



The Pioneer

Paper with passion since 1864

RNI No.APENG/2018/76468

*LATE CITY VOL. 7 ISSUE 174 | *Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

PUBLISHED FROM: VIJAYAWADA DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH DEHRADUN HYDERABAD

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

Some officers are being retained due to the lack of alternatives. Coordination is necessary among all officers. Some officers are focusing on making money. Such people are not being prioritised. Officers who have subject expertise are being given importance. On land issues like Bhu Bharati and Dharani, Naveen Mittal has a complete understanding. There is a need to speed things up. We have streamlined the administrative machinery



- Revanth Reddy, CM, Telangana

P4

Public outrage marks beginning of terrorism's end in J-K: CM



INDIA WILL BE FIERCELY COMPETITIVE ON MANY PRODUCTS: SCINDIA



Srinidhi Shetty Clarifies on Sita Role Rejection RUMOURS



DON'T MISS...

More substations to be set up: Min

Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravikumar has assured that a sufficient number of electrical substations will be established to eliminate power fluctuation problems faced by farmers. Energy Minister Gottipati Ravikumar, accompanied by MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy and MLA Inturu Nageswara Rao, laid the foundation stone for the construction of a 33/11 KV power substation at Mannetikota village in Ulavapadu mandal. The substation will be constructed at a cost of Rs 4 crore. The Minister stated that the substation...

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At 84, scientist earns MBA degree from IIM

For Dr Girish Mohan Gupta, age is not a limitation; it is merely a statistic. At the age of 84, when most people prefer to slow down, looking forward to their retirement, the veteran scientist and entrepreneur has added another feather to his cap — an MBA degree from IIM-Sambalpur — and is already preparing for his next academic journey, a PhD in management. "There is no age limit for learning," said Gupta after receiving his degree from the prestigious institute last week. "As long as you are..."

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Govt to check indirect exports to Pakistan

The government is collating data to figure out the quantum of indirect exports of Indian goods to Pakistan from third countries in a bid to check such rerouting of shipments to the neighbouring country, sources said. The government is working with the industry to look into alternate routes for shipments of goods through air route in the backdrop of Pakistan closing its air space for Indian carriers, they said. Goods like flowers, fruits and vegetables are exported through air routes to regions like...

-PAGE: 8

DC eye comeback against KKR

Delhi Capitals (DC) would aim for an improved batting effort in the middle overs when they face a struggling Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in their Indian Premier League match here on Tuesday. DC have suffered two defeats in their last four matches, including a loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Sunday, and will look to avoid any hiccups at the business end of the tournament. Abhishek Porel has battled with plenty of aggressive intent at the top of the order but veteran Faf du Plessis will quickly...

-SPORTS

CM asks NDA to ensure PM's AP visit a success

SAYS AMARAVATI SYMBOLISES THE SELF-RESPECT OF ALL TELUGUS AND BELONGS TO EVERY CITIZEN

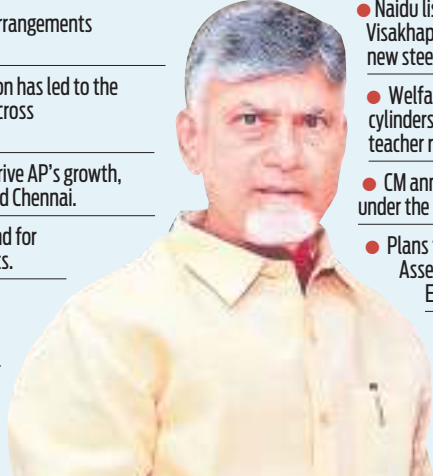
PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has urged National Democratic Alliance (NDA) leaders in Andhra Pradesh to ensure that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the State on May 2 is a resounding success. Speaking during a teleconference with NDA leaders on Monday, Naidu said Amaravati symbolises the self-respect of all Telugus and belongs to every citizen of the State.

Highlighting the importance of the upcoming public meeting, Mr Naidu instructed leaders to ensure that no inconvenience is caused to those attending. "Just as a family dreams of owning a house, a State too needs a capital city that its people can be proud of," he said. Explaining the NDA's policy of decentralisation, Naidu noted that since 2014, central educational institutions have been distributed across North Andhra, Coastal Andhra, and Rayalaseema. Emphasising balanced regional development, he pointed out that Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have greatly benefited from Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai respectively. Similarly, he stressed that Amaravati would drive Andhra Pradesh's growth and revenue.

The Chief Minister praised the farmers who voluntarily donated land for Amaravati's construction, assuring them that residential and commercial plots are being allotted back as part of the capital development project. "Farmers are partners in the making of

- CM asks leaders to ensure smooth arrangements for the upcoming public meeting.
- Naidu explained that decentralisation has led to the distribution of central institutions across Andhra regions since 2014.
- He stresses that Amaravati would drive AP's growth, similar to Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Chennai.
- CM praises farmers who donated land for Amaravati and assured them of plots.
- Says industries and better transport infrastructure would boost employment and the economy.
- He warns against rival forces misleading the public and urged leaders to highlight government achievements.



• Naidu lists Central support for Polavaram, Visakhapatnam railway zone, and a new steel plant

• Welfare initiatives like pensions, free gas cylinders, Anna Canteens, and the DSC teacher recruitment outlined.

• CM announces investment aid for farmers under the Annadata scheme from next month.

• Plans to establish industrial parks across all Assembly segments under 'One Family-One Entrepreneur' revealed

• Construction of the Rayalaseema Steel Plant would soon begin, with Visakhapatnam set to become an economic hub.

• Naidu details major investments by Erain-Co and ArcelorMittal.

Amaravati," he stated.

On employment generation, Naidu said that the establishment of industries and improved transport infrastructure would significantly boost the State's economy. Warning against rival forces attempting to mislead the public and obstruct progress, he urged NDA leaders to actively communicate the government's development efforts to the people.

Listing recent achievements, the Chief Minister highlighted the Centre's support for the Polavaram project, the railway zone for Visakhapatnam, and an Rs 11,400 crore allocation for a new steel plant. He outlined ongoing welfare

initiatives, including pensions, free cooking gas cylinders, services for fishermen, Scheduled Caste categorisation, Anna Canteens, and the issuance of the DSC notification to fill 16,347 teacher posts. He also announced that farmers would receive investment assistance under the Annadata scheme next month.

Further, Mr Naidu revealed plans to establish industrial parks in 42 constituencies, eventually extending to all 175 Assembly segments under the 'One Family-One Entrepreneur' vision. He announced that construction of the Rayalaseema Steel Plant would soon commence, while Visakhapatnam

would be developed into an economic capital and Tirupati into a spiritual hub.

He also detailed major investments by Erain-Co and ArcelorMittal in Ramayapatnam and Anakapalle, respectively, projecting Visakhapatnam district to emerge as the largest steel-producing hub in the country. Plans for Rayalaseema's growth in the defence, electronics, automobile, and green energy sectors were also outlined, supported by enhanced logistics connectivity.

Senior leaders from the TDP, Jana Sena and BJP participated in the teleconference.

CM invites ryots to Capital works relaunch event

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has invited farmers from the capital region to participate in the ceremony marking the relaunch of Amaravati construction works. He said that 2 May would be a historic turning point for the State and described the construction of the capital as a vital step in Andhra Pradesh's development.

He emphasised that a world-class capital was possible only because of the farmers' sacrifices and assured them that the people of the State would always remember their goodwill. He urged farmers from the capital villages to actively engage in all Amaravati-related activities.

The Chief Minister discussed the formal relaunch of capital construction, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate on 2 May.

He interacted with farmers about their aspirations and concerns during a meeting at his residence in Undavalli. CM Naidu assured them that the government would facilitate bank loans for the returnable plots allocated to farmers who had con-



- Bank loans for returnable plots and land titles for the landless
- Land values set to rise with intl airport development

tributed land for Amaravati's construction.

"After the capital was announced in 2014, YSRCP leaders sought to create confusion and discourage farmers from surrendering their lands. Yet, trusting us, farmers willingly contributed 34,000 acres, hoping to secure a better future for themselves and the State. Sadly, under the YSRCP government, they endured much suffering. Despite promising to continue Amaravati as the capital, the previous government later pushed for three capitals, describing Amaravati as a 'graveyard' and a 'desert,'" Naidu said.

Continued on Page 2

Actor Balayya, AIG chief Nageshwar Reddy receive Padma Awards from Prez



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nandamuri Balakrishna and AIG Hospitals chairman D Nageshwar Reddy received Padma Award from the President. President of India Droupadi Murmu presented four Padma Vibhushan, 10 Padma Bhushan and 57 Padma Shri awards for the year 2025 at the Civil Investiture Ceremony-I held in Ganatrantra Mandap of the Rashtrapati Bhawan on Monday. Vice-President of India Jagdeep

Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah, many Ministers of the Union and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Padma Awardees will pay homage at the National War Memorial on Tuesday morning, April 29.

They will also visit Rashtrapati Bhawan and Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya.

AP poised to be aviation & defence manufacturing hub: Industries Secy

P2

14-YEAR-OLD VAIBHAV YOUNGEST EVER IN IPL HISTORY TO SCORE CENTURY

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Royals' newest batting sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi created history on Monday when became the youngest batter ever to score an IPL century at the age of 14 years and 32 days here. Suryavanshi brought up his whirlwind ton off only 35 balls with a whopping 11 sixes and seven fours, recording the second fastest century in the history of IPL. He was finally out for 101 off 37 balls.

His stunning knock came against IPL 2022 winners Gujarat Titans, who had set a target of 210 for Rajasthan Royals to win.

The record of fastest century in IPL belongs to former West Indies batter Chris Gayle, who had brought up his triple figure mark in 30 balls for Royal Challengers Bengaluru against Pune Warriors in April 2013.



Vaibhav Suryavanshi 35 balls 100 runs

India, France sign Rs 64,000 cr deal for 26 Rafale jets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and France on Monday inked an intergovernmental agreement to procure 26 naval variants of Rafale fighter jets at a cost of around Rs 64,000 crore for the Indian Navy.

The pact provides for setting up of a production facility for Rafale fuselage as well as maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities for aircraft engines, sensors and weapons in India, according to the defence ministry.

The agreement will also facilitate the transfer of technology for the integration of indigenous weapons in India, it said without elaborating.

The ministry said the delivery of the aircraft would be completed by 2030, with the crew undergoing training in France and India.

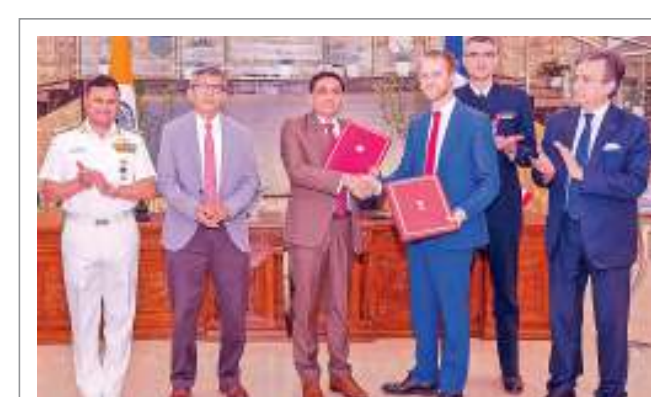
India is procuring the jets for deployment on board aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.

Manufactured by French defence major Dassault Aviation, the Rafale-Marine is a carrier-borne combat-ready aircraft with proven operational capabilities in the maritime environment.

The sealing of the mega deal came three weeks after the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi cleared the procurement.

Under the terms of reference, the delivery of the jets will have to start around five years after the signing of the contract. In July 2023, the defence ministry accorded the initial approval for the mega acquisition following a series of deliberations and evaluation tests of the platform. Under the deal, the Indian Navy will also get associated ancillary equipment including weapon systems and spares from Dassault Aviation.

The defence ministry said that the Rafale-Marine has commonality with



the Rafale being operated by the Indian Air Force (IAF).

"Its procurement will substantially enhance joint operational capability, besides optimising training and logistics for the aircraft for both Indian Navy and IAF," it said in a statement.

"The induction would lead to the addition of a potent force multiplier to the Indian Navy's aircraft carriers, substantially boosting the nation's air power at sea," it said.

The intergovernmental pact has been signed by Defence Minister

"Its procurement will substantially enhance joint operational capability, besides optimising training and logistics for the aircraft for both Indian Navy and IAF."

Rajnath Singh and France's Minister of Armed Forces Sebastien Lecornu. The signed copies of the agreement, aircraft package supply protocol and weapons package supply protocol were exchanged by Indian and French officials, the defence ministry said.

BJP names candidate for RS bypoll from AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The BJP on Monday named P Venkata Satyanarayana as its candidate for the upcoming Rajya Sabha by-election from Andhra Pradesh. Satyanarayana (64) is a veteran BJP leader from Bhimavaram in

West Godavari district with long-standing ties with the RSS.

"The central election committee of the BJP has decided one name (Satyanarayana) for the ensuing bye election to the Council of states (Rajya Sabha) from Andhra Pradesh, said BJP national general secretary and in-charge of party headquarters Arun Singh in a press release, revealing the NDA candidate's name.

According to BJP Satyanarayana is a lawyer who held several roles in the party in Bhimavaram and also served as the party's vice president for Andhra Pradesh between 2018 and 201.

Continued on Page 2

Prioritise waste mgmt, municipalities told

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Municipal Administration Minister P. Narayana has urged municipalities and panchayats to prioritise waste management, describing the disposal of garbage as a major challenge. A workshop on 'Capacity Building - Behavioural Change' was held at a hotel here on Monday.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Narayana stated that 6,500 tonnes of solid waste are generated daily. He regretted that the previous YSRCP-led government had left behind 80 lakh tonnes of garbage. As per Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's directive, a target has been set to clear all the accumulated waste by 2 October 2025.



"Managing solid and liquid waste in municipalities is challenging. However, we are efficiently implementing policy measures adopted successfully in

other states. Awareness programmes are being conducted to achieve gradual waste removal," the Minister said.

Continued on Page 2

5 killed as car collides with container truck

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

A horrific road accident on Monday claimed the lives of five people, including two women and a young boy, and left two others critically injured. The incident occurred when a car, carrying a family of seven, collided with a container truck at Thotapalli village in Pakala mandal on the Puthalappattu-Naidupet national highway.



Continued on Page 2

CM opens India's largest academic block at VIT-AP

INAUGURATES V-LAUNCHPAD 2025 GLOBAL INNOVATION CHALLENGE



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu today inaugurated the Mahatma Gandhi Academic Block, three new hostel blocks, and launched the V-Launchpad 2025 Global Innovation Challenge at VIT-AP University, marking a significant milestone in the institution's pursuit of academic excellence and innovation.

laborative spaces, and a 700-seater auditorium. This inauguration highlights VIT-AP's growing reputation as a global centre of learning. Additionally, the Chief Minister unveiled three new hostel blocks: VV Giri Block (2.31 lakh sq.ft), Acharya NG Ranga Block (2.26 lakh sq.ft), and Durgabai Deshmukh Block (2.26 lakh sq.ft), designed to provide a nurturing environment for students' academic and personal growth.

Technology (USA), Arizona State University, and IBS Global (Poland). The initiative aims to foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and leadership among students and start-ups, with a strong focus on global collaboration and sustainability. The ceremony was attended by dignitaries, including Kandula Durgesh, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Cinematography; Tenali Sravan Kumar, MLA of Tadikonda; and global partners such as Ms Edyta Wolczyk (IBS Global, Poland) and Murali Bukkapatnam (Chairman, TIE Global).

achievements, including a 95% placement record. He emphasised the goal of expanding VIT-AP's student strength to 50,000 by 2047 and urged students to "think global, go global." The ceremony was attended by dignitaries, including Kandula Durgesh, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Cinematography; Tenali Sravan Kumar, MLA of Tadikonda; and global partners such as Ms Edyta Wolczyk (IBS Global, Poland) and Murali Bukkapatnam (Chairman, TIE Global).

AP poised to be aviation & defence manufacturing hub: Industries Secy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh is poised to emerge as a hub of aviation and defence manufacturing, backed by strategic initiatives and government support, said state Industries Secretary N Yuvaraj on Monday.



ments, developing skills, and establishing itself as a national leader in defence manufacturing through strong public-private partnerships," said Yuvaraj in an official press release. Noting that India's annual defence production

now stood at Rs 1.27 lakh crore, he highlighted the need for greater private sector involvement and increased focus on research and development activities. The state has identified over 30 clusters for industrial development and is promoting economic growth by offering land and incentives to developers across different regions. According to Yuvaraj, four key focus areas under the aerospace and defence policy 4.0 include aircraft and missiles, weapons, marine and

shipbuilding, and defense electronics, aiming at holistic development. Through this comprehensive strategy, the state aims to attract investments worth Rs 20,000 crore and create 50,000 jobs, aligning with Swarn Andhra (Golden Andhra) 2047, said the press release. Officials also highlighted the critical importance of local manufacturing, with a set goal of achieving 85 per cent localisation in defence manufacturing by the year 2032.

28 Home Guards to be recruited by AP CID

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Criminal Investigation Department (AP CID) has issued a notification for the recruitment of 28 Home Guard positions. The department invites applications from eligible male and female candidates. Applicants must be between the ages of 18 and 50 years, and should have completed at least an intermediate level of education. Additionally, candidates must possess computer literacy and a valid driving license (either LMV or HMV).

APSRTC to roll out 200 electric buses in Vizag

Initiative aims to reduce emissions, improve public transit, and position port city as a model for eco-friendly urban transport

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) is set to roll out 200 electric buses across the Visakhapatnam district in a bid to reduce emissions and enhance public transport services. The initiative, which will be implemented in two phases, will first see the deployment of 100 buses—50 from the Gajuwaka depot and 50 from the Simhachalam depot.



Madhurawada depot as preparations for the launch continue. As Visakhapatnam sees an average of 6.86 lakh daily commuters within a 70-km radius, the introduction of cleaner and more efficient transport alternatives has become essential. "We are actively conducting driver and mechanic training programs, while also mapping out the most effective routes for seamless integration of the electric buses with the current services," the official added. The first batch of electric buses is expected to begin operations soon, with local authorities hopeful that the initiative will not only

improve air quality but also transform the public transit experience in the city. "Visakhapatnam is on track to become a model for sustainable urban transport in Andhra Pradesh," said a senior official from the transport department. This move aligns with the national shift towards eco-friendly public transportation, with several cities already benefiting from the introduction of electric buses. APSRTC is hopeful that Visakhapatnam's success will mirror these positive outcomes, furthering the State's commitment to environmentally responsible development.

Unaided schools body demands fee reimbursement

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Representatives of the Federation of Unaided School Associations of Andhra Pradesh have urged the State government to immediately release the pending fee reimbursement dues owed to private unaided schools. Speaking at a press conference held at Vijayawada, association leaders K Tulasi Prasad, Paruchuri Srinivasa Rao, K Srikanth Babu, Bharat, and Sundar Ram expressed concern that delays in payments were causing hardships for schools and families alike.

They said that despite the non-payment of fees by several parents, schools continued to accommodate students, ensuring that their education remained uninterrupted. The association leaders pointed out that for the past three years, under the Right to Education (RTE) Act, private schools have been admitting students into free seats, but the government has not reimbursed the fees as mandated.

