legacy can be dynamic, fluid and cooperative. Exploring this junction of age, viewpoint and design further would be a pleasure. It would be a stunning addition to the development of Indian couture if it were to serve as a model for upcoming legacy partnerships.

**What does timelessness mean to each of you in this day of rapid fashion and digital fatigue?**

**Arjuun:** Timelessness, in my opinion, is when something made with soul, integrity and purpose endures beyond fads. Emotional longevity is more important than mere beauty. It is a subdued protest against today's disposable fashion. Every item of clothing is designed to be worn, cherished and handed down. I hope it serves as a reminder to the younger generation that fashion can still be poetic, meaningful and personal while embracing the present.





# Chiru takes charge of casting for his film with Anil Ravipudi



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The Anil Ravipudi and Chiranjeevi collaboration was officially announced a few weeks ago, and now the team is in the process of finalising the cast. Initially, Tamannaah's name was rumored for the female lead, but now Aditi Rao Hydari's name is doing the rounds as the heroine opposite Chiranjeevi. According to a source, it is Chiranjeevi himself who is selecting the film's cast. Several actors reportedly approached Anil Ravipudi for roles in the film, but Anil firmly told them, "I am not selecting. Chiranjeevi garu is selecting all the other cast of the film," said a source quoting Anil Ravipudi. Harsha Vardhan, who received acclaim for his role in the recent film *Court*, has been roped in for a key role. Along with him, Abhinav Gomatam will be playing another comic role, says the source. For some important roles, the team is planning to rope in Hindi actors. Most likely, a Bollywood actor may be seen playing a negative role in the film. Anil Ravipudi had earlier introduced his technical team through a special video and is now planning to introduce the cast members through another video, added the source.



## SAMANTHA BRINGS THE HOUSE DOWN WITH HER HILARIOUS 'MAATA' ACT IN SUBHAM

Samantha Ruth Prabhu is back with a bang — not just as an actor but also as a producer. On Sunday, the actress unveiled the trailer of her debut production *Subham*, a horror-comedy under her banner Tralala Moving Pictures. While the trailer is packed with quirky humor and an intriguing plot, it's Samantha's unexpected cameo that has truly taken the internet by storm. The 2-minute-51-second trailer opens with a group of men indulging in an outdated conversation about how they expect their wives to be at their service, particularly when it comes to making coffee. However, not everyone at the table shares their 'alpha male' views. What starts off as a light-hearted mockery of regressive mindsets soon takes a spooky turn, as the women in their homes become mysteriously obsessed with a 9 pm TV show. Panic sets in among the men as they realize they are rapidly losing control over their households. Just when the chaos reaches its peak, Samantha makes a surprise appearance as a 'Maata' — a mystical figure consulted by the desperate men. With perfect comic timing, Samantha's character dramatically predicts doom for the men, even extending premature condolences. Her deadpan expression and over-the-top gestures add a delicious layer of humor to the already zany premise. It's this cameo — brief yet brilliant — that has fans buzzing with excitement. Sharing the trailer on her Instagram and X (formerly Twitter) profiles, Samantha wrote, "Join us for a fun ride with a film that's all heart. #Subham In theatres May 9." Within minutes, fans flooded her comment sections, showering her with love. With *Subham*, Samantha seems to be starting a new chapter — both in front of and behind the camera. While her producing venture promises fresh storytelling with a strong dose of humor and social commentary, her cameo proves she hasn't lost her knack for leaving a mark with even the briefest appearances.

