



The Pioneer

Paper with passion since 1864

RNI No.APENG/2018/76468
*LATE CITY VOL. 7 ISSUE 1851 *Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

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

Civil defence authorities to get emergency procurement power

'NEVER WANTED TO BE A PLAYBACK SINGER - I WANTED TO BE A VOICE'

'Vijay Deverakonda is not what the world thinks,' says Kingdom PRODUCER

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

I will participate in the ongoing war to fight against Pakistan if there is a full-scale war and if he feels the need. I worked for state-of-the-art Mig-23 flight; its speed is 2.5 times faster than sound speed. Problem will not be solved unless Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) is returned to India. The Indian Army's counter-attack on Pakistan's attack on Jammu is the right action. If the war continues, Pakistan will collapse. No third country may come forward to fight

- N Uttam Kumar Reddy, TG Minister

DON'T MISS...

'Be prepared to tackle disasters'

West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has directed officials to remain fully prepared to tackle disasters effectively. Training sessions were conducted for district, divisional, and mandal-level officials via Google Meet on Friday to enhance preparedness and response strategies. Speaking on the occasion, Collector Nagarani emphasised the importance of taking preventive measures to minimise the loss of life and property during disasters. She urged officials to gain a thorough understanding of every aspect of disaster ...

-PAGE: 4

Kolkata Port tightens security

Kolkata's Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port has enhanced its security protocols and operational vigilance in the wake of the ongoing military conflict with Pakistan, port officials said on Friday. Security was beefed up following directives from the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and the Directorate General of Shipping. A high-level security review meeting was virtually conducted by the secretary of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, T K Ramachandran, with all the port officials...

-PAGE: 5

ATMs well stocked, functional

Dismissing rumours, public sector banks including State Bank of India and Punjab National Bank on Friday said their ATMs are fully functional, well-stocked, and that digital services are operating smoothly. The announcements came against the backdrop of reports on social media that ATMs are likely to be shut in the coming days on account of rising tension between India and Pakistan. They also said that all their digital services are operating smoothly. "All our ATMs, CDMs/ADWMs and digital services ...

-PAGE: 8

Cricketers back Indian armed forces

India's sporting icons, including Neeraj Chopra, PV Sindhu, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, have come out in strong support of the country's armed forces for their strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan, hailing them as "the soul of our nation." India on Thursday night swiftly thwarted Pakistan's attempts to strike its military bases with drones and missiles including in Jammu and Pathankot after foiling similar bids at 15 places in northern and western regions of the country, as tension soared between the two ...

-SPORTS

India ramps up diplomatic offensive

PNS ■ NEW YORK/LONDON

India has ramped up diplomatic offensive against Pakistan following the military conflict, with its Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra saying that the country is at war with the terrorists and will bring justice to victims of the Pahalgam terror attack by holding the "lowlifes, sub-human monsters" accountable.

Separately, Indian envoy to the UK Vikram Doraiswami said India's response to Pakistan's original conflict escalation with the terrorist attacks in Pahalgam was "precise, targeted" and focussed solely on terror infrastructure but Islamabad has chosen to continue to escalate the matter instead of taking an "off-ramp" to end the crisis.

Tensions between India and Pakistan soared significantly following India's Operation Sindoor on early Wednesday in response to the Pahalgam attack on April 22 that had cross-border linkages and Pakistan's subsequent unsuccessful attempt to attack

It's at war with terrorists



Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra

15 Indian cities. "April 22 was the most heinous terrorist act," Kwatra said in an interview with CNN on Thursday. "It is nobody's case to

say that these terrorists should

24 airports closed till May 15

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At least 24 airports in northern and western parts of the country, including Srinagar and Chandigarh, have been shut for civilian flights till May 15, sources said on Friday. Earlier, these airports were closed for civilian flights till May 10 in

be given a free pass, and that's precisely what we did the day before yesterday, held them accountable," Kwatra said and described India's action as "a very precise, calibrated, measured response to these terrorists." "We are at war with the terrorists, and we will, as I said, bring justice to the victims and hold them accountable," he said, answering a question if India is at war with Pakistan. "Our foremost objective in this was (to) hold these lowlifes, sub-human monsters accountable and bring justice to the victims."

Continued on Page 2

India confronting shared threat, says Jaishankar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Friday said India is "confronting" the challenge of terrorism, which is a "shared threat" to the inter-

national community. The minister thanked those who have expressed solidarity with the country and understand the "resolute response that is underway".

He was delivering an address at an event hosted at the Russian Embassy here to mark the 80th anniversary of the Soviet Union's triumph over Nazi Germany in World War II.

"It is a great pleasure to join you all on this occasion to mark the 80th anniversary of the victory in the war over fascism in 1945," Jaishankar said.

"We also meet at a time when India is confronting the challenge of terrorism, one that is a shared threat to the international community. I thank those who have expressed solidarity with us and understand the resolute response that is underway," he added.

The Indian armed forces early Wednesday carried out precise missile strikes on nine terror targets in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Pakistan under Operation Sindoor.

India on Thursday thwarted Pakistan's attempts to strike military sites with drones and missiles at 15 places in northern and western regions of the country and targeted Pakistani air defence systems with one in Lahore being "neutralised".

Continued on Page 2

India opposes fresh IMF loans to Pak, abstains from voting

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday opposed IMF's proposal to extend fresh loans of USD 2.3 billion to Pakistan, saying the funds could be misused for

financing state-sponsored cross-border terrorism.

New Delhi abstained from voting at the crucial International Monetary Fund meeting, whose outcome was not known till the

filing of the story.

As an active and responsible member country, India raised concerns over the efficacy of IMF programmes in case of Pakistan given its poor track record, and

also on the possibility of misuse of debt financing funds for state-sponsored cross-border terrorism, the finance ministry said in a statement.

Continued on Page 2



24x7 Control Room set up at AP Bhavan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In view of the tense and unprecedented situation along India's international border with Pakistan, the Andhra Pradesh Government has established a 24x7 Control Room at Andhra Pradesh Bhavan in New Delhi to assist its residents currently residing or travelling in the border states.

The Control Room has been set up to offer timely support, guidance and essential assistance to people of Andhra origin in Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, and Himachal Pradesh.

In an official statement, the Resident Commissioner of Andhra Pradesh Bhavan said the state government was closely monitoring the developing situation in coordination with the Central Government and the respective State authorities.

Residents in need of assistance may contact the Control Room via landline on 011-23387089 or mobile numbers 98711999430 and 9871999053. Additional support may be sought from Deputy Commissioner Shri MVS Rama Rao (Mobile: 9871990081) and Liaison Officer Shri Suresh Babu (Mobile: 9818395787).

Agniveer Jawan from AP Murali Naik martyred; CM Naidu pays tributes



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Agniveer Jawan M Murali Naik (24), hailing from Kallitanda village in Gorantla mandal of Sri Sathya Sai district, was killed in an exchange of fire with infiltrators along the border in Jammu and Kashmir on Friday. Military officials informed his family about the tragic demise the same day.

Naik, the son of Sriram Naik and Jyothibai, was recruited under the Agniveer scheme in October 2022. He underwent six months of training in Nashik, Maharashtra, before being deployed to Jammu and Kashmir. During a recent infiltration attempt, Naik was part of the Army

team that engaged five armed infiltrators. In the ensuing encounter, he sustained bullet injuries and succumbed to them. All five infiltrators were neutralised by the Army.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu expressed deep sorrow over the soldier's death, describing it as a supreme sacrifice for the nation. He spoke with the bereaved parents over the phone and conveyed his heartfelt condolences. "The nation will always remember Murali's bravery and dedication," the Chief Minister said, adding that the State government would provide all possible assistance to the family. He urged them to remain strong during this period of immense grief.

Handri-Neeva waters to flow from July 10: CM

Vows to eradicate poverty by 2029

PROMISE TO TRANSFORM RAYALASEEMA: Naidu reiterated his long-standing vision to turn Rayalaseema from a drought-hit region into a fertile "land of jewels", recalling past struggles and affirming that the completion of the Polavaram-Banakacharla link will end droughts in the state.

MAJOR IRRIGATION INVESTMENTS: Between 2014 and 2019, Rs 70,000 crore was spent on irrigation projects statewide, including Rs 4,200 crore on Handri-Neeva. The project aims to irrigate over 6 lakh acres across Rayalaseema under Phases 1 and 2.

WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES: Naidu outlined several welfare schemes including pensions, free gas cylinders under Deepam 2, investment assistance for farmers, and digital services like WhatsApp Governance. He also mentioned law enforcement reforms and upcoming digital health cards.



PNS ■ URAVAKONDA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday announced that water will be released through the Handri-Neeva Sujala Sravanthi project on July 10. He stated that Rs 3,873 crore is being spent on canal lining and widening works across 554 km under Phases I and II of the project.

Blaming the previous regime for stalling the works for five years, the CM said the NDA government had not only resumed the works but also fast-tracked them. "Once the Polavaram-Banakacharla link is completed, drought will become a thing of the past in Rayalaseema and every acre in the state will be irrigated," he declared.

Recalling the journey of the Handri-

Neeva project, the CM said, "I laid the foundation stone for this project on March 11, 1996, in the Uravakonda constituency. It was a dream project of our revered leader N.T. Rama Rao, who envisioned it during a time when Rayalaseema was parched and struggling. Despite limited allocation of surplus Krishna waters, NTR launched projects like Handri-Neeva, Galeru, Nagari and Telugu Ganga to rejuvenate the region."

He reminisced about the difficulties faced by Rayalaseema's farmers, who could barely manage two crops in ten years, mostly groundnuts. "I provided compensation for crop losses and remember transporting fodder from the coastal districts to save livestock during droughts."

Continued on Page 2

PM Modi can protect nation

Naidu praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a strong leader capable of defending the country. India is united against terrorism. The brutal killing of civilians in Pahalgam is heart-wrenching. Under the NDA, operations like Sindoor have wiped out terror networks. He paid tribute to Murali Naik, a Telugu youth martyred in service, and assured full support to his family. "Many youngsters are joining the armed forces. We must back them. The future lies in peace and progress, not violence."

Ample fuel stocks available, no need for panic buying

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has ample stocks of petrol, diesel and cooking gas LPG, and there is no need for panic buying, oil companies assured the public on Friday.

State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), in separate statements, assured of enough stock availability and smooth operations.

They made the statements after social media was flooded with posts and videos showing people queuing at petrol pumps to stock fuel as tensions between India and Pakistan escalated.

"Indian Oil has ample fuel stocks across the country and our supply lines are operating smoothly," IOC said in a post on X.

"There is no need for panic buying, fuel and LPG are readily avail-

OIL COMPANIES ASSURE PUBLIC



able at all our outlets."

Panic buying was mostly witnessed in states bordering Pakistan.

Several towns in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab enforced blackouts after Pakistan's armed forces launched multiple attacks using

drones and other munitions along the entire western border on the intervening night of May 8-9. The Indian Army said the attacks were "effectively repulsed".

These had led to a fear of escalation in tension and panic buying.

"Help us serve you better by staying calm and avoiding unnecessary rush. This will keep our supply lines running seamlessly and ensure uninterrupted fuel access for all," IOC said.

BPCL said sufficient petrol, diesel, CNG, and LPG are available across its vast nationwide network.

"All BPCL fuel stations and LPG distributorships across its nationwide network are operating smoothly and are fully equipped to meet the energy needs of consumers. There is no cause for concern or panic buying. Our supply chain operations remain robust and efficient, ensuring uninterrupted supplies. We urge all customers to remain calm. BPCL remains steadfast in its commitment to energy accessibility and reliability," it said.

HPCL said sufficient fuel and LPG stocks were available across the country.

Continued on Page 2

Jagan moves HC seeking restoration of Z+ security

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

YSRCP chief Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has filed a petition in the Andhra Pradesh High Court seeking a direction to the Centre to provide him with Z plus security cover by central agencies.

The former CM in his petition, citing some instances, alleged that his security was abruptly reduced to 58 personnel without any prior notice, lawful justification, or objective threat reassessment by the state government.