They further stated that the government had recently issued a Government Order (GO) regarding admissions for the academic year 2025-26 without finalizing the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) or fixing the fees for the upcoming year. They criticized this move, asserting that admissions should only be conducted after clearing past dues and determining the per-child expenditure through a proper committee.

Clarifying their position, the leaders said they are not against RTE 12 (1)(c) admissions and highlighted that they admitted around 38,000 students last year under this provision.

Peela Srinivasa Rao elected GVMC Mayor

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) Floor Leader Peela Srinivasa Rao was elected Mayor of the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) during the governing body meeting held on Monday. The election, conducted under the supervision of District Joint Collector Mayur Ashok, saw participation from corporators and ex-officio members.



Soon after taking charge, Srinivasa Rao held a review meeting with senior GVMC officials, emphasizing the need

for focused development and improvement of civic infrastructure. He directed officials to prioritize public health, street lighting, and drinking water supply, particularly ahead of the summer season.

The Mayor stressed fiscal discipline, urging officials to minimize unnecessary expenditure and adhere strictly to their responsibilities. He announced plans to conduct daily ward visits and instructed that regular progress reports be submitted through the GVMC dashboard.

During the review, GVMC Chief Engineer K. Sivaprasada Raju informed that Rs 8 crore had been sanctioned under the summer action plan for strengthening drinking water facilities. The Mayor also called for speedy completion of pending projects and better maintenance of cold storage centers. The meeting was attended by Additional Commissioners D.V. Ramanamurthy and S.S. Varma, Chief City Planner A. Prabhakar Rao, and other key officials.

Coalition using SIT as political tool in liquor case: YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP State Legal Cell President, Manohar Reddy, termed the liquor case as a politically motivated witch-hunt, built on baseless allegations and procedural violations. He revealed that the case originated merely from letters sent by an unknown individual, "Venkateswara Srinivas," with no proven connection to the liquor trade. Instead of lodging formal complaints, the authorities accepted postal letters and bypassed standard inquiry protocols. Within just nine days, an "investigation" was allegedly completed without transparency about those questioned or the evidence gathered.



the SIT officers of acting under political pressure, systematically targeting former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and senior YSRCP leaders, and harassing respected industrialists with fabricated charges. Highlighting key irregularities, he pointed out that Raj Kasireddy did not sign any confession, as recognized by the courts, and individuals like Chanakya and Sridhar Reddy were coerced into making false statements. Yet, a section of the "yellow media" continues to spread misinformation to malign the YSRCP.

Manohar Reddy reminded that during Chandrababu Naidu's tenure, liquor syndicates caused an estimated Rs. 5,000 crore loss to the state, with 53% procurement controlled by just four companies, facts also highlighted in CAG audit reports. In contrast, the liquor policy under Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy reduced liquor outlets by 33%, cut consumption, and ended private syndication. He lambasted the current NDA coalition (TDP-BJP-JSP) government for reversing these reforms, with illegal belt shops proliferating and liquor sales surging unchecked. Challenging the government, Manohar Reddy asked if they dared to order a CBI probe into liquor scams during the TDP era. "If you have nothing to hide, why not accept an impartial investigation?" he demanded.

Today Almanac section with weather forecast for Vijayawada. Forecast: Mostly Sunny, Temp: 38°, Humidity: 65%, Sunrise: 5:44 AM, Sunset: 6:26 PM.

CM invites ryots to Capital...

Continued from Page 1

He praised the farmers' unwavering five-year struggle, which he said had saved Amaravati. "Amaravati is a divine capital, and it is only because of the strong foundation you laid that it could not be erased. Prime Minister Modi will launch the relaunch event on May 2, and every resident must be part of this historic occasion. After that, construction works will rapidly pick up pace, and we will also focus on developing the farmers' allotted plots," he added. The meeting also covered discussions on additional land acquisition to meet the capital region's needs. CM Naidu clarified farmers' doubts, assuring them that acquisitions would only be aligned with development needs, such as the international airport and cricket stadium, and would not be forced upon them.

development, increased land values, and benefits for local farmers. "Similarly, Amaravati's international airport and other infrastructure, including new bridges across the Krishna River and inner and outer ring roads, will boost connectivity, attract investments, and push land values higher," he said. Naidu reassured farmers that there would be no gap between the government and them, and no step would be taken against their interests. Responding to farmers' requests, the Chief Minister agreed to establish a memorial for those who lost their lives during the capital movement and announced plans to set up a museum tracing Amaravati's history from the Satavahana era to the present. He also promised to initiate a programme to grant land titles to those residing without legal ownership within the Gramakantham limits. Ministers Narayana, Anagani Satya Prasad, Vangalapati Anitha, MLA Tenali Sravan Kumar and others were present at the meeting.

5 killed as...

The family, hailing from Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu, had visited the hill shrine of Tirumala and was returning home when their vehicle crashed into the rear end of the truck. The collision was so severe that the car's roof was completely torn off, and the bodies were scattered across the highway, creating a shocking and tragic scene. Half of the car was wedged into the back of the container truck, according to police reports. The five deceased, including a nine-year-old boy, two women, and two men, died on the spot. The injured were rushed to the government hospital in Tirupati. Authorities are yet to formally identify the victims. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed his deep sorrow over the tragedy and instructed district officials to ensure the best medical care for the injured. Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan also conveyed his condolences and extended his sympathies to the victims' families. Minister for Transport M. Ramprasad Reddy has contacted district officials to ascertain the cause of the accident and has pledged to offer support to the grieving families.

Prioritise waste...

Continued from Page 1

He added that the Government had decided to undertake cleanliness drives under four themes and work systematically to ensure Andhra Pradesh becomes the top-ranked state in the country for cleanliness. The Minister emphasised that public awareness was crucial, noting that people must avoid dumping waste on roads. He said wide-reaching campaigns would be conducted to promote recycling and proper waste disposal. Swachhand Corporation Chairman Kommareddy Pattabhiram called on citizens to participate in making Andhra Pradesh a leader in waste management. He urged stakeholders attending the workshop to draft plans to further the state's cleanliness efforts. Principal Secretary Suresh Kumar observed that cleanliness is prioritised abroad and suggested that it should become an integral part of Indian culture too. He noted that Andhra Pradesh currently ranks sixth in waste management and assured that measures were being taken to improve its standing. Later, Minister Narayana, Pattabhiram, and Suresh Kumar jointly released an IEC poster.

BJP names...

Continued from Page 1

Currently, the chairman of BJP state disciplinary committee, Satyanarayana had also been part of the saffron party's election manifesto drafting committee for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for the 2014 polls, among several other roles. He also contested the 1996 Parliamentary elections from Narasapuram constituency. The by-poll was necessitated following former YSRCP leader V Vijayasai Reddy's resignation from the Rajya Sabha. Andhra Pradesh BJP leader Pathuri Nagabhushanam said that the party's Rajya Sabha strength from the southern state will rise to two with the election of Satyanarayana. BC leader R Krishnaiah is the other BJP Rajya Sabha member from the state.

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Collector distributes assistive devices to special needs students

Urges beneficiaries to make the best use of government facilities

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

District Collector Dr G Lakshmi has encouraged students with special needs to overcome challenges and take full advantage of the facilities provided by the government to achieve greater success in life.

distributed the equipment. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Lakshmi said that 173 beneficiaries received a total of 273 devices, worth Rs. 18.70 lakh.



dedication to supporting differently-abled individuals. He announced that eligible beneficiaries would soon receive new pensions of Rs. 6,000 per month.

role in supporting differently-abled students and assured that the government would continue to provide equipment promptly upon receiving applications.

Education Officer (DSEO) UV Subbarao, Samagra Shiksha Additional Project Coordinator G Maheswara Rao, Samagra Shiksha Officer L Venkateswara Rao, and other officials were also present.

Cybercrimes: Commissioner convenes meeting with bankers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As various types of cybercrimes are increasingly affecting society, with the goal of preventing these crimes through proactive measures and raising public awareness, the NTR District Police Commissioner, SV Rajasekhara Babu, organised a coordination meeting with officers from all banks within the Commissioner's jurisdiction at his office in Vijayawada on Monday.



prey to such cybercrime tactics. Following the Commissioner's instructions, officers from the Nandigama and Thiruvuru police stations, along with their staff, conducted meetings with local bank officials.

accusing them of involvement in drug trafficking or money laundering cases, officials said. Using these scare tactics, fraudsters coerce victims into transferring money from their savings accounts to current accounts located in other States, police officials explained.

Kuppam Chairperson poll a mockery of democracy: YSRCP

PNS ■ KUPPAM

The Kuppam Municipal Chairperson by-election has starkly exposed the undemocratic practices prevailing under the TDP-led coalition government. Despite securing a clear majority with 19 out of 25 seats, the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) faced intense coercion and unethical tactics from TDP leaders, culminating in a highly controversial result.

Naidu. The election reportedly witnessed direct interventions by TDP leaders, with offers of up to Rs 50 lakh made to sway YSRCP councillors. As a result of this pressure, 10 YSRCP councillors defied the party whip and voted against their party's candidate.

APNGGO Assn condemns Pahalgam terror attack, holds candlelight vigil

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Non-Gazetted and Gazetted Officers (APNGGO) Association's NTR district president D Satyanarayana Reddy and secretary P Ramesh have strongly condemned the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, terming it an inhumane act against innocent tourists.



unity and harmony. He extended his deep sympathies to the families of the victims. Secretary Ramesh also condemned the Pahalgam terror attack, urging the Central government to adopt a firm stance against terrorism and those supporting such acts.

tirelessly guard the nation's borders, often risking their lives to protect citizens. Vijayawada city president CVR Prasad described the brutal attack on tourists as a shocking and saddening act, stating that it has left a deep scar on the hearts of all Indians.

PM's visit: Meet reviews arrangements

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A review meeting was conducted at the Krishna District Collectorate under the supervision of in-charge Minister Vasumsetti Subhash to oversee the preparations for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit.



Telakapalli Ravi flays omission of Telugu legends from commemorative list

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Telakapalli Ravi, honorary president of the Andhra Pradesh Sahithi Sraavanthi, has expressed dissatisfaction over the exclusion of prominent Telugu figures such as Gurajada Apparao, Kandukuri Veeresalingam, and Gurram Jashuva from an official government list intended to commemorate the birth anniversaries of influential personalities.

He criticised the BJP for its perceived influence over major media outlets and newspapers in the State, claiming that this control suppresses the public's access to an accurate understanding of historical events.

Elaborate security arrangements in place for Chandanotsavam

Special attention to ensure seamless movement of queues for free darshan

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In view of the annual Chandanotsavam festival of Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple at Simhachalam, scheduled for Wednesday, the city police have drawn up comprehensive security arrangements to ensure a smooth and hassle-free experience for devotees.



is being given to ensure the seamless movement of queues for free darshan as well as the ticketed categories priced at Rs 300, Rs 1,000, and Rs 1,500.

and have taken corrective measures to prevent any recurrence," he added. To facilitate easy access to the temple, the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) will operate an adequate number of buses between the foothill and the temple premises.

Thirunalla festival of Ganganamma Ammavari Devasthanam begins

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The three-day Thirunalla festival of the Samarasata Sri Ganganamma Ammavari Devasthanam, constructed under the auspices of the Hindu Dharma Parirakshana Trust and led by the Samarasata Seva Foundation with financial support from the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), commenced on Monday in Bodapadu, a hamlet of Nunna of Vijayawada Rural mandal in NTR district.

Puja, Punyahavachana, Akhanda Deeparadhana, Kalasha Sthapana, and Ankurarpana Puja. Following these rituals, goddess Ganganamma was ceremoniously welcomed into the temple after performing Manu Puja, accompanied by traditional Mela Tala (music and percussion) and the offering of yellow saffron.

CPM seeks action against demolition of houses in Undi State secretary Srinivasa Rao urges CM to intervene and stop demolition of houses

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao has demanded immediate action against the demolition of houses belonging to the poor in the Undi Assembly constituency in West Godavari district. He urged Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to intervene and stop the demolitions, questioning the government's silence even after an MLA publicly stated he would personally oversee the demolition.



there for over 40 years and termed the demolitions undemocratic and unjust. Rao refuted the claims that the demolitions were carried out to prevent pollution of canal water, stating that the canal near the demolished area was clean and that no scientific tests had been conducted to verify water contamination.

Highlighting other sources of pollution, he said that drains from aqua tanks were releasing hazardous waste into the Yanamadurru drain, yet action was not taken there, exposing the selective targeting of the poor. Rao stated that, of the 110 houses in Palakoderu, 65 families were allotted plots elsewhere, but due to a legal dispute filed by a landlord, only ten families had managed to construct homes, leaving many homeless.

VMC Corporators study sanitation management system

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of the Southern States Study Tour, a delegation from the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC), including corporators and officials, visited the Nagercoil Corporation in Tamil Nadu on Monday. The team, led by Deputy Mayor Avuthu Sri Shailaja Reddy, was warmly received by Nagercoil Corporation Commissioner Nishant Krishna.

the corporators and explained Vijayawada's geographical profile, sanitation management practices, and related issues. Later, in a field-level study, the VMC corporators visited the Knowledge Centre at Konam, where Commissioner Nishant Krishna provided a detailed explanation of the facility's construction, room layout, and features.

ages sanitation operations through six Material Recovery Facility (MRF) plants. Waste collection operations have been outsourced to specialised agencies, whose performance is evaluated through a Key Performance Index (KPI) system. The mayor detailed that waste is weighed at collection points and tracked via GPS technology to monitor its origin, ensuring 100 per cent door-to-door waste collection coverage. Regarding summer

preparedness, Mayor Mahesh mentioned that the government ensures additional water release from dams to maintain an uninterrupted supply to city residents. He added that Heat Prevention Kits — containing ORS sachets, caps, cooling glasses, and other essentials — are distributed to safeguard public health during peak summer months. Commissioner Nishant Krishna elaborated on the Knowledge Centre at Konam, explaining that a two-storey, 5,300-square-foot building has been constructed to offer free reading facilities, with access to computers and Wi-Fi services.

'More substations to be set up to check low voltage issues'

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravikumar has assured that a sufficient number of electrical substations will be established to eliminate power fluctuation problems faced by farmers.

Energy Minister Gottipati Ravikumar, accompanied by MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy and MLA Inturu Nageswara Rao, laid the foundation stone for the construction of a 33/11 KV power substation at Mannetikota village in Ulavapadu mandal. The substation will be constructed at a cost of Rs 4 crore.

The Minister stated that the substation is being built to address the low voltage problems affecting agriculture.

Later, the Minister inaugurated a water head tank and CC roads at Baddipudi village in the same mandal. Speaking to the media, he asserted that substations are being constructed wherever necessary to meet the demand, ensuring that farmers and the general public do not experience power fluctuations.



receive subsidies through the Suryagarh scheme."

Ravikumar revealed that solar electricity would be generated through the PM Kusum scheme in areas with substations and provided to farmers. He clarified that a target has been set to provide 10,000 Suryagarh connections in every constituency in the State. Permissions have been secured for a total of 20 lakh Suryagarh connections with the support of the Central Government.

Power Minister Gottipati Ravikumar highlighted that the coalition government led

by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu is spending approximately Rs 30,000 crore to disburse social security pensions.

"When the coalition government assumed power, it spent Rs 800 crore on repairing roads and an additional Rs 600 crore on repairing bitumen roads across the State. We have reopened the Anna canals and are already providing free gas cylinders under the 'Super Six' schemes," he reiterated, vowing to fulfil every assurance given to the people.

The Minister added that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would relaunch development works in the Capital city of Amaravati on 2nd May, demonstrating the coalition government's commitment. He also noted that the software sector is being developed in Visakhapatnam to promote balanced regional development. "Two solar parks will be established shortly in the Darsi and Kanigiri areas," he announced.

As many as 500 families joined the TDP in the presence of the Minister on the occasion.

Couple dies in suicide pact over dowry

PNS ■ BHADRADI KOTHAGUDEM

Tragedy struck Tekulapalli in Kothagudem district. A young couple, who had a love marriage six months ago, committed suicide in a suicide pact unable to bear the harassment of family members.

Islav Deepika (19) from Regula Thanda village under Tekulapalli mandal and Boda Srinu (23) from Venkatya Thanda were in love. As their elders did not agree to their marriage, they defied their families and got married six months ago. The young couple, who stayed away from their families for a few days, later came to Srinu's residence in Venkatya Thanda.

For the past two months, family members had been pressuring Deepika for dowry. This led to frequent quarrels between them. Deepika was three months pregnant.

Frustrated by the family disputes, Srinu consumed a soft drink laced with a pesticide and rat poison on April 24. He later informed his wife about it. Following this, she also drank the same soft

Fishing harbour at Machilipatnam to be ready by March 2026: Minister

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Minister for Roads & Buildings and Infrastructure Development, BC Janardhan Reddy, has reaffirmed that the construction of the fishing harbour at Machilipatnam will be completed by March 2026.

On Monday, Ministers BC Janardhan Reddy, Kollu Ravindra, V Anitha and Vasamshetty Subash, along with District Collector DK Balaji, reviewed the progress of the fishing harbour works.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Janardhan Reddy stated that the project, taken up at

a cost of Rs 422 crore, has seen 57 per cent of the works completed so far. However, he noted that some crucial works are still pending, with delays attributed to technical reasons. Consequently, the deadline for completion has been extended for the second time.

He further informed that the government is constructing nine fishing harbours across the State at a total cost of Rs 3,500 crore. Upon completion, the Machilipatnam fishing harbour area will be developed into a tourist hub. He added that the works are being expedited and monthly reviews

are being conducted to monitor progress.

The Minister also mentioned that any issues are being addressed in coordination with District Collectors. He assured that the technical problems concerning the sea mouth would be resolved within 45 days, as the matter has been referred to Chennai for expert solutions.

APSRTC Chairman Konakalla Narayana Rao, Maritime Board Chairman Damacharla Satya, and CEO Pravin Aditya were among those present at the review meeting.



Mega job mela on May 3: Durgesh

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

A mega job mela will be held on the campus of Government Mahila College in Nidadavole on May 3 to offer employment opportunities to 1,302 unemployed youths.

In a statement issued here on Monday, Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh said that 45 reputed companies would participate in the job mela. They are expected to recruit 1,302 candidates for various positions within their organisations.



The salary packages on offer will range from Rs 12,000 to Rs 40,000. The Minister urged unemployed

youths to take advantage of this opportunity.

Representatives from 45 companies, including Isuzu, L&T Construction, GMR Cargo, Panasonic, HDB Financial Services, Apollo Pharmacy, Ison Experiences, Smart Brains, Sand Space Technologies, Delatekar Corporate, Sutherland, Synergy, ESAF, Spandana, Muthoot Finance, PCA Bazaar, Resolute, Indus, MCV, Indo MIM, Pilkington, Infilm, HDFC, BSCPL, GLR, Deccan Fine Chemicals, and others are expected to attend

the fair. Youths who have completed 10th class, Intermediate, ITI, diploma, degree, B'Tech, or postgraduate qualifications and are seeking good employment opportunities are encouraged to attend and pave the way for a bright future.

