



The Pioneer

Paper with passion since 1864

RNI No. TELENG/2018/76469

*LATE CITY VOL. 7 ISSUE 191 | *Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

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



Rajnath to represent India at Russia's Victory Day parade



INDIA, UK MAKING LAST DITCH EFFORT TO CONCLUDE FTA TALKS



'My perspective will shape the kind of narratives I'm DRAWN TO'

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

If Rahul Gandhi and his party are now claiming the Centre's decision as their success, they must first explain why a caste census was not conducted when they were ruling. If the Congress truly believed in a caste census, why didn't they implement it during their 50 years in power? From KCR's so-called 'samagra survey' to Revanth's caste enumeration, there has been no standard methodology. Surveys were tampered with to inflate the numbers of favourable castes and suppress others

- Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Union MoS for Home

DON'T MISS...

Key Maoists base captured

A large-scale operation targeting key Maoist leaders in the Karregutta hills, located at an altitude of 5,000 feet in the Usur Police Station limits in the Bijapur district on the Telangana-Chhattisgarh border, entered its ninth day on Wednesday. As part of the operation, security forces took control of some parts of Karregutta. Under the leadership of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), a massive operation is still being conducted from Kothapalli on ...

-PAGE: 4

Form a popular govt' in Manipur

Twenty-one Manipur MLAs have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah separately, urging them to form a 'popular government' in the northeastern state, which is now under the President's rule, to ensure peace and normalcy. The Centre had on February 13 imposed the President's rule in Manipur, where more than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023...

-PAGE: 5

Sugarcane price hiked by 4.41 pc

The government on Wednesday decided to increase the fair and remunerative price (FRP) of sugarcane by 4.41 per cent to Rs 355 per quintal for the upcoming 2025-26 season beginning October. A decision in this regard was taken in the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi keeping in mind the interest of sugarcane farmers, an official statement said. For the current 2024-25 season, the sugarcane FRP has been fixed at Rs 340 per quintal...

-PAGE: 8

GT looking at Gill as long-term captain

Gujarat Titans have systems and processes in place to help Shubman Gill "grow as a captain" as the franchise has appointed the India batter with a long-term view, says COO Colonel Arvinder Singh. A vital cog in their title-winning campaign in Gujarat Titans' maiden season in IPL 2022, Gill was appointed captain of the franchise when Hardik Pandya moved back to Mumbai Indians ahead of the 2024 edition. While the first year as a full-time skipper didn't bring Gill much success as GT finished eighth...

-SPORTS

Centre announces caste enumeration in next census

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major decision, the government on Wednesday announced that caste enumeration will be included in the next census exercise in a "transparent" manner and slammed the opposition parties for using caste survey as a 'political tool'.

The Congress and other opposition parties have been vociferously demanding a nationwide caste census, making it a major election issue, and some states like Bihar, Telangana and Karnataka have conducted such surveys.

The government decision comes

Slams Oppn for using it as 'political tool'



ahead of assembly elections in Bihar, where several parties including

some BJP allies have been coming out in support of the caste census.

Announcing the decision taken by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the census comes under the purview of the Centre, but some states have done caste enumeration in the name of surveys "non-transparently" which has created doubts in the society.

Noting that caste was not included in all census operations conducted since Independence, Vaishnaw

alleged that the Congress governments have always opposed caste census and the party had used the issue as a political tool.

"Considering all these facts and to ensure that the social fabric is not disturbed by politics, caste enumeration should be transparently included in the Census instead of surveys," he said, adding that this will strengthen the social and economic structure of our society while the nation continues to progress.

The minister alleged that the states ruled by opposition parties have done caste surveys for political reasons

Continued on Page 2

Caste census is Modi's decision, not Congress's legacy: Sanjay

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, asserted that the decision to conduct a nationwide caste census is a bold, historic move by the Modi Government, and dismissed the Congress's attempts to claim credit for that as "shameless propaganda."

In a statement issued in Hyderabad on Wednesday, Sanjay said, "If the Congress truly believed in caste census, why didn't it implement that during

Continued on Page 2

What Telangana does today, India follows tomorrow: CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Wednesday hailed the Centre's decision to include a caste census in the national census, calling it a 'vindication' of Telangana's 'pioneering initiative' and that of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's 'foresight.'

In a post on X, Revanth credited Rahul for being the first to demand a nationwide caste census during his historic Bharat Jodo Yatra. "Based on his vision and direction, Telangana became the first state

Continued on Page 2

Rahul hails Centre's move, cites TG model

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Welcoming the Centre's decision to include caste enumeration in the next census, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Wednesday that Telangana has emerged as a national role model for caste census and can serve as a blueprint for the rest of the country.

Addressing a press conference shortly after the Centre's announcement, Rahul said, "We support this decision completely. After 11 years of opposing it, the Modi government has suddenly

Continued on Page 2

CMO RESHUFFLE

Sreenivasa Raju is CM's Principal Secretary

Shahnawaz moved to DCA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government has appointed retired IAS officer KS Sreenivasa Raju as the Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for two years.

The orders were issued on Wednesday through GO Rt. No: 539 by the General Administration (Special. A) Department. Sreenivasa Raju was serving as Advisor to the government on Infrastructure & Projects.

The appointment of Sreenivasa Raju marks a significant return to the CMO for the retired officer, who is expected to play a crucial role in strategic planning and coordination in the Chief Minister's Office. Simultaneously, IPS officer Shahnawaz Qasim, who was serving as Secretary to the CM, has been posted as the Director General of the Drugs Control Administration (DCA). He has also been given Full Additional Charge of the post of Director of the Prohibition and Excise Department. This move comes after the retirement of IPS officer VB

Kamalan Reddy on April 30.

With the new appointments, the Chief Minister's core administrative team has been reshuffled. Already,



Sangeetha Sarvey has been moved to the Health Department. G Chandrashekar Reddy, IFS, is likely to become the Chief of the Information Commission. Jayesh Ranjan has been inducted into the CMO's Special Cell.

CID arrests SBI officer in Rs 27 crore bank fraud case

3



Chief Minister Revanth Reddy releasing the results of the SSC Public Examination along with Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka and Minister Ponnam Prabhakar on Wednesday

Girls outshine boys in SSC

CM releases results, 92.78% pass

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

21 to April 3. This includes 4,96,374 regular candidates and 10,733 private candidates.

Girls continued to lead with a pass percentage of 94.26 per cent compared to 91.32 per cent for boys. Among private candidates, girls secured a pass rate of 61.70 per cent, beating boys by 6.56 per cent.

Mahbubabad district topped the state with a remarkable 99.29 per cent pass rate. Vikarabad recorded the lowest pass rate of 73.97 per cent.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy announced the March 2025 SSC (Class 10) public examination results along with Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka and Minister Ponnam Prabhakar.

With an overall pass percentage of 92.78 per cent among regular students, the state recorded a slight improvement over last year's 91.31 per cent, the Directorate of Government Examinations said.

Of the 5,09,564 registered candidates, 5,07,107 students appeared for the examinations held from March

Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy, despite having the highest number of candidates, had relatively lower pass percentages of 88.53 per cent and 87.84 per cent, respectively.

Continued on Page 2

ENC Hari Ram suspended, Prasad appointed in-charge ENC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government has suspended former Engineer-in-Chief (ENC) B. Hari Ram following his arrest and jailing in connection with an Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) case.

Hari Ram, who served as in-charge ENC at Gajwel, was arrested recently by the ACB after raids linked to alleged irregularities and disproportionate assets. After his judicial custody, the government invoked deemed suspension rules as per service conduct guidelines.

The Telangana Government has appointed Chief Engineer PVA Prasad as the in-charge Engineer-in-Chief (ENC) of Gajwel, after the deemed suspension of B. Hari Ram.

According to the memo issued by the department (Memo No. 3526-A/Ser. II/A1/2025), PVA Prasad, who is now serving in the office of the ENC (General), has been given Full Additional Charge (FAC) of the Gajwel post. The vacancy arose due to the suspension of B. Hari Ram, who was serving as in-charge ENC at Gajwel.

KCR's history will be buried in his farmhouse after 10 years: CM

Is Congress Villain No: 1 for giving Telangana: Revanth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that KCR will be in his farmhouse for 10 more years, and after that his history will be buried there itself.

The CM was addressing a gathering at the birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Basaveshwara in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

The CM was responding to BRS chief K. Chandrasekar Rao's recent remarks, calling for a debate on Telangana's key developmental and social welfare issues.

He said that the Congress, the TDP and the BRS were in power for 10 years, and now again the Congress will be in power for 10



years. "Is the Congress Villain Number 1 for giving Telangana state? KCR doesn't have the guts to mention my

name. This shows the strength of Congress activists," the CM said.

Releasing SSC results on the occasion, Revanth said it was symbolic to do so on the birth anniversary of a visionary like Basaveshwara.

"Basavanna was a revolutionary who laid the foundation for social reforms in the 12th century. It is a proud moment to release Class 10 exam results on this day. Our people's government is functioning in the spirit of Basavanna," he said.

In a direct dig at KCR, Revanth said, "The so-called Leader of the Opposition is sitting idle in his farmhouse drawing salaries, allowances, and availing

Continued on Page 2

SC reserves verdict on plea for delimitation exercise in AP, TG

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday reserved its verdict on a plea seeking directions to the Centre for holding the delimitation exercise to increase the assembly seats in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh reserved its decision on a plea

filed by K Purushottam Reddy who contended that holding delimitation exercise only in Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and excluding Andhra Pradesh and Telangana was unconstitutional.

The petitioner's counsel said he was seeking parity with UT of Jammu and Kashmir and delimitation exercise be taken in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Additional solicitor general K M Nataraj, appearing for the Centre, referred to Section 26 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act and said the delimitation process could be undertaken only after the 2026 census concluded.

Continued on Page 2



BHOODAN LAND ROW

HC refuses relief to IPS officers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court has refused to stay the Single-Bench verdict that placed lands purchased by IPS officers in the prohibited list, reaffirming that these lands were originally classified as Bhoodan lands.

The court suggested that if the officers want to contest the ruling, they can file a vacate petition before the same Bench.

The controversy revolves around Survey No: 194 of Nagaram village in the Maheshwaram mandal of Rangareddy district, where many senior IPS officers had purchased plots.

A petition was filed in the High Court alleging that the land belonged to the Bhoodan category and was not eligible for private sale or registration.

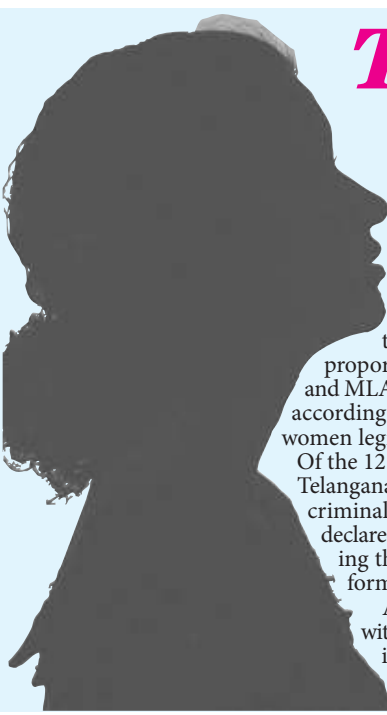
On April 24, Justice Bhaskar Reddy ordered

that lands purchased by 27 officers be included in the prohibited property list, given their Bhoodan classification. After this, some of the affected officers approached the High Court challenging the verdict.

Among those who moved the court were senior IPS officers Ravigupta, Mahesh Bhagwat, Shikha Goel, Tarun Joshi, Rahul Hegde, Swati Lakra and Soumya Mishra.

They argued that the purchased plots were not Bhoodan lands but patta lands, and that they held valid sale agreements for the areas marked as pits 16, 20, and 18 within the survey number 194.

Despite these arguments, the High Court, after concluding its hearing on Wednesday, stood by the Single-Bench order. The court emphasised that any reconsideration must be sought through a vacate petition in the appropriate legal manner.



TG, AP women legislators top in facing criminal cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have emerged as the top states with the highest proportion of sitting women MPs and MLAs with criminal backgrounds, according to a recent analysis of 512 women legislators across the country.

Of the 12 women representatives from Telangana, eight (67%) have declared criminal cases, and five (42%) have declared serious criminal cases, making the state one of the worst performers on this front.

Andhra Pradesh follows closely, with 14 (58%) of its 24 women legislators facing criminal charges and nine (38%) involved in seri-

ous criminal cases. This trend is reflected in the national picture as well, where out of 512 sitting women MPs and MLAs, 143 (28%) have criminal cases and 78 (15%) face serious charges such as attempt to murder and even murder

This trend is reflected in the national picture as well, where out of 512 sitting women MPs and MLAs, 143 (28%) have criminal cases and 78 (15%) face serious charges such as attempt to murder and even murder

As per the ADR report, among political parties, the TDP and AAP have the highest per-

centages of women MPs and MLAs with criminal records, that is, 65% and 69% respectively. Serious charges are also alarmingly high in these parties, with 45% of TDP and 31% of AAP's women legislators facing grave charges.

Andhra Pradesh also leads with the highest average assets for women MPs/MLAs at Rs 74.22 crore. Across the country, the average wealth per woman legislator is Rs 20.34 crore, and the total wealth of the 512 analysed comes to Rs 10,417 crore. Notably, 17 women MPs/MLAs are billionaires.

Out of the total 512 women MPs/MLAs, 71% are graduates or above, 24% have studied between Class V and XII, and only 12 are diploma holders. Youth representation (25 to 40 years) is at 22% among women, a much better figure compared to just 10% among male legislators.

Revanth's toxic obsession with KCR derailing governance: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Harish Rao launched a sharp attack on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, accusing him of using every platform, including student gatherings and cultural events, to settle political scores with former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Reddy.

He said that Revanth's "obsession" with KCR has turned venomous, as seen in the Chief Minister's conduct during the Basaveshwara Jayanti celebrations and the SSC results announcement function.

"Revanth is so rattled by the success of our Rajatotsavam Sabha that he can't sleep. His desperation was evident in his disgraceful language and conduct today," Harish said on Wednesday.

He criticised the government's decision to delay the announcement of SSC exam results, claiming the timing was altered twice simply to give the Chief Minister a political spot-



"Revanth is so rattled by the success of our Rajatotsavam Sabha that he can't sleep. His desperation was evident in his disgraceful language and conduct today," Harish said on Wednesday

light. "At a time when lakhs of students and parents were anxiously waiting, the government chose to delay results for optics. It's shameful," he said, accusing the Congress Government of politicising students' futures.

Referring to Revanth's remarks at the Ravindra Bharathi during the Basaveshwara Jayanti event, Harish said the platform, which was meant to honour the ideals of equality and justice, was mis-

used for staging personal attacks.

"You turned an event commemorating Basaveshwara into a battlefield for your political insecurities," he said.

Harish also listed a slew of welfare schemes that he claimed have been either halted or abandoned under Congress rule.

"Dalit Bandhu, BC Bandhu, KCR Kit gone. Pension dues remain unpaid, double-bed-room housing projects are stalled, scholarships are

delayed, fee reimbursement is uncertain. What happened to your six guarantees?" he asked.

He also mocked the Congress Government for failing to honour key election promises such as creating 2.25 lakh jobs, publishing a job calendar, paying Rs 2,500 per month to women, offering gold for brides, and distributing scooters to girl students.

"Even tenant farmers are waiting for your promised Rs 15,000 Rythu Bharosa. Where is it?" he said.

Govt okays concrete lining of AMRSLBC High Level Canal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government has accorded administrative sanction for concrete lining of the High Level Main Canal of the AMRSLBC Project in Nalgonda district at an estimated cost of Rs 442 crore.

The orders were issued on April 30 by the Irrigation and CAD (Projects-I) Department, following a proposal submitted by the Engineer-in-Chief (General). The project involves providing concrete lining to the stretch between KM 23.500 and KM 136.150 of the High Level Main Canal of the AMRSLBC (Alimineti Madhava Reddy Srisailem Left Bank Canal) Project.

The order says that the Chief Engineer (Irrigation), Nalgonda, will oversee the execution of the project and ensure that the estimate complies with Indian Standards and relevant codes.

Govt hires retired bureaucrats for important posts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government continues to hire senior officials well beyond their retirement, signaling a growing trend of hiring experienced hands for important administrative and technical roles. With each passing week, more names are being added to the "retired but not out" list.

Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari, who retired on Wednesday, has been appointed as the Vice Chairperson of MCRHRD Institute.

On Wednesday, VB Kamalasan Reddy, who retired as Director General of Drugs

Control Administration, was reappointed as the Officer-on-Special Duty in the Intelligence Security Wing and given Full Additional Charge of the Telangana Command and Control Centre. Sreenivasa Raju, another retired IAS officer, was brought back as the Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Wednesday.

In April, NVS Reddy was granted an extension as the MD of Hyderabad Metro Rail.

Adding to the list, the government reappointed two retired Superintending Engineers on Tuesday in the Irrigation and CAD Department.

S. Bheem Prasad was reappointed as Officer-on-Special Duty to the Minister for I&CAD for a year, with remuneration equivalent to the last pay drawn minus pension. G. Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy has been reappointed as the Superintending Engineer, IC-1, Nagarkurnool, for a year. He has been given Full Additional Charge (FAC) of the post of Chief Engineer, Nagarkurnool.

This wave of reappointments has sparked debates in bureaucratic circles and among political observers. During BRS rule, appointing retired bureaucrats in key posts was seen as political agenda.

Keshava Rao opposes Operation Kagar, calls for talks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Advisor to the Telangana Government, Dr K. Keshava Rao, has strongly opposed the Union Home Ministry's recently launched 'Operation Kagar', and urged the Centre to adopt a diplomatic and peaceful approach to tackling the Maoist violence.

In a press release issued on April 30, Dr Rao said that while violence has no place in a democracy, the response to extremism must be handled

tactfully by the state.

"The police and armed forces cannot remain silent to violence by extremists," he said, adding that brute force alone cannot be a long-term solution.

Dr Rao appealed to the Centre to consider the offer by extremist groups for a peace dialogue. "Such talks should begin with the premise that violence and an ideology based on it must be renounced," he stated.

Emphasising the power of negotiation, he said that meaningful dialogue is the best way to end extremist violence.

Recalling the 2005 talks in United Andhra Pradesh, Dr Rao pointed out how that dialogue led to a significant decline in Naxal violence.

"Today, the problem is confined to a few districts bordering Chhattisgarh in Telangana," he said and added that the current phase of violence must be urgently brought to an end.

India warns Pakistan against unprovoked ceasefire violations along LoC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has warned Pakistan against its unprovoked firings along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir as the directors general of military operations of the two armies spoke on the hot-line amid the escalating tensions over the Pahalgam terror attack.

Pakistan has been resorting to firings on the Indian side of the LoC since Friday night in violation of a ceasefire understanding and the Indian Army responded to them "appropriately", according to military sources.

The directors general of military operations (DGMOs) held the conversation on Tuesday. It came as India mulls its options to respond to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people.

The Pakistan military has been warned against the unprovoked firings, people familiar with the DGMO talks said.

The sources, however, described the

exchanges over the hotline as "routine", saying it was a weekly conversation between the DGMOs that is held every Tuesday.

The Indian DGMO strongly took up the matter of ceasefire violations by the Pakistan military, the sources said.

In a significant move aimed at reducing tensions, the Indian and Pakistani armies on February 25, 2021 announced that they would cease firing across the LoC while recommitting themselves to a 2003 ceasefire agreement.

The ceasefire understanding was broadly being adhered to till last week.

The sources said Pakistan military resorted to "unprovoked firings" using small arms from their posts across the LoC in Baramulla and Kupwara districts, and across the international border in the Pargwal sector on Tuesday night as well.

The Pakistan military has been put on high alert following India's assertion that it will hunt down the terrorists involved in the Pahalgam strike.

AIMPLB-AIMIM 'switch off lights' protest political gimmick: BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana unit of the BJP has dismissed the joint call by the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIM-PLB) and AIMIM for a "switch off lights" protest as a hollow political stunt aimed at misleading the Muslim community.

State BJP chief spokesperson and media in-charge, NV Subash, criticised the protest, which is being staged against the recently amended Waqf Board Act, a law passed through due democratic process to ensure greater transparency and equitable representation for all sects in the Muslim community, including marginalised groups like the Pasmandas and Ahmadis.

"Mr Asaduddin Owaisi claims to

have faith in the Constitution and democratic institutions, but he opposes a constitutionally valid law purely for political theatrics," Subash said.

"On the one hand, he slams the Waqf Board for misusing funds and failing the poor. On the other hand, he defends it because his party has been given lucrative posts in it," he said.