He said, during his tenure as Chief Minister, he was provided with Z+ category security, including a comprehensive 139-member security detail which included. Counter Assault Teams (CAT) from the OCTOPUS wing, armed static guards, PSOs in rotational shifts, escorts, watchers, trained drivers, and dedicated protection at residence and office.

Sajjala slams 'vendetta' politics of coalition

PNS ■ GUNTUR

YSRCP State Coordinator Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy strongly criticised the coalition government for what he described as a campaign of political vendetta, following his appearance at the Guntur CID office in connection with an alleged attack on the TDP office.

Speaking to the media on Friday, Sajjala denied any involvement, stating he was elsewhere on campaign duties during the incident and had already submitted evidence of his absence. He reiterated his willingness to cooperate with any further inquiries.

He accused the ruling coalition of indulging in "diversion politics" to cover up its governance failures. Labelling it a "Red Book regime", Sajjala said the government was filing baseless cases against YSRCP leaders to silence dissent.

India draws the red line with *Operation Sindoor*

"Pakistan proposes, India disposes" on the lines of "Man proposes, God disposes" is the message India sent to recidivist Pakistani leadership through Operation Sindoor. Pakistan has, time and again, tried to destabilise India using terrorism to wage proxy wars. But the flawlessly executed Operation Sindoor by India proved that Pakistan may initiate, but it is India that will finally determine the outcome of its plans.

Retaliating against the barbaric terror attack in Pahalgam by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists, India targeted and destroyed terror camps spread across Pakistan and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) through Operation Sindoor. By specifically targeting only terror camps, avoiding collateral damage to civilians and military infrastructure, India deliv-

ered a focused and proportionate response, leaving Pakistan no moral excuse for escalation.

Pakistan, which owes its existence to the two-nation theory, believed India's religious diversity a vulnerability which it could exploit to destabilise and even balkanise India. The way the terrorists selected their victims in Pahalgam made it clear that Pakistan aimed to stoke communal strife within India, especially between its Hindu and Muslim populations. Instead, Pakistan received a response that shattered many of the illusions it was living under.

Indians dealt the first blow. They stuck to their pluralist civilisational ethos and displayed unwavering unity, nullifying Pakistan's sinister designs and dealing a fatal blow to the two-nation theory. Two weeks later, Operation Sindoor ended many more

"Cherapakuraa Chedevu" - "don't harm, for you will be harmed" is a popular saying in Telugu. Pakistani military leadership, if it continues on its current path, will reap the harm it intended for India

fantasies the Pakistani leadership harboured.

Given India had already executed surgical and Balakot strikes, Pakistan believed the only option left to India was to escalate further and launch a full-scale war. Pakistan calculated that India could not jeopardise its world-leading economic growth and once-in-a-lifetime opportunity provided by America's tariff wars to become a global manufacturing hub by jumping into a war.

Another myth Pakistan har-

boured, based on its two-nation theory, was that Islamic nations would rally behind Pakistan, a fellow Islamic country. It also assumed that the West, including the US, EU and the UK, would give in to its nuclear blackmail and constrain India's response. Would India dare a two-front war if it attacked Pakistan, given that China is an all-weather friend of Pakistan? Or so it dreamt.

Over the past decade, India has grown from strength to strength. India's defence preparedness and weapon capabil-



KISHORE POREDDY

ities have risen multi-fold. India's fastest-growing economy will be the fourth-largest globally by the year-end. The EU and the UK are wooing India for Free Trade Agreements. India has excellent relationships with Islamic nations, barring a few exceptions, and counts Islamic

nations like the United Arab Emirates as staunch allies. India enjoys close friendship with Russia, while being a member of the Quad, a grouping of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. Even Chinese President Xi Jinping has been for an Elephant-Dragon tango.

Blinded by its hate towards India and smarting under previous defeats, the Pakistani leadership could not see the obvious. Neither could it grasp Modi's resolve nor his crystal-clear strategic thinking: that's why the terrorists Pakistan sent left a message with the widows of the victims: "Tell Modi".

Operation Sindoor shattered all of Pakistan's illusions in one go. India escalated its response by launching multiple attacks and reaching deep into Pakistan's heartland, while still limiting the attacks to

targeting terrorists and not Pakistan in general, giving Pakistan no justification to escalate further. US Vice President JD Vance's comments a day after India conducted Operation Sindoor deflected the global response to India's strikes. In a media interview, the Vice President said the US would not get involved in any India-Pakistan war, which was fundamentally not its business.

By now, Pakistani leaders must have realised they were outmanoeuvred and out-gunned by India. That it has become a pariah in the global community, given its record of using terrorism as an instrument of State policy for decades, as stated by its leaders on live television. However, that might be too much to expect from Pakistan's military leadership, whose primary motive is to retain its control

over the country. How the Pakistani leadership reacts is anybody's guess. But one thing is for sure. "Cherapakuraa Chedevu" - "don't harm, for you will be harmed" is a popular saying in Telugu. Pakistani military leadership, if it continues on its current path, will reap the harm it intended for India. Given that its economy is in shambles, a war with India will sap whatever life force remains, wrecking it beyond repair. Once the economy fails, all bets are off.

Given the sectarian strife in Pakistan, the weakening of its military, coupled with the conditions in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Sindh, it is easy to see that a four-nation theory will soon overshadow the two-nation theory in Pakistan.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson)

Murali Naik died fighting for the country, says father

PNS ■ KALLI THANDA

Mudavath Murali Naik was our only son, and he died fighting for the country, "leaving us orphaned," said his father, Sriram Naik, in Sri Sathya Sai district on Friday.

He said he would leave it to the country to decide what support it would offer his family.

Naik, an Agniveer from Kalli Thanda village in Gorantla mandal, died in the early hours of Friday, at around 2 am, in a reserve area in Jammu and Kashmir during an exchange of fire, his father said, recounting the heartbreaking news conveyed by the Indian Army.

"My son died for the country. He fought for the country. What makes us sad is that I have only one son. We depended on him, and our support is gone. Now we have become orphans, my wife and I. Whatever the solution, I leave it to the country. Whatever decision it will take is up to the country," said Sriram Naik, speaking to a vernacular news channel.

According to Sriram Naik, his wife Jyothi Bai received a call at 9 am on Friday from an Army officer who spoke in Hindi and asked about their relationship with Murali Naik.

"That officer asked us who Mudavath Murali Naik was. My wife said Murali is my son. He told her to give the phone to your husband. He spoke in



Hindi," said Sriram Naik, narrating how they received the last news about their son.

He (Murali Naik) joined the Army in November 2022 as an Agniveer and underwent training at Nashik in Maharashtra, said Sriram Naik.

According to official information, 23-year old Naik belonged to 851 Light Regiment of the Indian Army's Northern Command.

Naik last availed leave for 15 days between January 6 and 20, 2025 and died in action as a battle casualty on Friday.

After training, he was put on duty in Assam, where he worked for a year and was later transferred to Jammu for six months, said Sriram Naik, which was followed by a 15-day leave in January and his return to duty and eventual death in action.

The slain soldier's mother recalled that her son called her the day before yesterday (May 7) and checked about their welfare

and if they had their meal.

"He (Murali Naik) spoke the day before yesterday (on the phone). He asked how we all were and if we had food. Told him we had," said Jyothi Bai, holding back her tears amid the gloomy atmosphere at her home in their tribal settlement.

Reflecting that it was a sad development that her son died young, she said, "What can we do?"

Meanwhile, State Handlooms Minister S Savitha visited the slain soldier's family in Kalli Thanda village and handed over the financial aid of Rs 5 lakh, said an official press release.

She said arrangements will be made for a statue of Murali Naik at the centre of Gorantla mandal, it said. Chief Ministers of AP and Telangana, Chandrababu Naidu and A Revanth Reddy and several others, condoled Naik's death. "My homage to martyr Murali Naik, who sacrificed his life for the country. I extend my deep sympathies to his family members," said Naidu in a post on 'X'.

Later, the Chief Minister made a phone call to Naik's parents, Jyothi Bai and Sri Ram Naik, to comfort them. "The state government will stand by the family of Murali who attained martyrdom for the country," said the CM in an official press release.

Governor S Abdul Nazeer, opposition leader YS Jagan

Mohan Reddy and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan also paid respects to Naik.

"I am deeply saddened to learn that Army Jawan M Murali Naik was martyred in the ongoing Operation Sindoor in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday. I offer my tributes to the brave soldier for laying down his life in defending the nation and express my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members," said Nazeer in a press release from the Raj Bhavan.

YSRCP chief Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed deep grief over the martyrdom of soldier Naik in Jammu & Kashmir.

"Naik's supreme sacrifice, laying down his life for the nation's security, can never be forgotten. He (Jagan) conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and expressed his profound sympathy for their loss," said a YSRCP press release.

Jagan also made a phone call to the soldier's parents to comfort them. Actor-politician Pawan Kalyan said the Indian society will never forget the sacrifice of Naik and his martyrdom in Operation Sindoor.

"I pray to God for the peace of Murali Naik's soul, who died fighting enemy forces on the borders of Jammu & Kashmir," said Kalyan in a press release, adding that the state government will give assurance to his family in all ways.

Multi-crop farming key to better prices: Spl CS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

B. Rajasekhar, Special Chief Secretary of the State Agricultural, Horticulture, Cooperation and Marketing Department, has underscored the need for multi-crop farming to help farmers secure better prices for their produce. He said a special conference was being held to educate tomato and chilli farmers on improving crop quality and reducing investment costs through scientific and natural farming methods.

The State Horticulture Department organised a brainstorming workshop at the Farmers' Training Centre on the premises of the Water Resources Department in Vijayawada on Friday. The session brought together horticulture officials, agricultural scientists, and exporters to raise awareness on key farming and market-related issues.

Inaugurating the seminar with a traditional lamp-lighting ceremony, Rajasekhar reaffirmed the state government's commitment to improving the livelihoods of farmers. He said Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had issued clear directives to boost market access and ensure fair pricing for horticulture produce. "This conference aligns with the Chief Minister's vision



to educate farmers on improving yields, adopting better marketing strategies, and understanding pricing mechanisms," he said. Rajasekhar urged farmers to shift from monoculture to multi-cropping systems for greater income stability. He recommended a scientific approach starting from quality seed selection to balanced plant nutrition and pest management. "Natural farming methods can help improve both the quality of crops and the prices they fetch," he added.

He also highlighted the need for farmers to stay alert to market trends before harvesting. "Tomato prices once soared, making it a profitable crop, but later crashed, forcing some farmers to discard their harvest. If market trends are antic-

ipated, farmers can time their harvests for maximum gain," he said.

Stressing quality standards, Rajasekhar warned against excessive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, noting they reduce shelf life and hamper export prospects. He said natural farming was the way forward for securing better returns.

He also assured that local processing units were being established to support farmers. While weather prediction technology has improved, he noted that many farmers still suffer losses due to lack of preparedness. He directed officials to ensure timely updates from scientists and meteorologists and mentioned that windbreaks would be installed to protect crops from high winds.

Dr K. Srinivasulu, Director of the State Horticulture and Sericulture Department, said the workshop aimed to address challenges faced by tomato and chilli farmers while promoting organic farming. He noted that a special mission had been launched at the Centre to promote organic agriculture.

"In Andhra Pradesh, 12 lakh farmers are already practising organic farming across 6 lakh hectares. Experts from Japan, Germany and other European countries have appreciated these efforts. Multi-crop farming should be encouraged to increase profitability," Dr Srinivasulu said. He also pointed to the success of intercropping in the Delta region, where oil palm and cocoa are being grown as intercrops.

The conference was attended by Agriculture and Marketing Director Vijaya Sunitha; Horticulture Additional Directors M. Venkateswarlu, D. Ashok Kumar and Harinath Reddy; ICAR Director M. Seshu Madhav; Dr YSR Horticulture University Principal Dr Venkata Ramana; ITC Manager Vishnuvardhan; Horticulture Scientist Dr Sirish; NTR District Horticulture Officer Balaji Kumar, among others.

Ample fuel stocks available, no need...

Continued from Page 1

"Our supply chain is operating seamlessly," it said. "There is absolutely no need for panic buying. Fuel and LPG are readily available at all HPCL outlets. Let's stay calm and avoid unnecessary rush to ensure uninterrupted service for everyone."