Minister Kandula Durgesh advised interested unemployed youths below the age of 35 in the constituency to attend the job mela on 3 May from 9 am onwards, bringing their biodata, educational certificates, and other relevant documents.

Dalits protest against social boycott

PNS ■ KAKINADA

A group of Dalits affiliated with the Visthrutha Dalit Sanghams (VIDASAM) staged a dharna in front of the Collector's office here on Monday, demanding the registration of a case under the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act over the social boycott of Dalits in Mallam village.

VDS State Convenor Dr Busi Venkata Rao, who led the protest, stated that the proper registration of cases under the Act was essential to putting an end to the social evil of caste-based boycotting.

He criticised officials for their inaction, despite Dalits in Mallam village of Pithapuram mandal being subjected to a brutal social boycott for three days from April 20.

Dr Venkata Rao also demanded that the government provide compensation to Pallapu Suresh, a Dalit electrician who died while carrying out electrical work at the house of an upper-caste individual, and offer employment to his widow.

Ursa is Nara Lokesh's benami company, alleges YSRCP

PNS ■ RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has strongly condemned the Telugu Desam Party (TDP)-led coalition government over an alleged land scam involving the allocation of public land worth Rs 3,000 crore to Ursa Clusters, which it claims is a benami company linked to Minister Nara Lokesh.

Addressing the media in Rajamahendravaram, former MP Margani Bharat accused the coalition government of betraying the people of Andhra Pradesh by handing over prime land at throwaway prices to a company with dubious credentials. "The emergence of Ursa is a calculated move to plunder public resources. The silence of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, Nara Lokesh, and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan indicates their complicity in this Rs 3,000 crore scam," Bharat alleged.

Ursa Clusters was registered in the United States on 27 September 2024, just ahead of Lokesh's visit there in October, by NRI promoters Kaushik Pendurthi and Satish Abburi, both reportedly linked to defaulted ventures. Its Indian subsidiary, India Ursa Clusters Private

Limited, was established on 12 February 2025, operating from a residential flat in Hyderabad and a modest house in the US.

Within two months, the coalition government allegedly fast-tracked approvals to allocate land worth Rs 3,000 crore to Ursa at Rs 50 lakh per acre, whereas central institutions like LIC, RBI and SBI were charged Rs 4 crore per acre for similar land in Visakhapatnam and Amaravati. Even the Indian Army paid Rs 1 crore per acre. Bharat questioned, "Why is Kapulupada land in Visakhapatnam, valued at Rs 30,000 per square yard, being sold to Ursa for Rs 50 lakh per acre? What justifies such blatant favouritism for a company with no proven credentials?"

Bharat also highlighted previous controversies, citing how, in 2015, a relative of Lokesh was allotted 498 acres in Jayanthipuram, Krishna district, at just Rs 1 lakh per acre despite a market value of Rs 1 crore per acre, resulting in a Rs 498 crore loss. He recalled Chandrababu Naidu's earlier attempt to allocate 400 acres in Shamsabad to IMG Bharat, a scam blocked under YS Rajasekhara Reddy's government.

Bharat challenged the government, stating, "Ursa's promoters have a history of defaults through the 21st Century companies. How does a two-month-old company secure such prime land without scrutiny?"

He further alleged that the government's plan to allocate 2,300 acres of APIC land in Nakkapalli, along with 724 acres of government land and 753 acres of 'D-patta' land, to ArcelorMittal for a steel plant and port violates both the 1894 and 2013 Land Acquisition Acts, which prioritise public sector use. A letter from former Union Secretary Sharma to the AP Chief Secretary seeking clarification reportedly remains unanswered. "While the people of Visakhapatnam are fighting to save the Steel Plant, the coalition government is busy handing over valuable public land to private companies," Bharat remarked.

The YSRCP has demanded a CBI investigation into the Ursa scam and the Nakkapalli land allocations, insisting that Naidu, Lokesh and their associates be held accountable. The party urged the people of Andhra Pradesh to oppose the alleged looting of public assets and demanded transparent answers from the government.

SEIL Energy's fire brigade responds to 157 community emergencies

PNS ■ NELLORE

SEIL Energy India Limited, one of India's largest Independent Power Producers (IPP), concluded the National Fire Service Fortnight with a valedictory ceremony held on Monday.

The company marked the National Fire Service Fortnight from 14 to 28 April by organising a series of fire safety awareness programmes and competitions for its employees and associates. During the ceremony, SEIL's Fire Brigade demonstrated its preparedness through various fire-fighting mock drills, showcasing its commitment to ensuring the safety of both its employees and the community.



Raghav Trivedi, CEO of SEIL Energy India Limited, expressed his sincere appreciation for the SEIL Fire Brigade's unwavering dedication to safeguarding both

the company and the community. "Their commitment to providing emergency services is truly commendable," he remarked.

Sunil Gupta, Head of Operations and Maintenance (O&M), praised the team for their world-class safety practices and efforts in supporting the community during emergencies. He highlighted the Fire Brigade's role in saving lives and protecting valuable property during 157 medical and fire-related emergencies in the past year, which included 7 fire incidents, 13 labour pain calls, 17 road accident calls, and 120 other serious emergencies.

Gupta presented awards and prizes to the winners of various competitions. The heads of departments and employees were also in attendance at the event.

People simply cannot believe KCR anymore: CM Revanth Reddy

I am continuing some officers as there are no alternatives: CM

- India needs an Indira Gandhi-type PM
Leaders will get posts only if they stay in the party
No differences between me and Rahul

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that people are not in a position to believe former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

Responding to the BRS's silver jubilee celebrations public meeting held at Warangal, the CM said that there is no 'substance' in KCR's speech. "KCR is blaming us after emptying the treasury. KCR spoke at the Warangal public meeting due to his insecurity,

There was no clarity in KCR's speech," the CM said.

Criticising KCR for stating that the government is not even answering 'Harish and KTR' (kids) in the Assembly about what is needed of him to attend the Assembly, Revanth asked KCR to explain why he is sending 'children' to the Assembly.

The CM said that no state is implementing the schemes implemented in Telangana by the Congress government and that a discussion about his rule will be held among the people six months before the next Assembly elections.

Revanth said that his government introduced many schemes during the last one-and-a-half years and is streamlining them now, and added that the government had streamlined the administrative machinery.

"Some officers are being continued due to the lack of alternatives. Coordination is necessary among officers. Some officers are focusing

more on making money. Officers who have domain expertise are given importance. Naveen Mittal knows land issues like Bhu Bharati and Dharani," the CM said.

Reacting to Prime Minister Modi, the CM said the nation needs an 'Indira Gandhi-type' Prime Minister.

Responding to another question, Revanth reiterated that he and Rahul Gandhi have a good relationship. There is no need to tell the world about the equation I have with Rahul Gandhi, the CM said. When asked why his government is not arresting opposition leaders facing corruption charges, the CM said that he will be in politics for 20 more years.

"I will not enter into vengeful acts. I will follow the law. I will not arrest anyone giving in to the demand to arrest someone, even if it is the case against KTR or the phone tapping case or anything that should be done as per the law. I will not order the police to

arrest anyone misusing the law like KCR," the CM said.

He said he will fulfil his promise if he makes a commitment to anyone. "I gave a commitment to Addanki Dayakar and gave him an MLC ticket. Posts would come to those who are patient. Congress leaders would lose if they spoke as they liked. I will not forget anyone who places their trust in me," he said.

The CM said the government provided all the TGSRTC buses KCR had requested for the Warangal meeting. The TGSRTC also earned revenue through it. However, the BRS Government did not give buses when the Congress asked for them for Rahul Gandhi's meeting.

He said Congress MLAs would have to go to the people, and then only schemes would reach the people. The government lagged behind in publicising things done by it, the CM said.

Minor fire at Yadadri power plant in TG, no injuries

PNS ■ YADADRI BHUVANGIRI

A minor fire broke out in Unit-1 of Yadadri Thermal Power Station (YTPS) in Nalgonda district of Telangana on Monday, officials said.

No one was injured in the incident, which occurred around midnight, officials said, adding only some cables and valves were burnt.

"It was a minor fire where some cables were burnt. The fire was brought under control immediately," a senior police official said.

Leakage of fuel oil has been found to be the cause of fire, an official release said.

The unit, where operational trials are going on, is under the control of BHEL (involved in plant works) and construction works have not been completed, it said.

The minor damage does not hamper routine works, it said, quoting BHEL officials.

YTPS has five units of 800 MW each. The Unit-2 was completed last year, and it was earlier announced that the ongoing work at the plant will be completed by mid 2025.



TTD to release June 'Srivari Seva' quota tomorrow

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The online quota for Srivari Seva services in June will be released on April 30.

The schedule is as follows: General Srivari Seva for Tirumala and Tirupati at 11 am, Navaneetha Seva (exclusively for women) at noon, Parakamani Seva (exclusively for men) at 1 pm, and the new Group Leader Seva at 2 pm.

Following the directions of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to enhance the quality

of Srivari Seva and improve services for the multitude of pilgrims, a team of officials visited Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation (Puttaparthi), Isha Foundation (Coimbatore), and Art of Living (Bengaluru).

After the study tour, TTD introduced several reforms to Srivari Seva. In the first phase, some changes will be implemented alongside the launch of a new Jio-developed application on April 30. More reforms will follow in a phased manner.

For the past two years, retired government employees have been

serving as Senior Sevaks. Going forward, those aged between 45 and 70 years may apply under the 'Group Leader' category and choose to serve for 15 days, one month, or up to three months through the online portal.

Group Leaders will oversee Srivari Sevaks, take attendance at their assigned points, and evaluate the volunteers' services as Excellent, Good, or Average. Additionally, a separate online quota for male Sevaks with at least a Tenth Standard qualification will be open for Parakamani Seva.

ACROSS THE STATES



Kerala Health dept urges caution against cholera

The Kerala Health Department on Monday issued a warning regarding cholera cases in the district following the death of a man due to the waterborne disease. Health Minister Veena George urged caution against the disease and advised avoiding the intake of contaminated food or water. "Cholera can be transmitted through contaminated water and food. Special vigilance should be exercised as it is summer season," she said in a statement. The health minister came up with the warning after the recent death of a 63-year-old man at a hospital in the capital district. George said the department has taken stringent measures after the death was confirmed due to the disease. Neither his relatives nor any of the staff of the hospital where the patient was treated had any symptoms of cholera so far, the minister said, adding that they have all been given preventive medicines. Diarrhoea, vomiting, muscle pain, and dehydration are the main symptoms of the disease, and people should seek immediate treatment if anyone experiences the



Himachal launches portal to facilitate pensioners

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Monday launched a portal to facilitate beneficiaries of the state's eight pension schemes. The 'e-Kalyan' portal has been developed by the Department for Empowerment of Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes, Minorities, and Specially Aabled (ESOMSA) of the state government. "All eligible applicants seeking benefits under various pension schemes being run by the Directorate of ESOMSA can apply online through the portal," a statement issued here said. According to Sukhu, "providing social security pensions to the needy was one of top priorities of the state government" and he reiterated the government's commitment to functioning in line with the principles of a welfare state. Sukhu said eight pension schemes were currently operational in the state for the welfare of the vulnerable sections of society. He said that Rs 1,410 crore have been spent on these schemes during last financial year, benefitting 8,24,928 individuals.



450 illegal Bangla immigrants identified in Gujarat

Around 450 Bangladeshi nationals have been found to be residing illegally in Gujarat so far after police launched a crackdown and detained nearly 6,500 undocumented people who are suspected to be citizens of the neighbouring country, DGP Vikas Sahay said on Monday. Director General of Police (DGP) Sahay said following mega search operations in Ahmedabad and Surat, similar exercises were undertaken across the state, with a total around 6,500 suspected illegal Bangladeshi immigrants detained and their identities being verified. "After mega search operations were carried out in Ahmedabad and Surat, all districts and police commissionerates of Gujarat were asked to undertake the task (of identifying Bangladeshi nationals). As per information available with me, we have detained around 6,500 suspected Bangladeshi citizens and questioned them," he informed. "So far, around 450 Bangladeshi citizens have been established to be living illegally here (in Gujarat) on the basis of documentary proof. Interrogation of the rest of the detainees is going on. We feel we will be able to establish the identity of a large number of illegal Bangladeshis," the IPS officer maintained.



India's military expenditure was nearly 9 times that of Pakistan: SIPRI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's military spending in 2024 was nearly nine times that of Pakistan's expenditure, according to a study released on Monday by a leading Swedish think-tank that comes amid growing tensions between the two countries over the Pahalgam attack. India's military expenditure, the fifth largest globally, grew by 1.6 per cent to USD 86.1 billion while Pakistan's spent USD 10.2 billion, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

The top five military spenders -- the United States, China, Russia, Germany and India -- accounted for 60 per cent of the global total, with combined spending of USD 1635 billion, it said. China's military expenditure increased by 7.0 per cent

to an estimated USD 314 billion, marking three decades of consecutive growth, the study noted.

The communist nation accounted for 50 per cent of all military spending in Asia and Oceania, investing in the continued modernisation of its military and expansion of its cyberwarfare capabilities and nuclear arsenal, it said in the report titled "Trends in World Military Expenditure 2024".

The SIPRI said military spending in Europe (including Russia) rose by 17 per cent to USD 693 billion and was the main contributor to the global increase in 2024.

With the war in Ukraine in its third year, military expenditure kept rising across the continent, pushing European military spending beyond the level recorded at the end of the Cold War, it noted.

Age no bar: At 84, scientist earns MBA degree from IIM; next step PhD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For Dr Girish Mohan Gupta, age is not a limitation; it is merely a statistic. At the age of 84, when most people prefer to slow down, looking forward to their retirement, the veteran scientist and entrepreneur has added another feather to his cap -- an MBA degree from IIM-Sambalpur -- and is already preparing for his next academic journey, a PhD in management.

"There is no age limit for learning," said Gupta after receiving his degree from the prestigious institute last week.

"As long as you are curious and willing, every day becomes a new opportunity," he said. With an impressive CGPA of 7.4, Gupta emerged as one of the most consistent performers in his batch under the MBA for Working Professionals programme. Balancing rigorous weekend classes with corporate responsibilities was no easy feat, but discipline and passion kept him going.

"I never let age come between me and my curiosity. I love sports, I swim regularly, and I play badminton. Fitness and learning are constants in my life," he said, adding that he was often among the first to arrive on campus for classes. Born in pre-Independence India in

Oppn MPs demand special session of Parliament

PAHALGAM TERROR ATTACK

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More opposition MPs on Monday joined the call for convening a special session of Parliament in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack.

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MP Manoj Jha wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while Communist Party of India (CPI) MP P Sandosh Kumar sent a letter to Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, urging them to convene a special session of Parliament to express the will of the nation and send a message of unity.

Independent Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal had on Sunday requested political parties to urge the government to convene a special session of Parliament as early as possible in May. The former Union minister has called for passing a resolution condemning the Pahalgam terror attack to convey the message to the world that the country is united.

Jha, in his letter addressed to the prime minister, said the Parliament of India stands as the cornerstone of the republic and the highest forum for democratic expression.



At this time of grief and testing, the Parliament must come together to pay heartfelt homage to the victims of the Pahalgam attack, honour their memory, and reaffirm our shared commitment to the ideals of unity, justice and peace.

"At this time of grief and testing, the Parliament must come together to pay heartfelt homage to the victims of the Pahalgam attack, honour their memory, and reaffirm our shared commitment to the ideals of unity, justice and peace," Jha said.

He said it is essential that the government takes the nation and its elected representatives into full confidence, adding that a shared national response,

built through consultation and consensus, is the surest path to preserving unity and safeguarding our nation.

"It is in this spirit that I respectfully urge you to convene a Special Session of Parliament, dedicated exclusively to an open and principled discussion on the Pahalgam attack and its broader implications for the security, well-being and aspirations of the people of India," Jha said.

Kumar, a CPI MP from Rajya Sabha, in his letter addressed to Rijiju, said the special session would allow members across party lines to come together to mourn the loss and express the will of the nation. He said the attack did not only cause immense sorrow to the victims' kin but also shook the "collective conscience of our nation."

As Delhi sizzles, rising heat takes a toll on animals

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With temperatures soaring, veterinarians across Delhi highlighted a rise in cases of dehydration, heatstroke and respiratory distress among animals.

They advised that pets be kept in cool rooms so that they can be comfortable as temperatures hit new highs.

The city's weather has remained dry and hot throughout April, with very little rainfall.

Heatstroke can cause symptoms like excessive panting, drooling, weakness, vomiting and diarrhoea, veterinarians explained. Pet cats and dogs, stray animals, and even birds are struggling to cope with the extreme heat.

Dr Anuradha Sharma, veterinarian at city-based clinic, said, "Just like humans, animals are extremely vulnerable to heat stress. Dogs, cats, cows and even birds like pigeons and crows are coming in with symptoms of severe dehydration and heat exhaustion."

Explaining the impact of extreme temperatures, Sharma said, "Animals, especially dogs and cats, regulate their body temperature differently from humans. They do not sweat like we do."

Public outrage marks beginning of terrorism's end in J-K: CM

PNS ■ JAMMU

The unprecedented and spontaneous public outrage in Jammu and Kashmir over the Pahalgam terror attack has offered a glimmer of hope that terrorism may see its end soon with people's help, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on Monday.

While assuring that his government would work to strengthen people's crusade against the menace of terrorism, Abdullah also appealed to the Centre to avoid steps that will alienate the public in the aftermath of the April 22 attack in Baisaran meadow that left 26 people, mostly tourists, dead.

Terming the massacre as the most unfortunate during the special one-day session of the J&K



Assembly to pay homage to the victims, Abdullah said the spontaneous pouring of people on roads against the incident offers a glimmer of hope that terrorism may see its end soon with their help.

"Militancy, terror or terrorism will finish when people are with us. Given people's outrage against the terror attack, this is the begin-

ning of its finishing if we take proper steps," an emotional chief minister said, winding up a discussion on a resolution in the House to condemn the Pahalgam terror attack.

"We should not take any step or action that will alienate people. We cannot control a terrorist with a gun but we can end terrorism if people are with us. I think that time has come when people are heading towards that stage," he said.

Referring to the unprecedented and spontaneous protests across Jammu and Kashmir, Abdullah said Srinagar's Jamia Masjid and other mosques for the first time observed a two-minute silence before Friday prayers.

1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS SC orders expeditious trial of 11 cases in Kanpur

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the expeditious trial of 11 cases related to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, in which chargesheets were filed post a reinvestigation.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh asked the special public prosecutors appointed in the case to enter appearance before the courts aside from measures for the cases' early disposal.

The bench underlined an "inordinate delay" in the matter and ordered the expedi-



tion trial of the cases.

Advocate Ruchira Goel, appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government, said a 40-year-old illegible FIR in a Kanpur anti-Sikh riots case was forwarded to the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) to re-trace its contents but the laboratory was yet to give a report.

Communalism will not set foot in TN: CM Stalin

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Monday categorically stated that communalism or Pahalgam-like attack would not be allowed in the state and added that his government would be supportive of the Centre's action following the terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir on April 22.

Denying a charge by the BJP lawmaker Vanathi Srinivasan in the Assembly on an apprehension of communal threat in the

state, the Chief Minister said the law and order in Tamil Nadu was being maintained effectively.