Subash asserted that the amendment to the Waqf Act is aimed at empowering underrepresented and economically weaker sections within the Muslim community. It is ironic that those who once criticised the Waqf Board for its opacity now resist reforms meant to clean it up. The AIMIM's double standards are now being increasingly questioned by the very communities they have long ignored," he said.

"Mr Asaduddin Owaisi claims to have faith in the Constitution and democratic institutions, but he opposes a constitutionally valid law purely for political theatrics"

Centre announces...

Continued from page 1

and emphasised that the Modi government has resolved to transparently include caste enumeration in the forthcoming pan-India census exercise.

The opposition INDIA bloc had made caste census a major poll plank in the recent elections, with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi promising representation to people based on their population.

"Better late than never," Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X, reacting to the government announcement.

He said the party had raised the issue in its resolution on social justice, which was passed in Ahmedabad on April 9, 2025, and also shared an April 16, 2023 letter of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in which he had demanded

that the decennial census be carried out and a comprehensive caste census be made a part of it.

The last nationwide census was completed in 2011 and the next decadal one was to commence in April 2020 but got delayed due to the Covid pandemic.

Though Home Minister Amit Shah had said late last year that the census would be conducted "very soon", there is no clarity as yet on when exactly the exercise would be carried out.

"In the CCPA meeting held today under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji a message of strong commitment towards social equality and rights of every section has been given by deciding to include caste census in the upcoming census," Shah wrote on X in Hindi.

He alleged the Congress and its allies opposed the caste census for decades while in power and played politics over it while in the opposition.

"This decision will empower all economically and socially backward classes, promote inclusion, and pave new paths for the progress of the deprived," he said.

Vaishnav said in 2010, the then prime minister Manmohan Singh had assured the Lok Sabha that the matter of caste census should be considered in the Cabinet. A group of ministers was formed to consider this after most of the political parties had recommended a caste census.

"Despite this, the Congress government decided to conduct only a survey instead of a caste census. That survey is known as SECC.

"It is well understood that the Congress and its INDI alliance partners have used Caste Census only as a political tool," the minister alleged.

The first caste enumeration in independent India was conducted in 2011 and was known as the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011.

Caste census is...

Continued from page 1

its 50 years in power? Even when many political parties demanded caste enumeration during the 2010 Census, the Congress-led UPA agreed only for a socio-economic survey and not a scientific caste count."

He accused the Congress of using the issue merely for vote bank politics without any genuine intent.

"If Rahul Gandhi and his party are now claiming the Centre's decision as their success, they must first explain why a caste census was never done when they were ruling," he said. Calling the Modi government's move "scientific and transparent," Sanjay said the Centre's approach will provide a clear picture of caste-wise population figures across the country, helping to ensure 'justice' in reservations without favour or bias.

Sanjay also criticised the caste surveys undertaken by states like Telangana, saying that it lacked transparency and consistency. "From KCR's so-called Samagra Survey to Revanth Reddy's caste enumeration, there has been no standard methodology. Surveys were tampered with to inflate the numbers of favourable castes and suppress others, creating social tensions," he said.

He reminded that the Congress has always opposed caste-based enumeration in the past and has no moral right to stake claim now. "From 1947 to 2024, the Congress never added caste data during the national census. Their new love for caste census is completely opportunistic," he said.

Girls outshine...

Continued from page 1

Telangana Residential Schools led the performance chart with a pass percentage of 98.79.

Government and aided schools lagged behind the state average, while private, social welfare, tribal and BC welfare schools exceeded that. A total of 4,629 schools achieved a 100 per cent pass rate, while only two schools reported zero pass results.

The subject Social Studies had the highest pass percentage of 99.43 per cent.

Mathematics, considered a tough subject, had a pass percentage of 96.18 per cent, which is slightly less than that of the previous year. The second language had a near-perfect pass rate of 99.93 per cent.

A total of 1,306 Children with Special Needs (CwSN) appeared for the exams, out of which 1,222 passed, registering a success rate of 93.57 per cent.

Students who failed can appear for the SSC Advanced Supplementary Exams from June 3 to 13. The last date to pay the exam fee is May 16. With a late fee, the exam fee can be paid till two days before the exam.

For students seeking recounting or re-verification of marks, the last date to apply is May 15. Re-verification includes re-totalling and checking for unvalued answers, but does not consider appeals for undervaluation.

As per existing government policy, the announcement of ranks remains banned. Institutions found violating this by declaring ranks will face strict action, including the withdrawal of recognition.

Rahul hails Centre's...

Continued from page 1

agreed to a caste census. It's a first step, and Telangana is the model." He insisted, however, that the government must announce a timeline for implementation and allocate funds accordingly. "We want a people's census, not a bureaucrats' census," he said.

Highlighting the work done by the Congress Government in Telangana, Rahul said, "There is a vast difference between the Bihar and Telangana caste census. Telangana's process was based on open consultation. The survey undertaken there can become a national blueprint."

He reiterated the Congress's longstanding demands on the issue, including scrapping the 50 per cent cap on reservations and ensuring constitutional provisions such as Article 15(5) — which provides for reservations in private educational institutions — are implemented by the Centre. "This is not just about reservations. This is about the real participation of OBCs, Dalits and Adivasis in the economy, education and governance," he said.

What Telangana...

Continued from page 1

in India to conduct a comprehensive caste survey last year, the first since 1931," he said.

Highlighting the findings of the Telangana Social, Economic and Caste Survey, the Chief Minister said that 56.32 per cent of the population in the state belongs to Backward Classes.

"Based on this data, the Telangana Assembly tabled the report and passed a resolution proposing 42 per cent reservations for OBCs in education, employment and political representation," he added. Revanth said the Congress took the movement further, staging protests across the country and at Delhi's Jantar Mantar to press the demand for a national caste census. "Today, we proved that what Telangana does today, India does tomorrow," he declared.

He called it a proud moment that Rahul Gandhi's vision, even while in the opposition, had influenced national policy.

"The moves of the Telangana Government for OBC empowerment have inspired the country. India has now agreed to follow our state," he said. Revanth also congratulated the Centre for accepting the demand. "Thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Cabinet for deciding to conduct the caste census during the next national census," he wrote.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha

Tithi: Apr 30 02:12 PM to May 01 11:23 AM

Panchami: May 01 11:23 AM to May 02 09:14 AM

Nakshatram: Apr 30 04:18 PM to May 01 02:20 PM

Mrigashirsha: May 01 02:20 PM to May 02 01:04 PM

Ardra: May 02 01:04 PM to May 02 01:04 PM

Rahukalam: 1:48 PM to 3:23 PM

Yamagandam: 5:53 AM to 7:28 AM

Varjyam: 10:17 PM to 11:48 PM

Gulika: 9:03 AM to 10:38 AM

Amritakalam: 06:15 AM to 07:43 AM, 03:36 AM to 05:06 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:47 AM to 12:38 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny

Temp: 37°

Humidity: 47%

Sunrise: 5:50 AM

Sunset: 6:36 PM

Updated: April 30, 2025 5:00 PM

City Pioneer

The Pioneer

HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | MAY 1, 2025

03



CITY EVENTS

Live Telugu & Hindi Musical Orchestra
By Sri Lakshmi Ganapathi Cultural Organisation
Venue
Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha
May 1, 4:30 pm

Live Musical Orchestra
By Veena Pani Kalanilayam
Venue
Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha
May 1, 4:30 pm

Live Performance
By Aalaap (Band)
Venue
36 Downtown Brew Pub (Vapour)
May 1, 8 pm

FC Championship: 2025
Venue
Smaash
May 1, 9 pm



Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao at a meeting in Hyderabad on Wednesday

Telangana launches Rs 1,500 cr green energy drive with revolutionary biogas tech

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has announced green investments of over Rs 1,500 crore to establish biogas plants using a revolutionary new technology, introduced for the first time in India through the Biovest-Spantech-EcoMax alliance.

At a partnership meeting held here on Wednesday, Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao participated in announcing the collaboration. Biovest Holdings from South Africa, Spantech Engineers India, and EcoMax Energy India have teamed up to launch advanced biogas solutions in India.

As part of this Indo-South African partnership, Biovest and Spantech signed a technology transfer agreement. Spantech would supply its BioGenie biogas purification systems, while Biovest would license its Herba technology

Microsoft highlights India's AI Power at IDC Pinnacle Summit

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

India is becoming a major global hub for the Artificial Intelligence (AI) and tech talent, with over 17 million developers on GitHub and a goal to be the largest developer community by 2028. Microsoft's India Development Centre (IDC) highlighted as a key role in this growth, at the Pinnacle Summit 2025 held at its Hyderabad campus on Wednesday.

Now in its third year, the summit brought together Microsoft leaders, IDC teams, customers, and AI experts to share ideas, celebrate innovation, and encourage learning. This year's theme was "Unlock the Agentic Future - Where AI Agents Meet Human Ingenuity."

Managing Director and president of Microsoft IDC Rajiv Kumar said that "we are proud to support India's growing AI talent and help them build impactful solutions for



Rajiv Kumar, MD and president, Microsoft IDC with Jay Parikh, executive vice president, CoreAI at a conference in Hyderabad on Wednesday

the world. India's developers will lead the next wave of innovation."

He was joined by Jay Parikh, Executive VP, CoreAI, on his first India visit since October 2024. They discussed Microsoft's AI stack, platform strategy, and India's global role.

Jay said that AI is transforming every part of life and business. "Our tools, like Azure AI Foundry and GitHub Copilot, are already helping thousands worldwide, including in India."

Meanwhile, president of Microsoft India and South Asia, Puneet Chandok, added

India is shaping the AI era. "Our AI tools combine intelligence, emotion, agency, and memory, this is where true change begins." The summit also featured customer stories, tech showcases, and the Pinnacle Awards recognising top innovations.

CID arrests SBI officer in Rs 27 cr bank fraud case

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a significant breakthrough in a long-pending bank fraud case, the Telangana CID on Wednesday arrested Kodur Sanjay, Assistant General Manager of State Bank of India (SBI), for his alleged involvement in a Rs 27 crore loan scam dating back to 2013.

Sanjay, 53, who is currently posted at SBI's Administrative Office in Gachibowli, was earlier serving as Relationship Manager for Medium Enterprises at the bank's SME Balanagar branch between June 2009 and June 2011. He was arrested from his residence in Padma Rao Nagar in Hyderabad and is being produced before the LB Nagar court.

According to the CID, Sanjay and Customer Support Officer G Ravindranath colluded with M Anjaneyulu and his wife M Reeta, the managing director and director of Adarsh Communications Pvt. Ltd., to fraudulently secure a cash credit loan of Rs. 27 crore from SBI's Balanagar branch.

The borrowers, along with Sanjay, allegedly submitted forged documents to show agricultural land as non-agricultural and supported an unapproved layout, in clear violation of banking norms. Despite the forged HMDA documents and ineligible land use status, the bank officials facilitated the loan and failed to safeguard the hypothecated property, causing massive losses to the public sector bank.

Rs 5 cr multi-level marketing fraud: Kingpin arrested

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a significant breakthrough, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Telangana apprehended one of the key accused in a multi-level marketing fraud case that duped nearly 400 people, including unemployed youth, to the tune of Rs 5 crore.

The case originated from a complaint filed by Kodala Bhadrachari, a resident of Chitaly village in Jayashankar Bhopalpally district.

According to the complainant, one Lalith Mohan Varma, chairman and managing director of the Uttar Pradesh-based Maya Care Welfare Society, lured people into an online binary system-based multi-level marketing (MLM) scheme promising high returns. The scheme, run under the banner of Maya Care Welfare Society, turned out to be a fraudulent money circulation racket.

A case was registered at the CID Police Station in Hyderabad, invoking sections 420 of the Indian Penal Code and Sections 3 read with 4 and 5 of the Prize Chits and Money Circulation (Banning) Act, 1978. Acting on the instructions of Shikha Goel, Director General of CID Telangana, the investigation team led by Inspector K. Sridhar of the CID's Warangal Regional Office traced and arrested Anand Varma, 49, the General Secretary of Maya Care Welfare Society.

Cygni Energy opens Gigafactory at Maheshwaram

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad-based Cygni Energy, India's largest independent energy storage solutions company, has launched Phase-I of its fully automated Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Gigafactory at E-Mobility Valley in the Electronics Manufacturing Cluster (EMC), Maheshwaram. This is also India's first BESS facility certified by LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and includes advanced engineering and battery management labs.

Jayesh Ranjan, Special Chief Secretary and CEO of the Industry and Investment Cell in the CMO, inaugurated the facility alongside IIT-H Chairman Prof Ashok Jhunjhunwala, iLabs Group Founder Srinji Raju, and other industrial leaders.

Built with an investment of over Rs 100 crore, the 1.6 lakh sq. ft. factory sits on a 5-acre campus and can produce 4.8 GWh of high-

capacity battery packs for EVs and large-scale energy storage. These systems will support grid-scale projects and independent power producers.

On this occasion, Jayesh Ranjan appreciated Cygni for its achievement and added that this facility not only strengthens India's commitment to clean energy but also creates jobs, creates local talent, and builds a strong ecosystem for the future of energy storage solutions.

Meanwhile, Founder and CEO Venkat Rajaraman said the facility uses advanced manufacturing with global best practices like Poka-Yoke and full traceability. He noted that Phase II will expand capacity to 10.8 GWh, with a total investment of Rs. 250 crore and over 1,000 jobs created. Venkat Rajaraman said that Future plans include new automated lines and technologies like Cell-to-Pack and sodium-ion batteries, developed in partnership with IIT-Madras.



Jayesh Ranjan Special Chief Secretary and CEO of the Industry and Investment Cell in the CMO, inaugurating the Gigafactory in Maheshwaram on Wednesday

Hydraa dismantles blockade between Devaryanj and Kandlakoya

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a major relief to residents of Devaryanj and Kandlakoya, the Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (Hydraa) has cleared illegal obstructions on the road connecting the two villages to National Highway 44.

Local residents had complained that a private individual, identified as Bandakunta Narasimha Reddy, had erected gates and dug up a portion of the road between Devaryanj and Kandlakoya blocking access.

Acting swiftly on the complaint, Hydraa officials inspected the area and confirmed the obstruction.

The disputed road falls under Survey Numbers 135 and 136, where the government has already allotted land for public infrastructure, including a District Court complex, Medchal Sub-Registrar Office, and the Medchal Traffic Police Station.

In addition, the area houses several industries and is regularly used by local commuters from both villages.

Currently a mud road, the stretch is slated for upgrading into a 40-foot-wide blacktop road. Locals questioned how such vital access could be blocked amid official development.

Following its field inspection, Hydraa dismantled the gates and removed boulders placed on the road. The dug-up section was filled with soil to restore smooth passage.

Two Pakistani nationals remain in Telangana jails

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two Pakistani nationals, who completed their prison terms, are under detention in Telangana jails for several years pending their deportation, as the neighbouring country has refused to accept them as citizens, officials said on Wednesday.

Sher Ali Keshwani, 72, has been under detention in Cherlapally Central Prison since 2015 after his acquittal in an espionage case in Hyderabad.

Although he was convicted in another case in Uttar Pradesh and completed his sentence in 2014, he was brought to Hyderabad from Agra prison by local police.

Similarly, another Pakistani national, Mohd Nazeer, in his mid-50s, who also completed his sentence, has been under detention in Chanchalguda Central Prison since 2018. Nazeer, who entered India via Nepal, was remanded in

December 2013 and sentenced to five years by a local court on charges of fraudulently practising traditional medicine in Hyderabad.

He completed his sentence in December 2018.

To facilitate the deportation of the two Pakistani nationals, Telangana prison authorities arranged consular access through the Pakistan Embassy, but it has not recognised them as its citizens, the officials said.

"Their sentences are actually over. They were sent to Tihar Jail (Delhi) for consular access, but Pakistan is not admitting them as their citizens. As per the state government's order, they will remain under detention until their deportation," a senior Telangana Prisons official said.

According to regulations, once a foreign national's sentence is completed, they must be deported to their native country after being handed over to the respective embassy, officials said.

"However, the issue with these two (Pakistani) prisoners has been ongoing for years. Pakistan is not accepting them as nationals, so they remain in detention in state jails," another Telangana Prisons department official said.

Since Telangana lacks detention centers, the state government has ordered that they remain in jail until their deportation, the official added.

Meanwhile, four Pakistani citizens, who were staying in Hyderabad on short-term visas, have left India following a directive from the Centre after the Pahalgam terror attack, police said on Wednesday.

Police earlier reported that over 200 Pakistani nationals were staying in Telangana, mostly in Hyderabad, with 190 on long-term Indian visas.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, on April 25, called the chief ministers of all states and instructed them to ensure no Pakistani nationals remain in India beyond the deadline set for departure.

Sangeetha takes charge as Director of Health

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

S Sangeetha Satyanarayana officially assumed charge on Wednesday as the Director of Health and Family Welfare and

CEO of Aarogyasri HealthCare Trust.

Prior to this, she served as Joint Secretary to the Chief Minister.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, she

said, "The government is committed to ensuring efficient service delivery to its people. It will be an honour and my duty to ensure that it is executed properly at the field level."

Gen Z drives pet parenting boom: Doc

SAMUEL JOSHUA
samueljoshuamjmc@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

Gen Z is choosing to experiment with pets, where good pet parenting is seen as a sign of stronger marriages and better parenting in the future, said Dr Venkata Dharmendra Boppana, Co-founder and Chief Mentor of Hyderabad-based Nutrition Nxt. He holds a PhD in veterinary science and has around 25 years of experience in veterinary immunology and infectious disease research.

When asked how nutrition influences pet behavior and the healthy lifespan of pet dogs, Dr Venkata Dharmendra

explained that when a dog eats, the undigested food goes to the large intestine, where trillions of microorganisms break it down. This process creates volatile fatty acids, and the protein tryptophan helps produce serotonin. He noted that in a healthy gut, a good amount of serotonin is made, which keeps dogs happy, jumpy, playful, and loving. But when serotonin is low, bad bacteria make steroids, which can make dogs unhappy, grumpy, aggressive, and restless. He stressed that pets need complete and balanced nutrition to stay healthy.

Talking about the emotional connection between Gen Z and their pets, Dr Venkata



Gen Z experimenting with pets for stronger marriages and better parenting

Dharmendra noted that many young people now live away from their parents. He said that instead of getting married and having children early, Gen Z is experimenting with pets. He explained that caring for pets builds emotional attachment and teaches good parenting

skills, which can later help them build stronger marriages and raise their children with love.

He added that pets help Gen Z manage stress after a long workday by triggering the release of dopamine, which improves mood and helps

them relax from daily pressures. Dr Dharmendra emphasised that pets are becoming like family, with many families now allowing them to eat together and even sleep on the same bed. He also noted that emotional bonding and companionship with pets have increased significantly after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Venkata Dharmendra said that their startup, Nutrition Nxt, offers special food for puppies, adult dogs, and senior dogs. These foods are made with natural ingredients that support gut health by boosting good bacteria through prebiotics and probiotics.



Hyderabad City Police undergoes major restructuring

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

Telangana government has approved a significant restructuring of the Hyderabad City Police, introducing new police stations, divisions, and specialised units to enhance policing and public accessibility. The move follows a comprehensive review of the 2023 reorganisation carried out after 35 years.

The latest changes involve no additional financial burden to the State. Instead, the reallocation of the existing sanctioned strength of 17,020 personnel aims to address jurisdictional gaps, public inconvenience.

Hyderabad now has 72 Law and Order police stations with the addition of Tolichowki Police Station, carved out from parts of Filmnagar, Mehdiatnam (formerly Humayun Nagar), and Golconda jurisdictions.

Golconda Division renamed as Tolichowki Division. Secretariat Police Station renamed Lake Police Station. Humayun Nagar Police Station renamed Mehdiatnam Police Station. Shahinayathgunj Police Station renamed Goshamahall Police Station.

Three traffic police stations — Marredpally, Bowenpally, and Narayanguda — have been discontinued.

Existing traffic stations have been renamed to match Law and Order divisions. Tr Nampally as Tr Gandhi Nagar Police Station, Tr Amberpet as Tr Osmania University Police

Station. Tr Langer House as Tr Kulsumpura Police Station, Tr Bhahadurpura as Tr Chattrinaka Police Station, Tr Nallakunta as Tr Saidabad Police Station.

New Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) headed by an Inspector with eight staff. New Juvenile Bureau Unit headed by an Inspector with 7 staff.

Cyber Crime Strengthened Across Zones, Zonal Cyber Crime Cells (ZCCs) established in each Law and Order zone. Each cell staffed with 1 Sub-Inspector and 5 Constables. 327 new personnel were added to Law and Order wing. A total of 321 new personnel added to the Traffic wing.