## Vijay Deverakonda calls Suriya his inspiration

Hollywood superstar Suriya is gearing up for the grand worldwide release of his much-anticipated film *Retro* on May 1. Directed by Karthik Subbaraj and featuring Pooja Hegde as the female lead, *Retro* is produced under the 2D Entertainment banner, spearheaded by Suriya and Jyothika. The film's Telugu distribution is being handled by the renowned Sitara Entertainments. Ahead of its release, a lavish pre-release event was held on Saturday evening at JRC Convention Centre in Hyderabad. The event saw the presence of several celebrities, with popular Telugu star Vijay Deverakonda attending as the chief guest. Taking to the stage, Vijay Deverakonda delivered an emotional and inspiring speech, expressing his admiration for Suriya and extending his best wishes for *Retro*. "Namaste to everyone. I hope you're all doing well. Before talking about the film, I would like to pay my respects to the victims of the Pahalagam incident." Vijay began, acknowledging the tragic event with a moment of respect. **HE CONTINUED WITH A HEARTFELT NOTE ABOUT SURIYA:** "I'm happy to be here to promote Suriya's movie. I fell in love with his acting after watching Ghajini. I was curious to know who he was and watched all his other films. Suriya Son of Krishnan was especially close to my heart. The *Chanchala* song moved me emotionally and has remained a beautiful memory. Watching Suriya on screen, I was in awe of his physique, acting, and dance. I once dreamed of meeting him, and now sharing the stage with him is an unforgettable moment. I truly admire him as an actor." Vijay also praised Suriya's commitment to choosing diverse and meaningful projects, saying, "His choice of films inspires others in the industry, and he always explores different genres." Reflecting on Suriya's social contributions, he added, "Through the Agaram Foundation, Suriya has supported countless students, and he inspires me to do the same. I hope everyone enjoys *Retro* when it releases on May 1." Adding to the excitement, Suriya's upcoming project with director Venky Atluri under the Sitara Entertainments banner was officially announced, signaling a strong connection with the Telugu audience going forward.

## Three big B'wood beauties to join Allu Arjun-Atlee's high-budget film

Once the Allu Arjun and Atlee collaboration was officially announced, it created a lot of buzz. The film is being made with a high budget and, according to reports, will introduce a new genre in Indian cinema. Kalanidhi Maran is producing this big-budget film under his Sun Pictures banner. On the occasion of Allu Arjun's birthday, the makers released a promotional video that showcased the film's heavy graphics requirement. The film is reportedly creating a separate universe, and according to sources, Allu Arjun will be seen playing dual roles. Now, reports suggest the makers are planning to rope in three Bollywood actresses as female leads. Mrunal Thakur is almost finalized for one of the roles. A few days ago, the team conducted a look test with Mrunal, and she has been confirmed for one female lead. Meanwhile, Janhvi Kapoor has also almost confirmed her dates for the film. The team is also in talks with Deepika Padukone for the third female lead, although she has yet to respond. If Deepika is confirmed, the makers are planning a grand announcement featuring all three actresses. The film's pre-production work is currently underway, and shooting is expected to commence in August, according to reports.



## Anupama joins Sharwanand's next film, promises a strong role

Director Sampath Nandi is all set to direct Sharwanand in his next film. It's a period drama set against the backdrop of Mahabubnagar and the Karnataka border. The film's pre-production is completed, and now, the shoot is set to commence. Sampath Nandi, who supervised the film *Odela 2* starring Tamannaah, saw it release a few days back. Although the film bombed at the box office, Sampath stated that he made profits before the release as he sold it to OTT platforms for higher rates. Now, Sampath Nandi is focusing on his upcoming project with Sharwanand. He has finalized the female lead as well. Anupama Parameswaran has been roped in to romance Sharwanand in this period drama. Interestingly, Sharwanand and Anupama earlier worked together in the super hit film *Sathamanam Bhavathi*. Now, the duo is reuniting for Sampath Nandi's film. Anupama also has several projects lined up. Her film *Paradha* is all set to hit the screens soon. She is also acting in a Tamil film *Bison* opposite Dhruv Vikram and has signed a few more Tamil and Malayalam films. Anupama's recent film *Tillu Square*, where she paired opposite Siddhu Jonnalagadda, was a big hit, and she played a glamorous role. With that film, she indicated she is now open to glam roles as well. In this upcoming Sharwanand film, she will portray a strong woman, says a source.