"So, let me make it clear that communalism cannot, I repeat, cannot enter Tamil Nadu under any circumstances. Even incidents like the terrorist attack (on tourists) in Jammu and Kashmir will not happen in the state," Stalin said.

Following the incident in Pahalgam, he had conveyed his government's intention to be supportive of the Centre's action on the terrorists, he said



and added "we did not utter anything about security lapse but backed the Centre on its action against the terrorists in national interest."

Later, responding to Leader

of the Opposition AIADMK Edappadi K Palaniswami's allegation on deteriorating law and order in the state, Stalin said Tamil Nadu not only witnessed a decline in crime rate but also saw the government cracking the whip on criminals and anti-social elements during the four-year rule of the DMK.

"The detentions under Goondas Act increased while the number of custodial deaths declined to three and absolutely none during 2024 in the present DMK regime.



Yamuna water failed quality test at 22 of 33 locations

Union ministry tells Par panel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on Monday said 22 of the 33 locations at Yamuna River being monitored did not meet the compliance standards of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in 2024.

A PowerPoint presentation by the ministry to a parliamentary standing committee said all seven and 12 locations in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, respectively, failed the "primary water quality criteria for outdoor bathing", while all four locations in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh each passed it, sources said.

In Haryana, three of the six locations at Yamuna met the required conditions, while as many failed, it added.

The CPCB's National Water Monitoring Programme (NWMP) evaluates water under

the metrics of Dissolved Oxygen (DO), Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), pH and Faecal Coliform. Lack of adequate sewage treatment, besides untapped drains in the national capital, a major source of pollution in the river, which is the biggest tributary of the Ganga, are important causes for contamination in the Yamuna, the sources said.

The ministry, in its presentation to the committee, said 791 MLD (megalitres per day) of sewage out of the total 3,600 MLD generated in Delhi remains untreated, according to the figures of February 2025. The ministry officials said out of 22 drains in the city, only nine are tapped, and two are partially tapped, according to the sources. However, there are nine untapped drains in Tughlakabad, Abul Fazal, ISBT, Sonia Vihar, Kailash Nagar, Shastri Park, Barapulla, Maharani Bagh and Jaipur, while two large drains -- Najafgarh and Shahdara -- are not technically feasible for tapping.

SC to examine NALSA plea for release of old, terminally ill convicts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to consider a plea of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) to release elderly and terminally ill prisoners on bail in the country.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar told lawyer Rashmi Nandakumar, appearing for NALSA, to move to respective high courts for the relief.

Nandakumar referred to the data and said many terminally ill persons, whose convictions were upheld by various high courts, were unable to

move the top court to challenge their convictions and seek bail or the suspension of sentence and the matter needed an intervention.

The CJ considered the submissions and said the plea of the NALSA will be taken up by a bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath.

"Petitioner urges this court to issue necessary directions so that prisoners of advanced age and prisoners who are terminally ill are released on bail to ensure that they can be taken care of by members of their families and can be reintegrated into society in their final days," NALSA's petition said.

The plea said terminally ill prisoners and those of advanced age required specialised care and individual attention and it may not be possible for prison authorities



to provide considering the extent of overcrowding in prisons. The plea, therefore, urged the top court to issue directions to facilitate the release of prisoners aged above 70 years and

those suffering from terminal illnesses. Such prisoners, it said, required specialised medical care and personal attention that overcrowded prisons are often ill-equipped to provide.

NALSA said as of December 31, 2022, India's prison occupancy rate stood at 131 per cent, severely straining infrastructure and impacting the quality of medical care and dignified living conditions within jails.

The petition highlighted some recent cases, including that of a 93-year-old woman incarcerated in Karnataka, whose plight prompted intervention from the District Legal Services Authority.

Similarly, bail was secured for a terminally ill undertrial by the High Court Legal Services Committee before the Calcutta High Court. The plea said the NALSA launched a "Special Campaign for Old and Terminally Ill Prisoners" running from December 10, 2024, to March 10, 2025.

As part of the campaign, dedicated national, state, and district units were constituted to visit prisons, identify eligible inmates, and coordinate efforts for their potential release. Data showed 456 prisoners -- including both convicts and undertrials -- were identified to be within the targeted categories.

Editor's TAKE

Sweltering heat grips northern India

IMD issues advisories as vast swathes of the country brace for even hotter days ahead

As April nears its end, large parts of northern and central India are already in the grip of a blistering heatwave, with temperatures soaring well beyond seasonal norms. Delhi, the national capital, has touched 42°C — an ominous marker considering that the hottest months of May and June still lie ahead.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has sounded a yellow alert for the city, warning that maximum temperatures could touch 43°C in the coming days, a full 3-4 degrees above the usual average for this time of year. This unrelenting heat has not spared other parts of the country either. States across north, central, and eastern India — including Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal — are witnessing an early and intense summer. In parts of Jharkhand, temperatures have already breached the 43°C mark, prompting fresh warnings and health advisories from the IMD. The early arrival of such extreme heat is no longer an anomaly, but rather an indication of broader climatic shift.

Meteorologists have attributed this current spell to a combination of local and global factors. Dry and hot westerly winds continue to sweep across the northern plains, preventing any cloud development and keeping the heat trapped at the surface. A Western Disturbance — an upper air system that usually brings brief relief in the form of rain and cooler winds — is active, but its influence has largely remained confined to the Himalayan region, failing to bring much respite to the plains.

Additionally, global climate patterns such as the El Niño phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean are likely playing a role in distorting India's seasonal cycles. These disruptions are contributing to the growing unpredictability of weather, often resulting in prolonged dry spells, delayed monsoons, or early heatwaves. While temperatures have been climbing steadily, the IMD has made it clear that the coming days will be particularly challenging. The capital region is under a yellow alert, with authorities advising people to avoid stepping out during peak afternoon hours between 11 AM and 3 PM. Precautions such as staying hydrated, using umbrellas or hats, and wearing light, breathable clothing have been strongly recommended. The consequences of such extreme weather go far beyond mere discomfort. Public health experts warn of increased risks of heatstroke, dehydration, and respiratory illnesses.

For vulnerable populations such as the elderly, children, outdoor laborers, and those with pre-existing conditions, the risk is especially high. There are also growing concerns about the strain on infrastructure, particularly in terms of water and electricity. With power demand peaking due to widespread use of fans and air conditioning, there is a very real danger of grid overloads and outages.

Water reservoirs, already under stress in several regions, are likely to see further depletion as evaporation rates surge. Simultaneously, the contrast in regional weather patterns continues to widen. While the north and central parts of the country reel under extreme heat, the northeastern states are bracing for heavy rainfall. The IMD has forecast widespread showers accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning, and strong winds — particularly over Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Tripura.

This rainfall, expected between April 25 and 29, offers a stark reminder of India's increasingly uneven climate patterns — with floods and droughts occurring side by side in different corners of the nation. Further south, states such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and coastal Andhra Pradesh are dealing with a different but equally taxing weather pattern — hot and humid conditions that pose their own set of challenges, particularly for urban populations. This spell of early heat serves as yet another warning about the growing impact of climate change.

Once considered rare, heatwaves are now more frequent, more intense, and longer-lasting. Their consequences — on health, livelihoods, agriculture, and infrastructure — are already being felt and will likely worsen in the absence of strong mitigation and adaptation measures.

As India heads into what could be one of its hottest summers on record, it is clear that the time for reactive measures is over. Urban planning must prioritise heat-resilient infrastructure, public awareness campaigns must be ramped up, and long-term policies addressing climate adaptation need urgent attention.

The sweltering temperatures of April may just be the beginning. What lies ahead could be far more testing.

UCC on the horizon

As the BJP frames the Uniform Civil Code as a step toward national integration and gender justice, critics warn of growing unrest and constitutional challenges ahead

After the controversial passage of the Waqf Bill, the Modi Government plans to implement the equally or even more contentious Uniform Civil Code (UCC) passed last year.

This raises the question of whether it is the right time to push for the UCC amid ongoing protests against the Waqf Bill, which began after the UCC was approved in Parliament last year.

The BJP has released a video recently on the achievements of Modi's first year in his third term and is preparing for the UCC implementation. The video, titled 'Big Moves Under Modi 3.0 — The Journey Has Just Begun...' suggests prioritising the UCC. The video presents it as an important step towards national integration and gender equality.

Despite being proposed and withdrawn twice in 2019 and 2020, the UCC bill was eventually approved by Parliament last year. For the BJP, the UCC is a crucial part of its political agenda, alongside the completion of the Ayodhya temple and the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. The UCC is a complex issue.

It has several angles, such as political, legal, legislative, religious, gender, and Constitutional perspectives. The country witnessed angry agitations even during the passage of the law. Just as the Waqf Act creates unrest, the UCC is bound to trigger nationwide agitations.

It is worth noting that while many countries like France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia have a UCC, others like Kenya, Pakistan, Italy, South Africa, Nigeria, and Greece do not.

Prime Minister Modi defended the implementation of the UCC in Lok Sabha in December last year, stating that the Constituent Assembly, which drafted the Indian Constitution, wanted the Uniform Civil Code to be enacted by an elected Government.

He also highlighted that BR Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, strongly advocated for a uniform civil code preventing one-sided claims.

The Apex Court also emphasised the need for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in 1985 to maintain national unity and recommended a single law for all citizens in 1995. In 2019, the Modi Government reaffirmed its commitment to the UCC.

The Court had also declared Triple Talaq unconstitutional, promoting gender justice. Minority groups feel that personal laws are vital to cultural and religious identities, and implementing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) could infringe on religious freedom



under Article 25 of the Constitution. India currently has separate personal laws for various religious communities, including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Parsis, which govern issues like marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The UCC supporters argue for one law for all citizens.

Moreover, experts warn that the UCC could overstep state legislative authority, challenging the principles of cooperative federalism. The Portuguese Civil Code, introduced in the 19th century, is still in effect in Goa and has not been replaced since the state's liberation.

Early this year, Uttarakhand implemented the UCC for the state. Other BJP-ruled states like Assam and Maharashtra want to push it through.

The BJP may want to replicate this in different states. The challenges of implementing the UCC are many.

While supporters argue for a UCC implementation, others caution against it, citing the need to respect religious and cultural diversity. The lack of consensus among political parties presents a formidable challenge. Many opposition parties and even some NDA allies, and some communities like the Muslims, have strongly opposed it. Ensuring effective implementation across the vast and diverse India is formidable, as it requires preparations for administration, infrastructure, resources, and significant public awareness and education about the UCC. Implementing the UCC brings up concerns about religious freedom and cultural identity.

While the Supreme Court upholds the constitutional validity of the Uniform Civil Code, implementing it remains a contentious issue in Indian society and politics. It is a highly sensitive issue in India, with diverse cultures.

Many minority communities are concerned about the potential risks to their religious liberties, highlighting the complexity of the issue.

The Modi Government claims that the

Uniform Civil Code (UCC) will secure equal property rights for women, ensuring fair distribution of a deceased person's assets among the spouse, children, and parents. Previously, only mothers inherited the property.

Both parties need to give grounds for divorce. Some communities, like Muslims, are apprehensive that a UCC could undermine this and the protections that the Constitution has provided. Implementing a UCC due to concerns about losing their cultural identity or traditional practices is a key fear. It will be prudent to address the complexities of the implementation before pushing it through, mainly to avoid law and order agitations at the ground level.

There are already demonstrations against the Waqf Bill, and the intention to implement the UCC will only add to the unrest. Therefore, a balanced approach, ensuring the rights of all communities, is the only way forward apart from mobilising a political consensus.

(The writer is a popular columnist. Views are personal)

Leaderspeak



In this war against terrorism, the unity of the country, the solidarity of 140 crore Indians is our biggest strength. We have to strengthen our resolve to face this challenge that has appeared before the country. We have to demonstrate strong willpower as a nation. Today, the world is watching, after this terrorist attack, the whole country is speaking in one voice.

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

Opinion

BY KANISHK

Spirituality in public service is a quiet force — a subtle, transformative presence that elevates action beyond duty and policy. It is not dramatic or ceremonial; rather, it is the silent essence that gives meaning to governance. Without it, public service risks becoming mechanical, devoid of soul. With it, even routine work becomes an act of purpose, a service imbued with deeper intent.

At its heart, public service is a commitment to something larger than the self. It seeks to uplift the vulnerable, amplify the voices of the unheard, and bring dignity to the weary. This service calls for more than expertise or efficiency — it requires a vision born from character, moral clarity, and spiritual depth. True public service is not confined to a role or title.

It manifests in the policymaker, the volunteer, the social worker, the diplomat — all united by a common purpose: the greater good. Leadership, in this realm, cannot rely on knowledge alone. Knowledge is inert until shaped by reflection, compassion, and inner values. Spiritual wisdom breathes life into decisions, offering clarity and courage when doubt or fatigue sets in. Without this grounding, even the most brilliant minds may falter — confusion creeps in, cynicism sets root, and leadership loses its compass. Leadership today is often misunderstood as a position of authority, but real leadership stems from

authenticity. It is not found in designations but discovered in one's depth of conviction and steadiness of spirit. Authority may be granted by position, but legitimacy is earned through inner alignment. Spiritually grounded leaders do not chase applause — they pursue truth and inspire through vision and integrity. They don't act from ambition, but from an attunement to the pulse of humanity. Such leadership stirs hope, cuts through cynicism, and dissolves indifference.

These leaders don't rebel against tradition for the sake of it; instead, they bring discernment and evolution. Their compass is conscience, not ideology. In moments of crisis, they offer stability. Their ethics are not performance, but an extension of their being. They see not division, but interconnectivity — as if all lives are branches of a single sacred tree. This worldview fosters institutions where dignity becomes a right, not a privilege.

Compassion becomes inclusive, not selective. Governance finds rhythm not in control, but in care. Here, spirituality is not religious dogma but a deep connection to something timeless and meaningful. Today, the world seeks not just knowledge or efficiency, but meaning.

A quiet spiritual awakening is unfolding. This awakening isn't about IQ or even EQ, but a higher dimension — Spiritual Quotient (SQ): the ability to see beyond the immediate, to act with purpose and compassion. Without SQ, institutions crumble under their own weight; fatigue replaces idealism, and burnout overtakes brilliance. When a leader is spiritually aligned, their institutions reflect that purpose. This generates "spiritual capital" — the shared conscience of a community

that guides its ethos. When such spiritual clarity guides governance, it becomes more than administration — it becomes dharma in action. The ancient Indian ideal of Ram Rajya embodied this: a just society led by humility, where governance was sacred, and transformation flowed from values, not mandates. Great nations and institutions outlive their founders when their leaders' spiritual fire seeps into collective consciousness.

It becomes legacy, not just memory. This is no idealistic dream — it is rooted in India's own civilisational wisdom. Indian governance was never purely utilitarian. It emerged from Vedantic insight, where action and spirit were inseparable. Chanakya's Yogakshema envisioned a state that nourished holistic well-being, and his Rajarshi — the philosopher-king — was a leader who blended contemplation with action. Colonial rule, however, severed governance from spirituality. Administration became technical, education lost its soul, and systems bred compliance over conscience.

That legacy still lingers in our institutions today. But the spiritual embers remain — and they hold the promise of renewal. From the mystical Nasadiya Sukta to the Bhagavad Gita's call to duty, India's heritage calls us to see leadership as sacred service. Let service be a quiet prayer. Let leadership be a steady flame. Let us rekindle, through stillness, a public life that is once again filled with soul.

(The writer is a Central Government Officer, presently serving in the Ministry of Home Affairs. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Indo-Pak staff is ominous

Madam — While the United Nations and world leaders, including the United States, have condemned the Pahalgam massacre, no nation has actively engaged in mediation talks, treating the matter as a bilateral affair. Meanwhile, in response to India's diplomatic measures and warnings to Pakistan over its alleged role in the incident, Pakistan is scrambling to bolster its operational readiness.

It has launched a three-day air warfare exercise, Zarbe-Haideri, along its borders, deploying PL-15 Chinese missiles with a range of 200 km for the first time in its southern sector.

Additionally, Pakistan has positioned fifth-generation fighter aircraft such as the J-10, JF-17, and F-15C, capable of striking targets up to 290 km away, along with long-range anti — ship precision missiles to protect the Karachi harbour area.

The situation risks escalating into a standoff reminiscent of 'Operation Parakram' more than two decades ago. Pakistan should know that India is fully prepared to respond firmly to any Pakistani misadventure with anger held in abeyance as added strength hence should resort to diplomatic talks showing evidence of its non involvement in the massacre and help India in destroying terrorism jointly to diffuse the situation.

RS NARULA | PATIALA

International Dance Day

Madam — April 29 is the "International Dance Day" celebrated annually all over the world. The International Theatre Institute, ITI has established the day in 1982 and recognised by UNESCO to highlight the amazing diversity and talent of dancers all over the globe. April 29 marks the birth anniversary of renowned dancer Jean Georges Noverre.

Evidence of dance has been found dating back 9000 years and it has been growing fast into a worldwide phenomenon. This day provides an annual opportunity to unite dancers and enthusiasts in the joy of movement. Dance transcends cultural boundaries and connects people across the globe. It's a day to honour the beauty, passion, and expression that dance brings to our lives. Dance is healthy for the body, mind, heart, and soul and has been established as a form of happiness in many people's lives. Dance is an outlet of expression and communication of emotion, it helps in releasing powerful feelings into the environment to feel less overwhelmed.

One of the key aims of this day is to persuade governments and political bodies to recognise the importance of dance and remove obstacles to participation. Let's organise a professional dance performance, recognise the popular dancers, promote dance form in educational institutions, seek government support, financial help to dancers and dance trainers, erase the stigma about any form of dance, and exhibit the cultural importance of dance.

DR B MADHUSUDHAN REDDY | KARIMNAGAR

Houses of alleged terrorists demolished

Madam — Authorities here have demolished the houses of three alleged terrorists in Bandipora, Pulwama and Shopian districts of Jammu and Kashmir as security forces continued their crackdown on the terror ecosystem following the Pahalgam terror attack. With this, nine houses of suspected terrorists and overground workers of terror outfits have been razed so far since the April 22 attack in the lush meadows of Baisaran that killed 26 people and left the nation grief-stricken and fuming.

As part of the anti-terror crackdown, that picked up more steam after the Pahalgam tragedy, security forces have raided more than 500 locations in the Valley in just five days and grilled hundreds of suspects. Political parties have urged the Centre to ensure that innocent people are not targeted while it goes after terrorists. Following the Pahalgam terror attack, Prime Minister Narendra Modi pledged to hunt down the killers "to the ends of the earth" as his government linked the dastardly attack to Pakistan. Since then New Delhi has announced a raft of retaliatory steps, including the cancellation of visas and suspension of the 1960s Indus Water Treaty, and Islamabad hitting back with a string of tit-for-tat measures, that included putting the 1972 Shimla Agreement in abeyance. Pakistan has warned that if India actually goes through with diverting or blocking the Indus water flow, Islamabad would see it as an "act of war".