Hyderabad City Police stated that updated jurisdiction maps, contact numbers, and station details will soon be published on their official website for public reference.

I & CAD Dept reshuffles 9 senior engineers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Irrigation & CAD Department reshuffled senior engineers on Wednesday after the retirement of some senior officials, including a Chief Engineer, two Superintending Engineers, five Executive Engineers, and one Deputy Executive Engineer.

As per orders approved by Principal Secretary Rahul Bojja, nine engineers have been given Full Additional Charge (FAC) of some higher posts in various irrigation circles.

The move comes after a proposal by the Engineer-in-Chief (Admn.), I & CAD Department, to ensure that there are no disruptions in operations.

A. Satyaraja Chandra, currently serving as Superintending Engineer in the Peddapally Irrigation Circle, has been given FAC as Chief Engineer, Irrigation in Mancherial.

GK Pushkar Kumar, currently an Executive Engineer in Hyderabad Irrigation Circle, has been promoted as Superintending Engineer, Hyderabad.

B. Rama Rao, Executive Engineer in Armor division, will now serve as Superintending Engineer in Nizamabad Circle.

AVVS Narasimha Rao, a Deputy Superintending Engineer of Kallur Circle, has been posted as Deputy Chief Engineer, Irrigation at Khammam.

B. Jagan has been assigned FAC as Deputy Superintending Engineer in Karimnagar.

K. Devanand, a Deputy Executive Engineer in Mahbubnagar, will now be Executive Engineer, QC & I.

B. Yadagiri and M. Lakshmi have been given FAC roles in Mahbubabad and Nirmal respectively.

N. Venkata Ramana of Suryapet Circle will now serve as Executive Engineer in Suryapet's Irrigation Division No: 01. The Chief Engineer, Suryapet, has been allowed to make FAC arrangements for the post of Deputy Executive Engineer in the same circle, following the retirement of G. Srinivasa Rao.



Dreams of education, secured life cut short by tragedy

PNS ■ JOGULAMBA GADWAL

The two nursing students, who died tragically on Tuesday, when a goods carrier ploughed into a group of students and others waiting at a bus stop in Gadwal, came from very poor families. Their dreams of becoming nurses and leading a secure life have been shattered.

One of the student's father has been bedridden with swollen legs for five years, and another student's father lost both legs in a road accident three years ago and has remained confined to bed ever since. Despite these hardships, their mothers worked tirelessly, hoping to give their children a better future through education. In a cruel twist of fate, tragedy struck the students suddenly. Their families were devastated.

Gosai Mareppa and Manikyam, a couple from Guruvilingampally village under Maganur Mandal, have a son, Ramesh, and two daughters, Gouri and Maheshwari.

About five years ago, Mareppa became bedridden. Ramesh had to start working as a daily wage labourer to support the family, while their mother Manikyam took to begging in the local area to care for her husband. Despite these challenges, the two

daughters studied hard and earned government seats for a BSc Nursing course—Gouri in the Wanaparthy district and Maheshwari in the Gadwal district.

Maheshwari was staying in a hostel in Gadwal while pursuing her third year of BSc Nursing. She dreamed of supporting her struggling family after completing her studies. Tragically, she died in a road accident, leaving the family in deep sorrow. Her parents are inconsolable. As they did not even have money to see their daughter's body, some villagers helped Ramesh, her brother, travel to Gadwal.

The horrific road accident in the Gadwal district centre moved not only the locals but also officials and political leaders. Leaders from BJP, BRS, Congress, MIM and student unions rushed to the district hospital on Tuesday night to console the grieving families. They demanded strict legal action against the driver responsible and urged authorities to support the victims' families.

District Collector BM Santosh ordered a special investigation and instructed the police to act tough. Revenue officials were also directed to gather detailed reports on the victims' families.



Brahmotsavams of Sri Bhadrakali Amman Temple held

PNS ■ HANAMKONDA

The Kalyana Brahmotsavams of Sri Bhadrakali Amman Temple in Hanamkonda are being celebrated grandly. These festivities will take place from April 29 to May 10. The celebrations began on Tuesday with the Ankurarpana rituals. On Wednesday (April 30, 2025) as part of Day two, 2, The Dwajorohanam, Vrishabha Vahana seva at 11 AM, and Mruga Vahana Seva at 7 PM was performed.

The Dhwajorohanam is a flag-raising ceremony and is a vital part of the temple's rituals, often performed during festivals and special occasions like particularly a Brahmotsavam. This ritual is often performed amidst Vedic chanting and traditional musical instruments. It symbolizes an invitation to deities to

grace the festival. On May 1, The phase one Kalayana Mahotsavam (Eduurukollu) of Bhadrakali Devi and Bhadrashwara Swamy will be organized on May 2, Kalyanam will be held at 7 pm on. The celebrations will conclude on May 10 with the Chakra Tirthostavam, Kumbhabhishekam and Pushpa Yagam.

Temple Executive officer K Seshu Bharathi said many devotees turn to temple during the Brahmotsavam. She said that they have ensured all facilities for the comfort of the devotees. Temple Chairman Bhadrakali Sheshu along with the Telangana Mudhiraj Mahasabha, state president Dr. Banda Prakash, Palle Ashok, Bayya Swamy, Puli Rajanikanth and Mudhiraj community members were among the attendees for the day two program.

Migrant tribals from Bastar urged to return

PNS ■ BHADRACHALAM

Thousands of tribal people, particularly members of the Gutti Koya community, have migrated from the Dandakaranya forest region in Chhattisgarh to the Bhadrachalam area in Telangana's Bhadrachalam district. These migrations are largely driven by a desperate search for livelihood and safety, as tribal families find themselves caught between Maoist insurgents and intensified security operations under "Operation Kagar."

To escape the ongoing conflict, the Gutti Koyas have settled in forested areas across several mandals including

Charla, Aswapuram, Dummugudem, Manuguru, Paloncha, Dammampeta, Allapalli, Tekulapalli, Karakagudem, Chundrugonda, Gundala, and Pinapaka. They have built makeshift shelters and rely on Podu cultivation to sustain themselves.

This trend of migration began as early as 2004, during the Salwa Judum campaign — an anti-Maoist movement supported by the then Chhattisgarh government. Many tribals fled their native villages after facing violence, including alleged arson and killings, under suspicion of aiding Maoists.

Today, an estimated 39,175 Gutti Koyas are spread across 27 settlements in the Bhadrachalam-Kothagudem district.

KARREGUTTA COMBING OPERATION

Security forces capture key Maoists base

It is, however, to be noted that the members of the Communist Party of India-Maoist, better known as Moist party, still evade capture

PNS ■ BHADRADRI KOTHAGUDEM

A large-scale operation targeting key Maoist leaders in the Karregutta hills, located at an altitude of 5,000 feet in the Usur Police Station limits in the Bijapur district on the Telangana-Chhattisgarh border, entered its ninth day on Wednesday. As part of the operation, security forces took control of some parts of Karregutta.

Under the leadership of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), a massive operation is still being conducted from Kothapalli on the Telangana side to major areas in Chhattisgarh such as Pujarikanker, Nambi, Galgam, and Nadipalli. The DRG (District Reserve Guard), Bastar Fighters, and COBRA forces from Chhattisgarh are participating in large numbers. The security forces hoisted the national tricolour atop the



Helicopter deployed for search and capture Maoists at Karregutta hills

Karreguttalu hill.

During this operation, in an encounter that took place on April 24, three female Maoists belonging to the PLGA (People's Liberation Guerrilla Army) first Battalion were reportedly killed.

Security forces, who have already encircled the Karregutta region from all directions, seized and defused over 150 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) planted by the Maoists.

Now, questions have arisen whether top Maoist leaders have managed to evade capture in the Karregutta hills or secretly relocated to safe zones before the operation began. It is well known that thousands of paramilitary personnel, helicopters, and drones are being used in the operation. Despite nine days having passed since the operation began, there has been no clear trace of Maoists in the hills.

Permanent CRPF camp to be set up in Karreguta

PNS ■ MULUGU

Security forces have conducted a major operation in the Karregutta hills along the Telangana borders. Over the past nine days, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) achieved significant success in this mission. The operation aimed to curb Maoist infiltration in the region. Using drones

and helicopters, the forces effectively identified and inspected difficult terrain in the forests.

Given the importance of the operation, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) chief personally visited the Karregutta area. CRPF officials briefed him on the operation's details. Security forces have already identified and neutralised Maoist dumps and underground

bunkers. In light of these developments, the decision has been made to establish a permanent CRPF base camp in the Karregutta hills. This camp will ensure easier access to both Chhattisgarh and Telangana regions. Authorities see this as a crucial step toward gaining stronger control over future Maoist movements.



Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy distributing CMRF and Kalyana Lakshmi cheques to beneficiaries in Khammama on Wednesday

Over Rs 1,000 crore CMRF assistance provided to poor: Ponguleti

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy stated that the people's government has provided Rs 1,070 crore in one year under the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) to support medical expenses for the poor in the State.

He noted that this is the first time such a large amount has been sanctioned under the relief fund after the formation of the new State.

The minister distributed Rs 23.33 lakh under the CMRF to 71 beneficiaries and Kalyana Lakshmi cheques to 35 beneficiaries, each receiving Rs 1,00,116, at the Kusumanchi camp office.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Srinivas Reddy said that the people's government

is striving to provide all facilities to the poor. He remarked that the previous rulers, during their 10-year tenure, never offered such funds for health-care.

He also mentioned that under Rajiv Aarogyasri, the treatment limit for poor families in corporate hospitals has been increased to Rs 10 lakh. Other welfare initiatives include 200 units of free electricity for poor households, LPG cylinders for Rs 500, Indiramma housing, supply of fine rice through ration cards, and a Rs 500 bonus for fine paddy.

Khammam Revenue Divisional Officer G Narasimha Rao, Kusumanchi Mandal In-charge Tahsildar Karunashree, public representatives, officials, and others participated in the event.

Electricity safety week to be observed from today

PNS ■ HANAMKONDA

The CMD of Northern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Limited (TGNPD-CL), Karnati Varun Reddy, on Wednesday announced that the Electricity Safety Week would be observed from May 1 to 7 across 16 circles. On the occasion, at an event held on Wednesday at the corporate office, CMD Karnati Varun Reddy unveiled the posters and pamphlets for the Electricity Safety Week.

Addressing the nodal CEs assigned to the 16 circles, the CMD explained that the Electricity Safety Week is conducted every year during the



TGNPDCL CMD Karnati Varun Reddy, along with staff, unveiling posters on Electricity Safety Week at Viduyt Bhavan, Corporate Office

first week of May to bring electrical accidents down to zero while also raising awareness among staff and the public regarding electrical hazards. He emphasised the importance of

explaining the significance of electrical safety to electricity consumers, particularly farmers, in each circle, division, and sub-division, and urged for the posters to be displayed in

open areas and pamphlets to be distributed to inform the public about electrical safety principles. He stated that appropriate precautions should be taken to prevent electrical accidents, and safety meetings should be held during this week.

Present at the unveiling of the electricity safety posters and pamphlets were in-charge directors: Director (HRD) B Ashok Kumar, Director (Projects) T. Sadar Lal, Director (Finance) V Tirupati Reddy, Director (Operation) T. Madhusudhan, CEs: Thirumal Rao, Raj Chauhan, Ashok, Bikasim, Venkata Ramana, Joint Secretary K. Ramesh, and others.

Officials to make arrangements for visit of beauty queens

PNS ■ HANUMAKONDA

In connection with the visit of beauty queens from various countries participating in the Miss World pageant, Tourism

Department officials held a meeting with District Collector P Pravinya at the Hanamkonda District Collectorate on Wednesday.

As part of the district tour on May 14, beauty queens from various countries will visit the historical Thousand Pillar Temple and Fort Warangal.

In this context, Tourism Directorate DGMs Nathan, Ibrahim, and Chief Engineer Srinivas met with District Collector Pravinya to discuss various arrangements to be

made. Beauty queens from various countries will participate in the Miss World pageant to be held in Hyderabad.

As part of their visit to Warangal, they are expected to visit the Thousand Pillar Temple and Fort Warangal.

In this context, on May 2, Collectors Pravinya from Hanamakonda and Satya Sharada from Warangal, along with Warangal Police Commissioner Sunpreet Singh, GWMC Commissioner Ashwini Thanaji Wakhade, officials, and event organizers will meet to discuss the arrangements and security aspects to be addressed at both locations, as informed by tourism department officials.



Tourism Department officials at a meeting with District Collector P Pravinya in Hanamkonda on Wednesday

DDS organises native seeds fair in Zaheerabad

PNS ■ ZAHEERABAD

Amid the growing dominance of hybrid seeds, the Deccan Development Society (DDS) has taken a strong stand to

preserve and promote native seed varieties by organising the Seed Fair 2025 at its premises in Zaheerabad. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from over 60 seed savers representing as many villages.

The fair, held on Tuesday, showcased around 70 varieties of native seeds, including millets, pulses, oilseeds, and veg-

etables. These traditional seeds, crucial for sustainable farming, were displayed in heaps by dedicated farmers.

Jadala Chandramma from Bidakanne village in Jharasangam mandal emerged as the top contributor, presenting an impressive 58 varieties of native seeds. She was declared the winner of the seed competition. Karne Narsamma from Nyalakal exhibited 56 varieties, while Mogulamma from Potpalli village in Jharasangam mandal showcased 55.

SRINIVAS GUDUPALLI ■ RANGAREDDY

Despite the existence of multiple labour welfare laws, thousands of workers in the Shadnagar constituency continue to suffer in hazardous, unregulated, and exploitative working conditions. The region, which includes Kothur, Nandigama, Shadnagar, and Kondurg mandals, is home to over 300 micro, small, medium, and heavy industries that employ more than 35,000 workers. A staggering 80 per cent of these units fall under the polluting category, operating with minimal regard for worker safety or health. Many of these workers are

migrants from other states, forced to work in dangerous environments without proper protective gear or access to healthcare. Labour laws, particularly the Inter-state Migrant Workmen Act, 1979—which was created to ensure fair treatment and protection of migrant workers—are virtually non-existent in these industries. In the event of fatal workplace accidents, there have been disturbing instances of bodies being disposed of secretly, with families often left in the dark or compensated unofficially to avoid legal scrutiny.

Since the formation of Telangana in 2014, industrial accidents have claimed dozens of lives: nine deaths in 2014, 11

Rs 2-crore worth CT-scan machine gathering dust in Jangaon Govt Hospital

PNS ■ JANGAON

New CT-scan machinery sanctioned to the district headquarters government hospital here at a cost of Rs 2 crore has been gathering dust here for want of its installation. The CT-scan machine at the hospital went out of order eight years ago. Proposals have been sent several times requesting the government to sanction the machine. However, the machine was sanctioned in December last year.

For want of its installation, the patients have been approaching the private diagnostic centers and burning a hole to their pockets.

The CT-scan machinery is highly essential for the hospital as it caters to the medical needs of the accident victims on highways - Warangal-Hyderabad and Siddipeta-Suryapeta. Moreover, patients approach the hospital from places like Alair and Gundalamandals, Cheryala and Maddurumandals of Siddipeta district.

With the sanctioning of medical college to Jangaon district and with the initiative of Collector RizwanBasha, the latest model of the state of the art CT-Scan machine was sanctioned to the hospital.

The machine reached the hospital on March 26 as against the promise made by the company representatives that the machine would become operational in February. It was decided to install the machine, for which it takes at least two months, at the hospital backing down from the original decision to get it installed in T-hub.

The hospital superintendent provided all amenities for the CT-scan room, but there is an inordinate delay in getting it installed. Before the installation, the old CT-scan machine should be removed from the place.

Workplace safety in Shadnagar abysmal



in 2015, 10 in 2016, 12 in 2017, 09 in 2018, 02 in 2019, three in 2020, two in 2021, four in 2022, 04 in 2023, and eight in 2024.

These numbers reflect only the known cases, while the real figures could be significantly higher due to lack of transpar-

ent reporting. While authorities are often quick to respond to large-scale accidents, questions remain about whether they are conducting regular monitoring of safety standards in industries. Accusations persist that officials from the industries and labour departments delay action, often favouring factory managements over worker welfare.

A particularly horrific incident occurred on June 29 last year at South Glass Industry, where at least ten migrant workers were reportedly killed in a gruesome accident. Officials swiftly completed formalities at the site before media or opposition leaders could

arrive, but the fate of the victims' families and whether compensation was paid remains uncertain—raising serious concerns about the state's priorities.

Construction workers are also facing severe neglect. The region can boast of 10,000 to 15,000 workers engaged in unorganised sectors such as masonry, carpentry, painting, plumbing, and granite work. Though the Construction and Other Workers Welfare Board was set up in 1996 to provide identity cards and implement 11 welfare schemes, nearly 70 per cent of workers remain undocumented and excluded from these benefits, rendering the initiatives ineffective.

ACROSS THE STATES



MP CM Mohan Yadav dubs terrorists as 'germs'

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Wednesday termed terrorists as "germs" and urged people to remain united in the fight against terror launched by the Modi government in the wake of the Pahalgalam attack. Citing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strong message against terrorism after the Pahalgalam terror attack, during a program organized at Janapav, the birthplace of Lord Parshuram, about 50 km from Indore city, Yadav said that Prime Minister Modi has pledged to destroy India's enemies, terrorists and their supporters and at such a time, the countrymen should maintain their unity. Yadav said, "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, India's flag is flying high in the world today, while some germs (terrorists) are seen buzzing like flies and mosquitoes. They (terrorists) have forgotten that we Indian citizens are descendants of Lord Parshuram. They will not be able to know where they have disappeared."



IMD predicts above-normal temperatures in May

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday said most parts of India are likely to see above-normal temperatures in May but occasional thunderstorms may keep the heat from reaching the severe levels of last year. IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said the number of heatwave days is expected to be higher than normal -- by one to four days -- in most parts of Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal. Some areas of Gujarat, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, adjoining Telangana and north Karnataka are also expected to see above-normal heatwave days. Normally, different parts of the country, except the southwest Peninsular India, experience one to three days of heatwave in May. Mohapatra said most parts of the country are likely to receive normal to above-normal rainfall, except for some areas in northwest, central and northeast India.



Meth tablets worth Rs 6 cr seized in Mizoram

In a major drug haul, methamphetamine tablets worth Rs 6.17 crore were seized during an operation in Aizawl, police said in a statement on Wednesday. Two persons have been arrested for transporting the drug, which was believed to be smuggled from Myanmar, the statement said. Acting on a tip-off, CID (Special Branch) team of Mizoram police in Aizawl, carried out a covert operation across the stretch of a national highway between Tuirial and Zembawk in the northeastern outskirts of Aizawl and intercepted two cars at Zembawk area near a Presbyterian church on Tuesday, it said. The vehicles were coming from east Mizoram's Champai town, which shares border with Myanmar, it said. Upon thorough inspection of the vehicles, 20 bundles, each containing methamphetamine tablets, weighing a total of 18.9 kg were seized from one vehicle, while 29 other bundles containing 28.5 kg of the highly addictive drug were seized from another vehicle, it said. The contraband weighing 47.5 kg was valued at Rs 6.17 crore. It was concealed inside the rear body linings and dashboard beams of the two cars, it said.



Public admin training modules must keep evolving: Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Wednesday said public administration training modules must keep evolving to meet the rapidly changing requirements driven by emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

Addressing the convocation ceremony of the 50th Advanced Professional Programme in Public Administration (APPPA) at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) here, he said, "What is relevant today may not be tomorrow. We need to learn every day to stay relevant."

Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel, also underscored the importance of civil-military synergy.

"Today's army officers don't just stay in isolation; they are expected to brief the media, interact with civilians and respond jointly in disaster-affected regions," he said, calling for greater focus on communication skills in future iterations of the course.

CENTRE TO STATE GOVT Implement BNSS Sec 479 for relief to undertrial prisoners



"All states and UTs are, therefore, requested to issue necessary instructions to the prison authorities for proactive implementation of the provisions of Section 479 and to ensure submission of monthly progress reports to MHA in the prescribed format."

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has asked all states and Union territories to actively implement the provisions of Section 479 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita. This section of BNSS seeks to release on bail undertrial prisoners who have been detained for half of the maximum punishment term for their offence.

In a letter to chief secretaries as well as directors general and inspectors general of prison facilities in all states and UTs, the ministry has said Section 479(3) places a specific responsibility on the superintendent of a prison to file an application before the concerned

court for the release of such eligible undertrial prisoners on bail.

The section provides that undertrial prisoners, who have undergone detention for half of the maximum period of imprisonment prescribed for the offence shall be released on bail by the court.