India on Wednesday struck at nine sites in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Pakistan, its deepest strikes inside Pakistan in decades, in retaliation for a deadly ter-

rorist attack two weeks before. Thereafter, Pakistan attempted to unleash drones and missiles at Indian military targets in more than a dozen cities and towns, many of them home to air force bases. The three firms advised the citizens to stay calm and avoid unnecessary rush, which will help the company in keeping their supply lines running seamlessly and ensure uninterrupted fuel access for all.

Meanwhile, Nayara Energy, in a statement, said its 4,05,000 barrel per day refin-

ery at Vadinar in Gujarat continues to operate at full capacity. "All our retail outlets are operating normally, and we are well stocked to meet fuel demand. We are keeping a close watch on the situation, staying in regular contact with government officials, and complying fully with the established guidelines. We have multiple tiers of security at the refinery with robust surveillance mechanisms. This security apparatus works in close collaboration with the government's agencies," it added.

India ramps up diplomatic...

Continued from Page 1

India's High Commissioner to the UK Doraiswami, who was interviewed by a series of UK media outlets on Thursday to present India's stance on the rising tensions between India and Pakistan, told 'Sky News' that the international community can intervene by pointing out the opportunity for an off-ramp to Pakistan.

He displayed an image live on air of US-designated Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorist Abdur Rauf leading prayers for the terrorists killed in Operation Sindoor, also presented during a briefing by Foreign Secretary Vikram Mistry in New Delhi.

"Everybody knows that for the last 30 years, Pakistan has used this (terrorism) as a means of sub-critical warfare

against India," said Doraiswami.

"If the international community really wants to be able to look at this and worry about it, the simple solution is to tell Pakistan it has an opportunity for an off-ramp. These are things that the world should have compelled Pakistan to do 30 years ago, and to compel them to implement their promises about taking down this infrastructure. It has not done so," he said.

Asked if India fears a further escalation of conflict in the region, the envoy asserted that the "original escalation" is Pakistan-sponsored terror groups attacking and shooting civilians in Pahalgam on April 22.

"Our response thereafter was precise, targeted, reasonable and moderate. It was

focused principally and solely on terrorist infrastructure. We did not strike the Pakistani military establishment. We did not strike national infrastructure, and we made it abundantly clear... that the object of this exercise was clearly to avoid military escalation - a fact actually acknowledged in a left-handed way, of course, by the Pakistani side in terms of their own official statements which said that the airspace hadn't been violated," said Doraiswami.

"The logical solution would be, as we've said repeatedly, for Pakistan to take the opportunity of an off ramp, which we have made abundantly clear, including this morning, that if Pakistan stops attacking our military facilities, the matter ends there, but it is for them to decide," he said.

Handri-Neeva waters to...

Continued from Page 1

People called this region a land of stones. I promised to turn it into a land of jewels—and today, the people have reposed their faith in the NDA once again."

Stressing that water is the foundation of development, Naidu said, "The moment I promised canal widening, I issued a G.O. within the hour." Referring to his first term post-2014, he noted that Rayalaseema projects were prioritised. "When Kia Motors asked where water would come from, we completed the Gollapalli project within

six months and brought the company to this drought-prone belt."

He questioned the contribution of the previous government. "In five years, did they spend even a rupee? Did they build even one road or clear a single canal?" The CM highlighted that between 2014 and 2019, Rs 70,000 crore was spent on irrigation statewide, with Rs 12,441 crore for Rayalaseema and Rs 4,200 crore for Handri-Neeva alone. "Canal width has increased from 10m to 16.5m. We are preparing to bring in 40 TMC of water. Packages 23 to 34 are complete.

India opposes fresh IMF' loans to ...

Continued from Page 1

India registered its protest at the board of IMF, which met on Friday to review the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) lending programme (USD 1 billion) and also considered a fresh Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) lending programme (USD 1.3 billion) for Pakistan. India pointed out that rewarding continued sponsorship of cross-border terrorism sends a dangerous message to the global community, exposes funding agencies and donors to reputational risks, and makes a mockery of global values, it said.

"While the concern that fungible inflows from international financial institutions, like IMF, could be misused for military and state sponsored cross-border terrorist purposes resonated with several member countries, the IMF response is circumscribed by procedural

and technical formalities," it said. This is a serious gap highlighting the urgent need to ensure that moral values are given appropriate consideration in the procedures followed by global financial institutions, it said. The IMF took note of the India's statements and its abstention from the vote.

India's opposition at IMF comes at a time when military conflict between India and Pakistan have intensified after a terrorist attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam that killed 26 tourists on April 22. Pointing out that Pakistan military's deeply entrenched interference in economic affairs poses significant risks of policy slippages and reversal of reforms, the statement said, even when a civilian government is in power now, the army continues to play an outsized role in domestic politics and extends its tentacles deep into the economy.

India confronting...

Continued from Page 1

Since the dastardly terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar have received calls from their counterparts in several countries, condemning the April 22 attack, conveying condolences over the loss of lives and expressing solidarity with India.

Russian President Vladimir Putin conveyed to Prime Minister Modi in a phone call on May 5 that his nation fully backs India's fight against terrorism and that the perpetrators of the Pahalgam terror attack must be brought to justice.

A Russian embassy readout had said that Putin described the terror attack as "barbaric" and the two leaders emphasised the need for an "uncompromising fight" against terrorism in all its manifestations.

Jaishankar in his address at the embassy also said, "Today is an occasion for hope and optimism, as also for remembrance, underpinned by the conviction, that international cooperation is even more important than ever before." "It is an endorsement of our diplomatic endeavours to be that

bilateral, regional or multilateral," he added.

Russian envoy Denis Alipov and several other diplomats were present on the occasion.

The backdrop on the stage depicted the famous Red Square landmark of Moscow.

Russia marked the 80th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II with a massive military parade on Red Square on Friday attended by President Putin and various foreign leaders.

The Soviet Army had launched an offensive against Nazi Germany in January 1945. The commanders-in-chief signed the Act of Unconditional Surrender of Germany on May 9, ending the war.

Jaishankar said it is hard to overstate the importance of such a momentous event, "one that laid the foundation for the current world order".

"The contribution that Indians made to this defining event is well known. It ranged from the Burma, North Africa and Italy campaigns to the Persian Corridor to the Soviet Union and the hump over the Himalayas. I am glad today that the Russian Embassy recognise the efforts through a plaque," he added.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Trayodashi: May 09 02:56 PM to May 10 05:30 PM
 Chaturdashi: May 10 05:30 PM to May 11 08:02 PM
Nakshatram:
 Chitra: May 10 12:09 AM to May 11 03:15 AM
 Swati: May 11 03:15 AM to May 12 06:17 AM
Rahukalam: 9:01 AM to 10:36 AM
Yamagandam: 1:48 PM to 3:24 PM
Varjyam: 09:33 AM to 11:21 AM
Gulika: 5:49 AM to 7:25 AM
Amritakalam: 08:01 PM to 09:50 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:46 AM to 12:37 PM
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Mostly Sunny
Temp: 36°
Humidity: 51%
Sunrise: 5:38 AM
Sunset: 6:29 PM
 Updated: May 9, 2025 5:00 PM

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
TRIBAL WELFARE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
No. 28 to 34/2025-26/SE/TW/DB Date: 07-05-2025
 Online tenders are being invited for execution of Seven works under the limits of Visakhapatnam Tribal Welfare Engineering Circle with an estimated cost of Rs. 2826.15 Lakhs. Commencement of tender schedules: 12.05.2025 from 4.00 P.M. onwards. For other details contact: www.approcurement.gov.in or contact: 0891-2783210. Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Tribal Welfare, Visakhapatnam
 (OFF R.O.No: 18330/CLAD/11/11/2025-D: 08.05.2025)

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

VMC Commissioner launches malaria awareness rally

Civic body to educate residents about prevention of mosquito-borne diseases

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of the observation of Friday as Dry Day, Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanchandra launched a malaria prevention awareness rally in Ramakrishnapuram. The event aimed to educate residents about the prevention of mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue.

During the rally, VMC staff identified mosquito larvae in stagnant water sources around homes and highlighted how water storage areas contribute to the spread of diseases. Participants raised slogans emphasising the importance of mosquito eradication and maintaining hygiene to prevent disease transmission.

The Commissioner urged residents to be vigilant in preventing mosquito breeding by eliminating stagnant water in and around homes.

"Water in coolers, flower vases, pots, coconut shells, old tires, and discarded bottles should be regularly emptied or replaced. Mosquito nets should be used as a preventive measure," he advised.

As part of the campaign, municipal malaria staff also



supervised the removal of waste in the Budameru canal and sprayed ML oil using drones to control mosquito larvae.

Key areas inspected for sanitation and drainage

During a field inspection earlier, the Commissioner visited Guntathippa Drain, Auto Nagar, and Ayodhya Nagar. He reviewed desilting operations and instructed engineering officials to expedite work before the monsoon season to prevent rainwater backflow.

He also directed the Town Planning Department to identify and remove encroachments that obstruct drainage flow.

Dhyanchandra later inspected the Anna Canteen in Ayodhya Nagar. He emphasised the need for regular checks on food quality, sanitation, and drinking water supply. He asked nodal officers to take timely action to ensure public convenience.

Zonal Commissioners Prabhudas, K Shami, In-charge Chief Medical Health Officer Dr Gopalakrishna Nayak, SE (Works) P Satyanarayana, EE Samrajyam, AMHO Dr Babu Srinivas,

Biologist Surya Kumar Nayak, and other officials were present.

Review meeting held on traffic issues

Meanwhile, Dhyanchandra convened a review meeting at the VMC main office to address the city's growing traffic issues. The session brought together traffic police officials and Town Planning representatives to discuss key concerns such as road congestion, bottlenecks, and traffic obstacles.

The Commissioner emphasised the need for coordinated efforts to enhance traffic management and ensure smoother vehicular flow across the city.

He instructed officials to take appropriate measures to mitigate congestion and implement effective solutions.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (ADCP) Prasanna Kumar, Inspectors Uma Maheshwara Rao and Satya Ramesh, VMC Chief City Planner Sanjay Ratna Kumar, Deputy City Planner Chandra Bose, and Assistant City Planner Mohan Babu.

NTR police intensify night patrolling

Thorough inspections of lodges, hotels, and suspicious locations
Increased surveillance on suspicious individuals and smuggling activities

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Following the current situation in the country, the NTR district police have increased night patrol operations throughout the city to enhance public safety and prevent anti-social activities. Following the directives of Police Commissioner Sarvashreshtha Tripathi, special teams led by Admin DCP KGV Saritha are conducting daily patrols, vehicle checks, and inspections in hotels, lodges, and isolated areas.

On the nights of May 8 and 9, Station House Officers (SHOs) and their teams carried out thorough patrols and inspections across all police station jurisdictions in the district. Suspicious

individuals were stopped, questioned, and verified using IRIS technology. The police also counselled individuals loitering at night and checked unregistered or suspicious vehicles.

These intensified operations aim to instil a sense of security among citizens and deter illegal activities, such as the trafficking of alcohol, marijuana, and other narcotics. Police teams have been instructed to maintain strict surveillance, particularly at key urban locations and known hotspots.

Officials have emphasised their commitment to maintaining peace and law and order in the region, reassuring the public that their safety remains a top priority.



OCTOPUR personnel conduct 'Area Domination' exercise

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

In light of the tense war-like situation between India and Pakistan, an "Area Domination" exercise was conducted in Tirumala on Friday as a precautionary measure.

As part of this operation, around 130 personnel from OCTOPUS, police, intelligence, security departments, bomb squad, and dog squad participated. The teams were divided into four groups and carried out inspections in crowded areas such as the Sri Venkateswara temple, cottages, and bus stand. The goal was to instill confidence among devotees and act as a warning to miscreants. Suspicious individuals were questioned, and their luggage was thoroughly checked.

Speaking on the occasion, DSP Vijay Kumar said that



this exercise would now be conducted regularly to reinforce the message that TTD's security system is fully alert. He added that the operation serves as a warning to troublemakers and assurance to the devotees.