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

TEACH PAKISTAN A LESSON BUT WITH CAUTION

The content of the article, "No Indus water to Pak..." (284-25), though carries some emotional touch, will be endorsed by many. It is true, Pandit Nehru was gentle enough and stood firm on international norms, a humane approach and tried to live up to the theory of Love thy Neighbour. The recipient not reciprocating the best of sentiments and gestures demonstrated by the Indus Water Treaty is a fallout of the misplaced priority of focusing more on communal agenda than on developing the country. India has waited enough and suspension of the treaty should sensitise the ruling dispensation to shun its communal agenda and focus on peoples' welfare besides establishing peace with all. Pakistan is falling in debt trap besides living with the menace of terrorism. All these make clear that the leadership in Pakistan is not prepared to change its course. India's decision to deprive Indus water, which is a lifeline for Pakistan, suits the situation of this day. However, it is to be kept in mind that there

is possibility of our action becoming a precedent that turns against us as we have China on the other side with a major river flowing through its soil into India. Basic fact Pakistan needs to understand is that it has wasted decades in pursuing communal agenda in the process of which it has lagged far behind India in every aspect, besides living with the pains inflicted by terrorism.

In spite of attacks and constant irritants from Pakistan India is growing in many spheres whereas Pakistan is sinking under debt and lack of development, which should open its eyes. Using hate towards India to make its failures and misdeeds may work for sometime but not for all the time. It should remember the poetic justice which says "those who take sword will perish by sword". It is also time for the Union government to spare some time and energy to settle all the disputes over sharing of water among the States, keeping all political considerations aside.

AG RAJMOHAN | ANANTPUR

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

India's grand rewrite of communication order

The WAVES summit will drive the country's creative economy through intellectual property creation and develop its M&E infrastructure. It will also help build the industry's capacity to create a skilled workforce for global needs

FIRST Column

As the final countdown to the WAVES Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit draws near, the moot question remains: how will the global communication ecosystem respond to the vision, challenges, and opportunities unleashed by the four-day summit in Mumbai from 1 May?

More than just another gathering, WAVES is a seismic shift. It promises to reorient the way we understand, design, and deliver the future of media and entertainment (M&E). With an architecture built around inclusivity, imagination, and integrated diplomacy, the summit is poised to be a landmark "Communication Moment" for the world.

Through its immersive curation of threads, themes, ideas, and tools, WAVES will redraw the boundaries of what M&E can mean in an era marked by disruption and reinvention.

At the heart of this transformation lies a compelling proposition: that the summit is not merely about showcasing creativity — it is about systematising it. The real takeaway from WAVES 2025 is not just the exchange of ideas, but the articulation of a futuristic communication order — one that interweaves Commerce, Creativity, Content, and Culture into a coherent, collaborative, and globally relevant vision.

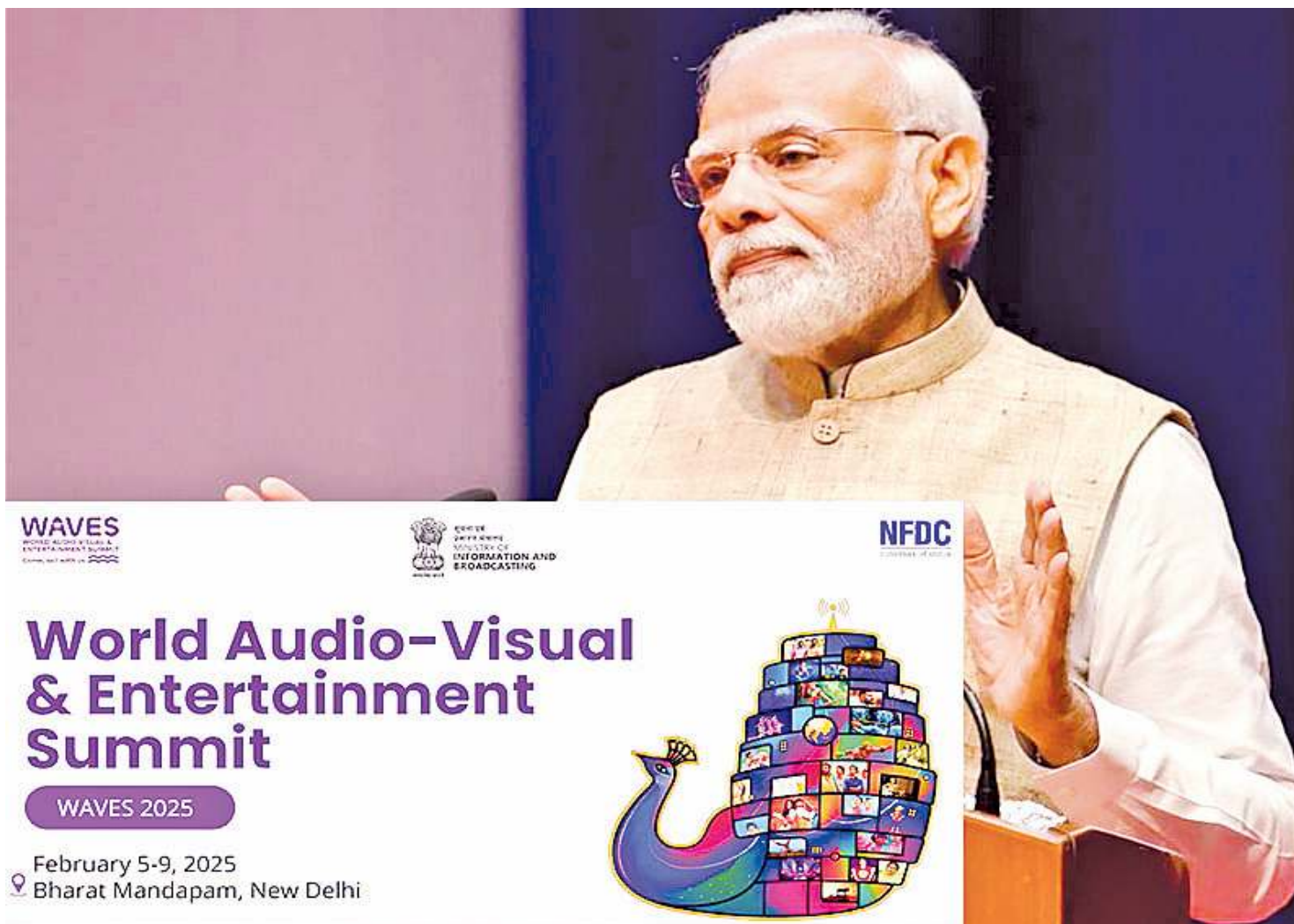
From the outset, WAVES has been propelled by an unflinching commitment to innovation and ideation. As the inaugural edition, it places "Communication First" not just as a slogan but as an organising principle. For perhaps the first time, a summit in the M&E space has been imagined as a "Communication Mahakumbh", where continuity meets disruption, and heritage is re-engineered through innovation.

The four identified pillars of WAVES — Broadcast & Infotainment, AVGC-XR, Digital Media, and Films — each distinct in their scope, nevertheless converge powerfully in intent and deliverables. Together, they represent a conscious synthesis of old and new, traditional mediums and emerging technologies, global ambitions and local identities.

What sets WAVES apart is its ability to harmonise these forces into a dynamic, composite framework. In doing so, it sketches the contours of a new communication order — one led by India, but built for the world. The catalytic force behind this vision has been the launch of Create in India: Season I, an initiative that has electrified the industry with its participatory energy and collaborative ethos.

It has thrown open the doors to storytellers, technologists, investors, and policymakers, crafting a rich ecosystem of engagement that mirrors the complexity of the M&E sector itself.

The themes and templates curated under this banner are refreshingly forward — looking. They tackle not just today's industry pain points but anticipate tomorrow's cultural, economic, and technological shifts. From decentralisation of nar-



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

atives and platform-neutral storytelling to immersive formats and multilingual access, WAVES has laid down a clear thesis: the future belongs to those who dare to reimagine.

In doing so, it positions India as the Content Hub of the World, a nation not just exporting stories, but shaping the very grammar of global storytelling. The commercial vision that undergirds this ambition is bold and aspirational, showcasing India's intent to lead not only through scale, but through thought leadership.

WAVES 2025 emerges at a moment when the

“Creator Economy” is reshaping global production — consumption cycles. Here, India is not a passive participant but a proactive architect; fusing its demographic dividend, cultural wealth, and technological prowess into an unbeatable formula for soft power.

WAVES is the conduit through which this soft power is being systematised, internationalised, and strategically leveraged.

It is not just a summit. It is a signal — a signal that India is ready to anchor the future of M&E diplomacy through stories, ideas, and innovations that resonate across borders.

The kinetic current of visibility, opportunity, collaboration, and growth generated by WAVES is designed to have a lasting ripple effect, influencing how future summits around the world are conceived, especially in terms of fostering international tie — ups, cinematic synergies, and media-tech alliances.

THE FOUR IDENTIFIED PILLARS OF WAVES — BROADCAST & INFOTAINMENT, AVGC-XR, DIGITAL MEDIA, AND FILMS EACH DISTINCT IN THEIR SCOPE, NEVERTHELESS CONVERGE POWERFULLY IN INTENT AND DELIVERABLES.

At its core, WAVES is a think tank in motion — where storytelling meets strategy, policy meets participation, and art meets action. By blurring the lines between entertainment and engagement, it reminds the world that M&E is no longer a side-show to diplomacy. It is diplomacy. In an increasingly multipolar world, cultural influence is power. And the medium through which that power is asserted is communication — fluid, visual, participatory.

Through M&E, nations now shape perceptions, steer conversations, and signal intent. WAVES situates India's M&E industry squarely within this strategic frame, projecting it as a potent tool of statecraft and global engagement. The brilliance of WAVES lies in its refusal to chase uniformity. It understands that the future of M&E is not about amplifying one dominant voice but about curating a chorus of perspectives.

As the world negotiates climate shifts, social transformations, digital disruptions, and identity politics, storytelling must evolve — from monologue to mosaic.

India, with its plurality of languages, genres, and formats, offers a compelling framework for this evolution. WAVES is a celebration of that plurality. It is a staging ground for narratives that are rooted in tradition but responsive to the future — narratives that can travel far, yet stay authentic. In a time where content is everywhere, WAVES is a reminder that context is king.

And in this context, India leads not just as a creator, but as a curator of meaning in a fragmented world. To conclude, one of the key objectives of the summit is to have global M&E leaders invest in India.

A lot of hard work and thought has gone into WAVES and officials are upbeat about its success. Sanjay Jaju, Secretary, I&B Ministry, said WAVES would be the first-ever global summit covering the entire gamut of the M&E industry.

The most promising aspect of WAVES is the interest it has generated across the globe. The international outreach of the summit is evident by a line-up that boasts Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen, YouTube CEO Neal Mohan, Instagram Head Adam Mosseri, Netflix CEO Ted Sarandos, marketing agency WPP's CEO Mark Read, Spotify's Chief Public Affairs Officer Dustee Jenkins, and NVIDIA's Vice President Richard Karris — all of them will be part of the programming roster.

The Ministry hopes that the summit will promote India as a "one-stop destination" for content creation, drive the country's creative economy through intellectual property creation and develop its M&E infrastructure, as also build the industry's capacity to create a skilled workforce for global needs.

(The writer is a former civil servant and writes on cinema and strategic communication. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi Srinivasan. Views are personal)

Why a - ew li- guistic survey is crucial for cooperative I- dia

A comprehensive linguistic survey is not just about collecting data; it is a transformative step toward building inclusive cooperative frameworks that truly reflect the voices of every Indian

In the land where the echoes of countless languages have woven a timeless cultural tapestry, India stands as a testament to resilience and diversity. Our linguistic heritage has not only shaped our folklore and traditions but also nurtured the roots of cooperative living.

From the ancient guilds of traders and craftsmen to the community — driven farming practices of our villages, collaboration has always been the essence of our economic framework. However, as we move towards the ambitious goal of Viksit Bharat @2047, it is alarming that we are yet to fully understand the linguistic landscape that underpins the cooperative spirit of this nation.

A comprehensive linguistic survey is not a luxury — it is a necessity. It is the compass that will guide policymakers to ensure that cooperative reforms are inclusive and effective.

Without accurate data on the languages spoken across regions, our policy interventions remain shallow, and our efforts to strengthen the cooperative economic framework risk becoming fragmented.

The Government's vision of the PACS-to-APEX approach — empowering primary agricultural credit societies to function cohesively with apex institutions — cannot materialise without understanding the linguistic and cultural nuances of local communities. Physiological density data and linguistic insights will ensure that financial services, credit schemes, and agricultural innovations reach the last mile.

Ironically, the most extensive linguistic survey of India was conducted not for the welfare of its people but for colonial administrative control.

The Linguistic Survey of India, initiated by Sir George Grierson during the British era between 1898 and 1928, documented Indian languages primarily to serve the colonial interest of consolidating power. The British viewed linguistic diversity as a tool to deepen divisions and enforce policies of divide and rule.

This colonial baggage still weighs heavily on our administrative systems. Despite over seven decades of independence, we have done little to refine or update this foundational linguistic knowledge.

Adding to this disparity is the fact that, while the private sector has astutely recognised the importance of linguistic insights, development practitioners and policymakers often lag. Rural marketing practitioners in corporate houses possess extensive data on regional languages, dialects, and consumer behaviour.

Using this intelligence, they successfully penetrate rural markets, build brand loyalty, and tailor communication strategies that resonate with



BINOD ANAND

local communities.

In stark contrast, Government initiatives aimed at development and economic upliftment continue to operate with outdated linguistic data or delegate language considerations entirely to state Governments.

The result is a fragmented approach that fails to execute cooperative economic frameworks effectively. Consider this: a rural marketing executive knows precisely how to communicate with farmers in their dialect to sell fertilisers or machinery, but a Government financial literacy campaign in the same village may miss its mark simply because it

is not available in the local language. This gap in understanding not only undermines the potential of Government schemes like PM-KISAN and FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations) but also impedes the inclusive growth of cooperatives.

By conducting a fresh linguistic survey, policymakers can bridge this knowledge gap, making public-sector interventions as impactful and relatable as their private-sector counterparts.

A renewed linguistic survey will empower cooperatives to function as truly participatory institutions. It will facilitate the creation of multilingual financial literacy programmes, region — specific agricultural advisories, and cooperative training modules.

Further, the promotion of Indigenous languages will encourage knowledge sharing of traditional farming techniques, watershed

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AIMED AT DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC UPLIFTMENT CONTINUE TO OPERATE WITH OUTDATED LINGUISTIC DATA OR DELEGATE LANGUAGE CONSIDERATIONS ENTIRELY TO STATE GOVERNMENTS

management practices, and sustainable agriculture. With more accurate linguistic and physiological density data, policymakers can design hyper-localised interventions that cater to each region's unique challenges.

Moreover, respecting linguistic diversity fosters social cohesion and national unity.

By acknowledging and celebrating our people's rich linguistic heritage, we send a powerful message that every voice matters. The cooperative economic framework, founded on the principles of collective growth and mutual benefit, can only thrive when communication barriers are dismantled.

To achieve Viksit Bharat @2047, we must acknowledge that economic empowerment is incomplete without linguistic inclusion. Every cooperative, from the grassroots PACS to the apex-level institutions, must reflect the diverse voices of its members.

It is time for policymakers to embrace the richness of India's linguistic heritage and weave it into the fabric of cooperative governance. Only then can we build an equitable economic framework that uplifts every community, leaving no one behind. The call for a linguistic survey is not just a call for data — it is a call to honour the soul of our nation.

To realise the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, India must prioritise linguistic inclusion as a cornerstone of cooperative growth. Our diverse languages are more than cultural artefacts — they are vital tools for empowerment, communication, and social cohesion.

Without updated and comprehensive linguistic data, policy interventions risk alienating the very communities they aim to support.

A new linguistic survey will bridge the gap between Government initiatives and grassroots realities, enabling cooperatives to function with greater participation, relevance, and impact.

It will foster multilingual literacy programmes, amplify Indigenous knowledge systems, and ensure that no voice is left unheard. As private enterprises leverage language to drive market success, so too must policymakers harness it for national development.

Recognising the role of language is not merely about effective governance — it is about honouring India's pluralism and building an inclusive, equitable economy. The time to act is now; the call for a linguistic survey is a call to unify and uplift.

(The writer is member of the PM MSP Committee and Agricultural Reforms. Views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Bandhan Bank opens 16 new branches in 5 states

Bandhan Bank on Monday announced that it has opened 16 new branches across five states in India. The lender has opened seven new branches in Odisha, three each in Bihar and Jharkhand, two in Andhra Pradesh and one in Chhattisgarh. These branches were inaugurated by Bandhan Bank MD & CEO Partha Pratim Sengupta. Commenting on the occasion, Sengupta said, "We will continue to seek strategic opportunities to broaden our reach nationwide, while maintaining a strong focus on sustainable growth. Our aim is to provide innovative, adaptable solutions that align with the changing expectations of those we serve." All the new branches will serve the semi-urban and rural areas of the states, the Kolkata-headquartered private lender said in a release. The expansion of the branch network is in line with the bank's strategic commitment to diversification and establishing a stronger presence nationwide, it said. By broadening the footprint, the lender is enhancing accessibility to innovative banking solutions for customers.



Dr Reddy's to introduce Sanofi's novel drug

Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Monday said it has expanded its partnership with Sanofi Healthcare to introduce a novel drug for the prevention of lower respiratory tract disease in newborns. The company plans to introduce Beyfortus, which contains the monoclonal antibody, nirsevimab, in a pre-filled injection used for the prevention of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) lower respiratory tract disease (LRTD) in newborns and infants. The medication is also administered in children up to 24 months of age, who remain vulnerable to severe RSV disease through their second RSV season. RSV is a highly contagious virus that can lead to serious respiratory illness in infants. Under the arrangement, Dr Reddy's will have exclusive rights from Sanofi to promote and distribute Beyfortus in India, the Hyderabad-based drugmaker said in a statement.



Gold declines Rs 1,000 to Rs 98,400/10 gm

Gold prices declined Rs 1,000 to Rs 98,400 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid weak global trend, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 99,400 per 10 grams on Thursday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity depreciated Rs 1,000 to Rs 97,900 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 98,900 per 10 grams. "Gold prices continued to decline as easing US-China trade tensions boosted investors' risk appetite, reducing demand for safe-haven assets like bullion while a stronger dollar added downward pressure on gold," Abans Financial Services' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta said. On Friday, China announced it would exempt some US imports from its steep 125 per cent tariffs, though it denied that any formal trade talks were underway. Meanwhile, the US Federal Reserve officials signalled that they see no immediate need to adjust monetary policy, choosing instead to monitor the economic impact of the Trump administration's tariffs.

India will be fiercely competitive on many products: Scindia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The current global tariff environment notwithstanding, India is expected to stay competitive due to its vast domestic market, scale advantages, and focus on innovation, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has said, asserting that seen even from the lens of a comparative matrix of tariffs vis-a-vis other nations, India holds a more favourable position.

In a recent interview, Scindia - who is the Minister for Communications as well as Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) - noted that given that other nations too face varying levels of tariffs, India will likely emerge "fiercely and much more competitive" across numerous products than before.