For first-time offenders, the provision applies upon completing one-third of the maximum sentence.

Citing its repeated calls in the past for its implementation, the ministry reiterated that the provisions of Section 479 of the BNSS can play a vital role in addressing the prolonged detention of undertrial prisoners and reducing over-

crowding in prisons. "All states and UTs are, therefore, requested to issue necessary instructions to the prison authorities for proactive implementation of the provisions of Section 479 and to ensure submission of monthly progress reports to MHA in the prescribed format," it said.

The ministry had also written to the states and UTs on January 1, saying this was not a one-time exercise and that they should continue to provide the benefits of Section 479 to eligible prisoners on a continuous basis and to provide monthly progress reports on its implementation to the home ministry.

The fresh letter was shot off after it was observed that only a limited number of states and UTs have shared the requisite information after November 26, 2024.

The ministry has said that under this initiative, states and UTs were requested to identify eligible undertrial prisoners and move their applications before the concerned courts for their release on bail/bond under the said provisions.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had in the past also written to the chief ministers and UT administrations, seeking their cooperation and urging them to issue appropriate instructions to the prison authorities.



Form a popular govt' in Manipur to bring peace

21 MLAs WRITE TO PM MODI, AMIT SHAH

PNS ■ IMPHAL

Twenty-one Manipur MLAs have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah separately, urging them to form a "popular government" in the northeastern state, which is now under the President's rule, to ensure peace and normalcy.

The Centre had on February 13 imposed the President's rule in Manipur, where more than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

The imposition of the President's rule came after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned. The state assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation.

The letters, containing the same appeal, were signed by 13 BJP MLAs, 3 NPP legislators, 3 Naga Peoples' Front MLAs and two independent members of the assembly.

The letters stated, "The people of Manipur welcomed the President's rule...with lots of hope and expectations. It's going to be almost three months since the President's rule was imposed, but no visible actions to bring peace and normalcy are seen so far."

"There is strong apprehension among the people that the vio-

"The people of Manipur welcomed the President's rule...with lots of hope and expectations. It's going to be almost three months since the President's rule was imposed, but no visible actions to bring peace and normalcy are seen so far."

lence may reoccur in the state. Many civil organisations have come out openly against the imposition of the President's rule. They have been demanding installation of a popular government in the state," it said.

The legislators claimed in the April 10 letter that these organisations have started "holding public rallies, street corner meetings, instigating the general public, blaming the ruling MLAs for not staking claim to form a popular government and fixing responsibility for the imposition of PR (President's rule) in Manipur".

The letters were received separately by the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Home Affairs on April 29 and made public on Wednesday, one of the legislators said.

Rajnath to represent India at Russia's Victory Day parade

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will represent India at Russia's Victory Day parade on May 9 that will mark the 80th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Germany in the Second World War, official sources said on Wednesday.

Russia invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for



the grand parade to be held in Moscow but India con-

veyed to Russia that Singh will attend it.

"An invitation was extended to the prime minister to attend the Victory Day Parade at Moscow. The Russian side was informed earlier that India would be represented by Defence Minister Singh," said a source.

Russia has invited leaders

of several friendly nations to attend this year's Victory Day parade.

Modi had travelled to Russia twice last year for an annual summit with President Vladimir Putin and to attend the BRICS Summit in Kazan.

The Russian president is expected to visit India for the annual summit this year.



Priyanka flags scant access to medical facilities in Wayanad

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has written to Union Health Minister J P Nadda, flagging the issue of many tribes in Wayanad living in remote areas with scant access to medical facilities and demanding that a super specialty hospital, such as an AIIMS or a PGI, be urgently set up in her constituency.

In her letter to Nadda, Priyanka Gandhi said Wayanad district has the largest tribal population of Kerala and due to its distinctive geographical features and tropical biodiversity, many of these tribes continue to live in remote areas with scant access to medical facilities.

"Presently, there are approximately 48,397 families and 1,67,799 people living in 3,105 tribal settlements across the district. The major tribal communities living in Wayanad district are Paniyan, Adiyani, Kattunayakan, Kurichyan, Kuruman, Vettukuruman, Wayanadan Kadar, Thachanadan Mooppan, of which the Paniyan, Adiyani and Kattunayakan communities are considered most marginalised," she said.



786 Pakistanis exit India; 1,465 Indians return home from Pak

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 786 Pakistani nationals, including 55 diplomats, their dependents and support staff, besides eight Indians with Pakistani visa, have left India through the Attari-Wagah border crossing in the last six days following a government order in the wake of the Pahalgalam terror attack, officials said on Wednesday.

A total of 1,465 Indians, including 25 diplomats and officials, besides 151 Pakistani citizens with long-term Indian visas have crossed over to India from Pakistan through the international border crossing located in Punjab since April 24.

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

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

The deadline for exiting India for those holding SAARC visas was April 26.

For those carrying medical visas, the deadline was April 29.

The deadline for 12 other categories of visas was April 27. These were visas on arrival and visas for business, film, journalist, transit, conference, mountaineering, student, visitor, group tourist, pilgrim and group pilgrims.

Delhi govt to rehabilitate homeless, beggars under SMILE scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government will rehabilitate beggars, including homeless children, with the help of NGOs and provide skill development training, health care facilities and education, a statement said Wednesday.

The Department of Social Welfare has issued a call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from NGOs and other interested organisations, for the implementation of the SMILE scheme (Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise), which focuses on the comprehensive rehabilitation of beggars.

The department has instructed the organisations to submit their proposals by May 13, the statement read.

The SMILE scheme, introduced by the Ministry of Social



Justice and Empowerment, will be implemented in nine selected areas of Delhi --- Karol Bagh, Dwarka, Munirka-Vasant Vihar, R.K. Puram, Nizamuddin, Rohini, Shahdara, Old Delhi and Bangla Sahib Gurudwara.

The initiative adopts a structured, multi-step approach involving identification, outreach, shelter and long-term resettlement. It prioritises support for children, women, senior citizens and persons with disabilities, it stated.

Court orders seizure of property of SP leader

PNS ■ PRATAPGARH (UP)

A court here has ordered the seizure of assets worth Rs 7 crore belonging to a local Samajwadi Party leader under the Gangsters Act.

Additional Superintendent of Police (West) Sanjay Rai said on Wednesday that the District Magistrate's court issued the order in connection with a case filed against Gulshan Yadav under the Gangsters Act at Kotwali Kunda police station.

According to the order, Yadav, the acting district president of the SP and a resident of Maudara, had accumulated movable and immovable assets, including luxury vehicles, residential land, and bank accounts, through criminal activities and illegal means.

The total value of the seized assets amounts to Rs 7,00,15,502.

Rai said Yadav is facing 53 criminal cases, including charges of murder, attempted murder, extortion, violations of the Goonda Act, the Arms Act, the Explosives Act, and the Gangsters Act.



ENPO accepts Centre's proposal of 'Frontier Nagaland Territory'

PNS ■ KOHIMA

The Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) has announced that it is "compelled to temporarily narrow down" its long-standing demand for a separate statehood and accepted the Centre's offer for a certain level of autonomy in six eastern districts of the state.

ENPO media cell said the apex body of tribal organisations in six districts of eastern Nagaland has submitted its 'stance' to the Ministry of Home Affairs on the draft memorandum of settlement and the comments forwarded by the Nagaland government.

Alleging that the eastern Nagaland areas have been

neglected in all sectors since Nagaland state was created in 1963, the ENPO has been demanding statehood since 2010. The organisation has been demanding the formation of Frontier Nagaland Territory (FNT), comprising Kiphire, Longleng, Mon, Noklak, Shamator, and Tuensang districts.

The ENPO, while maintaining its demand for a "separate statehood", stated, "It is compelled to temporarily narrow down its stance, considering the inability of the GoI but with the condition that FNT arrangement would be reviewed in 10 years, and that all other unresolved matters will be taken up through democratic political processes."

Explainer: Caste Census – history, politics, and its significance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

All castes were enumerated during census exercises carried out in British India between 1881 and 1931, but at the time of the first census of independent India in 1951, the then government decided not to count castes any more except for scheduled castes and tribes.

A decade later in 1961, the central government asked states to conduct their own surveys and prepare state-specific lists of OBCs if they wished so.

Over six decades later now and after demands from several quarters and various parties, the government has now decided to include caste enumeration in the next nationwide census.

The last nationwide caste enumeration took place in 2011 under Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) in a bid to gather detailed information about the socio-economic status of households and individuals, including their caste.

Here is a look at history, politics, and recent developments and what is a Caste Census?

A caste census involves the systematic collection of data on the caste identities of individuals during a national census exercise. In India, where caste has historically shaped social, economic, and political dynamics, such data can provide insights into the demographic distribution, socio-economic conditions, and representation of various

caste groups. This information can be used to inform policies on affirmative action, reservations, and social justice.

What is its historical context? Caste enumeration in India has a long history:

British India (1881-1931): The British colonial administration included caste enumeration in census exercises conducted every decade between 1881 and

1931. These surveys categorized the population by caste, religion, and occupation, providing detailed demographic data. The exercise was partly driven by the colonial need to understand and govern India's complex social structure.

Post-Independence Shift (1951): After India gained independence in 1947, the first census of independent India in

1951 marked a significant departure. The government, under then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, decided to discontinue caste enumeration except for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). This decision was rooted in the belief that focusing on caste could perpetuate divisions and hinder national unity in a newly independent nation.

1961 Directive: A decade later, in 1961, the central government allowed states to conduct their own surveys to prepare state-specific lists of Other Backward Classes (OBCs). This was in response to demands for affirmative action for socially and educationally backward groups beyond SCs and STs.



Editor's TAKE

Deepening rifts and rising trade tensions

BRICS foreign ministers meet ends without joint statement as internal rifts surface

As the BRICS grouping of emerging powers convenes its foreign ministers in Rio de Janeiro ahead of its highly anticipated July summit, cracks within the expanded coalition are becoming increasingly visible. Despite shared concerns over global trade and geopolitical shifts, the meeting ended without a joint communique — an uncommon outcome that underscores growing internal disagreements. BRICS first summit was held in 2009. It originally brought together Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa to reshape global governance in a way that reflects the growing economic and political weight of the Global South.

In 2024, the group expanded significantly to include Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Iran — an enlargement aimed at amplifying its geopolitical influence. Together, BRICS nations represent over 40 per cent of the global population and a significant share of global GDP, positioning the bloc as a potential counterweight to Western-dominated institutions like the G7, the IMF, and the World Bank. Its growing economic heft and strategic alignment have made it central to discussions about a new multipolar world order. However, this recent meeting revealed that size does not always translate to cohesion.

The group was unable to issue a joint statement — a traditional diplomatic outcome — due to disagreements among members, particularly over language relating to United Nations reforms. Egypt and Ethiopia reportedly objected to proposals endorsing a stronger role for South Africa in a reformed Security Council, a priority for legacy BRICS members like India, Brazil, and South Africa. Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira acknowledged the divisions but emphasised that “there is room to resolve differences before July.” He highlighted that while consensus was reached on major issues, the diversity of the group, especially post-expansion, requires more negotiation to align positions.

Despite these diplomatic fissures, the foreign ministers rallied around a common concern: the rise of protectionist economic policies, particularly those implemented by the United States under President Donald Trump.

The Chair statement issued by Brazil expressed “serious concern at the prospect of a fragmented global economy and the weakening of multilateralism.” Without naming the US directly, the statement criticised “unjustified unilateral protectionist measures” and specifically condemned the “indiscriminate raising of reciprocal tariffs and non-tariff measures.”

These comments clearly referenced the Trump administration’s aggressive trade policies, including high tariffs on Chinese goods and escalating trade spats that risk destabilising the global economy. China, which has borne the brunt of these tariffs — facing levies as high as 145 per cent — reportedly pushed for stronger language in the statement. While Brazil and others supported a unified position, some newer members were less enthusiastic about directly antagonising the US, reflecting varied foreign policy alignments within the bloc.

The 2024 expansion of BRICS brought new energy and increased global clout to the bloc, but it also introduced conflicting interests and historical rivalries. Diplomats acknowledged that with greater power comes a need for more diplomacy. Indeed, the expansion has its costs, but it also gives BRICS more resources and a bigger platform for cooperation. Besides, so far the journey of BRICS has been rather rhetorical than real. It is yet to take on the Western world and establish itself as a formidable force in world trade and the geopolitical landscape.

Despite its growing economic clout and strategic aspirations, BRICS continues to suffer from several structural handicaps that limit its effectiveness as a unified global force. Chief among them is the vast political, economic, and ideological diversity among its members, which often results in conflicting priorities and diluted consensus. While legacy members like India, Brazil, and South Africa push for democratic reforms in global institutions such as the United Nations, newer entrants like Egypt and Ethiopia may resist initiatives that undermine regional balances or national interests.

Additionally, the bloc lacks a permanent secretariat or institutional framework to enforce decisions or coordinate policies, relying instead on rotating presidencies and ad hoc mechanisms. Geopolitical rivalries — such as the uneasy relationship between China and India — further complicate joint action. These internal frictions frequently undercut the group’s ability to present a cohesive front on major global issues, from trade and security to climate policy and governance reform.

Looking ahead to the July summit, the challenge for BRICS will be to forge a coherent strategy that accommodates its internal diversity while pushing forward its shared interests — particularly in trade, development finance, and institutional reform. As the global system edges away from US unipolarity towards a more fragmented and competitive landscape, BRICS ability to function as a unified bloc may well determine how the emerging multipolar world takes shape.

Taiwan: Advancing health equity

Taiwan, with its world-leading National Health Insurance system and pioneering digital health innovations, stands as a model for equitable, accessible healthcare. Yet, it remains excluded from the WHO due to political barrier

Health is a fundamental human right and a universal value. Improved health results in greater well-being for the people and has ramifications for the survival and development of a country and even the world.

At the 77th World Health Assembly, members adopted the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Fourteenth General Programme of Work for 2025–2028. The programme includes such strategic objectives as improving health service coverage and bolstering financial protections to ensure universal health coverage.

WHO has called on all countries to take action on these issues. As concerns universal health coverage, Taiwan launched the National Health Insurance (NHI) system in 1995. The scheme, which brought together already existing occupational insurance schemes, has reached its 30th year and now covers 99.9 per cent of the population.

The NHI system provides equitable, accessible, and efficient healthcare to all people in Taiwan. It is also an important pillar and guarantor of Taiwan’s social stability as well as people’s health and safety. It has, moreover, become a global benchmark for achieving universal health coverage.

In an annual survey carried out by Numbeo, Taiwan has been ranked first in the Health Care Index category for seven consecutive years. The NHI operates on a pay-as-you-go, self-sustaining model capable of addressing the financial challenges posed by an ageing population and rising healthcare costs. By reforming premium rates and adding additional funding sources, such as the tobacco health and welfare surcharge, the system is on a sound, sustainable footing.

To promote the health of our people, President Lai Ching-te articulated a vision of a healthy Taiwan in 2024. This aims to ensure that people are healthy, the nation is strong, and the world is ready to embrace Taiwan. Remaining focused on people, families, and communities, we are expanding health promotion operations and preventive healthcare.

Moreover, we are implementing a family physician plan, offering comprehensive care to patients with chronic diseases, and utilising telemedicine to improve healthcare accessibility in rural areas. By promoting integrated long-term care, palliative care, and ageing in place, we ensure holistic, lifelong, and dignified care for all people, realising health equity. In 2021, WHO released the Global Strategy on Digital Health for 2020–2025.

Under this plan, the global health body is seeking the development and adoption of



person-centric digital health solutions to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious diseases. It also oversees the development of infrastructure and applications to use health data to promote health and well-being. Taiwan continues to utilise its prowess in information and communications technology to build effective, high-ROI health systems and services.

The NHI cloud facilitates the more efficient exchange of medical records, while the adoption of international standards such as Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources enhances international medical data sharing. Additionally, the incorporation of AI-assisted technologies is advancing the development of smart healthcare.

The introduction of a virtual health insurance card and the My Health Bank app, which enables real-time management of personal health data, empowers people to make health-enabling choices. In 2008, Taiwan introduced the Health Technology Assessment to facilitate evidence-based policymaking. It also accelerated the inclusion of new treatments under the NHI system.

For example, in 2023, gene and cell therapies were covered for the first time, marking a new era for precision medicine and offering patients enhanced treatment options. Taiwan also continues to leverage innovative technologies to improve the working environment for the medical workforce and to bolster the overall quality of medical service.

What’s more, despite facing political challenges, Taiwan has continuously participated in international health affairs and has been dedicated to supporting the global health system. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan played a crucial role in sharing supplies, strategies, and experiences, and proved to be a reliable partner of countries worldwide. Separately, Taiwan’s success story in implementing universal health coverage offers valuable lessons for countries worldwide. As we continue to share our experiences in universal coverage, financial management, and digital health, we hope to facilitate other nations in reaching WHO’s goal of universal health coverage.

In this rapidly changing era, health challenges transcend borders, and global cooperation has become essential to addressing various health crises. However, Taiwan has been prevented from participating in WHO — the foremost global health cooperation body — due to China’s continued distortion

of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 and World Health Assembly Resolution 25.1. Neither of these resolutions mentions Taiwan or declares that Taiwan is part of the People’s Republic of China.

Therefore, these resolutions have no power to confer upon the PRC any right to represent Taiwan in WHO. In light of this, and to uphold the core UN values of inclusiveness and universality, we urge WHO and all relevant parties to recognise Taiwan’s considerable contributions to global public health and the human right to health.

WHO must adopt a more open-minded approach and demonstrate flexibility, adhering to the principles of professionalism and inclusivity. Taiwan should be included, as a matter of pragmatism, in the World Health Assembly and all WHO meetings, activities, and mechanisms, particularly those concerned with the WHO pandemic agreement.

Taiwan earnestly hopes to work with the international community to create a future of borderless healthcare that realises the fundamental human right to health stipulated in the WHO Constitution and the vision of leaving no one behind espoused in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

(The writer is Minister of Health and Welfare ROC Taiwan. Views are personal)



CHIU TAI-YUAN

Raja who worked for the people

SECOND Opinion

BY RAVI VALLURI

The Bengal Renaissance marked a pivotal awakening in India’s social, cultural, and intellectual life. Bengal became the crucible of this transformation, led by men of exceptional intellect and character — figures like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshub Chandra Sen, and Dwarkanath Tagore.

Their relentless efforts reshaped the moral and philosophical foundation of a stagnating Indian society, breathing new life into a nation shackled by tradition, superstition, and social injustice. Foremost among these reformers was Raja Ram Mohan Roy, born on May 22, 1772 in Radhanagar to Ramakanto Roy and Tarini Devi. A visionary far ahead of his time, Roy found no solace in the rigid orthodoxy and ritualism of contemporary Hinduism. Deeply disturbed by idolatry, he even journeyed to Tibet in search of spiritual truth, hoping to find refuge in Buddhism. However, his experience there was disappointing — he found Tibetan Buddhism equally steeped in rituals and idolatrous practices. Yet this journey left a profound mark on his life. After a group of Tibetan women saved him from violent monks, he developed a deep reverence for women, recognising their strength and resilience. This experience became the foundation of his lifelong advocacy for women’s emancipation,

especially his crusade against sati, the inhumane practice that forced widows to self-immolate on their husband’s funeral pyre. Roy’s dedication to social reform extended beyond this. He promoted women’s education, property rights, and gender equity — causes later championed by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, culminating in the landmark Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. Roy’s vision laid the groundwork for a more progressive and humane society. Spiritually, Roy sought to uncover the core, universal truths of religion. He founded the Brahma Sabha, which later evolved into the Brahma Samaj — a reformist movement that drew from both Hindu and Christian traditions. A polyglot fluent in at least ten languages, Roy studied religious texts across traditions — Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam. He even learnt Hebrew and Greek to explore the foundational texts of Christianity.

Through this comparative lens, he published *The Precepts of Jesus*, appreciating Christianity’s ethical teachings while also advocating for pure theism within Hinduism, stripped of its superstitions. An ardent proponent of modern education, Roy believed that Sanskrit-based instruction alienated the masses. Although he respected ancient scriptures, he opposed Sanskrit education for practical reasons, arguing that its esoteric nature hindered widespread learning. His progressive stance led him to advocate for English education, emphasising the need for rational and scientific knowledge. His vision helped establish prestigious institutions such as Hindu College, Presidency College, Vedanta College, and the English School in Calcutta. He even peti-

tioned the East India Company to expand English-language instruction, showcasing his commitment to national enlightenment. Roy also pioneered journalism in India, launching publications in Bengali, Persian, Hindi, and English. These journals served as powerful tools to disseminate knowledge in science, literature, and politics.