The Area Domination activities will cover key locations including CRO, RTC bus stand, Sri Venkateswara

temple, Nandakam area, MBC, and the Srivari footpath. Vehicles entering Tirumala, monasteries, guest houses, and local residential areas will be inspected daily as part of this initiative. TTD Vigilance Officer Surendra, OCTOPUS DSP Sri Vishwanatham, and other officials participated in the operation.

State to get MSME parks in all Assembly constituencies

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

In a significant push towards decentralised industrial growth, Andhra Pradesh Minister for MSME, SERP, and NRI Affairs, Kondapalli Srinivas, announced that every Assembly constituency in the State will soon be home to a dedicated MSME park and a flatted factory complex.

Speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony for the first such project at Saripalli in Nallimarla mandal on Friday evening, the Minister described the initiative as a transformative step aligned with Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's long-term vision for inclusive development. Srinivas recalled that the concept, first mooted during Chandrababu's previous tenure (2014-2019), aims to merge welfare with economic progress.

Three new flight services from State soon

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu has announced that three new flight services will be started to enhance connectivity and convenience across the State, aimed at promoting aviation.

The Union Minister men-

tioned that IndiGo will start the Visakhapatnam-Abu Dhabi international flight service from June 13. This service, which will operate four days a week, will directly connect expatriates from the UAE and other countries to Visakhapatnam.

Visakhapatnam-Bhubaneswar flight service will start

from June 12, he said, adding that this will further strengthen trade, tourism and cultural ties between the two eastern coastal cities.

Air India Express will start an additional flight service from Vijayawada to Bengaluru from June 2, which will directly connect the capital city of Andhra Pradesh

with the IT capital of South India.

Ram Mohan Naidu said that these services will pave the way for the development of the State and better connectivity. He also hoped that these steps make the Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's dream of a connected Andhra Pradesh a reality.



SAAP Chairman Animimi Ravi Naidu taking a ride in speed boat

Water sports camp opens at Rushikonda

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Sports Authority (SAAP), Animimi Ravi Naidu, inaugurated a water sports summer coaching camp at Rushikonda on Friday, marking a fresh initiative to revive aquatic sports in the region. The event, organised by the District Sports Authority (DSA) with support from the State Canoeing and Kayaking Association, aims to foster local talent in water-based disciplines.

Speaking at the launch, Naidu emphasised the State government's commitment to restoring Rushikonda's reputation as a leading water sports destination. He attributed the decline in activities post-2019 to alleged negligence under the previous YSRCP regime and

cited encroachments on DSA lands as a major setback.

Tracing the roots of the sport in the city, Naidu recalled the initiatives of N. Chandrababu Naidu, who in 2002 laid the foundation for canoeing and kayaking in Visakhapatnam. "The momentum continued till 2019 but saw a dip thereafter. We are now focused on reviving and expanding these facilities," he said.

Earlier in the day, Naidu interacted with young athletes on the DSA premises and participated in a kayaking demonstration, underscoring his support for the initiative. Upon taking charge, he said he had apprised the Chief Minister of the encroachment issues, following which steps were taken to reclaim the affected land for developing modern infrastruc-

ture. Highlighting the importance of aquatic sports, Naidu noted their relevance not only for fitness and competition but also for life-saving preparedness during natural disasters. He urged the youth to make full use of the training and aspire for national and international success.

Plans are afoot to introduce competitions in 11 disciplines of canoeing and kayaking. Naidu also pointed out that outstanding performers in these sports could secure employment opportunities in the armed and security forces. Among those present at the event were District Sports Development Officer June Gallyot, State Canoeing and Kayaking Association president Balaram Naidu, and several sports enthusiasts.

Women's empowerment key to nation's progress: Anitha

Minister releases Swapnala Vimana, a book capturing the dreams and aspirations of young girls

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha has underscored the vital role of women's empowerment in national development, calling upon women to actively participate and lead across all sectors of society. Addressing a girl empowerment programme organised by NTPC Simhadri here on Friday, the Minister said that when women rise, the nation rises with them. The event witnessed wide participation and was attended by local leaders including Pendurthi MLA Panchakarla Ramesh Babu and former MLA Gandhi Babji.

As the chief guest, Minister Anitha released Swapnala Vimana, a book capturing the dreams and aspirations of young girls — a symbolic representation of their journey towards empowerment.

She lauded NTPC's initiatives aimed at nurturing the potential of girl children and stressed the impor-

ance of continued institutional efforts in promoting gender equity.

Highlighting the increasing influence of women in the political and social fabric of Anakapalle district, she noted the encouraging rise in female voter participation.

The Minister also took pride in the impressive academic results of girls in recent Class 10 board exams, particularly those from government schools, calling their performance a testament to their intelligence and potential.

Expressing concern over the growing threat of substance abuse among the youth, Anitha urged for comprehensive awareness programmes to combat the dangers of drugs, especially narcotics like ganja.

She called upon the NTPC to broaden its outreach, advocating for educational initiatives on crucial issues such as "good touch and bad touch" to safeguard children and instil awareness from a young age.

"There is no greater wealth than edu-



cation," she affirmed, encouraging parents to prioritise their daughters' learning, aspirations, and holistic development. The programme served as an

inspiring forum to reinforce the message of girl child empowerment and the need for collaborative efforts to foster inclusive growth in the region.



Elderly woman's admiration moves Dy CM Pawan Kalyan

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan moved with the love and affection of an elderly woman, who he met and had lunch with the woman in his camp office here on Friday.

The elderly woman Potula Perantamma, a resident of Esukapalli village of Y Kothapalli mandal, is an ardent follower and admirer of Pawan Kalyan. She prayed to goddess Vegulamma for the election victory of Pawan Kalyan. She vowed to present

'Garaga' to the goddess, if he won elections.

With the savings from the social security pension, she presented Rs 27,000 worth 'Garaga' to the goddess to fulfill her vow. Pawan Kalyan came to know her love and affection for him. He called her to his camp office today and welcomed her when arrived to the camp office.

Pawn Kalyan had lunch with the elderly woman and he personally served her food. Later he presented her a saree. He personally saw her off at his camp office.

AP accelerated tribal development: Sandhya Rani

PNS ■ PARVATIPURAM

The Tribal Welfare and Women and Child Welfare Minister, Gummadi Sandhya Rani, has reaffirmed the Andhra Pradesh government's commitment to the holistic development of tribal regions. Addressing the media after a review meeting with Project Officers from all nine Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) on Friday, she highlighted key areas of focus including education, healthcare, housing, and infrastructure.

Minister Sandhya Rani emphasised Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's vision to uplift tribal communities through targeted efforts. She announced that all government schools in tribal areas will undergo infrastructure improvements before the academic year begins in June. This initiative is part of a larger plan led by IT and HRD Minister Nara Lokesh to enhance educational standards in under-served regions.

On basic amenities, the



Minister stated that over 4,000 tribal villages now have access to potable water, with remaining areas being covered on a priority basis. The government is also integrating Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) into tribal welfare programmes, ensuring vital nutrition and healthcare through over 2,000 Anganwadi centres and 1,268 mini-centres. In the housing sector, the State government is allotting land to slum dwellers, providing three cents in rural areas and two cents in urban areas for permanent homes. Additionally, Aadhaar and ration card enrolment drives are being conduct-

ed in regions like Paderu and Srisaillam.

Sandhya Rani also highlighted the economic potential of tribal regions, particularly the expansion of Araku coffee cultivation, which now spans over one lakh acres. The government is also supporting agriculture and horticulture-based livelihoods to create sustainable employment opportunities. On healthcare, she mentioned several improvements, including the deployment of more doctors, the establishment of birth waiting halls, and the launch of the "Thalibidda Express" service for postnatal care, which has contributed to higher natural delivery rates in tribal regions.

In employment, the Mega DSP initiative is set to benefit over 2,000 tribal youth, offering new skills and job opportunities. The Minister criticised the previous government's inaction on Government Order No. 3, which was annulled by the Supreme Court, and assured that a new Government Order to protect tribal rights is being drafted.

Complete housing targets in stipulated time, Minister Parthasarathy tells officials

PNS ■ ELURU

Minister for Housing and I&PR K Parthasarathy warned the officials concerned of action, if negligence is found in completing the construction of houses as per the set target.

Minister K Parthasarathy held a meeting in Nuzvid on Friday with the Housing construction department officials and reviewed the process of construction of houses for the poor.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister made it clear that steps should be taken to complete the housing construction as per the target set by the government. Otherwise, action would be taken against the officials responsible, he warned.

When some issues were brought to his notice by TDP leaders, the Minister instructed the officials concerned to take steps to resolve them, adding that the government's objective is to ensure that every eligible poor person has a house.

When asked how many houses have been built in the constituency and how many more are to be built, the officials failed to provide the information to the minister. The Minister expressed his anger over the lack of comprehensive details with the officials.

"If the schemes being implemented by the government to the poor are not delivered to the beneficiaries on time, the beneficiaries will ultimately lose out. Action will be taken against the officials concerned, if negligence in completing the given target within the stipulated time is found," Minister Parthasarathy warned the officials.

He directed the Housing PD, AE and work inspectors to work in coordinated manner to complete the houses expeditiously.

Nuzvid Sub-collector B Smaran Raj, Housing construction project director and other officials were among those who attended the meeting.



Tourism Minister Durgesh offers appointment letters at 'Job Mela'

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Minister for Tourism and Cinematography Kandula Durgesh stated that the Mega Job Mela held in Nidadavole on Friday would create employment opportunities for thousands of young people.

The Minister inaugurated the Mega Job Mela at the Velagapudi Durgamba Government Women's Degree College campus in Nidadavole. He distributed appointment letters to the candidates selected for various roles through the event.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Durgesh noted that 42 companies had participated in the job mela, offering over 2,000 employment opportunities to unemployed youth. He said a significant

number of IT companies were involved in the event. He added that tourism and hospitality companies would be invited to the next job fair, Mela, which would provide opportunities for graduates in hotel and hospitality management.

Recalling the recent introduction of postgraduate tourism courses at Rajamahendravaram Arts College, the Minister said job fairs were being conducted in the district with the support of Vikas Organisation and Central and State Government agencies. He described the mela as a golden opportunity for the youth and urged them to make full use of it.

Minister Durgesh said the Prime Minister, Chief Minister, and Deputy Chief

Ministers were committed to creating employment opportunities for young people. He reminded the public that a Mega DSC has already been announced in the state, with over 16,000 teaching posts.

He further informed that a Cabinet sub-committee, comprising five ministers, has been formed to facilitate the creation of 20 lakh jobs over the next five years. He assured that those who were not selected at the fair should not lose hope, as training programmes would be arranged to enhance their skills and provide them with future employment opportunities.

The Minister also recalled Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's promise to create an entrepreneur in every household.

"I have requested Vikas Organisation to establish a continuous training programme for youth, focusing on communication skills to help them secure employment. They will coordinate with multinational companies such as TCS and Cognizant to bring in trainees," he said.

Launching a strong criticism of the previous YSRCP government, Minister Durgesh alleged that though the party had promised job creation, no such initiative was implemented during its five-year tenure. Nidadavole Municipal Chairman Bhupathi Adinara yana, Vikas PD K. Lachra Rao, Skill Development Corporation's GVD Murali, and former MLA B. Sessa Rao were present at the event.

Officials instructed to be prepared for disaster management

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has directed officials to remain fully prepared to tackle disasters effectively. Training sessions were conducted for district, divisional, and mandal-level officials via Google Meet on Friday to enhance preparedness and response strategies.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Nagarani emphasised the importance of taking preventive measures to minimise the loss of life and property during disasters. She urged officials to gain a thorough understanding of every aspect of disaster management and to be capable of implementing these measures at the field level.

"No lives should be lost in the district due to natural calamities such as floods, cyclones, lightning, or flash floods," the Collector said. "A reliable system must be in place to disseminate information even to remote areas to alert the public in time."

She further instructed that

whenever alerts related to thunder and lightning are issued by the State Disaster Management Authority, concerned officials must ensure that the information promptly reaches agricultural labourers, farmers, shepherds, and those engaged in NREGA works.

The Collector also recalled that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, while reviewing the damage caused by the sudden rains on 4 May, had issued clear instructions to the officials on disaster preparedness.