The lucrative domestic market has drawn global multinational companies to set up a significant presence here, he said and cited the strong pace of India's economic growth and New Delhi's policy push on manufacturing and innovation. "So I do believe that irrespective of the prevailing environment of tariffs, India will continue to be competitive because she has economies of scale behind her because innovation comes along with that economies of



The lucrative domestic market has drawn global multinational companies to set up a significant presence here, he said and cited the strong pace of India's economic growth and New Delhi's policy push on manufacturing and innovation. "So I do believe that irrespective of the prevailing environment of tariffs, India will continue to be competitive because she has economies of scale behind her because innovation comes along with that economies of scale to be able to cater to such a large market. And therefore, even in comparison with other nations, India will remain to be competitive," the minister said

scale to be able to cater to such a large market. And therefore, even in comparison with other nations, India will remain to be competitive," the minister said.

To a question on how he sees the US tariff situation playing out, the Minister said that the whole question of tariffs has to be seen from a comparative matrix point of view. "So if you're a country that I used to compete with and the tariffs that have been put on you are possibly today double of what mine are. Where I used to be uncompetitive vis-a-vis you, I now

become competitive. So, I think it is important to look at it not only from purely India-centric point of view but from a comparative matrix point of view," Scindia said.

The Minister expressed confidence that for many products in many areas, India will emerge fiercely and much more competitive than prior to the tariffs being in place. India has transformed itself from an infrastructure standpoint, and from an exporting nation standpoint as well, he said terming it "a monumental change". "...you have to understand

where we stand as an economy...Today, India stands very tall...We're today going to become the third-largest economy by 2028. We're today at almost a USD 4 trillion economy, USD 5 trillion by 2028, close to USD 6 trillion by 2030," the minister said.

From a country that used to import an overwhelming majority of its mobile phone requirement and produced merely 5 crore units, India is producing over 35 to 40 crore mobile phones, today. "Our exports are over Rs 1,75,000 crore purely on mobiles," he said.

Govt to check indirect exports of Indian goods to Pak: Sources

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is collating data to figure out the quantum of indirect exports of Indian goods to Pakistan from third countries in a bid to check such rerouting of shipments to the neighbouring country, sources said.

The government is working with the industry to look into alternate routes for shipments of goods through air route in the backdrop of Pakistan closing its air space for Indian carriers, they said.

Goods like flowers, fruits and vegetables are exported through air routes to regions like Middle Eastern countries.

These restrictions have been imposed following the terrorist attack on tourists in Pahalgam last week. 26 people were killed in the horrific incident, evoking a sharp response from the government.

The export data is being collected from sources like customs, export promotion councils and other departments, the sources added.

According to the economic think tank GTRI, Indian goods worth over USD 10 billion are reaching Pakistan every year indirectly through ports, such as Dubai, Singapore, and Colombo, bypassing trade

restrictions.

Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) has stated that Indian firms send goods to these ports, where an independent company offloads the consignment and keeps the products in bonded warehouses, where goods can be stored without paying duties while in transit.

"In the bonded warehouse, the labels and documents are



modified to show a different country of origin. For example, Indian-made goods may be relabelled as 'Made in UAE'. After this change, they are shipped to countries like Pakistan, where direct trade with India is not allowed," GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava has said.

This method, he said, helps firms to bypass India-Pakistan trade restrictions, sell goods at higher prices, using the third country route and avoid scrutiny since the trade appears to come from other countries.

Rupee rises 38 paise to close at 85.03 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated 38 paise to close at 85.03 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, supported by sustained foreign fund inflows, easing crude oil prices and a bullish trend in domestic equities.

Forex traders said strong domestic fundamentals, such as rising forex reserves also boosted investor sentiments.

At the inter-bank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.29 and moved between the intraday high of 84.96 and the low of 85.42 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.03 (provisional), registering a gain of 38 paise over its previous closing level.

On Friday, the rupee settled lower by 8 paise at 85.41 against the US dollar.

Forex traders said a steady rise in reserves enhances India's import cover, provid-

ing a crucial buffer against external shocks and lending stability to the rupee.

However, the rupee could face pressure amid any escalation in tensions between India and Pakistan as geopolitical uncertainties like these tend to



drive investors toward safer assets, causing outflows from emerging markets and weakening local currencies like the rupee.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher by 0.13 per cent at 99.60.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.46 per cent to USD 66.56 per barrel in futures trade.

Wipro bags deal from Germany's Vorwerk for IT transformation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT major Wipro has bagged an IT transformation deal from Germany-headquartered firm Vorwerk.

As part of the five-year partnership, Wipro will modernise Vorwerk's IT infrastructure using its AI-powered infrastructure operation solution, according to a company statement.

The company did not divulge the value of the deal.

This involves integrating all business applications, IT infrastructure, and cybersecurity systems into a single monitoring platform, enhancing visibility across Vorwerk's technology landscape. It aims to substantially improve operational efficiency and strengthen cybersecurity management.

Additionally, Wipro will work with Vorwerk's technology partners to improve their customer engagement strategy, standardise their product

Sensex jumps 1,006 pts on buying in Reliance, foreign fund inflows

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex soared by 1,006 points to close above 80,000 level on Monday as a sharp rally in Reliance Industries and private banks, and foreign fund inflows helped stock markets cut short two days of fall amid India-Pakistan border tensions.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,005.84 points or 1.27 per cent to settle at 80,218.37 with 23 of its constituents ending with gains and seven in the red. During the day, it surged 1,109.35 points or 1.40 per cent to 80,321.88.

The NSE Nifty rallied 289.15 points or 1.20 per cent to close at 24,328.50. All key sectors, barring IT, participated in the rally, with pharma, energy, and auto emerging as the top gainers.

Reliance Industries surged by 5.27 per cent to emerge as the biggest gainer among Sensex stocks. The oil-to-retail behemoth reported a 2.4 per cent rise in March quarter net profit beating street estimates.



Mahindra & Mahindra spurred 2.29 per cent after the auto major announced a Rs 555-crore acquisition of SML Isuzu and said that the buyout was a strong strategic fit for the company that would put it in a strong position. SML Isuzu Ltd shares, on the other hand, tanked 10 per cent.

Sun Pharma, Tata Steel, State Bank of India, Axis Bank, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro and ICICI Bank were also among the Sensex gainers.

HCL Tech, UltraTech Cement, Nestle and Hindustan Unilever were among the laggards. Foreign Institutional Investors

(FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,952.33 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

Foreign investors have infused Rs 17,425 crore in the country's equity markets last week, supported by a combination of favourable global cues and strong domestic macroeconomic fundamentals.

This came following a net investment of Rs 8,500 crore in the preceding holiday-truncated week ended April 18.

"The domestic market recouped from the losses incurred during the last two days of the previous week, which stemmed from the border tensions.

Govt starts 5th marine fisheries census process Launches mobile app for data collection

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday kick-started the 5th Marine Census operations and launched a mobile application for data collection of 1.2 million fisher households nationwide.

CMFRI, the nodal agency for implementing the marine fisheries census, will capture data from nine coastal states, and the entire census operation will be completed by December 2025.

"Today marks the beginning of the 5th Marine Census operations..." an official statement said.

The mobile app VyAS-NAV



-- launched by Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh at the coastal states fisheries meet in Mumbai -- has been developed by the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) to boost transparency and efficiency.

The village enumeration will be finalised by May-June, while family-level data and other facilities will be covered during November-December. The entire operation will span from April to December.

According to the statement, the VyAS-NAV app will be used by supervisors (staff of CMFRI, Fishery Survey of India and the Fisheries Departments across the coastal states) for field verification of fishing villages, fish landing centres and fishing harbours.

Unlike in the past, customised mobile and tablet-based applications created by

CMFRI will be used for data collection to reduce manual errors and accelerate data compilation for policy-level use.

At the coastal states meet, the minister inaugurated and laid the foundation for key projects for seven coastal states and UTs with a total outlay of Rs 255 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).

He also awarded the first-ever aqua insurance (One Time Incentive Sanction-cum-Release Order) to beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-KSSY).

Bullet train to be operational by 2028: Fadnavis

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The USD 15 billion Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project being built in collaboration with Japan will be operational by 2028, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Monday.

Fadnavis also said the state is looking to raise USD 50 billion from international financiers for infrastructure development in the state, and announcements for the same will be done in four months.

Without naming Shiv Sena's Uddhav Thackeray, Fadnavis said the bullet train project suffered during a two-year rule until 2022, but now the work is on in full swing. "By 2028, we will be able to travel in the bullet train," Fadnavis said, conceding that neighbouring state Gujarat is ahead of Maharashtra on the project development.

Fadnavis said creating infrastructure is very important to achieve the goal of USD 1 trillion GSDP, and that USD 30 billion was invested in infrastructure creation during his first stint as the chief minister between 2014-19, and more money is being put into important projects now.

Speaking at an event on the

India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) project organized by VRF here, he said the Vadnavan port will be operational in the next 3-4 years.

He said the port, being built on reclaimed land, will help reduce the cost of logistics, pointing out that the turnaround time at JNPA, India's largest container port located nearby, is higher.

The Vadnavan port will also have an adjoining airport which



will be built through land reclamation on the sea, Fadnavis said, adding that many major cities in the world have such airports.

It will also have a halt for the bullet train, Fadnavis said. The chief minister said Maharashtra is building a highway from Nashik to Vadnavan port which will ensure that 17 districts of the state get connected with the modern port.

Women, freshers driving employment boom in India: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Professional networking platform Apna on Monday said it has recorded a sharp uptick in job applications in the first quarter of this year with a rise in women's workforce participation driven by flexible work, inclusive hiring, and rising opportunities in Tier II and III cities.

According to Apna's latest 'India at Work - Q1 2025' report, the platform witnessed a record-breaking 1.81 crore job applications, a 30 per cent increase from the previous year, reflecting India's growing economic optimism and digi-

tal hiring boom across sectors.

Women's participation in the workforce soared, with over 62 lakh applications -- a 23 per cent year-on-year jump.

This growth was most pronounced in Tier II and III cities such as Chandigarh, Indore, and Jamshedpur, driven by flexible work options, gender-inclusive hiring, and expanded opportunities in sectors like BPO, finance, and HR, the report said.

Freshers contributed over 66 lakh applications -- a 46 per cent year-on-year increase.

Meanwhile, Apna saw 3.1 lakh job postings, up 26 per



cent from Q1 2024, largely driven by Small and Medium-sized Business (SMBs) leading the charge, posting over 2.1 lakh jobs, including 28,547 roles exclusively for women. Enterprise hiring rose sharply with companies like LIC, Paytm, Delhivery, and Flipkart creating over 1 lakh openings, expanding recruitment beyond metros and tapping into the national talent pool, the report said.

"From Delhi to Dehradun, Surat to Samastipur, we saw hiring become truly decentralised. Tier II and Tier III cities contributed over 40 per cent of new users, with many of them showing double-digit growth in job applications. Applications from women for enterprise roles didn't just rise, they saw a 92 per cent leap. Fresher applications crossed 66 lakh," Nirmit Parikh, Founder & CEO of Apna said.

In Q1 2025, Apna recorded 65.4 per cent increase in job postings for Software/Web Developer roles, alongside a 42.2 per cent rise in fresher

applications for these positions compared to the previous year.

This surge highlights the growing need for specialised professionals in fields such as AI/ML, cybersecurity, business intelligence, and data-driven operations, as enterprises in these regions expand their digital capabilities. While traditional tech hubs like Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, and Mumbai maintain their dominance, cities such as Indore, Jaipur, Lucknow, Rajkot, and Warangal are rapidly emerging as key players in the tech hiring landscape.

NAWAZUDDIN SIDDIQUI FIGHTS A CORRUPT EMPIRE IN *COSTAO*

ZEE5 unveiled the trailer of the much-awaited and anticipated film, *Costao*. Set against the gritty backdrop of 1990s Goa, *Costao* tells the gripping story of a fearless customs officer who dared to defy an empire built on smuggling, corruption, and fear. Nawazuddin Siddiqui delivers a powerhouse performance as Costao Fernandes — a sharp, unconventional enforcer whose bold tactics and unrelenting pursuit for justice puts him at odds with both the criminal underworld and the very system he serves. Directed by debutant Sejal Shah, the movie also stars - Priya Bapat, Kishore Kumar G, Gagan Dev Riar and Hussain Dalal. Premiering on May 1, *Costao* is a story about courage, sacrifice and the brutal price of standing against the face of a corrupt empire.

Set in a world steeped in corruption and ruled by crime, as revealed in the trailer, the film follows *Costao*—a man whose daring methods and unshakable courage make him both a hero and thorn in the side of the system. When a deadly clash with the brother of a notorious smuggler sparks a high-stakes manhunt, *Costao* is thrust into a relentless battle for survival. Hunted, betrayed and on his own, he refuses to give in. He fights—not just for justice, but for his family and his own redemption. With heart-pounding action, powerful emotional turns and a protagonist as unpredictable as he is unforgettable, *Costao* delivers a wild, gripping ride. As everything begins to unravel, one question remains: with a lot of personal sacrifice, audacious courage but sharp instincts, will Costao be able to stand against the empire that runs the show and at what cost?

Debutant director Sejal Shah said, "*Costao* is the story of an officer who risked his life to do the right thing and paid the price for it. It's raw, intense and full of moments that will leave you questioning how far one person can go in the name of duty. Bringing this world to life has been a challenge and a privilege, and I couldn't have asked for a better actor than Nawazuddin Siddiqui to play Costao. He brings an unmatched authenticity and complexity to the character. ZEE5 has always backed bold, powerful storytelling, and I'm excited to collaborate with them. I can't wait for audiences to experience *Costao*—a story that deserves to be told."

Nawazuddin Siddiqui expressed, "*Costao* is not just a story about a customs officer fighting against a ruthless smuggling empire—it's about the cost of standing up to an entire system built on corruption and betrayal. There is a dialogue in the film where the character says 'Humare society mein sabko chahiye ki Officer honest ho aur brave ho... lekin Ghar mein Nah'; it's so true. Costao's courage in the face of unbeatable odds reflects this perfectly. His battle is not only against criminals but against a system that tries to break him at every turn. I can't wait for viewers to experience the explosive twists, raw emotion, and relentless intensity that *Costao* brings. It's a story that will keep you at the edge, questioning what's right, what's wrong, and what one man is willing to sacrifice for justice. Don't miss it; *Costao* drops on May 1st!"

Produced by Vinod Bhanushali, Kamlesh Bhanushali, Bhavesh Mandalia, Sejal Shah, Shyam Sunder & Faizuddin Siddiqui and written by Bhavesh Mandalia and Meghna Srivastava, *Costao* is an unmissable story.



PULKIT SAMRAT AND ISABELLE KAIF LIGHT UP THE DANCE FLOOR IN *BAN PIYA*

The festive song *Ban Piya* from the upcoming cross-cultural love story *Suswagatam Khushamadeed*, starring Pulkit Samrat and Isabelle Kaif, is out now—and it's pure madness and masti! Featuring the soulful voices of Armaan Malik, Dhvani Bhanushali, Amol Shrivastava and Abhishek Talented, with vibrant music by Amol-Abhishek and lyrics by Abhishek Talented, the track brings a breezy, festive vibe that's instantly infectious. Choreographed by Ganesh Acharya, the dance sequences blend energetic moves with colourful, grand visuals, perfectly capturing the youthful spirit of the film.

Ban Piya also marks the first showcase of Pulkit and Isabelle's sparkling chemistry, set against vibrant, celebratory backdrops—a playful romance that mirrors the film's heart of love beyond boundaries.

Speaking about the song, director Dhiraj Kumar says, "*Ban Piya* isn't just a song—it's the heart of the film's festive and vibrant spirit. Pulkit and Isabelle brought so much energy and freshness to it. We wanted the song to feel like a true celebration of cultures coming together, and I'm thrilled with how it has shaped up. We shot this song on a very large scale. This song truly is the soul of my film and I believe it perfectly sets the tone for the rest of the story." Choreographer Ganesh Acharya expressed his excitement about the song saying, "Choreographing *Ban Piya* was a blast! We wanted the dance to match the song's festive and energetic vibe. Pulkit and Isabelle's chemistry was incredible and we shot it on a grand scale to capture the celebratory spirit of the film." Directed by Dhiraj Kumar, *Suswagatam Khushamadeed* is more than a love story—it champions unity and cultural harmony through humour, music and heartfelt storytelling. With *Ban Piya* setting the tone, audiences can expect a vibrant, emotional and feel-good cinematic experience.

Produced by Sharwan Kumar Agarwal, Anil Agarwal, Dhiraj, Deepak Dhar, Azaan Ali and Suneel Rao and co-produced by Javed Deoriawale, Ajay Baranwal, Sanjay Surana, Ashfa Hassan and Sadiya Asim, the film also stars Sahil Vaid, Priyanka Singh, the late Rituraj Singh, Meghna Malik, the late Arun Bali, Neela Mulherkar, Manu Rishi Chaddha, Prashant Singh, Rajkumar Kanoujia, Mehul Surana, Shruti Ulfat and Sajjad Delafrooz.

The music is being launched under Zee Music Company. *Suswagatam Khushamadeed* will hit cinemas nationwide on May 16, 2025, presented by Reliance Entertainment in association with Insite India, Endemol Shine India, Yellow Ant Productions, Shurbhi Entertainment, Azaan Entertainment and U Entertainment.

Shubhangi shines bright as the leading lady in *Tanvi The Great*

Veteran actor Anupam Kher opened up about his decision to cast Shubhangi from his acting school for the lead role in his upcoming film, *Tanvi The Great*. The *Special 26* actor explained that he saw great potential in her and believed she was the perfect fit to bring the character to life on screen. Speaking about the casting choice, Kher expressed his desire to give a fresh face a chance, emphasising that he was determined to offer an opportunity to a newcomer. "When it came to casting Tanvi, I was determined to discover a fresh face and select a talent from my institute, Actor Prepares, in order to offer a newcomer this opportunity," he said.

Kher went on to praise Shubhangi's exceptional talent, stating, "She has given her all to portray Tanvi—a story very close to my heart. I hope audiences embrace her with the love and encouragement she truly deserves. I cannot wait for the world to witness the magic she has brought to *Tanvi The Great*. I am deeply grateful to Kajol for her support and for giving Shubhangi so much love on this important occasion." Reflecting on her acting debut, Shubhangi shared, "I am immensely grateful to Anupam Kher Sir and Actor Prepares for giving me this opportunity to be the



face of such a special film. My joy had no limits when I got to know I will be playing the role of Tanvi. Embodying the character of Tanvi has been an overwhelming yet an enriching experience. Working alongside so many legends in the film has strengthened my foundation, and I am determined to continue working even harder." In a grand reveal, actor and director Anupam Kher introduced Shubhangi as the leading lady of his upcoming film, with actress Kajol officially unveiling the future star of Indian cinema and extending her love and best wishes.