Despite oppressive press restrictions of the time, Roy fiercely defended freedom of expression, challenging censorship in courts and through official appeals. Although he did not live to witness the removal of these press controls, abolished by Charles Metcalfe in 1835 — his role as a crusader for free speech remains undeniable.

Politically astute, Roy campaigned against the Jury Act of 1827, which barred Indians from participating in trials involving fellow natives. He also opposed the renewal of the East India Company’s charter and called for key reforms, including civil and criminal law codification, greater Indian representation in the military, and the separation of judiciary and executive powers. Though an internationalist — he travelled to England in 1831 — Roy remained deeply empathetic to the plight of Indian peasants, decrying exploitative zamindars and punitive export duties. In every respect, Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a man far ahead of his time. His unwavering commitment to truth, reason, justice, and unity laid the foundation for the Indian freedom movement and inspired generations.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living, views are personal)

Leaderspeak



I would guess that India would be one of the first trade deals we would sign. Vice President Vance was in India last week, talked about substantial progress. I have mentioned that the negotiations with the Republic of Korea have gone very well, and I think we’ve had some very substantial negotiations with our Japanese allies.

US TREASURY SECRETARY SCOTT BESSENT

Letters to the Editor

Liberals call the shots in Canada

Madam — The recent Canadian midterm election results brought unexpected reactions from global leaders, reminiscent of the classic 1960s Bollywood song *Na Na Karte Pyar Tumhi Se Kar Baitha*. Many appeared to hope for a loss for Canada’s Liberal Party, but despite falling three seats short of the majority mark of 172, the party is poised to form the Government.

Notably, Donald Trump, who once quipped about making Canada the 51st US state, congratulated Liberal leader Mark Carney — not via social media, but with a personal phone call. Ironically, Trump’s antagonism may have helped Carney. As a vocal critic of Trump, Carney’s opposition struck a chord with voters, boosting the Liberals’ vote share by 11 per cent and securing 15 more seats than in the last election.

Meanwhile, the Indian Government was seen favouring Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, possibly due to past tensions with Justin Trudeau. Indian media widely predicted a Liberal defeat — but reality defied those expectations. Reluctantly, Prime Minister Modi congratulated Carney. Encouragingly, Carney has called for renewed India-Canada relations, emphasising their importance and expressing his intent to restore full diplomatic engagement. It is time both nations move past their differences and rebuild a strong, respectful partnership.

JANG BAHADUR SINGH | JAMSHEDPUR

China faces the brunt of US tariffs

Madam — As tensions between India and Pakistan reach a peak, the tariff war between the United States and China has also intensified. Many factories in China have shut down after losing orders from the United States. There is growing concern that around 10 to 20 million workers in China, linked to export industries, may face unemployment.

Many factories manufacturing toys, sports goods, and cheap products have sent their workers home and have nearly stopped production. In response, several Chinese companies are now seeking new customers in Europe and Latin America instead of depending on the United States. They are also considering setting up production units in India and Southeast Asia. In the coming months, this shift could completely transform China’s export model. The situation is most eroding in Yiwu and Dongguan, China’s major export hubs.

The athletic wear factory Wuiswole in Ningbo has started online sales in the domestic market. According to several Chinese company heads, the impact of Trump’s tariffs is more severe than that of COVID-19. Chinese tech companies have come forward to support domestic businesses. Hundreds of companies have been provided with free AI tools and virtual hosting services to help them resume online sales quickly amid difficulties caused by the Trump tariffs. The Chinese dragon is now deeply entangled in the web of American tariff strategies.

DATTAPRASAD SHIRODKAR | MUMBAI

A tipping point in the global trade

Madam — The article on Mr Trump’s tariff moves (dated 30-4-25) sheds light on a deep-rooted global economic struggle. After the two World Wars, colonial powers lost access to cheap raw materials and captive markets. In response, they established mechanisms like the World Bank, IMF, and Asian Development Bank — to maintain economic dominance. However, these institutions often left newly liberated nations trapped in debt rather than fostering growth.

The global economic system, driven by profit, has increasingly benefited a tiny elite while depriving the majority. Without sufficient purchasing power among the masses, markets dried up — a crisis that surfaced in the 1930s. Economist Keynes proposed state-led welfare spending to revive demand, a strategy that helped restore economic activity. Yet, the relentless pursuit of profit led to a repeat collapse in 2008, exposing the fragility of the system.

Globalisation, once hailed as a panacea, soon turned the United States into a dumping ground, diminishing its dominance. Trump’s reaction — tariffs and trade barriers — reflects a shift towards protectionism.

While most nations resist his unilateralism, bilateral trade pacts are rising. China stands firm, signalling the end of American economic hegemony. Trump’s recent pause on tariffs and softer stance suggest a reluctant recognition of this new multipolar trade reality.

AG RAJMOHAN | ANANTAPUR

PAHALGAM MASSACRE: TARGETED KILLINGS, NATIONAL OUTRAGE

The terrorists who massacred 26 people in Pahalgam also fired an extremely destructive weapon. Inadvertently or by design, they asked the tourists their religion, and asked to identify themselves by reading the Kalma or other means. After confirming them to be Hindus, killed them mercilessly in front of their wives and children! The mass murder of 26 unsuspecting tourists is an gory inhuman act, but after sometime, like Pulwama or 26/11 Mumbai attack will become an statistic. But the pointed killing of Hindus by openly identifying them will surely result in violent retribution continuously.

They and their masters knew very well that enmity between the Indians can be very easily created. Since they have absolutely no love lost for Muslims in India, they are hardly bothered of their fate as long as they are able to inflict a million cuts; and that too without any nefarious efforts by them!

Already, there are calls of boycotting Muslims and their business, attacks on

them accusing them of cow-slaughter. Kashmiri students studying in other states are threatened and are made to feel insecure, prompting the Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister to request respective governments to ensure their safety.

Amidst call of unity the BJP is blaming the opposition and the opposition calling out the criminal lapses of the ruling party! Not one person has asked for finding how could the terrorists just walk in and create bloody mayhem. Nobody is talking of the lapses, intelligence failure or what precautions are to be taken to prevent such tragedies in future! The PM down to the ministers and ordinary member are roaring and warning of strong action; all this after the killings! We still are unaware how the Pulwama carnage took place!

The terrorists both here and in Pakistan will be celebrating this schism in the country! These attacks give our upstart politicians opportunity to blame each other and shameless upmanship!

ANIL BAGARKA | MUMBAI

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

Reimagining migration: It's time for an overhaul

As global labour shortages intensify, a policy reset could transform this demographic strength into a global competitive edge, if India can shift from fragmented migration to a structured, ethical, and strategic talent export framework

FIRST
Column

The Reserve Bank of India's recent bulletin reaffirms India's position as the world's top recipient of remittances, receiving a record \$129.1 billion in 2024, amounting to 3.4 per cent of the national GDP and 14.3 per cent of global inflows. These remittances now rival nearly 30 per cent of India's merchandise exports, positioning India's migrant workforce as a critical economic asset to families back home and the nation's macroeconomic stability. This record inflow is not merely a number, it represents the enduring ambition and resilience of over 35 million Indian diaspora, encompassing Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) living and working abroad, making up the world's largest diaspora. Their contribution is even more significant when seen as a source of foreign exchange, a buffer to the current account deficit, and a stabilising force during global economic shocks, as observed during the pandemic and subsequent economic downturns.

The epicentre of illegal migration, Punjab alone received ₹32,535 crore in remittances in 2024, representing over 56 per cent of its merchandise exports and 4.6 per cent of its GDP — underscoring how significant migrant remittances are to state economies. Similar patterns are seen in Kerala, where remittances have historically funded household consumption, real estate, education, and local infrastructure. According to the World Bank, remittances exceed Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in many developing nations, and India is no exception.

Despite these achievements, India's migration landscape is marked by a stark duality. At the same time, approximately 2.5 million Indians migrate overseas yearly, and remittances continue to grow — so do irregular and unsafe migration, driven by a lack of legal pathways, poor governance, and limited awareness. States such as Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala — traditional migration hubs — are also grappling with the social and human costs of undocumented migration: from human trafficking and exploitation to unsafe "donkey routes" and permanent statelessness.

An Untapped Opportunity

As high-income countries — particularly OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) nations like the US, UK, Germany, France, Japan, and Australia — face a projected workforce shortage of 40–50 million by 2030, rising to 160 million by 2040, India stands uniquely positioned to meet this global demand.

With over 65 per cent of its population under 35, India has the world's largest youth cohort. Sectors like healthcare, logistics, construction, education, and technology are already witnessing acute shortages abroad. If paired with policy foresight, this demographic dividend could transform India into the world's leading exporter of skilled human capital. But to realise this, a shift from spo-



AS MITTAL

radic migration to structured, state-supported, legal migration is crucial. The Overseas Mobility (Facilitation and Welfare) Bill, 2024, currently under consideration, promises a long-overdue update to the Emigration Act of 1983.

It seeks to build a modern, transparent, and welfare-oriented migration system. But legislative reform alone won't suffice. We need a federalised, mission-mode approach involving Central Ministries, State Governments, skilling agencies, and private sector partners. To catalyse this shift, India must embrace a "Talent Export Policy" — similar in ambition to the "Invest India" initiative. Here's a seven-pronged roadmap to do so:

Establish a National Overseas Employment Authority

Set up a dedicated body under the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) that works with State Governments to identify destination country

6
ACCORDING TO THE WORLD BANK, REMITTANCES EXCEED FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) IN MANY DEVELOPING NATIONS, AND INDIA IS NO EXCEPTION. DESPITE THESE ACHIEVEMENTS, INDIA'S MIGRATION LANDSCAPE IS MARKED BY A STARK DUALITY

demands, facilitate skill-matching, and negotiate bilateral migration corridors. District-level Migration Resource Centres and Indian embassy helpdesks should be institutionalised worldwide.

Integrate Global Skill Standards

India must reimagine its skilling architecture to align with global job market standards, including foreign languages, cross-cultural communication, and sector-specific certifications. NSDC (National Skill Development Corporation) can partner with countries for mutual qualification recognition.

Make Migration Affordable

Migration costs to Europe can reach up to ₹10 lakh, deterring legal movement and incentivising illegal channels. Low-interest loans, Government subsidies, and employer — funded training models, inspired by the Philippines' ESA-Pay system, must be adopted to reduce the financial burden.

Strengthen Migrant Welfare Systems Abroad

Enforce ILO (International Labour Organisation)-compliant employment standards and fund legal aid cells, health insurance, and cultural orientation programmes in collaboration with Indian missions abroad. The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) can be scaled up to provide real-time support.

Negotiate Migration Agreements

India must expand its Bilateral Labour Mobility Agreements (BLMAs) portfolio like those already signed with Japan, the UAE, and Germany, ensuring wages, insurance, housing, and grievance redressal mechanisms are part of the contract.

National Mobility Industry Council

Bringing together ethical recruitment agencies, training institutes, employers, and regulators under a national industry body will professionalise migration practices, reduce fraud, and ensure quality assurance.

Harness the Power of Returning Migrants

Returning migrants bring global exposure, savings, and skills. A repatriate reintegration programme can turn them into local entrepreneurs and job creators, including re-skilling, credit access, and start-up incubators.

The Way Forward

For India, migration is not just an economic tool, it's a geopolitical asset. A well-supported diaspora can influence foreign policy, trade ties, cultural diplomacy, and technology transfer. Countries like the Philippines, Mexico, and Vietnam have already built national strategies around their overseas workforce. It is time for India to do the same, not out of compulsion but with a vision to lead. With the proper safeguards, strategic investments, and bold policy thinking, India can become the world's largest remittance — receiving nation and the most respected exporter of skilled talent. The global workforce crisis is India's demographic opportunity but only if we act with urgency, coordination, and compassion.

From gaon (village) to global capitals, Indian migrants are already shaping the world. Now it's time for India to shape the future of migration — legally, ethically, strategically and geopolitically. India's migration story is at a critical crossroads — rich in promise yet fraught with challenges. With remittances at record highs and global demand for skilled workers surging, the moment calls for bold, coordinated action.

By embracing a structured, rights-based migration policy, India can not only safeguard its migrants but also elevate them as strategic assets in global diplomacy, trade, and development. Legal, affordable, and skill-aligned migration must become the new norm. If done right, India can transition from being the world's top remittance recipient to a global leader in talent export — transforming migration into a national strength and a tool for inclusive progress.

(The writer is Vice-Chairman (Cabinet Minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board and Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views are personal)

The Unseen hands that build our world

On May 1, Workers' Day, we do more than mark a date — we remember a revolution born from blisters, built on dignity, and carried forward by the unbreakable spirit of those whose work shapes our lives, yet whose names we rarely know

She wakes not to an alarm but to the first strike of a hammer. There is no day, no night — just an endless chain of work that begins before sunrise and continues after dark. The hands that bear blisters are the ones that strengthen the nation's foundation. The sweat that falls to the ground raises towering buildings. Yet, these hands have been given more space on floors than in the pages of history.

They haven't been counted — they've been brought down, bent low. But May 1 is the day when the worker straightened their back and told the world: No more.

This day is not just a date on the calendar but a symbol of the consciousness that unites voices crushed for centuries. It is the echo of the strength hidden in the sweat of labourers — a strength that can redirect rivers, split mountains, and, most importantly, transform society's mindset.

A worker is not just a person but an idea. An idea that says labour is the foundation of creation. No uniform, no title, no rank — yet these are the most real people in the world. They may not have degrees to show, but every perfectly aligned brick is proof of their skill.

They are the ones who build cities but often get lost on their edges. They are denied entry to malls, yet they are the ones who build them. Labour is not just working; it is an unwritten poem, composed in lines of blisters, sweat, and unseen exhaustion.

It is a battle — a battle for existence, dignity, and identity that is repeatedly crushed by being called 'unskilled'. But the truth is, the most vital skills belong to those without whom the world would become a stalled machine.

Imagine for a moment: if workers stopped working for a day, what would happen? Cities would halt, streets would empty, and the framework of our so-called modernity would crumble. Yet, how often do we salute their labour?

Today's era is one of technology and innovation. We talk of Digital India, start-ups, and artificial intelligence, but do we forget that the engine of all this still runs on human effort? The delivery boy pedalling through scorching afternoons to bring your package — do we see the exhaustion hidden in his smile?

The welder whose eyes, sparked by more than just metal, forge the future — do we honour their art? Labour is no longer confined to factories; it is the story of every person who lives not for a 'job' but for a passion, even if that passion is to feed their family. It is the story of the rickshaw puller who carries the weight of his family with the strength of his legs. It is the story of the domestic worker who



RK JAIN ARJUN

weaves dreams for her children, even if she never attended school. These people are the backbone of our society, yet how often do we dismiss them as mere 'workers'?

The workers' fight is not just for wages or working hours but for the respect their labour deserves. They often fight alone — sometimes with their voices, sometimes with tears, and sometimes in silence.

But when they stand together, they change history. That day in 1886, when workers in Chicago demanded an eight-hour workday, was not just an event — it was a spark that ignited labour movements worldwide.

Even today, when workers take to the streets, their voice represents not just themselves but every person who stands against injustice. No law, no

6
WE MUST ASK: IS OUR DEVELOPMENT TRULY INCLUSIVE IF WORKERS' CONTRIBUTION IS LIMITED TO THEIR LABOUR? IS OUR PROGRESS GENUINE IF ITS FRUITS DON'T REACH THOSE WHO WATER ITS ROOTS? NO REVOLUTION, NO DEVELOPMENT, NO CONSTRUCTION IS COMPLETE WITHOUT THE WORKER'S SMILE AT ITS CORE.

Government, and no policy is greater than their collective consciousness. Workers' Day is not just a red mark on the calendar — it is a warning to systems that believe labourers only follow orders. They also ask questions, and when they do, the world must answer.

We need a society where labour is seen not as a class but as a value. Where honest work is not looked down upon. Where a child who says, "I want to be a worker like my father," is met with respect, not pity. This will only be possible when we view labour not just as a means of survival but as an art — a matter of pride.

We must understand that workers don't just work — they shape dreams. They don't just build structures — they lay the foundation of society. May 1 will truly be a festival when, instead of spending the holiday in malls, we take a step for workers' rights. When we listen to their stories and give their voices a platform.

This day also reminds us that workers are not just a tale of the past but the architects of the future. As we speak of the environment, sustain-

able development, and social justice, workers are at the heart of that change. Those who grow crops in fields, operate machines in factories, or clean our streets — they are the axis keeping our planet and society alive. Yet, our policies, priorities, and thinking often push them to the margins.

We must ask: Is our development truly inclusive if workers' contribution is limited to their labour? Is our progress genuine if its fruits don't reach those who water its roots?

No revolution, no development, no construction is complete without the worker's smile at its core. As long as their share is only sweat and not the rewards, our achievements remain incomplete. This day is not an empty slogan — it is the sound that rose from the strike of a hammer and can still shake our souls — if we are willing to listen.

It gives us a chance not only to remember workers' struggles but to ask what we can do for them. Perhaps it's time we see their labour not just as work but as a force that can change the world. Perhaps it's time we make Workers' Day not just a holiday but a day of resolve — a resolve to build a society where every worker stands tall, and their voice is heard. Because until the worker's smile becomes part of our progress, no achievement of ours will ever be complete.

On May 1, we do not just honour workers, we awaken to the truth they represent. Their hands, though blistered and unseen, shape the world we live in. They are the silent force behind our cities, our comforts, and our dreams.

Yet, they remain invisible — underpaid, undervalued, and often unheard. Workers' Day is a call not just to remember their struggles but to reimagine a society where labour is not just a necessity but a value of pride.

True progress lies in dignity for all not just in technology or wealth, but in the recognition of every hand that builds, cleans, grows, and delivers. Until we ensure their voices are heard and their efforts rewarded, our achievements remain hollow.

Let this day be a pledge — not just of gratitude but of action — to build an inclusive, just, and respectful world, where every worker stands tall and every drop of sweat is met with the respect it deserves.

On May 1, we honour not just the worker's toil but their truth. Their sweat shapes our world, yet their worth goes unseen. Let this day remind us: without dignity for labour, progress is hollow. Real development begins when every worker's voice is heard and their efforts valued equally.

(The author is a professor and a columnist. Views are personal)

IN BRIEF



India to be among Costa Coffee's top 5 markets

India will be among the top-five global markets for Costa Coffee, which is adding about 50 stores a year in the country as part of its expansion plans, the British coffee chain brand's Global CEO Philippe Schaille said on Wednesday. Costa Coffee, now owned by beverages major Coca-Cola, is enthusiastic about the Indian market where millennials are gradually shifting towards coffee from tea. "Today there are less than 50 million consumers who are willing to pay a premium for coffee. However, that cohort is growing massively in double digits... That's why India is an important market for us," Schaille said. India is among the top-20 coffee markets globally for Costa Coffee, and, Schaille said, it is focussing on key metro cities as part of its growth strategy. "We want to play a long game here. So we are focused on quality growth and not quantity growth. So we have a run rate of opening about 40-50 stores a year. That's a good run rate," he said. Costa Coffee, which is operated in India through its franchise partner Devyani International Ltd (DIL), is marking 20 years of presence in India.



IOC signs \$1.4 bn LNG import deal with Trafigura

Indian Oil Corporation, the nation's largest oil firm, has signed a USD 1.3-1.4 billion deal with Trafigura to buy 2.5 million tonne of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to meet the rising energy needs of the country, Chairman A S Sahney said on Wednesday. Trafigura will supply 27 cargoes or 2.5 million tonne of LNG beginning the second half of 2025, he told reporters here. India's gas demand is growing at double digit as it pushes usage of the fuel which is considered a transition fuel. Besides being used as a fuel in industries, natural gas is converted into CNG for running automobiles as well as piped to household kitchens for cooking purposes. LNG is also used as a fuel in long-haul trucking. Sahney said the deal with Trafigura is benchmarked to US Henry Hub prices. IOC operates a 5 million tonne a year LNG import facility at Ennore in Tamil Nadu and also has capacity booked at other import terminals, he said.



Jharkhand increases power tariff by 6.34 pc

The Jharkhand State Electricity Regulatory Commission (JSERC), on Wednesday, raised the power tariff in the state by 6.34 per cent. Under the new rates, domestic consumers in rural areas will pay Rs 6.70 per unit, up from Rs 6.30, while urban consumers will pay Rs 6.85 per unit, up from Rs 6.65. The revised tariff will come into effect from May 1, the member law of JSERC, Mahendra Prasad, said. While the rural tariff increased by 40 paise, the urban tariff by 20 paise. "The domestic tariff does not include the consumers availing 200 units of free electricity per month," he said. Of around 46 lakh domestic consumers, around 40 lakh consumers are availing 200 units of free electricity per household per month in the state, another official said. Despite Jharkhand Bijli Vitran Nigam Limited's (JBVNL) proposal for a 40.02 per cent increase, the commission approved a 6.34 per cent hike after examination. For the commercial category, the tariff was increased by 10 paise for rural and 5 paise for urban consumers.