## Nakkina Trinadha Rao faces major setback with *Chaurya Paatam*

Director Nakkina Trinadha Rao has received another setback with his new film *Chaurya Paatam*. Turning producer for the first time, he introduced Indra Ram as the lead actor and Nikhil Gollamari as the director. *Chaurya Paatam* released on April 25 but went largely unnoticed. Nakkina, known for directing hits like *Cinema Chupista Mama*, *Nenu Local* and *Dhamaka*, faced a big setback. Though *Dhamaka* did well on OTT platforms, it was a huge disaster in theaters despite reaching the Rs 100 crore mark in collections. As a producer, Nakkina's journey didn't start well either. *Chaurya Paatam* had extremely poor theatre attendance, with some shows getting canceled and the film being removed to make way for other movies. This failure is considered a major jolt to Nakkina Trinadha Rao's standing as both producer and filmmaker. Currently, he is making a film with actor Havish, and the shooting has already started, according to sources. Nakkina, who earlier directed stars like Ravi Teja and Nani, is now working with Havish, a relatively lesser-known actor. "He committed to doing a film with Havish long back, and now he is fulfilling it," said a source. Sources also suggest that Nakkina's high remuneration demands have become another concern, and his career graph seems to be on a downward trajectory. It appears he may need to rethink his strategies going forward.



## *Yamudu's* latest poster sets the stage for a mythological thriller

Mythology-inspired films are ruling the box office lately, and adding to the excitement is *Yamudu*, an upcoming film under the Jagannatha Pictures banner. Actor-director Jagadeesh Aamanchi leads the project, also taking on directorial and production responsibilities. Starring alongside him is Shravani Shetty as the female lead. The film proudly carries the powerful tagline, "Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah" (Dharma protects those who protect it). The makers recently dropped a striking new poster that has instantly grabbed attention. Earlier, the title posters and a special Deepavali poster had already piqued audience interest. However, the latest visual raises the anticipation to new heights. In the poster, Jagadeesh trans-



# Barcelona wins Copa del Rey title

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Seville

Barcelona has launched its bid for a treble after edging Real Madrid 3-2 in a thrilling Copa del Rey final with Jules Koundé scoring an extra-time winner. Right back Koundé pounced on a pass by Luka Modrić and fired into the low corner of Thibaut Courtois' net for the 116th-minute decider.

Barcelona will carry momentum from its record-extending 32nd Copa del Rey title into Wednesday's start of its Champions League semifinal series against Inter Milan. It also leads La Liga by four points over Madrid.

Pedri González dictated the game for Barcelona from midfield and scored from long range to take a 28th minute-lead at La Cartuja Stadium.

Madrid rallied with two second-half goals, with Kylian Mbappé coming off the bench at halftime and scoring from a free kick in the 70th and midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni's header in the 77th making it 2-1. Ferran Torres leveled in the 84th to force extra time. Barcelona has beaten Madrid in all three of the clásicos this season, including a 5-2 rout in the Spanish Super Cup final in January after winning 4-0 at Madrid in the league in October.

"This was such a physically demanding game, but we showed that we are a great team that never gives up," said Torres, who filled in perfectly for the injured Robert Lewandowski.

The loss to its fierce rival was another blow to Madrid after it was knocked out of the Champions League quarterfinals by Arsenal. This could have been its last title decider with Carlo Ancelotti in charge. The Italian coach said he will decide his future this summer amid speculation he is bound to take over Brazil.

Ancelotti, when asked about his future, said: "As I have said, I can continue, I can



stop, it will be a topic for the coming weeks." While Ancelotti's second stint in Madrid appears to be coming to an end, Hansi Flick has only added to his superb first season with Barcelona. The German coach has invigorated a group of players who seemed spent under Xavi Hernández and helped young players such as Lamine Yamal and Pau Cubarsí continue to grow into stars.

"I have to say thanks to the team because they had an unbelievable performance," Flick said. "A huge win in the Copa final is great for everyone and it gives us confidence for more."

King Felipe VI awarded the trophy to Barcelona captains Ronald Araujo and Marc-Andre ter Stegen, after the monarch returned to Spain following his attendance at the funeral of Pope Francis.

The trophy is the first piece needed to repeat a treble that Barcelona won under Pep Guardiola in 2009 and Luis Enrique in 2015. Madrid's Antonio Rudiger was shown a red card by the referee in the final moments when he apparently threw twice at the referee and shouted aggressively.