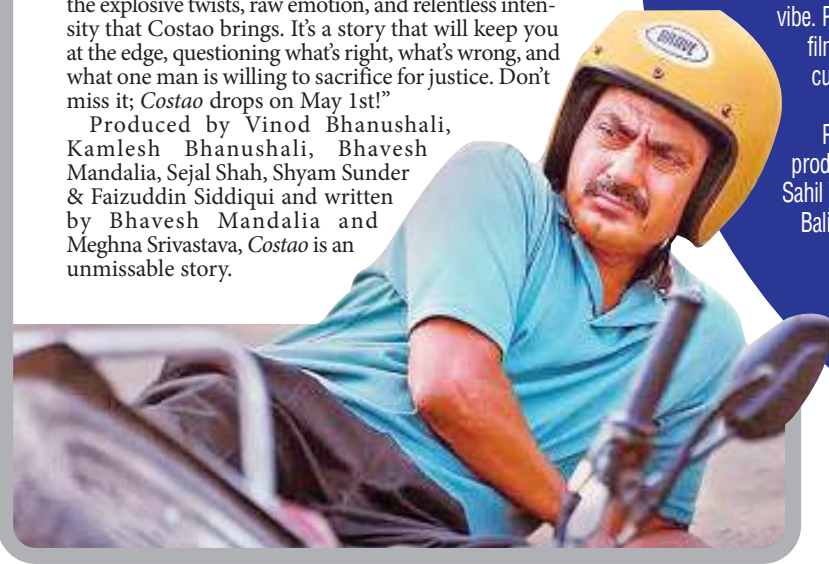
The film, which marks Anupam Kher's return to direction, is set to make its world premiere at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival as part of the Marché du Film. *Tanvi The Great* is produced by Anupam Kher Studios in association with NFDC and will be released soon.

Amol Parashar and Vinay Pathak bring heartfelt rural drama with *Gram Chikitsalay*

Amol Parashar and Vinay Pathak-starrer *Gram Chikitsalay*, a heart-warming drama series, is all set to stream from May 9 on Prime Video. The series also stars Akansha Ranjan Kapoor, Anandeshwar Dwivedi, Akash Makhija and Garima Vikrant Singh in pivotal roles. Produced under the banner of The Viral Fever (TVF), the five-part series follows the journey of Dr. Prabhat, an ambitious city doctor, who navigates bureaucratic hurdles, sceptical locals, and small-town eccentricities to revive a nearly defunct Public Health Center in a remote village.

"With *Gram Chikitsalay*, we bring to life a heartfelt and inspiring story that delves into the challenges and triumphs of rural healthcare, told through a lens that is both humorous and deeply relatable," said Vijay Koshy, president, The Viral Fever. Koshy added: "At its core, the series is about resilience, connection, and the pursuit of change against all odds. Through Dr. Prabhat's journey, we explore universal themes of idealism meeting reality. He isn't just fighting diseases; he's challenging deeply rooted systems, prejudices, and the status quo—all while learning that change is a two-way street. Amol Parashar has done a splendid job bringing this character to life."

Gram Chikitsalay is created by Deepak Kumar Mishra (creator and director of Panchayat), written by Vaibhav Surman and Shreya Srivastava and directed by Rahul Pandey.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



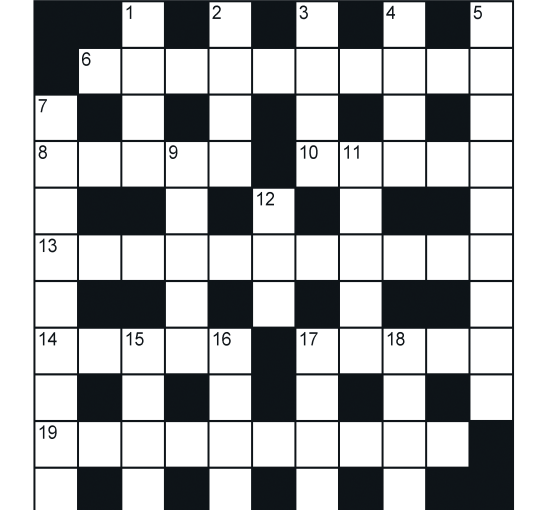
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



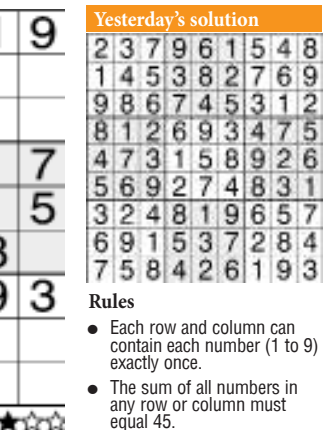
NANCY



SUDOKU



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



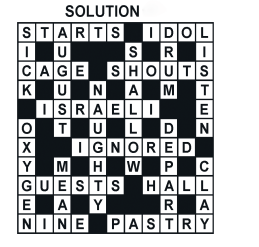
ACROSS

- 6 Broken down; not working properly (3,2,5)
- 8 A word for a taxi driver
- 10 A sung musical drama
- 13 Saying you are sorry
- 14 Light soft modelling wood
- 17 Part of a poem or song
- 19 Follows seventeenth

DOWN

- 1 A round underground part of some plants
- 2 A small type of horse
- 3 A toy that spins around a held string (2-2)
- 4 The part along the side or end
- 5 Three-sided figures
- 7 A way of cooking eggs
- 9 These ring at churches
- 11 Stick wallpaper on with this
- 12 The number of years someone has lived
- 15 Use these when running
- 16 Small busy insects
- 17 An opinion
- 18 Animals like large mice

GINGER MEGGS



‘Taking up dance as career was initially not a choice **born out of passion but necessity**’



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As the world gears up to celebrate International Dance Day on April 29, it's only fitting to spotlight artists whose journeys have been deeply defined by dance. One such name is Shantanu Maheshwari—an actor, dancer, choreographer and anchor who has made an indelible mark both nationally and internationally. From founding the dance crew Desi Hoppers to winning accolades on global platforms, Shantanu's journey is a testament to passion, discipline and resilience. In a conversation reflecting on his journey, the *Dil Dosti Dance* fame opens up about how dance found him, shaped him and continues to drive him forward.

To begin this exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, he recalls that it was his teacher, Anurag Mohta, who first inspired him to dance. "I always wanted to dance like him," he shares. However, taking up dance as a career was initially not a choice born out of passion but necessity. "Our monetary conditions back then were not very good. So I had to start taking dance classes, as dance was something I was well-versed with. I never initially enjoyed it, but I made sure that I never taught anyone in a disinterested manner so that his



or her aspiration for dance does not die," Shantanu reveals.

Aware of the responsibility that came with teaching, he ensured that his students' dreams were always nurtured with sincerity. Over time, however, dance grew from a means of livelihood into a passion. "Though with time, I understood that dance was my passion and there is nothing else that I feel so strongly about, so why not take this up as a career," says Shantanu. His love affair with dance began early—at the age of seven—through active par-

ticipation in numerous competitions. "From there, I just took things forward and became clear about wanting to make dance a career option for myself," he adds.

When it comes to his favourite dance style, the *Campus Beat* star expresses his fondness for Bollywood dance. "This style is a mix of everything. For me, this style of dance has more of the South flavour of dance," he explains. Shantanu highlights how Bollywood dancing incorporates elements like popping, breaking, locking and even traditional folk styles. "Bollywood dancing is actually more of freestyle dancing and it has no boundaries. There is a lot of freedom to explore with this style of dancing," he enthuses.

On how he prepares for performances, he goes on to elaborate, "I just start with understanding what is required for the particular performance. Then rehearse for it as much as I can, till the time I feel confident about what I am rehearsing—be it memorising the steps or performing them the way I want to." He stresses the importance of mental and physical preparedness: "Mentally, once I am very sure of the choreography, then I know I am there and the mental confidence to be able to pull off that entire act is set within me. On the physical front, besides keeping my body fit, practicing things under the right guidance and understanding the technicalities of that act are what I ensure for myself."

Reflecting on advice for aspiring dancers, Shantanu shares, "I always maintain that be true to the art and art will give you back a lot. So firstly entering the industry for the right reasons is important. Things like money and fame will definitely be found, but sustaining is the key here and that is only going to happen with hard work and being true to your passion for dance." He underlines the importance of humility and openness to criticism: "Being open to healthy criticism is definitely important. You might think you are the best with what you are doing, but there will always be someone a notch higher than you. So it's best to be humble, keep learning, be true to the art, and keep growing as an artist."

Dance, for Shantanu, has been transformative beyond the stage. "Dance has given me a lot! It has introduced me to acting, it has introduced me to a lot of people, taken me to so many different places I would have never even imagined getting

to," he shares. It opened countless avenues for exploration and personal growth. "Dance helped me gain confidence within myself. Dance has been my core strength," he says proudly.

Shantanu also acknowledges the influence of international dance competitions on his discipline and lifestyle. "Whenever I have participated in international dance competitions, the discipline they have is something I have always looked up to. Not only has that inspired me but I have also tried to incorporate it into my lifestyle," he explains. For him, dancers are nothing short of athletes. "You have to train and maintain your body like an athlete. You have to keep working hard towards that discipline," he states, adding that this mindset has helped him understand food intake, body

anatomy, and even boosted his self-confidence.

Being the co-founder of Desi Hoppers, Shantanu also took on logistical responsibilities. "Dance also helped me learn international travel requirements for competitions better, as being a co-founder of our crew Desi Hoppers, all of that was my responsibility. All these things put together helped me explore so many avenues and helped me extensively grow as a human being and an artist," he concludes.

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, dancer-actor **Shantanu Maheshwari** opens up about his inspiring journey from discovering his passion for dance at a young age to building a successful career on the global stage. Reflecting on his beginnings, challenges and the discipline dance instilled in him, Shantanu shares heartfelt insights about staying true to the art form, evolving as an artist and the life-changing impact dance has had on him



Bollywood dancing is actually more of freestyle dancing, and it has no boundaries. There is a lot of freedom to explore with this style of dancing

EMRAAN HASHMI ON *AWARAPAN 2*

It's not a reunion, it's the right time for the story



Actor Emraan Hashmi is gearing up to revisit one of his most beloved films with *Awarapan 2*, but he doesn't view his collaboration with the Bhatt camp as a reunion. Earlier this month, on his 46th birthday, Hashmi announced the sequel to the 2007 cult hit *Awarapan*, which will once again be produced under Mukesh Bhatt's Vishesh Films banner.

Speaking about the project in an exclusive chat with PTI, Hashmi emphasised that while their professional paths diversified in recent years, there was never a formal parting with the Bhatt production house. "I don't see this as reuniting at all. It's not like we parted ways. We had a phenomenal run with a nearly 90-95% success rate over 14 years, starting from 2003's *Footpath* to 2016's *Raaz: Reboot*. When you have that kind of success together, it naturally becomes tricky to keep finding the right stories," the actor said.

Hashmi, who made his acting debut with *Footpath*, went on to headline several successful Vishesh Films projects such as *Gangster*, *Murder 2* and *Raaz: The Mystery Continues*. Over time, he branched out, working with a range of filmmakers in projects like *The Dirty Picture*, *Shanghai*, *Ghanchakkar* and *Tiger 3*. Reflecting on the decision to greenlight *Awarapan 2*, Hashmi said the project was a long time coming but needed a story that could match the original's cult legacy.

"It's been under discussion for some time. We didn't want to make a sequel just for the sake of it. *Awarapan* has a massive cult following—sometimes more goodwill than my bigger box office hits, through

satellite TV, Torrentz back in the day, and now YouTube. We waited for the right story and now feels like the right time," he explained.

The original *Awarapan*, directed by Mohit Suri and written by Mahesh Bhatt, centered on Shivam (played by Hashmi), a tormented hitman grappling with guilt and redemption when he discovers his boss' mistress desires freedom and love. Shriya Saran, Ashutosh Rana and Mrinalini Sharma also starred in the film. Acknowledging the challenges of living up to the expectations set by the first film, Hashmi shared that they were cautious about ensuring freshness in the sequel.

"How do you keep it new? Because you've been there, you've done pretty much everything. There's no point in bringing out films that audiences feel they've already seen. We took time, and then COVID-19 slowed everything further. A lot of recalibration happened during those years," he noted.



AWARAPAN HAS A MASSIVE CULT FOLLOWING—SOMETIMES MORE GOODWILL THAN MY BIGGER BOX OFFICE HITS, THROUGH SATELLITE TV, TORRENTZ BACK IN THE DAY AND NOW YOUTUBE. WE WAITED FOR THE RIGHT STORY AND NOW FEELS LIKE THE RIGHT TIME

TRANSFORMING ENGINEERING EDUCATION

From theory to practice



Let's talk about a system built for the 20th century that still governs the future of millions in the 21st. India produces over a million engineering graduates every year. But here's the uncomfortable truth—a majority of them are not job-ready. Why? Because we're still preparing them for a world that no longer exists. Static textbooks, outdated syllabi and a heavy focus on theory still dominate classrooms. Meanwhile, the industry has moved on fast.

We need to stop teaching from the rearview mirror

Take software development. Once a domain of massive teams and multi-year timelines, it has been revolutionised by Generative AI. Today, tools can write code, debug and even design interfaces. What once took years, now takes weeks. Companies no longer want just coders—they want creators. Professionals who can build software that builds software.

How do you prepare students for that kind of future? Not with theory-heavy lectures. Not with memory-based exams. You do it with a live, evolving curriculum—one that updates every semester, just like the technologies students are expected to master.

Skills over scores

It's high time we stopped measuring how much a student can remember. Let's start measuring what they can do. Replace exam scores with skill profiles. Ask: Can this student solve a real-world problem? Can they build a product? Collaborate in a team? These are the metrics that matter. Employers don't hire marksheets—they hire ability. And why wait until the end of a semester to measure progress? In a world that thrives on rapid iteration, feedback must be frequent. Shorter assessment cycles, quicker feedback loops and continuous improvement—that's how workplaces operate. Our classrooms must reflect that.

Theory is not the destination

Learning should be active. If a concept is taught in the morning, students should apply it by the afternoon. This is how true learning happens—not in silence, not in isolation, but through action. By building. By experimenting. By failing and trying again.

And let's acknowledge something else. No curriculum can fully capture the pace at which industries evolve. That's why regular interaction with industry experts is not a luxury—it's a necessity. Students must hear from the people who are

building the future, not just those teaching the past.

Real-world projects, not just assignments

Ask any successful founder where they got their start—it often began with a side project. An idea in college. A problem they tried to solve. Imagine if our engineering colleges encouraged this spirit. Imagine if final-year projects weren't just evaluation tools but launchpads for real-world products and startups. Imagine the innovation we'd unlock.

Bring the industry to the campus

We often speak of preparing students for the industry. But what if we brought the industry to them? Created environments where students work in teams, solve real-world challenges and operate in settings that mimic tech companies and design studios. That's how you make transitions seamless. That's how you build professionals, not just graduates.

Think global, learn local

Indian students today are more connected than ever. Remote internships with global startups, online hackathons, and international speaker sessions—these are not futuristic ideas. They are happening now, and they must become mainstream. Global exposure prepares students to compete with the best and learn from the best.

Technology can teach technology

AI-powered platforms and adaptive feedback tools can create personalised, immersive learning environments at scale. The same tech that's disrupting jobs can help prepare students for new ones.

If India is serious about becoming a global tech powerhouse, we must stop settling for average. Our students deserve an education that is alive, responsive, and rooted in reality. An education that empowers them not just to get jobs, but to create them.

(The author, **Rahul Attaluri**, is the co-founder and CEO of *NxtWave* and *NIAT*.)

IPL: Delhi Capitals eye comeback against KKR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Delhi Capitals (DC) would aim for an improved batting effort in the middle overs when they face a struggling Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in their Indian Premier League match here on Tuesday.

DC have suffered two defeats in their last four matches, including a loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Sunday, and will look to avoid any hiccups at the business end of the tournament.

Abhishek Porel has batted with plenty of aggressive intent at the top of the order but veteran Faf du Plessis will quickly need to get used to the slow nature of surface at Kotla after struggling in his comeback game. KL Rahul has been DC's leading run-getter this season but could not accelerate against the spinners on Sunday night. He would back himself to take on the likes of Sunil Narine and Varun Chakaravathy.

With quality spinners in their ranks, KKR could pose a stiff challenge for the home. The Ajinkya Rahane led-side is slightly low on confidence after a tough outing against Punjab Kings in a rain-hit match.

A solid innings is expected from Karun Nair to ensure Rahul isn't left to shoulder the burden alone in the middle-order.

In the bowling department, DC skipper Axar Patel led from the front with two wickets but found little support from others. Star pacer Mitchell Starc, who went wicketless against RCB, will look to exploit the weaknesses in his former team, while Kuldeep Yadav, with his deceptive googlies, remains a threat in the middle overs.

DC's fielding has also left much to be desired against RCB, with Porel dropping a crucial catch of Krunal Pandya on Sunday night.

KKR, meanwhile, have managed just seven points so far and are placed seventh in the standings, having failed to collect any



points from their last three matches, including two losses and a no-result.

Rahane will be desperate to arrest the slide and keep their playoff hopes alive, with another defeat making the task tougher. Issues have cropped up across departments for KKR.

Their batting lacks a settled look, with Quinton de Kock and Rahmanullah Gurbaz being rotated in the opening slot alongside Narine, while the side has relied heavily on Rahane and youngster Angkrish Raghuvanshi to score runs. The middle-order trio of Venkatesh Iyer, Andre Russell, Rinku Singh and Ramandeep Singh has struggled to make a significant impact.

Bowling has been another area of concern, with KKR failing to break opening stands, allowing teams to post big totals — as seen in the last game where PBKS added 120 for the opening wicket. While KKR managed to pull things back at the death, it will require a collective effort from Chakaravathy, Vaibhav Arora, and Harshit

Rana to stem the flow of runs against DC.

Teams

Delhi Capitals: Axar Patel (c), Jake Fraser-McGurk, Abhishek Porel, Karun Nair, KL Rahul (wk), Tristan Stubbs, Ashutosh Sharma, Vipraj Nigam, Mitchell Starc, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohit Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Sameer Rizvi, Darshan Nalkande, Donovan Ferreira, Tripurana Vijay, Dushmantha Chameera, Faf du Plessis, T Natarajan, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Manvanth Kumar L, Madhav Tiwari.

Kolkata Knight Riders: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Rinku Singh, Quinton de Kock (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Rovman Powell, Manish Pandey, Luvnith Sisodia, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Moeen Ali, Ramandeep Singh, Andre Russell, Anrich Nortje, Vaibhav Arora, Mayank Markande, Spencer Johnson, Harshit Rana, Sunil Narine, Varun Chakaravathy, Chetan Sakariya.

People are forgetting importance of partnerships: Kohli

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Indian superstar Virat Kohli has underlined the importance of stitching partnerships in T20 cricket, especially on wickets where heaving the willow from the word go is not possible.

The pitches in the IPL thus far have been on the slower side, not allowing the batters to go hammer and tongs from ball one. However, the likes of Kohli and K L Rahul have flourished in challenging batting conditions.

Kohli collected his sixth half-century in 10 IPL innings against Delhi Capitals on Sunday, helping RCB maintain their unbeaten run away from home.

"It was a top win, especially looking at the surface. We saw a few games here and this wicket played out differently compared to those. Whenever there's a chase on, I keep checking with the dugout, whether we're on course," Kohli, who played a second-fiddle to Krunal Pandya, said after the win.

Kohli elaborated on his batting methodology, saying he analyses the conditions and changes his style of play accordingly. "What the conditions are like. Who are the bowlers that are due to bowl. Who are the bowlers that are going to be hard to get away," Kohli explained when asked how he plans the chase.