Collector Nagarani added that in the event of a lightning-related fatality, an audit should be conducted. The audit must verify whether warnings were issued, if those working in the area received the alerts, and whether any preventive measures were in place. A comprehensive report should then be submitted.

DRO M Venkateswarulu, DWMA PD KCH Appa Rao, DPO B Arunsi, and District Fire Officer B Sriniva Rao were among those present at the meeting.



2.86 lakh MT of paddy purchased from farmers so far: EG JC

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

East Godavari Joint Collector S Chinna Ramudu has said that 2,86,684 metric tonnes of paddy has been purchased from the farmers so far during the rabi season.

In a statement here on Friday, the Joint Collector said that the 2,86,684 metric tonnes of paddy has been procured during the rabi season so far from 24,798 farmers as against the target 3.30 lakh metric tonnes. He said that 39,856 FTO coupons have been issued to the farmers regarding procurement of paddy till May 9.

"An amount of Rs 550.26 crore has been credited into the bank accounts of farmers for their paddy produce," the Joint Collector asserted. The Joint Collector advised the farmers to dry up their paddy produce to ensure that the moisture level is reduced to 17 percent. As many as 62 lakh gunny bags had been supplied to the farm-



ers to shift their paddy to the rice mills, the Joint Collector highlighted.

Joint Collector Chinna Ramudu made it clear that Rs 2,300 is being paid for common variety of paddy per quintal and Rs 2,320 is being paid to the 'A' grade paddy variety in the district.

In order to do away with cumbersome in selling their paddy produce, the WhatApp (73373 59375) facility was provided to the farmers to sched-

ule their paddy selling from their homes itself. The farmers using the WhatAPP scheduling facility have sold 12,817 metric tonnes of paddy, the JC claimed.

The GPS devices were installed to 2833 vehicles which are transporting paddy during the rabi season to make the paddy procurement process easy, he revealed. The farmers are being provided the information about the moisture level of their paddy through SMS, the JC highlighted, adding that within 24 hours, money is credited into the bank accounts of farmers after purchasing their paddy produce.

Initially, 3.30 lakh metric tonnes of paddy procurement was set as target. But after getting information that the farmers have a huge quantity of paddy, it has been decided to purchase 50,000 metric tonnes more paddy produce from the farmers during the rabi.

Naidu neglecting Anantapur: Sailajanath

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Former minister and YSR Congress Party leader Sake Sailajanath has strongly criticised Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for allegedly neglecting Anantapur district and failing to fulfil promises made to the drought-prone region.

Speaking to the media, Sailajanath took exception to Naidu's recent visit to Urvakonda, accusing the Chief Minister of ignoring critical issues and offering "only empty words." He alleged that the Handri-Neeva project, once considered a vital irrigation lifeline, had been reduced to a drinking water scheme. He demanded that the canal's capacity be expanded to 10,000 cusecs to tackle the district's acute water crisis.

The former minister further accused Naidu of reneging on earlier commitments such as the establishment of

an airport and a spiritual centre at Penugonda's ISKCON temple. "Anantapuram, which elected 14 MLAs and two MPs from the TDP, deserves better," he said.

Sailajanath also urged the revival of horticulture schemes introduced by the late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy and continued by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, including free drip irrigation for small farmers and a modern horticultural research centre. He criticised the Chief Minister for engaging in "vendetta politics" and questioned the delay in establishing the Rayalaseema High Court.

Calling for immediate action to address water scarcity and support farmers, Sailajanath warned that the people of Anantapur would hold Naidu accountable. He reaffirmed the YSRCP's commitment to fighting for the district's rights.

Hostels to be built with all facilities for medical college students: Spl CS

PNS ■ ELURU

Health department Special Chief Secretary MT Krishna Babu directed the officials concerned to take steps to construct hostels consisting of all facilities to the medical college students.

Krishna Babu inspected the construction work of government medical college buildings on the premises of the government hospital in Eluru, at the Ayushman Bharat department and at the social welfare hostel complexes on Friday along with District Collector K Vetriselvi, State Director of Medical Education Dr. Narasimhan, Assistant Director Venkatesh, Eluru MLA Badeti Radhakrishnaiah.

Speaking on the occasion, Special Chief Secretary Krishnababu said that in the coming days, more than 750 students would pursue medical education, undergraduate,



postgraduate and specialist courses at the medical college.

He asked that proposals be sent immediately to construct hostel buildings in addition to the existing buildings to accommodate that capacity. The officials were instructed to ensure that the hostel buildings are located close to the medical college.

The officials explained the details of the land available for the construction of hostels to the Special Chief Secretary. Later, Krishna Babu personally inspected the construction

work of the government medical college being constructed on the premises of the district government main hospital in Eluru.

District Medical and Health Officer Dr. Malini, DCHS Dr. Pal Satish, Eluru RDO Achyut Ambareesh, SC Corporation ED Mukkunti, Medical and Health Department Infrastructure Development Organization Chief Engineer K Srinivas, SE Balaram Reddy and EE Rajababu were among those who accompanied the Special Chief Secretary.

200 litres of fermented jaggery wash destroyed

PNS ■ ELURU

The excise and prohibition officials and the police conducted a raid and destroyed 200 litres of fermented jaggery wash, meant for brewing country-made liquor at Kamayyapalem village of Jeelugumilli mandal on Friday.

Jangareddygudem excise circle inspector K Srinubabu told the media that on a tip off, a team comprising police and excise officials, conducted a raid and found a huge quantity of jaggery wash. The fermented jaggery was made ready to distill country-made liquor.

The police and excise personnel destroyed the fermented jaggery wash. They also seized 5 litres of country-made liquor. Case was registered against A Srinivasa Rao.



Ready to fight against Pak, declares Uttam Kumar Reddy

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

Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Captain N. Uttam Kumar Reddy said that he is ready to fight against Pakistan if there is a full-scale confrontation and if there is a need for that.

During a chat with journalists on Friday at the Gandhi Bhavan, Uttam said the disputes between India and Pakistan cannot be solved unless action is taken on the Kashmir issue.

"My personal opinion is that this problem cannot be solved unless Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) is returned to India. The Indian Army's counter-attack against Pakistan in Jammu was right. If war continues, Pakistan will collapse. No third country may come forward to intervene," he said.

Uttam said that he joined the IAF at the age of 16 and was a Mig-21 pilot in 1982. "I also flew the Mig-23, whose speed is 2.5 times that of



sound. I was posted at Uttarlai, Srinagar and Amritsar and became a pilot at the age of 20," Uttam said.

He said that killing tourists after asking about their religion was shocking. "The TRF is the terror wing of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). The right thing to do is to teach Pakistan a lesson. Rafale jets and Kamikaze drones were used during Operation Sindoor. Rafales operated entirely

from Indian territory," he said.

Reacting to the opposition's criticism regarding ministers using helicopters, Uttam said that while using helicopters 300 litres of fuel is used per hour. The expense involved in using a helicopter is Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.20 lakh for going anywhere in Telangana. Usually, three to four Ministers use one helicopter. If four ministers go by road,

the expense would exceed Rs 1.20 lakh and will take a lot of time too, he said.

"We are using helicopters to fulfil public needs. The BRS government also used to hire helicopters. I reviewed the Palamuru-Rangareddy Project in half a day using a helicopter. If I had gone by road, it would have taken four days. Ministers use helicopters only to discharge their duties fast," he said.

Two boys killed as tractor overturns

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

The marriage celebrations turned tragic as two boys were killed and five were injured when a tractor trailer on which a marriage party was travelling overturned at Vinnakota village of Gudlavallu mandal on Friday.

Police said that as many as 20 people were going to their village Gajulapadu of Nandivda mandal after attending a marriage of their close relative.

The tractor overturned killing Kutayala Arun (16) and Kanakavalli Abhisekh (15) instantaneously.

The injured were shifted to the GGH in Machilipatnam.

The injured persons told the media that the tractor driver tried to take out his mobile phone from his pocket resulting in him losing control over the vehicle.

Govt should demand Centre to include SCS in AP Reorganization Act 2014: APCC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) demanded the Naidu headed coalition government to demand the Centre to include the Special Category Status (SCS) in the AP Reorganization Act 2014.

Talking to the media here on Friday, APCC Vice-president Kolanukonda Shivaji pointed out that the AP Cabinet, in its meeting on May 8, resolved to demand the Centre to amend the AP Reorganization Act 2014 to include Amaravati as Capital city of Andhra Pradesh forever, in Section 5 and Sub-Section 2. He announced the Congress party's support to the Government's proposal.

However, the Government should also insist the Centre to include the Special Category Status issue to the AP Reorganization Act 2014. The Opposition parties have been accusing the Congress for the last one decade for excluding the Special Category Status

from the AP Reorganisation Act 2014, he stated.

Now the Naidu headed AP Government has an opportunity to insist the Centre to include the SCS to the AP Reorganisation Act 2014, he asserted, and demanded the government to pass a resolution in this regard.

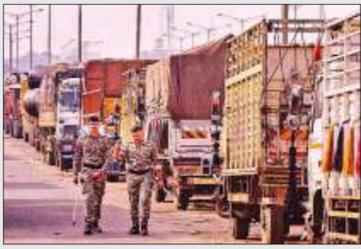
Congress leader Kolanukonda Shivaji demanded former Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy to respond to the ED's investigation of the liquor scam. The SIT found the hand of the then CMO

the liquor scam but the former Chief Minister has not responded so far. According to the report, Rs 10,000 crore money laundering took place but Jagan Mohan Reddy has not responded so far, the APCC vice-president blamed.

The Congress senior leader took strong exception to refusing permission to receive foreign funds to the Anantapur based Rural Development Trust, citing reasons that the organization is indulging in religious conversions.



ACROSS THE STATES



Transporters offer to hand over 7.5 lakh trucks to Army

The All India Motor Transport Congress on Friday offered to make available about 7.5 lakh trucks registered in Madhya Pradesh to the Indian Army. State unit chief of the association C L Mukati told reporters that he has written a letter to the Prime Minister's Office in this regard. "Operation Sindoor of the Indian armed forces has filled us with pride. In this critical time, to serve the country, we are ready to hand over 7.5 lakh trucks registered in the state to the army free of cost. We are safe only because of the valour of our army," he said. During the Kargil war of 1999, transporters in the state had handed over about 1,000 trucks to the army cantonment in Mhow, said Mukati.



Delhi Police arrest arms supplier linked to gang

The Delhi Police arrested an interstate arms supplier linked to a gang here, an official said on Friday. The accused, identified as Ubaid Qureshi, a resident of New Mustafabad, Delhi, was apprehended near a hotel on May 7, where a semi-automatic pistol and two live cartridges were recovered from him, the police said. "A trap was laid in the busy Paharganj area after inputs about the arms delivery. Around 2:10 pm, Qureshi was spotted alighting from an auto-rickshaw. He attempted to flee but was cornered and overpowered," a senior police officer said. During interrogation, Qureshi revealed that he began his criminal journey back in around 2000 while working as a truck driver, which is when he came into contact with drug traffickers. He then got associated with Arshad, a close aide of Azim - a gangster currently engaged in a turf war with the Chenu Pehlwan gang. The police said that Qureshi was involved in 13 criminal cases in Uttar Pradesh and nine in Delhi. Also, his role as an arms courier for various gangs has now come under the scanner.



Nepal assures safety of its citizens studying in Pak

The Nepal government on Friday assured the safety of its citizens studying in Pakistan amid heightened tensions between India and Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a press release, also urged Nepalese citizens in Pakistan and their families to contact the Nepalese Embassy in Islamabad for immediate assistance if needed. "The foreign ministry is aware of the situation of Nepalese students in light of recent developments and is constantly keeping in touch with Nepalese students studying there (Pakistan)," it said. "The Nepal government is aware of its responsibility to ensure the safety and interests of the Nepalese students and other Nepalese who are in Pakistan," the statement said. Terrorists opened fire in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir on April 22, killing 26 people, including one Nepali national, in the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019. The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy of the banned Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), has claimed responsibility for the attack.

L-G Sinha visits shelling-hit J-K villages

Says Indian Army ready to deal with any situation

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

The morale of soldiers is high and the Indian Army is ready to deal with any situation, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said on Friday after visiting villages affected by Pakistani shelling in the Uri sector.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration is ensuring that people in Uri do not face any inconvenience, he added.