### BARCELONA DOMINATES FIRST HALF

One of the biggest rivalries in global soccer was again a tale of two halves — until Torres scored the late equaliser against the flow of play to renew Barcelona's prospects.

Barcelona dominated the first half with its ball control and a pressure defence that was quick to recover the ball.

The only semblance of a Madrid attack

came when Bellingham was able to spin away from his marker. But a Bellingham pass intercepted by Cubarsí cued Barcelona's opener. Pedri lobbed forward for Yamal, breaking down the flank. The 17-year-old phenom — sporting a new dyed-blond hairdo — threaded a pass back to the top of the box, where Pedri arrived to blast it home.

### MBAPPÉ SPARKS MADRID FIGHTBACK

Mbappé started the game on the bench after injuring his ankle last week. But Ancelotti sent his striker on at halftime to replace Rodrygo. Modrić and playmaker Arda Güler soon followed. The changes helped Madrid click, and the game became a back-and-forth contest with both teams creating scoring chances.

# Newcastle, Chelsea move into Champions League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Newcastle and Chelsea picked up victories in the Premier League to move into the Champions League qualification positions as Ipswich became the third and final team to be relegated.

On the day Newcastle manager Eddie Howe returned to the dugout after recovering from pneumonia, his team's 3-0 win over Ipswich at St. James' Park was significant at both ends of the standings.

Newcastle jumped into third place in the congested race to finish in the top five and secure a spot in next season's Champions League. Meanwhile, Ipswich's return to the Championship was confirmed, with the team partly owned by pop star Ed Sheeran joining Southampton and Leicester back in the second tier.

It is the second straight season that the three promoted clubs have gone straight back down.

"It is been a massive challenge," said Ipswich manager Kieran McKenna, who led the team into the Premier League and back-to-back promotions from the third tier. "Many things we have done positively that will set us up well for the years ahead (and) there's been some things we could have done better and things we will learn from."

Howe has already guided Newcastle to the English League Cup title this season for the club's first major trophy in 70 years. He said his team's remaining four league matches feel like cup finals, too.

"You are ticking down," he said. "We have put ourselves back into a strong position but we know it can change quickly."

Chelsea climbed into fifth place, two points behind Newcastle and one behind Manchester City, by beating Everton 1-0 thanks to Nicolas Jackson's first-half goal. That sealed back-to-back wins for Chelsea.

Just five points separate Newcastle and seventh-placed Aston Villa, which wasn't in action in the Premier League on Saturday.

Instead, Villa was losing to Crystal Palace 3-0 at Wembley Stadium in the first FA Cup semifinal.

Eberechi Eze and Ismaila Sarr (two) were the scorers for Palace, which reached the final for a third time in its bid for the first major trophy in the south London club's history. It lost to Manchester United on both previous occasions, in 1990 and 2016.

### VARDY'S PENALTY WOE

Jamie Vardy began his long goodbye to Leicester, after confirming on Thursday he'd be leaving at the end of the season, by having a penalty saved in a 3-0 loss at Wolverhampton.

"That was so unfortunate," Leicester manager Ruud van Nistelrooy said. "I really wanted him to score to get us back in the game but also for himself."

Brazil striker Matheus Cunha, linked heavily with a summer move to Manchester United, scored one and set up two in Wolves' sixth straight win that has seen the team power clear of relegation danger.

"It shows he is committed with us, with his teammates, with everyone," Wolves manager Vitor Pereira said of Cunha.

Van Nistelrooy said he was unaware about his own future after falling to keep Leicester up.

# IPL: Gujarat Titans take on Rajasthan Royals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jaipur

In red-hot form, Gujarat Titans (GT) will aim to tighten their grip on the top spot and move closer to securing a playoff berth when they take on a faltering Rajasthan Royals (RR) in the Indian Premier League (IPL) here on Monday.

Perched comfortably atop the 10-team table with six wins from eight outings, the Shubman Gill-led side now needs just two more victories to book their place in the playoffs.