"I try and make sure my singles and doubles don't stop so that the game doesn't get stagnant. People are forgetting the importance of partnerships and that's



coming to the fore in this tournament to try and dominate the bowlers through partnerships and professionalism."

Krunal, who struggled initially to get going, eventually hit his first fifty in IPL in nine years.

"Krunal was outstanding, he can make an impact and it was just about time. We've communicated beautifully, Krunal kept telling me to stay while he took his chances," said Kohli.

After Kohli's dismissal, Tim David smashed 19 runs off just five balls to knock off the winning runs.

Talking about the finishers, Kohli said: "We have the extra power in Tim David,

there's Jitesh as well. That firepower at the back end of the innings definitely helps you. And now Romario as well."

He also praised the low-profile spin duo of Krunal and Suyash Sharma. "Hazlewood and Bhuvni are world-class bowlers, there's a reason why Josh has the Purple Cap."

"Krunal was outstanding the way he varied his pace. Suyash has been the dark horse for us, even if he doesn't have the wickets. Our spinners keep attacking in the middle overs."

We were 10-15 runs short: Axar

Delhi Capitals skipper Axar Patel said his team was 10-15 runs short of a com-

petitive total and rued the missed chances on the field after the six-wicket loss to RCB. "I thought in the first innings, the wicket was a bit tough but due to dew, it eased out in the second innings. We don't think anything we could have done different. If a batter could have accelerated, we could have got 10-15 runs extra."

"KL was batting well so I wanted him at number four. One side of the ground was shorter as well so we sent him at number four."

Adjudged the Player of the Match for his all-round show, Krunal, who took one wicket along with his unbeaten 73, said he was happy to perform for his new team.

"It is always good to see the results. Sometimes when you have put the hard work behind the scenes and feels good when it comes off. It is quite satisfying," he said. "My role was clear. If we lose three early wickets, I can go and make sure we stitch a partnership. We have such great power hitters — David, Jitesh and Shepherd. We can take down the bowling. Glad that I fulfilled my role."

"When Virat is at the other end, it is quite easy. First 20 balls, it was scratchy for me. But he kept backing me. Then I got his mojo. So, a lot of credit to Virat."

On his bowling, Krunal said: "I have always been an economical bowler. As a bowler, I have always wanted to be one step ahead. I have worked on my bowling. So, if you see the variations in speed. Knowing the batsmen's strength, I am trying to use it to my advantage. Glad it is using my favour."

Women's tri-series: India to face South Africa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

Their campaign off to a dominant start, a confident India will look to maintain momentum when they face South Africa in their second match of the women's tri-series here on Tuesday.

The Indian team extended its winning streak in ODIs to seven matches with a comprehensive nine-wicket victory over hosts Sri Lanka in the tournament opener on Sunday.

The 'Women in Blue' excelled across all three departments. The bowlers, led by the spinners Sneha Rana, Deepti Sharma and Shree Charani, restricted Sri Lanka to a sub-par total, while the top three — Pratika Rawal, Smriti Mandhana, and Harleen Deol — played fluent innings with the bat.

Their fielding was razor-sharp as well, and they will be confident of producing a similar performance against a South African side they haven't lost to in this format since March 2022.

India had beaten South Africa 3-0 the last time the two teams met in a 50-over series. The Indian players have also enjoyed recent game time in the Women's Premier League, adding to the squad's match readiness.

Spinners are once again expected to play a crucial role. However, the Indian team will continue to closely monitor the performance of its pacers in the absence of key

players as it looks to identify a core group ahead of the 50-over World Cup, to be held at home later this year.

Meanwhile, South Africa, who open their campaign on Tuesday, are trying to find their rhythm under new coach Mandla Mashimbyi, who was appointed last year.

The 44-year-old, however, has no prior coaching experience in women's cricket.

South Africa will be without senior all-rounder Marizanne Kapp, who has been rested for the series, but they will lean on the in-form Sune Luus, Laura Wolvaardt, Nadine de Klerk, and Chloe Tryon. Masabata Klaas, along with allrounders Annerie Dercksen and de Klerk, will shoulder the pace duties.

Teams

India: Pratika Rawal, Smriti Mandhana, Harleen Deol, Harmanpreet Kaur(c), Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh(w), Deepti Sharma, Kashvee Gautam, Arundhati Reddy, Sneha Rana, Nallapureddy Charani, Yastika Bhutia, Amanjot Kaur, Teja Vasabnis, Shuchi Upadhyay.

South Africa: Laura Wolvaardt(c), Tazmin Brits, Sune Luus, Annerie Dercksen, Lara Goodall, Nadine de Klerk, Chloe Tryon, Sinalo Jaftha(w), Nonkululeko Mlaba, Masabata Klaas, Ayabonga Khaka, Karabo Meso, Miane Smit, Nondumiso Shangase, Seshnie Naidu.

Sunil Joshi biggest name in contention for spin coach's role at BCCI's COE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Former India left-arm spinner Sunil Joshi has thrown his hat in the ring for the post of spin bowling coach at BCCI's Centre of Excellence (COE) that was vacated by Sairaj Bahutule earlier this year. The COE was earlier known as the National Cricket Academy when it was based out of the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru. It remains in the city but is now operational from a new location after BCCI purchased land to build a more expansive facility.

Bahutule resigned to become an assistant coach in IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals. The 54-year-old Joshi, who played 15 Tests and 69 ODIs for India between 1996 and 2002, is currently working with Ricky Ponting in the Punjab Kings IPL team and has also coached Uttar Pradesh during the domestic season.

He has also worked with Bangladesh's national men's team as its spin bowling consultant.

According to sources in the BCCI, Joshi appeared for his interview online in front of a three-member panel comprising COE's Head of Cricket VVS Laxman, chairman of men's selection committee Ajit Agarkar and General Manager (Cricket Operations) Abbey Kuruvilla.

There were four others, who appeared for the interview in person, including India U-19 women's team coach Nooshin Al Khadeer, who was an off-spinner during her playing days.

She represented the country in five Tests and 78 WODIs and has been working in the erstwhile NCA setup for some years now. Another strong candidate is believed to be Rakesh Dhruv, a former Gujarat and Saurashtra left-arm spinner. Veteran off-spinner Pritam Gandhe, a domestic doyen from Vidarbha, has also been interviewed for the post.

When a senior BCCI official was asked about the interviews for the position, he said: "Obviously, Sunil Joshi has the best CV out of all the other candidates. In case

of Nooshin, the BCCI is also going to have an elaborate women's wing with dedicated staff for international, national and domestic age-group women's cricketers."

"While playing elite level does embellish the CV and Sunil is the only (men's) Test cricketer among those who appeared for interview, his biggest plus is considerable experience in elite level coaching."

"He has coached multiple first-class teams, has been a part of IPL coaching set-up and also coached senior men's international team. And do not forget, he is from Bengaluru, which makes a lot of sense logistically," he said.

But even Dhruv cannot be ruled out as he has played a lot of cricket for Saurashtra and Gujarat. Most of the candidates were asked about their vision for the role.

The chosen candidate will be expected to not just provide technical insight to international stars like Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav or Washington Sundar but also work with a host of India A, India U-19 and top domestic performers.

Twelve teams to compete in Arjan Singh Memorial hockey tournament

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chandigarh

Twelve teams will compete in the sixth edition of the Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh Memorial hockey tournament to be held here from April 29 to May 6. Air Force Hockey team from Bangladesh will be one of the 12 sides taking part in the tournament, Air Marshal S Sivakumar said on Monday.

The other participating teams include Indian Air Force, Chandigarh XI, Punjab & Sind Bank, Central Industrial Security Force, Army XI, Indian Navy, Indian Railways and Rail Coach Factory.

The tournament winning team will get a prize money of ₹three lakh while the runners-up side will pocket ₹two lakh. Man of the match for each match will get Rs 10,000 while the player of the tournament will pocket ₹25,000.

The matches will be played at Raghbir Singh Bhola Hockey Ground, 3 Base Repair Depot, Air Force Station here on

league-cum-knockout basis.

Air Force Sports Control Board has been organising the prestigious hockey tournament in the memory of legendary late Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh at 3 BRD, Air Force Station, Chandigarh since 2018.

To promote hockey, the game in which our country has excelled for so many years in the international arena and to bring back its glory

— YS PANGHAL, ORGANISING SECRETARY

"Considering the eminence of the tournament in the Indian hockey scenario and the initiatives being taken by the Air Force Sports Control Board to encourage hockey at all levels, an all out effort is being made to promote the event," Sivakumar said.

Sivakumar said the organisers are hoping participation of more overseas

teams, including from the UK, in next year's edition.

The organisers also plan to hold the event alternately in Chandigarh and Bengaluru beginning next year, he said.

Group Captain Y S Panghal, Organising Secretary of the event, briefed about the tournament.

"Our air warriors have tilted hard and proved their mettle at all competitive levels and have brought laurels to the country as well as the Indian Air Force," Panghal said. "To promote hockey, the game in which our country has excelled for so many years in the international arena and to bring back its glory, it is strongly felt that there should be quality tournaments in the country where emerging talent competes and gets exposure to the fast pace game."

"This has resulted in the evolution of the Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh Memorial Hockey tournament since 2018," Panghal said.

KL Rahul should bat at four for India in next year's T20 World Cup: Kevin Pietersen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

KL Rahul is best placed to bat at number four and keep wickets for India in next year's T20 World Cup, believes Delhi Capitals (DC) mentor Kevin Pietersen.

With his intent in the shortest format being questioned in the past, Rahul has tweaked his approach to be the leading run-getter for Delhi Capitals this season.

The competition for the wicket-keeper-batter's slot in the national team is stiff with Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Dhruv Jurel and Ishan Kishan being the other options for the selectors.

Rahul has not been a part of India's T20 setup since the 2022 World Cup but Pietersen reckons not only has he done enough to warrant a comeback, he is best suited for the wicket-keeper-batter's role.

"I'd bat KL at four for India in T20 cricket. I think you guys have got plenty of opening batters."

"But the way KL Rahul is playing cricket now, he would be my first choice to bat at four, and keep wickets for India," said Pietersen in response to a query after DC's loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Sunday night.

At the start of the season, Rahul himself had talked about his renewed approach towards the T20 format.

Besides the stellar show in IPL, it was Rahul's recent performances for India in ODI cricket that left a huge impression on Pietersen, one of the best batters to have played for England.

"KL has been playing in a very positive manner since. Mid to late last year. We saw how he finished off a couple of the games for India and almost sealed the deal in the Champions Trophy in Dubai."

"I've had a lot of incredibly brilliant conversations with him about batting, a lot of deep and meaningful conversations because when you grow up as a youngster like he did, you get taught defence, elbow up, play in the V," he explained.

The big-hitter said it is not easy to change that approach after hitting the thirties. "You've got to change it and you've got to become a different kind of player for a different format which is evolving all the time. It's very, very difficult. So the way that he has accepted that he's needed to change, the way that he has changed is of great, great credit to the person that he is," said Pietersen.

The next T20 World Cup will be jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

Fine with tough batting surfaces in T20s Scores in the range of 250 were a common occurrence last IPL but the slower nature of pitches has made batting tougher this season. Pietersen has no issues with



that. "On wickets like these (the one at Feroz Shah Kotla), you've got to be methodical, you've got to find rhythm. Virat (Kohli) found rhythm this evening. KL got rhythm," he said.

"And I think that's where you see the true batter. The real batter that can come out there, and sort of monitor the situation, and it looks effortless... Is it good for T20 cricket to have the occasional wick-

et like this? I do not think it's a bad thing," he added.

Pietersen was not in favour of bowlers "just being served up into the stands every single ball"... "I don't think every night peo-

ple want to see that. I don't really want to see it every night," Pietersen said.

Foundations can be laid in IPL

He has played in the IPL and more recently been a part of the commentary panel. This season, he is back in the dugout as a member of DC support staff. The 44-year-old spoke about his role in the team.

"I always knew that when I was playing franchise cricket, that no particular coach could change you over that four to six week period, or eight week period," he conceded.

However, he cited his interactions with Abhishek Porel to stress that changes introduced during the tournament can become permanent if persisted with over a period of time.

"Last night I was working on something. We are five weeks into the tournament, we have only got three or four weeks left of the tournament. And I said to him, I said, 'Abhi, this is not going to work for you tomorrow.'"

"It might not work for you the next week. But if you keep working on it, in the next month, two months, three months, four months, I promise you this is going to help your game. And it's going to take you to a level where you're going to become a more destructive batter."

Dimple Hayathi makes a comeback with Sharwanand's period drama

Dimple Hayathi has signed a new film. After a two-year gap, the actress will be seen in a project starring Sharwanand, directed by Sampath Nandi. Anupama Parameswaran had already been signed as the female lead and now Dimple Hayathi is also part of the cast. The film is a period drama, and shooting is set to begin soon. Sampath Nandi, returning to direction after a gap, has based the film on real incidents while taking cinematic liberties to add fictional elements.

Dimple Hayathi, a Telugu girl, has previously worked in films like *Khiladi* and *Ramabanam*, but had not signed any project in the last two years. She was in the news a couple of years ago for damaging a police car, resulting in a police case. Dimple made her debut with *Gulf* at a young age and later appeared in the Tamil film *Devi*, which was released in Telugu as *Abhinetri*.

She also featured in a special song in *Gaddalakonda Ganesh* opposite Varun Tej, which became popular and earned her wider recognition. Interestingly, she was initially supposed to play the female lead in that film but had to opt out due to other commitments. The project she signed was shelved after completing 80% of the shoot. Director Harish Shankar, upon learning this, offered her a special appearance in the song.



SRINIDHI SHETTY CLARIFIES ON SITA ROLE REJECTION RUMOURS

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Kannada actress Srinidhi Shetty of *KGF* fame is all set to make her Telugu debut with the film *Hit 3*. Nani is the lead actor, and the film is hitting the screens on May 1. The actress clarified that she didn't reject the role of Sita in Nitesh Tiwari's film *Ramayan*, where Ranbir Kapoor is playing Lord Ram. "I auditioned for the role of Sita and after that, I didn't get any call from them. I wasn't a big actress who could reject a role in such a big film. Some miscommunication happened in the media," clarified Srinidhi Shetty. She added that Sai Pallavi has not grabbed her Sita role. "I am very happy that Sai Pallavi is playing Sita," said Srinidhi.

According to a source, Srinidhi Shetty and Yash played the lead pair in the film *KGF* and its second part. Now, Yash is playing Ravan and the makers

felt that if Srinidhi Shetty played Sita, it wouldn't look nice, so they approached Sai Pallavi.

The actress says that she got an important role in *Hit 3*. "Generally, in investigation thrillers, the female lead doesn't get much scope, but if you look at the earlier two franchises, the female lead's impact is there. Now, director Sailesh has further bettered the female lead's portion in *Hit 3*," said Srinidhi.

The actress lends her own voice for her role. "Initially, someone dubbed for my role, but I requested the director to allow me to lend my own voice for my debut film. He agreed, and actually, he liked my voice and continued with it," she said. She added that lending her own voice for her debut film gives something special.

The actress is also doing another Telugu film *Telusu Kada* opposite Siddu Jonnalagadda. It is directed by debutant Neeraja Kona.



Priyadarshi struggles again as lead actor

Actor Priyadarshi made a few successful films like *Balagam* and the latest *Court: State vs A Nobody*. Those films were successful because of their story and script, and more than that, Priyadarshi played a character within those strong scripts. Even the latest *Court* film was a super success, where Priyadarshi played an important role. However, when he played as the lead, the actor couldn't take on the full responsibility and he is not considered a crowd-puller, say some people in the industry. Priyadarshi played the lead role in *Darling*, which turned out to be a huge disaster and the film was removed from theaters on the second day itself. Now, Priyadarshi again played the lead in the film *Sarangapani Jathakam*, which was released on Friday. However, the film opened with poor box office collections and even the second day's performance was not encouraging. Indraganti Mohanakrishna is the director, while Sivalenka Krishna Prasad is the producer. *Court* became a super success partly because of Nani, who produced and aggressively promoted it. Nani even made a bold statement that people who didn't like *Court* need not come to watch his *Hit 3*. Apart from all this, the script of *Court* was strong, which led to its success. Now, Priyadarshi needs scripts like that; he needs to think carefully when choosing films like *Sarangapani Jathakam*. Though Indraganti is a sensible director and many actors want to work with him, the story needs to be strong. However, when it comes to this film, the story is weak and only in the second half did the film manage to get a few laughs.

Vijay Deverakonda voices strong support: "Kashmir is ours"

A few days ago, the entire nation was shocked when Pakistani terrorists attacked tourists in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, killing innocent civilians. The incident was widely condemned and many celebrities voiced their support for the victims and the Indian government. Actor Vijay Deverakonda, attending a film event, expressed solidarity with the victims' families. "I

just want to tell the families who lost their loved ones in the terrorist attack that we are all thinking about you and we are standing in support of you," he said.

Vijay further asserted that Kashmir is an integral part of India. "Kashmir is ours, and the people of Kashmir are our people. I shot for *Khushi* in Kashmir and have many beautiful memories there. The people are very

kind," he said, recalling his shooting experience. He added, "The citizens of Pakistan themselves will teach a lesson to their government, which is fueling terrorism in Kashmir. My deepest condolences to all the victims." Vijay also emphasized the importance of education, stating that with proper education, people might refrain from such ghastly acts. His remarks about Kashmir have gone viral on social media.



AFTER KOBALI, T SRINIVASA RAO BRINGS A TOUCHING FAMILY DRAMA

Producer T. Srinivasa Rao, who earlier made *Tikamaka Thanda Kobali*, is now coming up with another film. This time, he has chosen a story that revolves around family bonds and relationships, with the backdrop of a love story. Shooting for the film has begun and it is directed by Adinarayana Piniiseti.

Harikrishna and Bhavya Sri are playing the lead pair. Their natural chemistry is expected to add emotional depth to the narrative, according to the producer. He mentioned that the film is

not just a love story but also explores family relationships, their challenges, and triumphs.

"We are bringing a unique love story, and the shooting has started. We plan to continue it for the next few days," said director Adinarayana.

The producer added that *Kobali* had trended on Disney+ Hotstar for several weeks, and he is confident that this film will also succeed. "We are shooting in diverse and unique locations to provide the audience with a fresh and memorable experience," he said.



Daksha Nagarkar to groove with Varun Tej in Korean Kanakaraju

After a series of flops, actor Varun Tej is currently shooting for his upcoming film *Korean Kanakaraju*. Directed by Merlapaka Gandhi, the film stars Ritika Nayak as the female lead. It is an Indo-Korean horror comedy and the shoot started some time ago. Now, the makers have roped in Daksha Nagarkar for a special song in the film. Shooting is underway at a private studio in Hyderabad, with a special set erected for the song.

Daksha Nagarkar, who has done a few

Telugu films, was last seen in *Swag* opposite Sree Vishnu. The special song with Varun Tej is described as a "complete mass number," according to sources.

Music for the film is composed by S. Thaman. Varun Tej is hoping for a much-needed break with this project, as his recent films *Matka*, *Operation Valentine* and *Gandeevadhari Arjuna* underperformed at the box office.

Director Merlapaka Gandhi is known for delivering sensible hits and expectations are high for *Korean Kanakaraju*.