Centre hikes sugarcane price by 4.41 pc to Rs 355/qrtl

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday decided to increase the fair and remunerative price (FRP) of sugarcane by 4.41 per cent to Rs 355 per quintal for the upcoming 2025-26 season beginning October.

A decision in this regard was taken in the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi keeping in mind the interest of sugarcane farmers, an official statement said.

For the current 2024-25 season, the sugarcane FRP has been fixed at Rs 340 per quintal.

FRP is the minimum price mandated by the Government of India that sugar mills are legally obligated to pay sugarcane farmers for their produce.

Briefing media after the meeting, I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the FRP of Rs 355 per quintal has been approved for a basic recovery rate of 10.25 per cent.

"The FRP for sugar season 2025-26 is 4.41 per cent high-

er than current sugar season 2024-25," the statement said.

A premium of Rs 3.46 per quintal for each 0.1 per cent increase in sugar recovery over and above 10.25 per cent will be provided to farmers. A reduction in FRP by Rs 3.46 per quintal will be for every 0.1 per cent decrease in recovery rate.

The government has also decided that there will not be



any deduction in case of sugar mills where recovery is below 9.5 per cent. Such farmers will get Rs 329.05 per cent for sugarcane in the ensuing 2025-26 season.

According to the statement, the cost of production of sugarcane for the sugar season 2025-26 is Rs 173 per quintal. The FRP of Rs 355 per quintal fixed for 2025-26 at a recovery rate of 10.25 per cent is higher by 105.2 per cent over production cost.

India, UK making last ditch effort to conclude FTA talks

GOYAL MAY VISIT LONDON AGAIN THIS WEEK

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal is likely to visit London again this week as India and the UK are making a last-ditch effort to iron out differences and announce the conclusion of talks for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA), sources said.

There are four or five outstanding issues in all three pacts that the two countries are negotiating, they added. The three pacts under negotiation are - free trade agreement, bilateral investment agreement (BIT), and social security pact (officially dubbed as Double Contribution Convention Agreement).

The two sides were preparing to announce the closure of these negotiations on April 29 in London but differences cropped up over certain technical issues at the last minute.

Goyal concluded his two-day visit to London on April 29. On Monday he held bilateral meetings with UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds MP. The two held discussions to push forward negotiations on these



The two sides were preparing to announce the closure of these negotiations on April 29 in London but differences cropped up over certain technical issues at the last minute. Goyal concluded his two-day visit to London on April 29

pacts. The minister at present is in Oslo (Norway) and is scheduled to visit Brussels on Thursday. After that, he may visit London again on Friday or Saturday, according to the sources.

One of the sources said that there are outstanding technical issues in areas including BIT, and financial services.

"Talks are progressing at a faster pace. Talks are going on. We are very optimistic. A lot of

issues were closed during the visit of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and the commerce minister," they said, adding issues pertaining to matters including visas, wines, spirits, and electric vehicles have been resolved and closed.

Sitharaman on April 9 wrapped up the 13th Ministerial India-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) with her British counterpart Chancellor

Rachel Reeves on a positive note and expressed eagerness to conclude the agreement negotiations soon.

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

In FTAs, two countries either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on maximum goods traded between them. They also ease norms for promoting trade in services and bilateral investments.

The Indian industry is demanding greater access for its skilled professionals from sectors like IT and healthcare in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty.

On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary items.

Credit growth to farm sector slows to 10.4 pc: RBI data

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The bank credit growth to the agriculture sector slowed to 10.4 per cent year-on-year for the fortnight ended March 21, while advances to the industry remained flat at 8 per cent, as per the RBI data released on Wednesday.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released the data on sectoral deployment of bank credit collected from 41 select commercial banks, accounting for about 95 per cent of the total non-food credit deployed by all banks taken together.

Credit to agriculture and allied activities registered a growth of 10.4 per cent (y-o-y) as of the fortnight ended March 21, 2025, against 20 per cent in the corresponding fortnight of the previous year.

"Credit to industry expanded by 8.0 per cent (y-o-y) as on the fortnight ended March 21, 2025, same as in the corresponding fortnight of the previous year," the RBI said.

Among major industries, outstanding credit to 'petro-



leum, coal products and nuclear fuels', 'basic metal and metal products', 'all engineering' and 'construction' recorded an accelerated y-o-y growth.

However, credit growth in the infrastructure segment decelerated.

Bank loans to the services sector increased by 13.4 per cent as of the fortnight ended March 21, 2025, (20.8 per cent in the corresponding fortnight of the previous year), primarily due to decelerated growth in credit to NBFCs.

Credit growth (y-o-y) to 'professional services' and

'trade' segments remained robust.

Further, the credit to personal loans segment registered a growth of 14 per cent compared to 17.6 per cent a year ago, largely due to a decline in growth in 'other personal loans', 'vehicle loans' and 'credit card outstanding'.

On a year-on-year (y-o-y) basis, non-food bank credit as of the fortnight ended March 21, 2025, grew by 12 per cent compared to 16.3 per cent during the corresponding fortnight of the previous year (March 22, 2024), the RBI said.

Cine stars, cricketers invest in Karamtara pre-IPO round

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bollywood actors Ranbir Kapoor and Aamir Khan, as well as cricket players Rohit Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah, have invested in power transmission firm Karamtara Engineering's pre-IPO round.

Karamtara Engineering is a backwards-integrated manufacturer of products for the renewable energy and transmission lines sectors. It offers a diverse product portfolio, which enables it to serve as a one-stop shop for solar structures (fixed-tilt and trackers).

The company offers lattice structures for transmission lines, fasteners for solar, wind, transmission and industrial sectors, and overhead transmission line hardware fittings and accessories.

RISK OF SHOWDOWN WITH INDIA Pakistan Stock Exchange plunges 3500 points

PNS ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) plunged by more than 3,500 points on Wednesday as uncertainty took hold due to increasing risk of a showdown with India.

Information Minister Atta Tarar said that India was planning military action against Pakistan in 26 to 36 hours, spreading panic in the market.

The market maintained a downward trend throughout the day and finally the index closed at 111,326.57, down by 3,545.61 or 3.09 per cent, from the last close of 114,872.18, according to the data provided by the PSX.

Analysts attributed the plunge to the uncertain security situation after the Pahalgam terrorist attack of April 22 that killed at least 26 people.

The Dawn newspaper reported that Mohammed Sohail, chief executive of Tipline Securities, attributed the decline to "news of a likely attack in the next few days".

Awais Ashraf, director research at AKD Securities, said, "Investors are worried about potential Indian military action against Pakistan, concerns that have intensified following the information minister's press briefing."

Yousuf M Farooq, director of research at Chase Securities, echoed the same sentiments. He said that the market was under pressure following the information minister's "statement last night suggesting that India may take military action within the next 24-36 hours".

"The market in the short term will most likely follow news flows of Pakistan-India tensions," he added.

Sana Tawfik, head of research at Arif Habib Limited, also credited the slump primarily on geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan. Earlier in the day, Information Minister Tarar said that "credible intelligence" reports indicated that India was planning to conduct military action in the next 24 to 36 hours.

IA may face Rs 77 cr weekly addl expenses on airspace curbs

PNS ■ MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

Indian airlines are likely to face additional weekly expenses of Rs 77 crore for international flights operated from north Indian cities as the airspace curbs result in increased fuel consumption and longer flight durations.

An analysis of the number of overseas flights and back-of-the-envelope calculations based on increased flight time as well as approximate expenses by PTI showed that the additional monthly operational costs could be over Rs 306 crore.

Amid escalating tensions between India and Pakistan due to the Pahalgam terror attack, Pakistan on Thursday



said it will bar Indian airlines from using its airspace.

Alternative flight path is resulting in additional flying time of up to 1.5 hours for international flights from Delhi and north Indian cities.

A senior airline industry official, who has extensive experience in the commercial side, told PTI that the addi-

to Europe will be about 1.5 hours, and the extra cost will be around Rs 22.5 lakh.

In the case of Middle East flights, the additional time will be around 45 minutes, and the resultant cost will be about Rs 5 lakh, the official said.

Indian carriers are scheduled to operate more than 6,000 flights one way to various international destinations in April, data from aviation analytics firm Cirium showed.

Over 800 weekly flights are operated by Indian airlines to and from north Indian cities to overseas destinations, including North America, the UK, Europe and the Middle East, as per an analysis of the Cirium data.

For 1.5 additional hours, the cost will be around Rs 29 lakh, including landing and parking charges on account of a technical halt in an airport enroute, the official said.

Similarly, the additional flight time for a 9-hour flight

Women account for 7 pc of total workforce in NSE-listed cos: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Women account for 7 per cent of the total workforce in the NSE-listed logistics firms despite contributing to cost savings of up to 12 per cent due to higher efficiency, better attendance, and improved order processing quality, according to a report.

The report by the CII Centre for Women Leadership and NGO The Udaiti Foundation also indicates that safety remains a salient issue for women in the logistics sector, which may affect their participation.

The Udaiti Foundation aims

for increasing India's female labour force participation rate to 50 per cent and doubling the number of women owned enterprises in the country.

According to 'SheMoves Logistics - Driving Diversity & Inclusion in Logistics Report', leadership diversity drives financial performance, but representational gaps persist even as 44 per cent of companies have at least one woman in key management positions (KMPs), and most firms having one woman on their Board of Directors (BoDs).

The quantitative insights are based on data from 18 NSE-listed logistics companies and



The report by the CII Centre for Women Leadership and NGO The Udaiti Foundation also indicates that safety remains a salient issue for women in the logistics sector, which may affect their participation

Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reports (BRSR) while qualitative insights are drawn from in-depth interviews with other logistics companies besides the NSE listed

companies, as per the report. "Women constitute 7 per cent of the workforce in the NSE listed firms in the sector, showing a 1 percentage point increase over the last four

years. Top performers include AllCargo Logistics (19 per cent), TCI Express and All Cargo Gati (13 per cent each), Container Corporation of India (12 per cent), and Mahindra Logistics (11 per cent)," it said.

Noting that deep-seated structural and cultural factors continue to influence women's participation in logistics, the report said this manifests in challenges such as entrenched gender biases affecting hiring and promotion practices, the exclusion of women from informal networks, and infrastructural gaps like the lack of safe and

gender-responsive workplace facilities, including basic amenities such as separate washrooms.

Indicating that safety concerns remain a salient issue for women in the logistics sector, which may affect their participation, the report observed that POSH-related complaints in the sector increased by 37 per cent between 22-23 and 23-24.

Data show that 22 per cent of companies provide daycare benefits to their employees - which could be an important factor in ensuring women, have a higher return-to-work rate, as per the report.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
'E' PROCUREMENT NOTICE
NIT No. 02/IE-30/ISD/GHMC/2025-26, Dt: 30-04-2025 published on 'e' procurement platform. The details can be seen by logging @ <https://tender.e-procurement.gov.in>. The date of events is detailed below: Name of the Work: 1. Providing sluice gate to Box drain at IOCL for removal of water stagnation due to sudden discharge of water after high intensity of rainfall in ward No. 149 Begumpet circle-30, GHMC -1 work. Estimate Amount: Rs. 3.00 lakhs, Bid Document Download Start Date & Time: 01-05-2025 12:00 PM, Bid Submission Closing Date & Time: 05-05-2025 12:00 PM, Name & Address officer Cell. No.: EE, Circle-30, GHMC, Sec/bad, Cell No.s: 7331181426/7995468066. Address of the officer concerned Sri. Subramanya, SVRNRD, Executive Engineer, Circle-30, Begumpet, Sec-bad Zone, GHMC. Further details can be seen at e-Procurement <https://tender.telangana.gov.in> Sd/- Executive Engineer, Circle-30, Begumpet, GHMC. DFR R.O.No: 1136/PP/LAD/MT/13025-26, Dt: 30-04-2025

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
NIT No. 02/SE/TS/R&B/MBNR/2025-26 Dt: 28.04.2025
1. Online tenders are invited under e-procurement platform for 1 works of value 8.00 Crore in Mahabubnagar District. 2. Tenders can download the tender schedules from e-market place i.e. <https://tender.telangana.gov.in> from 05.05.2025 at 4.00 PM onwards. The last date of receipt tenders is before 18.05.2025 up to 3.30 PM. Further details can be seen at e-procurement <https://tender.telangana.gov.in> Sd/- Superintending Engineer, (R&B) Circle: Mahabubnagar DFR R.O.No: 1136/PP/LAD/MT/13025-26, Dt: 28-04-2025

Nawazuddin Siddiqui powers through the flaws in *Costao*



REVIEW

DIRECTED BY: Sejal Shah
PRODUCED BY: Vinod Bhanushali, Kamlesh Bhanushali, Bhavesh Mandalia, Sejal Shah, Shyam Sunder and Faizuddin Siddiqui
CAST: Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Priya Bapat, Kishore Kumar G, Gagan Dev Riar and Hussain Dalal
WRITTEN BY: Bhavesh Mandalia & Meghna Srivastava
RATING: 3/5

TEJAL SINHA
 tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Plot

Set in the politically turbulent landscape of 1990s Goa, *Costao* follows the gripping real-life journey of Costao Fernandes (Nawazuddin Siddiqui), a principled customs officer committed to uprooting gold smuggling in the region. At the center of his investigation is a powerful and cunning politician-socialite, D'Mello (Kishore Kumar G), who manipulates both the political system and criminal underworld for personal gain. As Costao digs deeper, he finds himself ensnared in a conspiracy that turns his world upside down. Despite his unwavering honesty, he is forced to flee after being falsely implicated. While battling to clear his name and uphold the law, Costao must also confront growing resentment at home—particularly from his wife Maria (Priya Bapat), who feels increasingly alienated by his dedication to work. The film traces Costao's fight for justice as he races against time and power structures that seem intent on silencing him.

Highlights

Costao offers several moments that leave an impact. The setting of Goa is more than just a backdrop—it's an atmospheric presence that adds texture to the story. Rafeq Mahmood's cinematography captures both the sunlit beauty and the darker undercurrents of the state. One of the emotional high points of the film comes through the tender bond between Costao and his daughter Marissa, played by the talented Asmi Deo. These moments of father-daughter intimacy provide warmth in an otherwise intense narrative and anchor the protagonist's emotional core. Another notable highlight is the physical transformation of Nawazuddin Siddiqui—particularly evident in an extended foot chase sequence where his dedication to embodying Costao's stamina and urgency truly shines.

Drawbacks

The film's primary weakness lies in its execu-

tion. The pacing is inconsistent—what begins with crisp storytelling eventually succumbs to sluggishness. A sharper edit could have significantly improved the narrative's momentum, especially in the second hour. Additionally, the writing fails to delve deeper into the moral complexity of its characters. D'Mello, as the main antagonist, is painted with broad strokes; his menace is implied rather than demonstrated. Kishore Kumar G is not given enough material to elevate his role beyond a cardboard villain. Moreover, some potentially powerful scenes—such as Costao's internal conflict or the family's breakdown—are glossed over or emotionally undercooked. These missed opportunities rob the film of the layered depth it could have achieved.

Technical Aspects

At its core, *Costao* is a story about resilience and moral conflict, but its storytelling never fully capitalizes on the tension embedded in its premise. Director Sejal Shah sets up the stakes effectively in the first half, introducing Costao's dual life—publicly revered but privately strained. The screenplay by Bhavesh Mandalia and Meghna

ensures we are always on the hunt to look for problems in this domain. pi-labs' technology isn't just theoretical—it's actively securing high-risk sectors. "In BFSI, [Authentify] is helping prevent fraud during remote onboarding and vKYC processes. In law enforcement, the platform is assisting agencies in authenticating digital evidence and identifying manipulated media." The company is currently working with central and state-level government bodies, helping them resolve complex cases involving synthetic media. Additionally, it is integrating its solution across verification workflows, from KYC systems to HR interviews and even at the device level on laptops and mobile devices. "The threat is evolving fast, and so must the

Srivastava initially shows promise, gradually immersing the viewer in the web of deceit that threatens to destroy the protagonist. Unfortunately, that grip slackens considerably in the second half. While the narrative builds intrigue with the tip-off about a 1500 kg gold smuggling operation, the aftermath plays out in a repetitive, stretched manner that diminishes the urgency. The dialogues are thoughtful in patches, particularly during confrontations and introspective moments, but the overall structure lacks tightness, resulting in a film that wavers between biographical realism and conventional crime drama tropes.

Rafeq Mahmood's cinematography is a clear standout, capturing not just the picturesque beauty of Goa, but also its gritty underbelly with a balanced lens. Unnikrishnan Payoor Parameswaran's editing, however, leaves much to be desired—certain sequences feel drawn out and repetitive, which affects the pacing. The film runs for 2 hours and 5 minutes, but the narrative drag makes it feel longer.

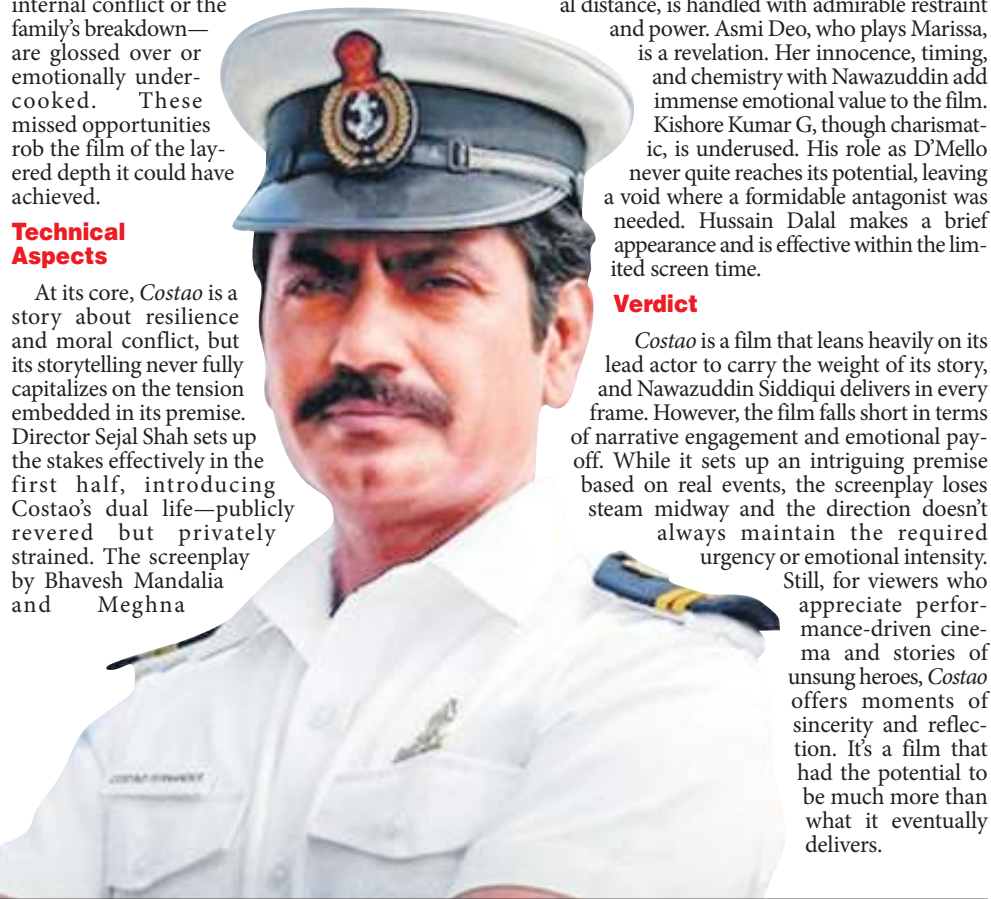
Performances

Performance is the one department where *Costao* truly excels. Nawazuddin Siddiqui once again proves why he remains one of India's most versatile and committed actors. He slips seamlessly into the skin of Costao Fernandes, portraying a man of integrity with remarkable restraint and gravitas. His portrayal balances strength and vulnerability, particularly during scenes where he confronts betrayal or injustice. The effort he has invested—whether in physical training for action sequences or emotional depth—is evident and elevates the entire film. Priya Bapat delivers a quietly powerful performance as Maria. She communicates her frustration, love, and hurt with great authenticity. One of her most notable scenes, where she confronts Costao over his absence and emotional distance, is handled with admirable restraint and power. Asmi Deo, who plays Marissa, is a revelation. Her innocence, timing, and chemistry with Nawazuddin add immense emotional value to the film.