Functioning like a well-oiled machine, the Titans have tasted defeat only twice this season, with Sai Sudharsan and Prasad Krishna leading the charge and the Orange and Purple Cap races, respectively. At the heart of Gujarat's batting dominance lies the formidable trio of Gill, Sudharsan, and Jos Buttler. Together, they have not just amassed over 300 runs each, but have also maintained an impressive strike rate of over 150, combining consistency with aggressive intent.

Despite losing Kagiso Rabada, who left for home due to personal reasons early in the season, the Titans' bowling emerged as their major strength.

Prasidh, who returned to competitive T20 cricket after multiple injury layoffs, has been sensational, snaring 16 wickets at a staggering average of 14.12 in eight games. His ability to out-think batters and vary his length have been the key to his success.

Mohammed Siraj too has been effective with the ball, claiming 12 wickets thus far and is joint fifth in the standing of the leading wicket-takers.

R Sai Kishore also finds himself among the top five wicket-takers this season, the left-arm spinner taking 12 wickets at an economy of 8.22.

Additionally, the Titans have a fairly settled line-up. They have rotated their impact players — Ishant Sharma, Washington Sundar or Kulwant Khejroliya

— based on the conditions.

In contrast, Rajasthan Royals became the first team to be knocked out of the tournament after losing to Royal Challengers Bengaluru by 11 runs earlier this week.

It was their fifth straight defeat and seventh loss in nine matches.

They now sit ninth on the points table. The inaugural edition's champions have struggled to find momentum all season.

They came close to winning in their last three games but failed to close out matches, suffering narrow defeats, including a heartbreaking Super Over loss to Delhi Capitals. While their top-order batters Yashasvi Jaiswal, Riyan Parag, and Nitish Rana have shown some form, their bowling has been a major letdown. The inability to control the flow of runs and pick up wickets at crucial moments has cost them dearly, leaving them to play only for pride in their remaining matches.

### Teams

**Rajasthan Royals:** Yashasvi Jaiswal, Riyan Parag (capt), Nitish Rana, Dhruv Jurel, Shimron Hetmyer, Wanindu Hasaranga, Jofra Archer, Maheesh Theekshana, Sandeep Sharma, Tushar Deshpande, Shubham Dubey, Kumar Kartikeya, Yuvraj Singh Charak, Kunal Singh Rathore, Akash Madhwal, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Kwena Maphaka, Ashok Sharma, Vaibhav Suryavanshi, Sanju Samson (injured).

**Gujarat Titans:** Shubman Gill (Captain), Jos Buttler (wk), B Sai Sudharsan, Shahrukh Khan, Sherfane Rutherford, Rahul Tewatia, Rashid Khan, Kagiso Rabada, Ravishrinivasan Sai Kishore, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Ishant Sharma, Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Anuj Rawat, Mahipal Lomror, Arshad Khan, Jayant Yadav, Nishant Sindhu, Kulwant Khejroliya, Gerald Coetzee, Manav Suthar, Kumar Kushagra, Gurnoor Brar and Karim Janat.

# Prabhsimran showing greater maturity this IPL: Joshi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Punjab Kings (PBKS) opener Prabhsimran Singh is showing "greater maturity" this IPL season and repaying the faith shown in him by the team management, believes their spin bowling coach Sunil Joshi.

Starting off cautiously, the seasoned Punjab batter exploded in the latter half of his innings to top-score with a 49-ball 83, guiding them to 201 for four against Kolkata Knight Riders here on Saturday.

Prabhsimran, who was on 34 off 32 balls at one stage, accelerated brilliantly to score 49 runs in his next 17 deliveries.

"I think it's all about confidence. In the pre-season, how much volume he adds to his batting is very important. Of course, positive environment with (head coach) Ricky (Ponting) and the batting coaching staff has really done well," Joshi said after rain washed out their match with KKR stranded at 7/0 after one over.

Prabhsimran, who has been part of the side since his IPL debut in 2019, was among the players retained by PBKS

ahead of the mega auction.

"He has been consistently performing in white-ball format as well. Last year also, he has shown consistency and the numbers show that. But this year, he has been more matured. He was part of an emerging team as well. So, that confidence also added to him," Joshi said.