"Attempts were made (to attack) but the morale of the forces is very high and they are ready to deal with any situation," Sinha told reporters in Baramulla.

"I went to villages in the border areas that suffered losses. The injured and the families of those who died have been granted ex-gratia.

The losses are being ascertained," he said.

Sinha said there was a need for additional safety bunkers, which would be built in the coming days.

"The injured are being treated. I went to see them and all are stable and will be discharged soon," he said.

Earlier, the lieutenant governor interacted with soldiers in Uri and commended their ser-



The Jammu and Kashmir administration is ensuring that people in Uri do not face any inconvenience, says L-G Sinha

vices to the nation. "The nation has always been proud of you. Whenever the

nation has faced any problem, you have rendered a supreme sacrifice," he said.

Sinha also visited villages in the Uri sector to assess the damage caused by Pakistani shelling in civilian areas over the past three nights.

Sinha directed the administration to provide immediate relief to the affected families and ensure their safety.

"Took assessment of the damage to the civilian area and residential houses caused by unprovoked shelling by Pakistan in the border villages of Lagama and Gingal in Uri.

I've directed the district admin to provide immediate relief to the affected families and ensure their safety and security," Sinha said in a post on X.

The lieutenant governor interacted with residents of Gingal, which witnessed heavy overnight shelling.

"Interacted with citizens during my visit to Gingal, Uri. Visited Lagama village in Uri and took appraisal of damage due to unprovoked firing by Pakistan.

The nation is standing strong with the affected families," Sinha said.

Kolkata Port tightens security in wake of conflict with Pak

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata's Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port has enhanced its security protocols and operational vigilance in the wake of the ongoing military conflict with Pakistan, port officials said on Friday.

Security was beefed up following directives from the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and the Directorate General of Shipping.

A high-level security review meeting was virtually conducted by the secretary of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, T K Ramachandran, with all the port officials.

The meeting was attended by senior officials of Kolkata Port, including Chairman Rathendra Raman, Deputy Chairman Samrat Rahi, senior



CISF Commandant Ruchi Anand and departmental heads.

Pursuant to the meeting, the port chairman held a meeting with senior officials for a review and announced a series of measures.

All personnel have been instructed to remain alert and report any suspicious activity immediately. Although Kolkata Port is located in the eastern part of the country and the

security threats are primarily in the western and northern regions, Kolkata Port is leaving no room for complacency on the security front, officials said.

"At Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata, the safety and security of our men, property and vessels is of utmost priority. Given the current national security situation, it is our collective responsibility to stay vigilant and prepared," Raman said.

Waqf Act is a step towards empowerment: Arunachal Guv

PNS ■ ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik on Friday hailed the Waqf Amendment Act 2025 as a progressive and inclusive measure aimed at empowering underprivileged sections of society.

Speaking at a Waqf reform awareness meet held at Raj Bhavan here, the governor said the Waqf Amendment Act ensures that the benefits and revenues generated from Waqf properties are effectively utilised for the upliftment of those in need, helping them stand shoulder to shoulder with other communities.



"The reform is not just about administration, it is about empowerment and equity," Parnaik said, addressing a gathering of community leaders, scholars, and representatives from various faiths.

He noted that the Waqf Amendment Act is the out-

come of extensive consultations and thoughtful deliberations, and represents a collective effort to bring about meaningful reforms for the benefit of all sections of the Muslim community, a Raj Bhavan communique said here.

"The process was guided by the inclusive spirit of 'Sabka Prayas' and reflects true national participation and teamwork," he said.

Parnaik also urged the Muslim community not to view itself as a minority, citing inspiring figures like former President A P J Abdul Kalam as shining examples of the community's contributions to India's growth and development.

Civil defence authorities to get emergency procurement power

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In view of an ongoing military conflict between India and Pakistan, the Centre has asked all states to give emergency procurement power to the heads of the civil defence authorities so that they can make the required purchases in case of an emergency situation.

In a communication to the chief secretaries of all states and Union territories, Director General of Fire Services, Civil Defence and Home Guards Vivek Srivastava said preparing the civil administration and adopting precautionary measures against hostile attacks in the states and Union territories are governed by the Civil Defence Act and Rules, 1968.

Citing the current hostile-attack scenario, the attention of the chief secretaries was drawn to section 11 of the Civil Defence Rules, 1968 that empowers the states to take certain measures deemed necessary for the protection of people and properties from injury or damage or for ensuring the due maintenance of vital services in the event of a



hostile attack.

The communication said the funds of the local authority shall be applicable to the payment of the charges and expenses incidental to such compliance, and priority shall be given to such compliance over all other duties and obligations of the local authority.

"I shall be grateful if section 11 of the CD (Civil Defence) Rules, 1968, can be invoked and necessary emergency procurement powers to the director civil defence of your state/UT may be granted so that efficient implementation of the necessary precautionary

measures can be implemented," the communication said.

There has been a rising military conflict between the two neighbouring countries following India's strikes on multiple locations in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) on Wednesday and Pakistan's attempts to hit Indian military sites on Thursday, which were thwarted by the Indian armed forces.

The Indian strikes were carried out in the wake of the April 22 terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam in which 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed.

Gujarat govt bans use of drones, firecrackers till May 15

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat government on Friday imposed a ban on the use of drones and firecrackers till May 15 in light of the military conflict between India and Pakistan.

The government also warned of taking strict action against those social media users who "spread anti-national sentiments".

"No firecrackers or drones will be allowed in any functions or events until the 15th of this month. Kindly cooperate and follow the guidelines," Gujarat Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi said in a post on X.

Earlier in the day, Sanghavi chaired a meeting with state police officials through video conference in Gandhinagar.

The meeting was attended by state Director General of Police (DGP) Vikas Sahay, Intelligence Bureau officials, Police Commissioners, Range Inspector Generals, district superintendents of police and cyber crime officials, an official release said.

During the meeting, the minister instructed the officials to keep a close watch and take strict action against peo-



ple who post anti-national content on social media platforms that could demoralise the armed forces, it said.

Also, action has been ordered against those who share or post any information on the movement of the army on social media platforms, the release added.

After the meeting, the minister said the state police on Friday lodged four FIRs in different parts of the state against some social media users for "spreading anti-national sentiments and undermining Army's morale".

"We will not tolerate those who post such content on social media. I have asked police heads to keep a watch on social media and take strict action against such elements," Sanghavi said.

Air India suspends Tel Aviv flights till May 25

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India on Friday announced extending the suspension of its flights to and from Tel Aviv till May 25.

Following a missile attack near the Tel Aviv airport on May 4, the airline had suspended its services till May 6 and later the same was extended till May 8.

Air India, the only Indian carrier to operate direct services to Tel Aviv, normally has five weekly flights to the Israeli city from Delhi.

"Our flights to and from Tel Aviv will remain suspended till 25th May 2025. Customers holding valid tickets for travel till 25th May 2025 will be offered a one-time waiver on rescheduling charges or a full refund for cancellations," the carrier said in a post on X on Friday.

On May 4, Air India had to divert its Delhi-Tel Aviv flight to Abu Dhabi due to the missile attack near the Tel Aviv airport.



CJI Khanna stresses on crisper petitions

Says huge effort needed to master 'art of drafting'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna on Friday laid stress on the need to have crisper and shorter petitions in judicial proceedings, saying a huge effort was required to master the "art of drafting".

Chief Justice Khanna, who is set to retire on May 13, said there was a need to adopt the "less is more" dictum as clarity in petitions was beneficial for both lawyers and judges.

He was speaking at a function organised by the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association (SCAORA) to bid him farewell.

Chief Justice of India (CJI)-



designate Justice BR Gavai, who is set to be sworn in as the 52nd CJI on May 14, also addressed the gathering.

He said CJI Khanna brought "transparency and inclusiveness" during his tenure.

In his address, CJI Khanna highlighted the importance of advocates-on-record in the Supreme Court and said they were not only apex court advocates but represented citizens from across the country.

"... one thing I still feel we haven't really mastered is the art of drafting. I feel that there is a huge effort which is required. We must adopt the dictum 'less is more'," the CJI said.

"The less you say, the shorter the petitions, the crisper the petitions, the clarity the petitions have, it is far more beneficial, both for you as well as the judges because, as judges, we exactly know what point is being argued," he said.

Stressing on the need to have crisper petitions, CJI Khanna said it helped in reading the files easily.

"And, as a judge, I can tell you, your 50 per cent work is done if the judge who has read the file

feels there is a point of view which requires consideration," he said.

He also asked advocates to argue matters in courts themselves instead of depending on their seniors.

"You have direct access to the litigants. Litigants talk to you, you prepare the brief, you study, and then you brief a senior. Why don't you come and argue in the court itself?" he asked.

The CJI said domain and subject matter skills were very important for lawyers.

Highlighting the importance of having full knowledge of the facts of a case, he said almost 70 to 80 per cent cases were decided on facts.

Editor's TAKE

A humble shepherd with a global vision

Revered for his humility, Pope Leo XIV is poised to shape a new chapter for the Church

In a historic and unexpected turn, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost has been elected as the 267th pope of the Roman Catholic Church, taking the name Pope Leo XIV. His election on May 8, 2025, marks the first time an American has ascended to the papacy, signaling a significant shift in the Church's global orientation.

Born in Chicago in 1955, Pope Leo XIV brings a rich tapestry of experiences to the papacy. His extensive missionary work in Peru, where he served as a bishop, and his leadership roles within the Augustinian order and the Vatican's Dicastery for Bishops, reflect a deep commitment to pastoral care and global outreach. Known for his reserved demeanor and thoughtful deliberation, he is often described as a "bridge builder" who seeks unity within the diverse tapestry of the Catholic Church.

His choice of the name Leo XIV pays homage to Pope Leo XIII, renowned for his advocacy of workers' rights and social justice. This selection underscores Pope Leo XIV's dedication to continuing a legacy of compassion and inclusivity.

Pope Leo XIV's election carries significant implications for the intersection of faith and politics, particularly in the United States. He has been an outspoken critic of nationalist policies, including those associated with former President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance, especially concerning immigration and social justice issues. While maintaining traditional Church teachings on matters like same-sex marriage and abortion, he emphasises the importance of pastoral sensitivity and the dignity of every individual.

His nuanced positions reflect a commitment to upholding doctrinal integrity while engaging with contemporary societal challenges. This approach aims to foster dialogue and understanding within a polarised global landscape.

The process leading to Pope Leo XIV's election was marked by thoughtful deliberation among the College of Cardinals. Following the death of Pope Francis in April 2025, 133 cardinal electors convened in the Sistine Chapel, engaging in a conclave guided by centuries-old traditions and the apostolic constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis*. After four ballots over two days, Cardinal Prevost emerged as a consensus candidate, reflecting a desire for continuity with Pope Francis's reformist agenda and a commitment to global inclusivity.

In his inaugural address, Pope Leo XIV emphasised themes of unity, peace, and pastoral care. He called for the Church to be a beacon of hope and a bridge in a fractured world. His leadership is expected to continue the synodal approach championed by his predecessor, promoting greater lay participation, environmental stewardship, and a compassionate outreach to marginalised communities.

As the Catholic Church embarks on this new chapter under Pope Leo XIV, his blend of humility, global experience, and commitment to social justice positions him to navigate the complexities of the modern world while staying rooted in the timeless teachings of the faith.

The Catholic Church, one of the oldest institutions in human history, has undergone profound transformations over the centuries — spiritually, politically, and culturally. Rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostolic tradition, the Church has had to continuously adapt to changing times while maintaining its theological foundations. In its early centuries, the Church faced persecution before eventually becoming intertwined with state power in the Roman Empire. The medieval period saw it wield immense political influence, often blurring the lines between spiritual authority and temporal control. However, this power was challenged by events such as the Great Schism and the Protestant Reformation, which forced the Church to re-evaluate its structures and doctrines.

The 20th century marked a particularly significant era of change. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was a watershed moment, modernising Church practices — introducing the use of vernacular languages in liturgy, promoting ecumenical dialogue, and encouraging greater engagement with the modern world. This opened the Church to a more pastoral and inclusive approach, focusing not only on doctrinal purity but also on social justice, human rights, and global outreach.