Kishore Kumar G, though charismatic, is underused. His role as D'Mello never quite reaches its potential, leaving a void where a formidable antagonist was needed. Hussain Dalal makes a brief appearance and is effective within the limited screen time.

Verdict

Costao is a film that leans heavily on its lead actor to carry the weight of its story, and Nawazuddin Siddiqui delivers in every frame. However, the film falls short in terms of narrative engagement and emotional payoff. While it sets up an intriguing premise based on real events, the screenplay loses steam midway and the direction doesn't always maintain the required urgency or emotional intensity. Still, for viewers who appreciate performance-driven cinema and stories of unsung heroes, *Costao* offers moments of sincerity and reflection. It's a film that had the potential to be much more than what it eventually delivers.



Rise of nature-first luxury living in India: More than a weekend dream

A few years ago, the idea of living in a forested estate, surrounded by fresh air and green views, was considered a privilege reserved for holidays. Today, for a growing number of affluent Indians, that dream is becoming a very real way of life.

We are seeing a powerful shift away from cities entirely toward balance, toward homes that offer both sophistication and stillness. High-net-worth individuals (HNIs) and ultra-HNIs are increasingly choosing spaces that bring them closer to nature, not just on weekends but every day. This is not a passing trend. It's a conscious decision about how and where people want to live.

What's driving the shift?

There's no single trigger behind this change. Instead, it's a blend of evolving values, flexible work, and a desire to live better. Remote work has opened up lifestyle possibilities that were unthinkable a decade ago. Many professionals no longer need to live within 10 minutes of a business district. With stable connectivity and strong infrastructure in many Tier-2 and fringe locations, it's now viable to work from homes nestled in nature.

Wellness is another driving force.

Clean air, silence and green surroundings have gone from luxuries to essentials. We now understand that our environment plays a major role in our physical and mental health. And when you can choose to live in a place that supports both, why wouldn't you? Then there's the redefinition of luxury itself. For many HNIs, true luxury is no longer found in just a location or a high-end interior. It's in the experience of space, of calm, of connection to something larger than four walls.

Market that's catching up

This isn't just anecdotal. The numbers support it. Knight Frank's Wealth Report 2024 noted a 25% increase in second home purchases by ultra-HNIs, with a growing preference for locations that offer open space, natural landscapes, and a slower pace of life. Meanwhile, a recent India Sotheby's report found that over 60% of its clients now place "nature proximity" among the top three priorities when selecting a residential property. These homes aren't just for the occasional weekend anymore. A lot of people are actually living in them, staying for weeks at a time, sometimes longer. Some are working from there; some have kids attending school online. And many want a quieter place to spend more of their day-to-day life.

Closer look: How developers are responding

For a long time, being close to nature meant

getting a weekend place outside the city. But today's luxury buyers want that connection every day, not just once in a while. And developers are listening. Builders like Marvel Realtors are designing homes where nature isn't something you drive to—it's something you live with. Across their premium projects, you'll find open-plan layouts that let sunlight flood every room, smart cross-ventilation to keep air fresh and double-height terraces that invite the outdoors inside. Landscaped courtyards, rooftop gardens, wide green corridors and shaded walking paths are no longer luxuries—they're part of the blueprint.

The shift is clear: larger balconies are sized for real outdoor living. Natural light and air aren't afterthoughts; they're planned into how the spaces breathe. Even building orientation is fine-tuned so homes work with the sun, the seasons, and the air movement, not against them. It's a response not just to lifestyle aspirations, but to a deeper change in priorities. In cities that are getting faster, louder and more crowded, true luxury is about slowing down, opening up and feeling rooted—even if you're five minutes from a business district. Developers are creating ecosystems where living feels lighter, healthier and closer to the world outside.

From retreat to routine

The clearest sign that this isn't a temporary trend is the way these homes are being used. Buyers aren't just booking occasional stays; they're living there, working there, sending their children to school from there and hosting friends for extended weekends that casually blend into weekdays. This is everyday living with the feel of a weekend. And for many, that blend is the new definition of balance.

What it all adds up to

What we're seeing isn't just a passing interest; it's a real change in how people want to live. The idea of home is expanding. It's not just about where you sleep or work, it's about how the space makes you feel every day. Because of this transformation, people now seek different features in their homes. They no longer focus solely on spacious rooms and beautiful views because they seek emotional connections with their living space. People seek breathing room, quiet areas and their own personal green space. The true challenge for home builders who operate in our field involves listening to these needs to develop spaces that enhance daily life equilibrium.

(The author, Vishwajeet Jhavar, is the MD and CEO of Marvel Realtors.)



Battling deepfakes and digital deception; safeguarding India's cyber frontlines

PNS/HYDERABAD

As phishing attacks in India surged by 175% in 2024, according to the Digital Threat Report, the spotlight has shifted sharply toward a more insidious cyber menace—AI-generated deepfakes. From impersonating bank officials to simulating entire identities, these synthetic media tools are redefining the anatomy of cybercrime. Standing at the forefront of defense is pi-labs, a deep-tech company spearheading AI-forensics innovation through its flagship platform, Authentify. In an exclusive interview, Ankush Tiwari, Founder and CEO of pi-labs, delves into how the company is tackling emerging threats, the core technology behind Authentify, and the evolving ecosystem of deepfake-driven attacks. AI has not only empowered productivity—it has also supercharged deception. Deepfakes, which can replicate a person's face, voice, and expressions with uncanny accuracy, are now being weaponised in identity fraud, vKYC manipulations, and even fake video calls. "Traditional phishing relied on poor-quality impersonations; today, deepfake videos, audios, and images can simulate a real person's face, voices and gestures with alarming precision. This enables fraudsters to bypass verification systems, manipulate trust in video KYC processes, or even orchestrate scams through fake video calls." To counter this new wave of attacks, pi-labs has developed Authentify, a detection platform designed to flag synthetic media across video, audio, and images—before they can exploit systems or trust. At the heart of Authentify is a powerful AI stack trained on millions of datasets spanning

geographies, languages, and identity markers. But the company isn't just chasing accuracy metrics—it's building contextual intelligence. "We use AI and deterministic techniques to identify deepfakes. We are also providing maximum transparency and explainability for our deepfake predictions," explains Tiwari. "We believe that deepfake detection goes beyond algorithmic precision—it requires an understanding of nuances and identity-specific markers." Operating in real-time, the platform integrates seamlessly into existing verification workflows through APIs. It offers deployment flexibility, supporting both on-premise implementations for sensitive environments and scalable cloud solutions. This allows Authentify to embed deepfake detection at the point of identity verification, without disrupting operations. One of the most alarming trends pi-labs has observed is the commodification of deepfake creation itself. Criminals are offering realistic identity forgeries—including Aadhaar, PAN cards and even voice clones—for as little as INR 50 to INR 100. "This is no longer just a cybercrime issue—it's the beginning of Jamtara 3.0. Misinformation, fake documents and identity manipulation pose real threats to national security, BFSI systems and law enforcement operations." These services are often hosted via encrypted messaging platforms like Telegram, sometimes operated from international hubs including China. The accessibility of such tools significantly lowers the barrier to committing sophisticated fraud. "Much like the early days of antivirus software, we always want to believe that attackers are ahead of us. This keeps us on our toes and



ensures we are always on the hunt to look for problems in this domain. pi-labs' technology isn't just theoretical—it's actively securing high-risk sectors. "In BFSI, [Authentify] is helping prevent fraud during remote onboarding and vKYC processes. In law enforcement, the platform is assisting agencies in authenticating digital evidence and identifying manipulated media." The company is currently working with central and state-level government bodies, helping them resolve complex cases involving synthetic media. Additionally, it is integrating its solution across verification workflows, from KYC systems to HR interviews and even at the device level on laptops and mobile devices. "The threat is evolving fast, and so must the

Proactive, embedded and AI-driven verification is no longer optional—it's critical." As synthetic media increasingly fuels misinformation, pi-labs sees its role expanding into the domain of public communication, elections and journalism. "Authentify can empower media outlets by offering them real-time verification tools to authenticate videos,

audio, and images before publication. For regulatory bodies and election commissions, it can serve as a validation layer to flag manipulated political ads, campaign material, or fake public service announcements." To support large-scale operations, the company offers API-based tools that can be directly embedded into content management systems and public-facing reporting platforms. This enables automated, real-time detection of synthetic media—an essential step in safeguarding democratic processes. In line with India's cyber resilience roadmap, pi-labs takes pride in being both locally grounded and globally competitive. "Our models are trained on data that reflects Indian demographics, languages and cultural nuances. At the same time, our technology architecture, AI pipelines and compliance standards are benchmarked against global best practices." While the core of their R&D is rooted in Indian realities, the company actively contributes to international cybersecurity alliances and standards. As AI evolves, so do the

threats. pi-labs is actively building future-proof defenses through continuous research. "We believe that the only way to stay ahead is to invest in deep, meaningful R&D. As a small but mission-driven company, we are proud to have published five patents and multiple research papers that contribute to the broader cybersecurity and AI-forensics ecosystem." Their R&D pipeline is focused on next-generation detection systems, real-time identity risk scoring and advanced signal processing for synthetic voice and video artifacts. "Our team is unified by a shared belief that we're working toward a greater good—building technologies that protect digital trust and strengthen the fabric of society in an age of synthetic media." For pi-labs, scaling AI-forensics infrastructure across India means building bridges—with government, academia and industry. "We believe a national framework for synthetic media detection standards, public-private research grants and collaborations with regulatory sandboxes will be critical. pi-labs is actively engaging with fintech alliances, cybersecurity task forces and digital governance initiatives to contribute to building this ecosystem." By partnering with policymakers and frontline institutions, pi-labs aims to anchor India's digital future on a foundation of trust, transparency and technological integrity. In an era where seeing is no longer believing, platforms like Authentify may be the silent sentinels standing between digital truth and deception. As Ankush Tiwari puts it, "AI-driven verification is no longer optional—it's critical."





● Aparna Reddy



● Sravanthi

The Hyderabad International Jewellery Show (HIJS) is set to take place in Hyderabad on May 23-25, 2025, at the GMR Arena. The show will feature over 700 booths from across India, bringing together industry professionals and showcasing the latest trends in jewellery. In a press meet announcing the event, actress Sravanthi and models showcased exquisite jewellery pieces, including ultra-lightweight gold jewellery that was unveiled on the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya.



● Priya and Vrinda



Design Vanguard 2025 at Woxsen University brought together a diverse group of students, industry leaders, and design enthusiasts to celebrate the creative brilliance of emerging designers. The event focused on the theme 'Tomorrow by Design: Nurturing Future Creators,' emphasising innovation, sustainability, and interdisciplinary design thinking. The event was attended by distinguished Chief Guests, including Sabu Cyril, renowned Indian Film Production Designer, Shayak Sen, Head of Design, Myntra, P. Venkat Srikanth, Head, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Hyderabad and Dr K. Veera Brahmam, Director, Advanced Lab - DRDO, Ministry of Defense, Government of India.



PARTY



● Diya Mirza



● Jiwani, Laila Khan, Swati Sanghi, Jaysh Rangan and Jayanti



● Kavita Golechha

The HiVision Foundation successfully hosted "Threads of Hope - A Philanthropy and CSR Summit on Education" at Hotel Park Hyatt, Hyderabad, bringing together a distinguished gathering of philanthropists, corporate leaders, policymakers, educationists, and changemakers — all united by a shared commitment to transform lives through education. The summit was attended by leading voices of change, including celebrated actor and UNEP Goodwill Ambassador Dia Mirza, and India's first Miss Universe, actor and philanthropist Sushmita Sen, both of whom spoke passionately about the urgent need for inclusive education and collective giving.



Photos by- SV Chary



Students from Sri Saraswati School in Banjara Hills have achieved outstanding results in the 10th class exams. Their student, Varalakshmi topped the batch with 577 marks. Out of 87 students who appeared for the exams, 85 passed. School Chairman Rama Subbaiah congratulated and felicitated the top-performing students, acknowledging their hard work and achievements.

Students from Swan Model School in Film Nagar have achieved excellent results in the 10th class exams. Harshika topped the school with 556 marks out of 600. The school's Chairman Ramdas, Principal Hariprasad and Correspondent Vasu congratulated the students on their outstanding performance and wished them continued success in their future endeavors.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



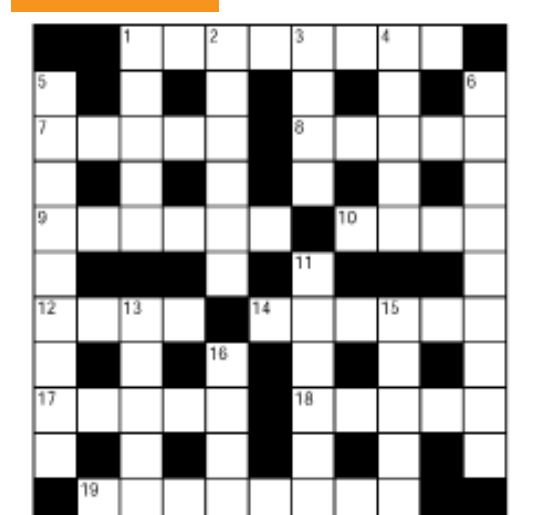
REALITY CHECK



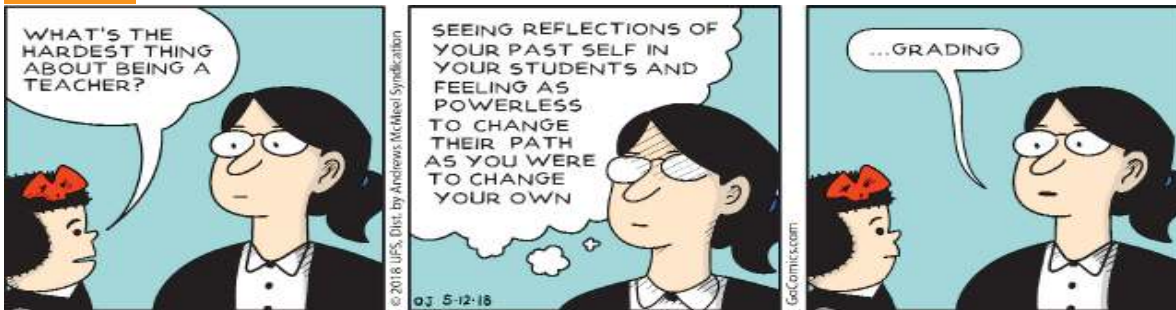
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

ACROSS

- Long pants
- Correct
- Untrue
- Someone who lives alone, keeping away from others
- Costing nothing
- Shortly
- Thief
- Lift up
- Think the same way
- Huge

DOWN

- A large wild cat
- Get
- Out of danger
- Draw a straight line with this
- A large group of musicians who play together
- Practised
- A root vegetable
- A smelly vegetable
- Destroys by fire
- Expensive

SOLUTION



GINGER MEGGS



MUTHAYYA

A dreamer's journey wrapped in rustic charm and realism

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

While Telugu cinema often features mass entertainers where the protagonist takes on goons and saves the world, many recent films are filled with violence, action, and gore. Only a few offer realistic stories with natural performances. One such film is Muthayya, which has released directly on ETV Win. Directed by debutant Bhaskar Maurya, the film features a cast of mostly new actors.

Story

Muthayya (Sudhakar Reddy) is an elderly man living in a village in Telangana. He does odd jobs to make a living but is an avid movie buff who watches all the latest releases in town. His close friend is Malli, a young cycle mechanic. Muthayya dreams of becoming an actor and expresses this desire to Malli, asking him to show his film to all the villagers once he succeeds.

Meanwhile, Malli is in love with a college-going girl from the same village, and the two meet in secret. Muthayya's son, who sells sarees for a living, never encourages his father's dream. Against this backdrop, the film explores whether Muthayya's dream comes true and what happens to Malli and his love story. These questions are answered as the story unfolds.

Analysis

There's always something special about village-based stories, as they bring out the innocence of the characters. Director Bhaskar tells the story of Muthayya, an elderly man passionate about cinema. He appreciates old films but also wants to watch the latest ones to understand how movies are being made today.

Muthayya shares a strong bond with Malli. They quarrel, joke, drink together, but can't live without each other—that's the essence of their friendship. Muthayya owns an acre of land and lost his wife early in life. Though his son doesn't encourage him, Muthayya loves both his son and grandson deeply.

The director narrates Muthayya's love for cinema and his journey to becoming an actor. All the characters are portrayed realistically, and their behavior and dialogues feel natural. The



REVIEW

Cast:

Sudhakar Reddy, Arun Raj, Poorna Chandra, Mounika Bomma, and others

Cinematography: Divakar Mani

Music Director: Karthik Rodriguez

Producers: Vamsi Karumanchi, Vrinda Prasad

Writer and Director: Bhaskar Maurya

Release: ETV Win

Rating: 3/5

scenes between Malli and his lover at the bus stop are hilariously presented.

Some standout moments include Muthayya running to see a film shoot in his village and making reels on his phone. These scenes showcase his fascination with cinema. Though the narration is slow-paced, it keeps the viewer curious about whether Muthayya succeeds in fulfilling his dream.

The film also touches on traditional theatre (natakam), once popular in villages. Back in the 70s and 80s, villagers performed mythological dramas without even being able to read properly, yet they recited dialogues and sang poetic verses fluently. The film brings back this nostalgic village culture.

The last 45 minutes become more engaging and emotionally rich as Muthayya faces several problems. A short filmmaker arrives in the village and decides to make a short film with Muthayya, leading to trouble. From this point, the director skillfully handles the narrative until the end, including several emotional moments. He connects multiple narrative threads through Muthayya's story. The music is nicely composed, and the cinematography beautifully captures the village backdrop and its greenery.

confident debut, focusing on authenticity and emotional depth rather than commercial frills. The screenplay unfolds at a measured pace, which may feel slow at times but suits the tone of the story. Dialogues are realistic and rooted in the village setting, adding to the film's charm. Karthik Rodriguez's music complements the narrative beautifully—subtle yet emotionally stirring. The background score supports the mood without being overbearing. Divakar Mani's cinematography is a major asset. He captures the lush village landscapes, rustic textures and everyday moments with warmth and simplicity. The visuals feel organic, reflecting the soul of rural Telangana.

Verdict

Muthayya is a well-written film set in a village, revolving around an old man's dream to become an actor. Whether or not he fulfills his dream is what keeps the audience engaged. Sudhakar Reddy lives the character of Muthayya and is ably supported by the rest of the cast. Though there are a few loopholes, the film is definitely worth watching. It has already won several awards nationally and internationally.

Performances

Sudhakar Reddy, who plays Muthayya, steals the show. He is undoubtedly the film's backbone, delivering a natural and powerful performance. He truly becomes Muthayya on screen, making it one of the finest portrayals in recent times.

Arun Kumar, who plays Malli, is another highlight. He delivers a superb performance and supports the lead actor well. Though most of the other actors are newcomers, they all do justice to their roles.

Technical Aspects

Director Bhaskar Maurya makes a

'My perspective will shape the kind of narratives I'm drawn to'

As her debut production Subham gears up for a theatrical release on May 9, Samantha Ruth Prabhu is stepping into a new phase of her cinematic journey—not just as a celebrated actor but now as a producer with vision and intent. Reflecting on her evolution in the film industry, the two-time Nandi Award winner says she's no longer governed by fear. Instead, she's driven by passion and the power of storytelling.

"You can't expect meaningful change without taking risks," Samantha shared in a latest interview adding, "And I don't think I've ever shied away from taking them. More often than not, those risks have paid off." Having spent over 15 years in the industry with a career spanning multiple languages and genres, Samantha says that the transition into production felt like a natural progression. "I believe I've gained the kind of insight and experience needed to be sure of the stories I want to tell," she added.

Under her newly launched production banner Tra La La Moving Pictures, Samantha is leading from the front, with a strong focus on quality and conviction. "We have an incredible team. We're committed to work that's intentional—never middling or half-hearted."

Subham, the banner's first offering, sets the tone for this creative journey. The trailer, released on April 29, offers a refreshing blend of humor, horror, suspense and emotion—a genre-defying family entertainer that promises something for everyone. Though she remains one of South cinema's most versatile stars—with

acclaimed performances in films like Eega, Mahanati, Theri, Super Deluxe, Majili, and the hit series The Family Man—Samantha confesses that producing has brought a new kind of joy.

"As an actor, you're part of the process, but when you're a producer, you experience the journey in its entirety. It's incredibly fulfilling to be part of every stage—pre-production, casting, budgeting, editing—and I've learned more producing this one film than I did over years of just acting."