**Prabhsimran is a seasoned campaigner. He is more experienced. He has come up with successfully good plans for today**

— SUNIL JOSHI, COACH

While Prabhsimran rediscovered his touch, youngster Priyansh Arya continued to impress, hammering a 35-ball 69 as the duo stitched a commanding 120-run stand for the opening wicket.

Arya, who made headlines with a century against Chennai Super Kings, has been one of PBKS' biggest finds this season, playing the early aggressor in the entertaining partnership.

"They are exciting players. Prabhsimran is a seasoned campaigner. He is more

experienced. He has come up with successfully good plans for today. So, it's a long way ahead for both of them," Joshi said. The openers' strategy to start cautiously and then shift gears aggressively, coupled with clear communication, was crucial, Joshi pointed out.

"I think the credit should be given to both of them, they batted according to the pitch conditions, took calculated runs and had very positive approaches.

"Of course, at this level, it's very simple key words — situation, conditions, pitch conditions, how it behaves and according to that you can plan your shots. So, that was a good communication from the coaching staff," he said.

"The communication is very clear from captain and coach, head coach and coaching staff also. That's why we invest in the players." The way the PBKS openers tackled KKR's spin duo of Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy was a standout feature. Taking calculated risks, they managed to dominate without losing wickets, as PBKS amassed 72 runs between overs 10 and 15. "I think it's a

learning curve for batsmen to assess both the bowlers in front of them. And it's always difficult when you are defending or when you are bowling first.

"So, obviously, your game plan and your dynamics changes when you are bowling first and when you are bowling second and our batsmen adapted to conditions very well," Joshi said.

On the washout Joshi said, "I think we can't go against the nature. We have to accept it. If the game would have been there, it would have been a good contest."

"There was an opportunity for two points, but yes, we have to accept that we got one. We missed one."

Meanwhile, KKR's young pacer Vaibhav Arora, who has impressed with the new ball this season, said the team was content with sharing points.

"Unfortunately match did not happen, can't say if we are happy or sad. But it is better to settle for one point than get nothing. It is a bonus point for us so we have to take it positively and you never know we qualify from this one point," Arora said.

# Bowlers will have their day at some point, says Boult

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Batters take power-hitting to another level in the IPL but the "bowlers will have their day" if they focus on staying aggressive without compromising accuracy, says Mumbai Indians' star seamer Trent Boult.

Teams are consistently crossing 200-plus totals in the ongoing edition of the league and breaching the 300-run barrier is also being talked about by experts and players. Boult said T20 cricket has evolved with batters finding ways to hit big shots but that also presents the bowlers an opportunity to bag wickets.

"No doubt, a 300-plus score will be reached this tournament. The ball seems to be travelling further, though I'd like to



believe it's still swinging in some parts of the country," Boult said on JioHotstar's special series 'Gen Gold'.

"From a bowling perspective, the only positive is that batsmen are coming hard, which creates opportunities. If we focus on being accurate, stay aggressive, and give it a real crack, bowlers will have their day at some point. That's what fans want to see, and I am sure there'll be plenty watching."

The New Zealander said bowling at death has become a huge challenge and the endeavour has been to keep getting better and never let with his skills or performance dip. "I'm constantly pushing myself to come up with new options and plans. These days, there are so many batters — some we've never even heard of or played against — so you've got to be on your game."

# Djokovic faces 'new reality' after losing opening match

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Madrid

After losing a second straight opening match and three in a row overall, Novak Djokovic said he was facing a "new reality" in his two decades of pro tennis. Djokovic's public coming to terms with his rare losing streak came after he fell in straight sets to Matteo Arnaldi in his first match of the Madrid Open on Saturday.

The 37-year-old Djokovic came to Spain after also losing his opener to Alejandro Tabilo at the Monte Carlo Masters two weeks ago and, before that, the Miami Open final. "I was hoping I can play one more match than I played in Monte Carlo. (It's) kind of a new reality for me, I have to say, trying to win a match or two, not really thinking about getting far in the tournament," Djokovic said.

The struggles by the winner of 24 Grand Slam titles coincide with the start of the clay-court swing culminating in the French Open next month.