In recent decades, under popes like John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and especially Francis, the Church has further grappled with issues like secularism, clerical abuse, gender roles, and the role of laity. Pope Francis's emphasis on mercy, care for the poor, and environmental stewardship has redefined the Church's mission for many in the 21st century.

Now, with the election of Pope Leo XIV, the first American pontiff, the Church stands at another pivotal juncture. His leadership signals a continued embrace of reform, cultural diversity, and moral courage in facing the world's pressing social and political challenges. Through centuries of change, the Catholic Church has shown a remarkable ability to evolve — slowly, at times painfully, but always with a deep concern for its spiritual mission and global relevance.

India's power and resolve

The Prime Minister's decision to rely on the armed forces reflects a deeper commitment to professionalism, affirming that India's future depends on capable, values-driven experts and globally aligned views

After almost two weeks of the Pahalgaon massacre, India retaliated by carrying out cross-border strikes with precision and depth. According to a press release under Operation Sindoor, altogether nine terror camps and headquarters of Jaish and Lashkar were targeted in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. While India showed its strong will to strike back by carrying out cross-border strikes, the strategic message was beyond punishment this time.

Until now, India's strike-back pattern suggested punitive deterrence with a limited hitting range. Uri strikes in 2016 and Balakot Strikes in 2019 demonstrated India's capability to enforce punitive deterrence against Pakistan by sending the strategic message that any undesirable behaviour will be met with a swift and severe response. In fact, after the Parliament attacks, India launched Operation Parakram, which was also an attempt to demonstrate an act of punitive deterrence, but punitive deterrence became an ineffective strike-back option as Pakistan built a perception that India's deterrence behaviour could be sustained with the ability to counter-strike as they were credible and had a limited hitting range. Pakistan's perception was demonstrated in Operation Swift Retort when Pakistan swiftly acted the next day after the Balakot strikes by breaching India's airspace with JF-17s and attempting to carry out air strikes on non-military targets in J&K. While the escalation ladder was in a pretty controlled state from both sides. Still, India's larger objectives of enforcing deterrence against Pakistan remain quite faint as both states resorted to punitive deterrence, almost seroing down the effectiveness of deterrence on Pakistan. Consequently, Pakistan didn't learn its lessons. It continued its terror operations in J&K and even shaped its sub-conventional tactics to such an extent that it could launch deep terror strikes with an element of plausible deniability. Creating offshoots and front organisations like The Resistance Front.

The echo to configure strong offensive deterrence was found in former Chief of Army Staff General Krishnaswamy Sundarji's vision paper — India's Army Perspective Plan 2000. He argued that for Pakistan, we have to adopt a maximised offensive deterrence ranging from seizure of territory to destruction of Pakistan's military and economic capabilities. Similarly, another former Chief of Army Staff, General Sundarajan Padmanabhan, who oversaw India's Operation Parakram, said, "Perpetrator would be punished so severely that its continuation thereafter in any form would be in doubt." Both the Generals echoed, maximum and credible deterrence against Pakistan, not aiming to punish



Pakistan but to escalate deterrence and offensive measures to such extent that Pakistan's sub-conventional warfare capability gets eroded but this erosion requires continuity in delivery of credible deterrence such as done in Operation Sindoor.

Operation Sindoor demonstrated three key swift shifts from earlier striking patterns. First, India expanded its striking horizon by going beyond Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir and striking deep inside Pakistan by targeting key cities—Bhawalpur and Muridke. Second, multiple targets increase operational selectivity, which was limited to only one or two camps until now — third — Attempt to push Multi Domain

Deterrence against Pakistan. India's five-point diplomatic strike after a few days of attack which notably included keeping the Indus Water Treaty in abeyance to isolating Pakistan's diplomatic and economic potential was an attempt to bring double squeeze strategy into play by exploiting and exacerbating Pakistan's internal weakness at one end and strategically isolating at the global stage — miserable failure of Pakistan at UNSC closed-door meeting despite launching renewed decades-old narrative of "false flag" is one testament of strategic isolation.

Earlier, India's isolatory approach towards Pakistan had demonstrated ordinary diplomatic measures, but this time India attempt-

ed to demonstrate some extraordinary diplomatic measures, adding the actual element of multi-domain deterrence. Overall, this time, India's strategic response demonstrated its capability to impose a sustained, credible and multi-dimensional deterrence against Pakistan.

Operation Sindoor echoes the beginning of a shift from immediate deterrence to long-term credible deterrence against Pakistan. The idea of long-term credible deterrence can push Pakistan to the margins if India continues to develop its long-term deterrence by adding more credibility by precisely striking the Octopus — the head of terror outfits in future. This shift in deterrence against Pakistan will force Pakistan to realise the new strategic reality that any misadventure would be met with an overwhelming response, not limited to plain responses. India's Operation Sindoor also gives a glimpse that India is also chalking a path of integrated deterrence and gradually departing from the traditional notion of deterrence, a similar move that the United States did in its National Defence Strategy after realising increasing threats and risks to its strategic security especially after 9/11 and began to sharpen its integrated deterrence in modern time after realising increased threat from rising threat from Russia and China in a heightened strategic completion environment.

The threat of the escalation ladder spiralling is one major issue in the retaliation cycle between India and Pakistan. This gets further aggravated if the Pakistan leadership is strongly tilted towards Islamic generals — from Zia, Musharraf, Parvez Kayani, to Asim Munir. Though India has already made it clear that its actions are calculative, precise, and non-

escalatory, targeting only terrorists, Pakistan has tried to play with fire when it comes to controlling escalations from unprovoked offensives at the border to launching nuclear rhetoric. After India's thunderbolt response, Pakistan's top echelons may be in a dilemma in delivering a reaction while considering the escalation factor, as the onus of escalation is now on Pakistan. Last year, Pakistan carried out limited air strikes in response to Iran's retaliatory response against anti-Iran terror groups in the bordering region of Pakistan. Similarly, Pakistan might opt for limited air-to-cross-border strikes but may also exercise in-depth strikes. At present, Pakistan is attempting to flare up by indiscriminate shelling against civilians in J&K's bordering regions. Poonch is one of the worst-hit areas by Pakistan's shelling.

Whatever Pakistan's response, Asim Munir must realise that he is already suffering with high costs, with his nation getting humiliated and bleeding. If Munir attempts to deliver a miscalculated response, then the escalation ladder might spiral, and he might get consumed by his fire. Pakistan must also realise that it does not have many options; it cannot afford to put its strategic security at more risk, especially when Pakistan's western frontier is almost smoked by TTP and Baloch fighters. It's high time that Pakistan realises that now, higher costs and risks are involved in coercing India after it has demonstrated a swift shift in its deterrence against Pakistan by showing both power and resolve.

(The writer is an advocate and a columnist. Views are personal)

The Power of choice and faith

SECOND Opinion

BY BARBARA O'NEILL

My journey into the world of mental health began early, shaped by personal experience and a natural call to care. I was just 18 or 19 when I found myself taking care of my mother, who was wheelchair-bound. At the same time, I was studying psychology at night, and it quickly became clear that nursing — especially psychiatric nursing — was where my heart belonged. Even while enjoying the life of a young adult, I was deeply curious: What causes mental illness? What pushes a person to the edge?

One case I'll never forget involved a man admitted in utter crisis. His wife had left him, his business collapsed, his home was destroyed in a fire, and his son became a paraplegic — all in a short span of time. He had reached breaking point. But with coordinated care from social workers, financial advisors, and mental health professionals, his life began to mend. Just a week later, he walked out of the facility with a bag in his hand and hope in his heart. That experience taught me a vital truth: with the right support, people can recover—even from the depths of despair.

At 25, my path took a spiritual turn when I became a Christian. Around the same time, I developed a deep interest in natural remedies and a holistic approach to raising my children. A pivotal moment came when I was given a book

called *Psycho-Dietetics*, published in 1976. It explored how American doctors were using minerals, vitamins, and lifestyle changes to support mental health. That book lit a fire in me. It launched a lifelong pursuit of natural, empowering, and faith-aligned ways to support the mind.

I've always believed in raising independent thinkers — emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. I didn't spoon-feed my children; I wanted them to think, question, and grow strong from within. That same principle guides my approach to care: give people tools they can use on their own, not just within the walls of a clinic. In recent years, especially amid global upheaval and restrictions, many people have started to look inward and upward for answers. The need for holistic self-care — mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual — has never been clearer. People are realising that healing is not just something that happens in a doctor's office; it starts with taking responsibility for one's own well-being.

Mental health is complex, but one truth remains: our mindset matters. Depression is often a state of mind — though this may be difficult to hear, it carries weight. Therapies like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) help us see that while we can't always change our circumstances, we can choose our responses. Gratitude, even in suffering, is one of the most powerful tools. In a world gripped by fear and uncertainty, we must remember the profound power of choice. It is central to mental freedom, parenting, and spiritual growth. When we choose to trust God in adversity, we're not simply holding onto hope — we're resisting fear itself. But this choice also reveals a deeper spiritual truth: God is not a tyrant. He gives us freedom,

even when it means people sometimes choose wrongly and others suffer. Still, in reclaiming our minds from destructive patterns, this freedom becomes our greatest strength. We are not victims of our thoughts. We can choose what we focus on. As Dr Neil Nedley says, "The mind stayed on Him is a choice." Sometimes, that choice starts with "fake it till you make it." It may sound hollow, but it's a powerful truth — repetition creates reality. Just like going to the gym builds identity over time, practicing hope reshapes our inner dialogue.

Living in the present is also vital. We're often robbed of today by regrets or fears of tomorrow. But as one speaker said, "Love today. Love where you are. Love what's happening — because you'll never have that moment again." Gratitude brings healing. Even when self-critical, pause and reframe. Maybe your feet look odd — but they carry you. You are free.

Lastly, mental wellness is deeply rooted in the physical laws of health, where simple, consistent habits yield profound results. Breathing through the nose, rather than the mouth, enhances oxygenation and naturally filters the air we take in, supporting clearer thinking and calmness.

Regular movement, exposure to sunlight, and quality sleep are equally vital — research shows that just ten nights of six-hour sleep can reduce brain function by up to 50 per cent. Hydration and proper nutrition, particularly with omega-3 fatty acids, form the building blocks of cognitive and emotional balance. Faith doesn't remove fear, but it gives us the courage to keep walking, step by step.

(The author is a world renowned holistic healer and advocate of transformative wellness. Views are personal)

Leaderspeak



Our response was targeted and measured. It is not our intention to escalate the situation. However, if there are military attacks on us, there should be no doubt that it will be met with a very very firm response. As a neighbour and close partner, it is important that you have a good understanding of the situation.

S JAISHANKAR, MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Letters to the Editor

Caste census must bridge gaps

Madam — The move to conduct a caste-based census must be viewed with thoughtful consideration. Data can be a tool for progress if it promotes fairness and opportunity, not division. Global principles emphasise equal dignity, social cohesion, and the recognition of merit beyond inherited identity. While marginalised communities deserve focused support, categorising citizens primarily by caste may risk reinforcing societal barriers.

Instead, emphasis should be placed on gathering data related to education, employment, and healthcare disparities. Nation-building thrives when every citizen feels valued as part of one collective future. Let us ensure that any data collection fosters inclusion, not fragmentation. Policy must balance historical realities with a shared vision for equity and unity. Progress lies not in highlighting our differences but in bridging them meaningfully.

In conclusion, the call for a caste-based census must be grounded in a vision that uplifts rather than divides. While acknowledging historical injustices, we must prioritise data that addresses real developmental gaps — education, employment, healthcare — without deepening social fault lines. The aim should be to craft policies that empower the marginalised while reinforcing our shared national identity. India's progress depends on fostering unity through inclusion, not fragmentation through labels.

HASNAIN RABBANI | MUMBAI

Rohit Sharma calls it a day gracefully

Madam — Unfortunately, an underachiever in Whites called it a day for reasons known only to him. India captain Rohit Sharma has retired from Test cricket. It comes after reports in the Indian media that he would be removed as captain for the Test series in England this summer. Rohit gave nonchalant joy whenever in form and in mood. Retires when still good enough to play for couple of years.