And despite her vast experience in front of the camera, Samantha says she's still in learning mode behind it. "I feel like I'm just getting started. There's so much more to learn and so much more to contribute."

When asked about the kinds of stories she hopes to champion as a producer, Samantha was clear: she won't be boxed in. "I don't want to limit myself to a particular genre or theme," she explained. "But naturally, as a woman, my perspective will shape the kind of narratives I'm drawn to."

It's not about restrictions, she insists—it's about a distinctive worldview. "The difference lies in the lens through which I view the world, and that lens will inevitably guide the stories I choose to tell."



Tamannaah Bhatia joins Sidharth Malhotra in mystical thriller VVAN – Force of the Forrest



major collaboration between two content giants—Balaji Motion Pictures and The Viral Fever (TVF). Balaji Motion Pictures, a division of Balaji Telefilms Ltd, has always been known for delivering bold, courageous, thrilling and gripping content to the masses. On the other hand, TVF has captured hearts with relatable stories that resonate with audiences as a whole. With both coming together, VVAN promises to be a one-of-a-kind cinematic experience, offering something truly unprecedented. The forest is alive—and it's calling.

Tamannaah Bhatia is set to take on a role unlike any before in the upcoming folk thriller VVAN – Force of the Forrest, starring opposite Sidharth Malhotra. Known for her powerful on-screen presence, Tamannaah will delve into a story deeply rooted in ancient folklore, mystery and suspense.

In the beautifully crafted motion poster released by Balaji Motion Pictures and TVF, we catch a glimpse of her character—draped in a maroon saree, sprinting barefoot through a dense, shadowy jungle. Upon seeing a warning sign, she's visibly shocked but continues her journey, even when thorns draw blood. Her determination is clear as she lights a diya, defying the ominous forces of the forest. Set in the mythical heartlands of Central India, the film will be shot in real forest locations, adding to its authenticity and intensity. Backed by Ektaa R. Kapoor, directed by Deepak Mishra and Arunabh Kumar, the film promises to be a genre-defining spectacle. From glowing orange eyes hidden in forest canopies to ancient temples pulsing with energy, VVAN is set to ignite imaginations when it releases in theatres in 2026. VVAN marks a



Sharwanand's pan-India action drama titled Bhogi

Sharwanand is stepping into a whole new cinematic zone with his upcoming film Bhogi, which marks his first full-fledged pan-India project. Directed by Sampath Nandi, the film was officially titled on Wednesday with the makers dropping a powerful teaser titled First Spark, setting the tone for what promises to be a visceral and intense action drama. Alongside the teaser, the team also announced that the film's shoot had officially commenced.

Taking to social media, director Sampath Nandi wrote, "Every drop of blood has a reason. Every fest carries a purpose." And #SharwaSampath BloodFest has a BLOODY name etched into it #BHOGI! #Sharwa38 First Spark out now. SHOOT STARTS TODAY! The teaser offers a glimpse into the brutal and rugged world the film is set in, with imagery that includes a hand writing the phrase "A blood fest" and the creation of a machete, hinting at a storyline drenched in violence and retribution. The film features

Anupama Parameswaran and Dimple Hayathi, with Anupama playing the lead opposite Sharwanand, while Dimple is set to appear in a significant role. Bhogi



unfolds against the raw and politically charged backdrop of the North Telangana-Maharashtra border during the late 1960s. It is a period rarely explored on Indian screens, and the story is expected to capture the social and emotional turbulence of that time with a grounded, gritty aesthetic. Set in a rural landscape that has been recreated with painstaking detail, the film dives deep into a world where power rules and survival is soaked in blood.

Known for his expressive performances, Sharwanand has undergone a striking transformation for the role, which demands a physical and emotional intensity not seen before in his past characters. The film, being made on a lavish scale, is being

produced by KK Radhamohan under the Sri Sathya Sai Arts banner and is presented by Lakshmi Radhamohan. With Sampath Nandi at the helm—celebrated for his flair in delivering stylish, mass entertainers—Bhogi is expected to strike a balance between grounded storytelling and high-octane action.

From its production design to its cinematography and music, Bhogi is being supported by a powerful technical team. Kiran Kumar Manne is handling the production design, Soundar Rajan S is serving as the cinematographer, and the music is composed by Bheems Ceciroleo. The film's visuals and soundscape are expected to elevate the raw storytelling, immersing viewers in an atmospheric narrative built on emotion, grit and spectacle.

Sharwanand's Bhogi will be released in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi, aiming to reach audiences across India. With the first glimpse now out and production underway, the film has begun its journey towards becoming one of the most anticipated action dramas of the year.

Santhanam steps into a haunted reel world in Devil's Double: Next Level; trailer promises laughs and screams

The trailer of Devil's Double: Next Level, the much-anticipated horror comedy starring Santhanam, was unveiled on Wednesday by actor Silambarasan, adding a wave of excitement among fans of the Dhillukku Duddu franchise. Silambarasan, popularly known as Simbu, shared the trailer on X (formerly Twitter), writing, "Big cheers to @iamsanhanam and the entire team on the grand trailer launch! Looks super fun and exciting — wishing you all a massive success! Can't wait to catch it on the big screen!"

Directed by S. Prem Anand, the film is a spiritual sequel to DD Returns and is scheduled to hit screens worldwide on May 16. The trailer offers a uniquely hilarious and spooky premise—Santhanam plays a film reviewer who's lured into watching a private screening by a devilish theatre owner, played by filmmaker Selvaraghavan. What starts as a simple screening soon spirals into a bizarre reality-bending experience when Santhanam is literally sucked into the world of the movie he's watching.

As Selvaraghavan's devilish character taunts him—"Review? How many films have you mocked? Now let's see you review while in the film"—the reviewer finds himself stuck inside a horror movie. He meets various characters, including Gautham Vasudev Menon as Raghavan, a no-

nonsense investigation officer, and Redin Kingsley, among others. However, none of them recognise their real selves—they are fully immersed in the roles they've been cast into within the film. The only one apart from Santhanam who's aware of the truth is Motta Rajendran, who brings in his signature comic flair and one-liners.

As the story progresses, Santhanam and Rajendran realise they are trapped on a mysterious island, with eerie happenings unfolding around them. The trailer promises a heady mix of slapstick comedy, meta-humour and supernatural thrills, staying true to the tone that made the Dhillukku Duddu films cult favourites.

Produced by Niharika Entertainment and The Show People, Devil's Double: Next Level boasts high production value and is presented by actor Arya. Director Prem Anand has revealed that the script was a year in the making. "DD Returns was a huge success with great response from the audience from all walks of life. We worked on the script of its sequel for one year. From children to adults, everyone will laugh and enjoy this flick too," he said.

The technical crew includes cinematographer Dipak Kumar Padhy, music composer Ofro, editor Bharath, and art director AR Mohan. The film is expected to deliver a perfect blend of chills and chuckles, catering to both horror buffs and comedy lovers alike.



Attention on him avoidable: Dravid on Suryavanshi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Rahul Dravid doesn't want microscopic attention on 14-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi following his path-breaking hundred in the IPL but having said that, the Rajasthan Royals head coach knows it is something that he can't control.

Having received a barrage of questions on Suryavanshi in the Star Sports Press Room on Wednesday, Dravid realised that the cricketer world will not be leaving the talented teenager alone from now onwards. The Bihar teen will have to find a way to handle this overnight stardom, he said.

In the interaction, the former India head coach also touched upon Suryavanshi's special skills that make him a formidable T20 batter at such a young age before adding that he remains very much a work in progress.

"I think it won't be possible to completely sort of avoid him from the experience that

is around him. I can't control what people are talking about him. I have come to this interaction and all I have heard is questions about Vaibhav," said Dravid when asked about protecting the youngster from the hysteria around him.

"It is going to be challenging for him but it is exciting at the same time. I would love to say that we should not shower him with that much attention. Maybe I am being naive as that it is not going to happen.

"Recognising that it happens and putting a certain level of support around that and navigate that attention and allow him space to be a youngster. It is part of being a cricketer in this country, it is impossible to distance yourself from and (you tend to get) sucked into it."

As the India U-19 coach, Dravid nurtured the likes of Rishabh Pant, Shubman Gill, Prithvi Shaw, Yashasvi Jaiswal and many more exciting talents.

Asked about Suryavanshi, Dravid



explained what makes him special.

"For me it is really the ability to have that level of fearlessness and not get fazed by the occasion. You don't get to see that with people that young. The range of shots he showed.

"He is only going to get better. Nobody is saying that he is a finished article. No one should rush to call him somebody he is not. Teams will be smarter against him. T20 format is such where he will have games where it will not work out," he cautioned.

Suryavanshi's six-hitting ability also stands out. He cleared the ropes 11 times in his 35-ball hundred against a potent Gujarat Titans attack.

"What gives him power is a good bat speed, high backlift, hand-eye coordination. His judgment of length is something that has amazed me, whether it is fractionally short or full, he can capitalise on that. His natural strength is helpful in this situation," said the Indian great.

A video clip of Suryavanshi was shown during the interaction where he was seen praising Dravid for making him a better cricketer over the past three months.

The moment the footage ended, Dravid played down the role played by him in his rise.

"The biggest credit goes to him. It would be wrong of me to take credit for him. He has come through a system (having played first class and India U19).

"His father has been supportive. Here in Rajasthan Royals, so many people have been involved...He will be asked Dravid questions and he has to give a diplomatic answer," the former India captain said with a smile.

"We try to keep it simple with him. For us, it is important that he plays the kind of cricket he enjoys playing...It is pretty obvious he likes to play attacking brand of cricket. We picked him not keeping his age in mind, we were convinced of his talent," he added.

Gujarat Titans looking at Gill as long-term captain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ahmedabad

Gujarat Titans have systems and processes in place to help Shubman Gill "grow as a captain" as the franchise has appointed the India batter with a long-term view, says COO Colonel Arvinder Singh.

A vital cog in their title-winning campaign in Gujarat Titans' maiden season in IPL 2022, Gill was appointed captain of the franchise when Hardik Pandya moved back to Mumbai Indians ahead of the 2024 edition.

While the first year as a full-time skipper didn't bring Gill much success as GT finished eighth, his side has been one to beat in this IPL, currently ranked third with an impressive six wins and three losses in nine matches so far.

"At Gujarat Titans, whatever we do, we don't do it for a season or two; we think long-term. When Hardik moved on, many were of the opinion that we had players who can just walk in and take on the role of a captain; but we chose to invest in Shubman," Singh said in a statement. "This decision clearly indicated that we were investing in Shubman for a long-term, not just for a single season. The results of that investment are now evident," he added.

Singh said GT have put in a system in place for Gill, who was appointed India's vice-captain during their victorious Champions Trophy campaign, to devel-

Singh said GT have put in a system in place for Gill, who was appointed India's vice-captain during their victorious Champions Trophy campaign, to develop as a leader. Gill was appointed captain of the franchise when Hardik Pandya moved back to MI

op as a leader.

"What is more important for us as an ecosystem is to understand that you cannot just make someone a captain and expect him to do everything," Singh said.

"There is a full-fledged system and process in place that has helped him grow as a captain. This is in addition to what he has gained at the international level over the years, representing India as a vice-captain on many occasions."

"Of course, we've had several senior players in the team, including Jos Buttler, Rashid Khan, and Kane Williamson. Shubman is someone who is very open to learning from others," he added.

Singh said Gill, who is nearing the 400-run mark for GT once again in the IPL, is stepping up as a leader on the field.

"The transformation in his leadership from last year to this year is remarkable; he is truly stepping up as the leader on the field. It's inspiring to witness," he said.

Cricket retained for 2026 Asian Games in Japan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) has confirmed that cricket will be a part of the 2026 Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games to be held in Japan from September 19 to October 4.

The call to retain cricket was taken during the meeting between the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) and the organising committee (AINAGOC) earlier this week.

"The latest development in the compilation of the sports programme came at the 41st meeting of the AINAGOC Board of Directors at Nagoya City Hall on Monday, April 28, when cricket and Mixed Martial Arts were both formally approved," the OCA said.

Cricket matches will be played in the T20 format and hosted in Aichi prefecture, although the exact venues are yet to be finalised.

"The venue for cricket will be in Aichi prefecture but the exact location has not been decided. Interest will be high, not only because of cricket's popularity in South Asia in particular but also because the T20 (20 overs per side) format will be included in the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 2028," the OCA said.

"This will be cricket's first appearance in the Olympics since 1900 in Paris, where Great Britain beat France by 158 runs in the final of the two-team tour-

nament.

Cricket will be among 41 sports featured at the Games, which are expected to see participation from 15,000 athletes and officials representing the OCA's 45 National Olympic Committees.

This will be the fourth time cricket features in the Asian Games, following its inclusion in Guangzhou (2010), Incheon (2014), and Hangzhou (2023). The Indian men's and women's teams are the defending champions.

Cricket will also feature in 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. It will be cricket's first appearance in the Olympics since 1900 in Paris, where Great Britain beat France by 158 runs in the final of the two-team tournament.

The OCA also confirmed that a "floating Athletes' Village" — a cruise ship docked in Nagoya Port — will accommodate 4,600 athletes and officials. It will house athletes from several disciplines including archery, basketball 3x3, canoe/kayak (sprint), cycling mountain bike, cycling BMX racing, football (men), gymnastics, handball, judo, kabaddi, kurash, mixed martial arts, rowing, rugby, sepaktakraw, sport climbing, squash, tennis, weightlifting, wrestling and wushu.

However, that cricketers will be accommodated in hotels, alongside athletes from badminton and football.

Dhawan lauds Suryavanshi, terms his ton "phenomenal"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Former India opener Shikhar Dhawan on Wednesday lauded teenage sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi for his fearless IPL hundred, saying the 14-year-old's confidence belies his age and his performance will inspire aspiring cricketers across the country.

Rajasthan Royal's Suryavanshi set the IPL ablaze by becoming the youngest player to score a century in the tournament. His 35-ball hundred against table-toppers Gujarat Titans was also the second-fastest in league history.

"It's a great performance indeed, the way he batted was just phenomenal. The big thing is not that he is just 14, the greater thing in that is his self-confidence at such a tender age," said Dhawan on the sidelines of the Intercontinental Legends Championship (ILC) launch.

The baby-faced big-hitter from Bihar's Samastipur hammered 11 towering sixes and seven fours, accumulating 94 of his 101 runs in boundaries. His innings was the fastest by any RR batter, breaking Yusuf Pathan's 15-year-old record of a 37-ball hundred against Mumbai Indians.

"The way he dominated the bowlers that night who have a name in international cricket is a great achievement indeed...the country should be proud and it will inspire other youngsters in the country," Dhawan said.

Dhawan, the first player to hit back-to-back centuries in the IPL, was also impressed with other youngsters, includ-

ing Ayush Mhatre, who have made a mark this season.

"It is great to see these players—someone is 14, another is 17—playing in the Indian Premier League. To see these boys achieve success at such a young age is great to see," said Dhawan.

The 39-year-old also condemned the recent terrorist attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam region, expressing heartfelt condolences to the victims' families and backing the government's response.

"I have no words for what happened in Pahalgam... I have full faith in our government that they'll be planning something to counter this. I have my full condolences with the families of the victims. It was heart-wrenching indeed," said Dhawan.

Dhawan was the guest of honour at the launch of the Intercontinental Legends Championship (ILC), which has been co-founded by U-19 Cricket World Cup winner and former Delhi Ranji player Pardeep Sangwan. I had envisioned this league since the day I retired... Shikhar (Dhawan) bhai, Praveen (Kumar) bhai, Parvinder Awana and Pawan Negi—thank you for extending your warm support, along with the sponsors who believed in us," said Sangwan.

Congratulating Sangwan on the initiative, Dhawan said: "I want to extend my heartiest congratulations to Pardeep (Sangwan) and his team for organising ILC. In such leagues, the pressure is relatively high because we play for respect. The competition will be tough."

Took the retirement call in Gabba, did not want to repeat the circle: Ashwin



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Former India off-spinner R Ashwin thought about retiring after his 100th Test but finally took the call midway into the tour of Australia to ensure the "whole circle" related to his spot in the playing eleven doesn't repeat itself.

Speaking on a newly-launched podcast by Chennai Super Kings, Ashwin told fellow CSK member Mike Hussey that he made up his mind on retirement after not starting the Australia series in Perth where Washington Sundar played ahead of the veteran off-spinner.

Ashwin did play the second Test at Adelaide before being left out of the eleven for the third Test at Gabba where he eventually brought the curtains down to a glorious career.

"To be very honest, I wanted to do it after my 100th Test (in Dharamsala, March 2024). And then I thought, Ok, let me give it a go in the home season. Because, I mean, you're playing well, and you're getting wickets, you're making runs," Ashwin said.

"I thought I'd probably close off with the Chennai Test here (against Bangladesh). I ended up getting a six-wicket haul and a hundred. So it's very tough to quit when you're doing very well.

"So, I went on with the series, and we lost against New Zealand. So, one after the other, it was just building up. And then I thought, okay, let me go to Australia. Let me see how this goes. Because the last time I was in Australia, I had a great, great tour," said India's second highest wicket-taker in Tests with 537 scalps to his name. Having said that, time away from

home was beginning to affect him.

"I thought it does make sense to play a bit. I was having a lot of fun, but the whole hard yards that I had to put through to put myself in the park again, physically and mentally, one of the most important things that was pulling me down was the family time," he said.

The 38-year-old, who is back at CSK this season, eventually made the announcement at the Gabba.

"And when I didn't start in Perth, it was like, okay, this whole circle keeps going again. People add very little value to what you're going through emotionally," he said.

"They don't really consider that because your emotions are yours, and it doesn't matter to anybody else. So I had been contemplating that, and then I thought, okay, maybe it is time," added Ashwin.

Azhar Mahmood shows interest in becoming Pakistan head coach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lahore

Former Pakistan all-rounder Azhar Mahmood on Wednesday expressed his interest in becoming the next head coach of the national team, saying he will soon apply for the high-pressure post.

The PCB was forced to begin a fresh search to find a new head coach and Director of the National Cricket Academy after foreign coaches Gary Kirsten and Jason Gillespie resigned last year, less than eight months into their two-year contracts.

The PCB had named one of their selectors, Aaqib Javed as their interim head coach until the T20 series in New Zealand.

Azhar reckons that he has "gained a lot of experience while working as assistant and bowling coach of the Pakistan team in recent years". He has worked with Mickey Arthur, Kirsten and Gillespie.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has set May 5 as the deadline for interested candidates to apply for the head coach position.

The PCB has not confirmed as yet whether it will appoint separate coaches for the red and white ball teams or one coach for both formats.

Pakistan's former test spinner Saqlain Mushtaq, who has also worked as interim head coach and bowling coach in the past with the national team, is said to be another strong candidate in the running for future assignments.

According to PCB sources, New Zealand's Mike Hesson is the front runner to take over as head coach if he agrees to take up the assignment.

Two years back, PCB had approached Hesson but he had turned down the offer due to his prior commitments in leagues. Hesson is coaching the undefeated

Islamabad United in the Pakistan Super League (PSL).

Pakistan's first commitment of its new international season will be a five-match T20 series at home against Bangladesh in late May and early June.

Pakistan has had several foreigners as team director, head coach, high performance coach and even bowling, fielding and batting coaches since 2023 but most of them left on not-so-very-amicable terms with the PCB.

The list includes Mickey Arthur, Grant Bradburn, Andrew Puttick, Morne Morkel, Tim Nielsen, Simon Helmot, Yasir Arafat, Kirsten and Gillespie.

The PCB has also experimented with local coaches including Saqlain Mushtaq, Muhammad Hafeez, Aaqib Javed not to forget the long list of local batting, bowling and fielding coaches.

Assam lifts the first North East Little Masters Trophy (U-14)



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Guwahati

Assam defeated Tripura by 47 runs in the final of the inaugural NE Little Masters Trophy 2025 at the ACA Cricket Academy Ground, Fulung, Guwahati.

Player of the Match (Final): Ayush Pandey (Assam) Best Batter of the

Tournament: Shresthangshu Deb (Tripura) Best Bowler of the Tournament: Abhinav Khanal (Meghalaya) Player of the Tournament: Pastha Pratim Kashyap (Assam) The closing ceremony was attended by BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia, BCCI Apex Council Member Mamon Majumdar, ACA Secretary Tridib Konwar, Tournament Director Romen Dutta, Treasurer Chiranjit

Langthasa and representatives of all the cricket associations of the Northeast states.

BCCI Secretary Shri Devajit Saikia appreciated the efforts of ACA in hosting this grassroots-level tournament and expressed confidence that such initiatives will help young cricketers from the Northeast dream big and reach higher levels.