"It's a completely different feeling from what I had in 20-plus years of professional tennis," he said.

"It's a challenge for me mentally to really face these kinds of sensations on the court, going out early now regularly in



tournaments." Arnaldi won 6-3, 6-4, delaying Djokovic's search for a career 100th title. The Serb was undermined by 32 unforced errors to his opponent's 18 and had his serve broken three times.

It was the first meeting between Djokovic and 44th-ranked Arnaldi of Italy. "He's my idol, he's always been," Arnaldi said of Djokovic. "To play him at a stage like this was already a victory for me. He's not at his best right now, so I came on court to try to play my best tennis and win and it happened." Arnaldi raised his arms and turned to the crowd after strik-

ing a winner that gave him a second-set break. Djokovic tried to hit right back and had three break points, but Arnaldi rallied to save his serve and finished off the three-time champion.

He wrote "OMG" (Oh my god) on the camera when given the marker for the now customary message by the winner to the television audience.

Djokovic is still seeking his first title of the season after winning his 99th title last August at the Paris Olympics. He has lost four finals since then. The only two players to reach the 100-title milestone are

Jimmy Connors (109) and Roger Federer (103). Arnaldi will next face Damir Dzumhur after he rallied past Sebastian Baez 1-6, 6-1, 6-2.

### OTHER MEN'S RESULTS

The sixth-seeded Alex de Minaur beat Lorenzo Sonego 6-2, 6-3 and moves on to play Denis Shapovalov after the Canadian defeated Kei Nishikori 6-1, 6-4.

Stefanos Tsitsipas fought back against Jan-Lennard Struff 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 and will face 10th-seeded Lorenzo Musetti, who beat Tomas Martin Etcheverry 7-6 (3), 6-2. Cameron Norrie also came back to down Jiri Lehecka 2-6, 6-4, 6-0. He will play Gabriel Diallo.

Other winners included fifth-seeded Jack Draper and 15th-seeded Grigor Dimitrov.

### SWIATEK, ANDREEVA AGAIN INTO LAST 16

Second-seeded Iga Swiatek saw off Linda Noskova 6-4, 6-2 as the defending champion advanced to the round of 16.

Swiatek will play Diana Shnaider in the quarterfinals. Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva advanced to the last 16 for the third straight year by defeating Magdalena Frech 7-5, 6-3.

# Monaco draw against Le Havre 1-1 in Ligue 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

Monaco dropped points in the race to qualify directly for next season's Champions League after drawing at Ligue 1 struggler Le Havre 1-1. Monaco moved above Marseille and into second place on goal difference, but direct rivals Lyon in fourth, Nice in fifth and sixth-placed Strasbourg all won to move one point behind Monaco with three matches left.

The top three qualify automatically and the team finishing fourth enters qualifying. Marseille needs to beat mid-table Brest on Sunday to reclaim second spot.

### LYON'S ATTACK PURRRING

Lyon blew Rennes apart in the first half on the way to a 4-1 win.

Belgium forward Malick Fofana scored a brilliant goal, cutting in from the left and curling the ball into the top right corner from 20 meters out.

Veteran captain Corentin Tolisso curled one into the bottom right corner from outside the penalty area and

Alexandre Lacazette blasted a shot into the top right following a rapid counter-attack for his 13th league goal.

Rennes replied early in the second half through 17-year-old striker Mohamed Kader Meité before Lyon's fourth goal from Georges Mikautadze, which was the best of the night.

Midfielder Rayan Cherki swapped passes inside the penalty area with Mikautadze and then, despite having almost no space, flicked the ball up to the Georgia winger, who controlled it on his chest before adroitly volleying in.

### LE HAVRE KEEPS FIGHTING

The draw boosted Le Havre's chances of staying up after fellow relegation battler Saint-Etienne earlier lost at Strasbourg 3-1.

Le Havre was in 16th place and the relegation-promotion playoff spot, one point above Saint-Etienne.

The draw relegated rock-bottom Montpellier.

Lorient was promoted from the second tier after beating last-placed Caen 4-0.