In his test Career, Sharma played 67 Test matches, scoring 4,301 runs at an average of 40.57, including 12 centuries and 18 half-centuries. As a captain he succeeded Virat Kohli as Test captain in 2022 and led India in 24 matches, winning 12. In his ODI Career Rohit Sharma will continue to play ODIs and has recently led the team to the 2025 Champions Trophy title.

His T20 Career ended as he retired from T20 internationals after India's victory in the 2024 — T20 World Cup. A graceful exit, Rohit Sharma bows out of Test cricket with 4,301 runs in 67 matches, 12 centuries, and a captaincy that saw India win half of his 24 Tests in charge. Though his departure follows whispers of a captaincy change, Rohit exits with dignity intact, still capable, still cherished. Having led India to triumphs in the 2024 T20 World Cup and 2025 Champions Trophy, his legacy lives on. Sometimes, it is best to leave them wanting more.

JAYANTHY SUBRAMANIAM | MUMBAI

Operation Sindoor: Precision Strike

Madam — On May 7, India launched Operation Sindoor, a precision military strike targeting nine terrorist hubs in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK). This decisive action followed the April 22 Pahalgaon attack that killed 26 civilians, mostly tourists. Between 1:05 AM and 1:30 AM, Rafale Jets armed with SCALP missiles hit camps run by Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba. Notably, Indian forces avoided Pakistani military targets, signaling a calculated and focused counterterrorism mission. The operation highlights India's evolving military doctrine — marked by swift retaliation, strategic restraint, and intelligence-based targeting.

It reinforces India's stance of measured but firm responses to cross-border terrorism while bolstering its defense credibility. Geopolitically, the strike comes amid Pakistan's internal instability and raises the risk of regional escalation. Islamabad is likely to seek diplomatic support, especially from China and Turkey.

China's stance will be closely watched, given its Indo-Pacific ambitions. Western nations, particularly the US, may support India's right to self-defense while calling for calm. Beyond immediate security implications, Operation Sindoor could influence economic and diplomatic ties, including trade dynamics and water-sharing talks. As India aligns military action with broader national strategy, its assertive posture may mark a significant shift in South Asia's geopolitical landscape.

AMARJEET KUMAR | HAZARIBAGH

PAKISTAN LEANS ON CHINA FOR ARMS SUPPLIES

Since the US having cut off arms supplies to Pakistan in the wake of the changed geopolitical situation in Afghanistan, cash-strapped Islamabad has been increasingly leaning on China in recent years to fill the gap.

According to data compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), China was the largest supplier of military hardware to Pakistan, accounting for as much as 81 per cent of the country's total imports, followed by the Netherlands at 5.5 per cent and Turkey at 3.8 per cent. Turkish President Erdogan expressed solidarity with Pakistan amid rising tensions with India following Operation Sindoor.

The total arms imports from China between 2019 and 2023 alone were valued at \$5.28 billion, which accounted for 63 per cent of Pakistan's total arms imports, according to SIPRI data.

Pakistan has been getting defence hardware from China that ranges from fighter jets for the air force to sub-

marines and frigates for the country's navy and artillery guns for the Pakistan Army. The JF-17 Thunder fighter jet is a flagship project of China-Pakistan military cooperation. The JF-17 is currently a mainstay of the Pakistan Air Force after the US stopped supplying its F-16s. Production of the jets started in 2007, and deliveries are ongoing, with each delivery introducing upgraded modern variants.

In 2015, Pakistan ordered eight Type-041 Yuan-class conventional submarines from China, four of which were to be built in China, and four to be made under license in Pakistan at Karachi Shipyard. Delivery schedule for these submarines runs from 2022 to 2028, with the deal valued at \$5 billion. Pakistan has also got Chinese SH-15 155mm self-propelled artillery guns for deployment to the Indian border. With this the Pakistan having full support of mighty China currently which is worrisome for India.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

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

Victory's veil: The allied legacy of moral evasion

Eighty years on, the Allied victory is still hailed as a triumph over tyranny — but behind the celebration lies a legacy of deceit, injustice, and moral compromise. The victors fashioned a postwar world less defined by liberation than by selective memory and calculated impunity

FIRST Column

When President Harry Truman read the plea from Manhattan Project scientists urging a reconsideration of the atomic bomb's use on Japan, his response likely showed no moral hesitation or remorse. Instead, his actions reinforced a postwar global order based not on liberty, but on selective memory and perverse exoneration.

Eighty years after Victory in Europe Day, the dominant Western narrative continues to present the war's outcome as a triumph of virtue, ignoring the uncomfortable ethical compromises and strategic duplicities that underpinned it. The mythology of liberation has become sacrosanct, while the darker aspects — such as rendition, racial internment, scientific justification of war crimes, and indifference to colonial sacrifice — remain marginalised or erased. The obliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki — while dressed in the procedural lexicon of wartime necessity — was, in fact, the Western world's inaugural postbellum moral abdication. The bombings were less a denouement of global conflict and more a vulgar display of technological supremacy calculated to dissuade Soviet assertiveness. The horror, therefore, was not simply that a nuclear Rubicon had been crossed, but that it was done with an exculpatory grin, and later justified with the antiseptic language of 'strategic imperatives'. It is no longer speculative fiction but a matter of record, buried in declassified memoranda, that alternatives existed — namely, Japan's increasing willingness to consider surrender if the Emperor were retained. Truman's decision was not an exigency of war, but a deliberate theatricality of dominance. The supposed Allied moral high ground crumbled further when Operation Paperclip was set into motion.

Over 1,600 Nazi scientists, including unrepentant perpetrators of ghastly human experimentation, were clandestinely ferried into the United States under the auspices of national security and scientific utility. Werner von Braun, a man whose rockets were lubricated by the blood of enslaved labourers at Mittelwerk, became a lauded patriarch of American aerospace triumph. The apologia was monstrously bureaucratic — his past affiliations were 'scrubbed' to sanitise his assimilation into American exceptionalism. In a 1947 CIA memo, the chilling intent is laid bare: "It is not desirable that the public or press become aware..." — a line that resounds like a macabre hymn to state-sanctioned impunity. This institutional duplicity was not uniquely American.

The British intelligence establishment had its own euphemistically elegant form of deceit. Through the "Double Cross System," M15 successfully manipulated German intelligence via double agents, such as the legendary Juan Pujol Garcia, to misdirect Axis expectations about D-Day. Though tactically ingenious, this also reveals an alarming precedent: deception, once wielded in wartime, quickly transmogrifies into peacetime governance. The ability to deceive a foreign enemy soon turned inward —



domestic populations were no longer sacrosanct from psychological warfare, propaganda, and informational obfuscation. Simultaneously, the West turned a wilfully blind eye to Soviet atrocities for the sake of fragile alliances. The Katyn Forest massacre, wherein Stalin's NKVD executed over 22,000 Polish officers, was known to the Roosevelt and Churchill administrations.

Declassified communications confirm that both leaders opted for calculated silence, fearing the rupture of wartime unity. One CIA memo chillingly advised that "public disclosure not advised due to diplomatic concerns." In those words lies the DNA of postwar moral relativism: truth subjugated to expediency.

Even within the triumphant United States, the internment of over 110,000 Japanese Americans — a move unreplicated in scale or racial homogeneity for any other ethnic group — was executed under the pretence of national security, yet dripped with racial animus. The true indictment emerges not just

from the camps themselves, but from what came after. Thousands of Japanese American men volunteered to fight for a nation that caged their families. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, largely composed of these internees' sons, became the most decorated unit of its size in US military history. Their leader, Senator Daniel Inouye, once said, "We fought not just the enemy, but the prejudice of our own country. Still, we fought."

That their legacy was received with patronising nods rather than substantive restitution only amplifies the grotesquerie of their sacrifice. Meanwhile, British colonial troops — 2.5 million strong from India, Africa, and the Caribbean — were deployed across the world's war fronts, shedding blood for a Crown that had no intention of emancipating them.

In Burma, Indian troops bore the brunt of the jungle war, their bodies discarded in the colonial ledger as expendable assets. Their gallantry was neither commemorated with equitable pensions nor with places in British collective memory. A veteran of the Burma Campaign once lamented: "We fought for the British, yet after the war, they forgot us. My medals mean little without respect." Postwar Britain, engrossed in rebuilding its own wounded self-image, had no space for the sepia-toned loyalty of its colonial wards. Simultaneously,



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

EVEN WITHIN THE TRIUMPHANT UNITED STATES, THE INTERNMENT OF OVER 110,000 JAPANESE AMERICANS — A MOVE UNREPLICATED IN SCALE OR RACIAL HOMOGENEITY FOR ANY OTHER ETHNIC GROUP — WAS EXECUTED UNDER THE PRETENCE OF NATIONAL SECURITY, YET DRIPPED WITH RACIAL ANIMUS

Time for the People of J&K to Rise and Shine!

Once plagued by instability, Jammu and Kashmir is now witnessing a transformative resurgence in tourism, infrastructure, and investment, ushering in a new era of growth, opportunity, and national integration

The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful places on earth. It, however, has also been one of the most volatile regions due to the delusional and dogmatic mindset of our western neighbour. The result: ever since 1947, it has been subjected to periods of turmoil, instability and tremendous external pressures.

The casualties in this entire process have been the people of the State along with our brave security forces, who have defended the people from both external as well as indoctrinated internal elements. Post-Independence, the economy of the State was doing quite well, and it was driven to a large extent by the tourism industry. For decades, this sector formed a critical part of the State's economy and was the favourite destination of India's most loved entertainment source — the Bollywood movies!

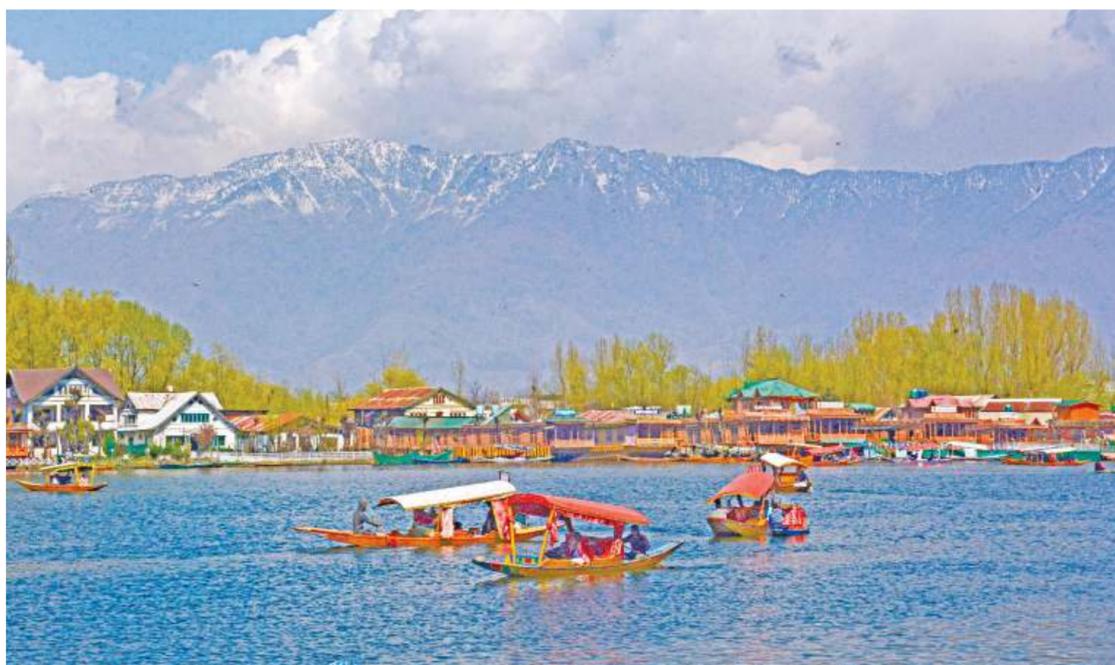
As a result, the State remained in the limelight, with the most famous actors, in a way, becoming its brand ambassadors. As many as 50 per cent of the movies were shot in the State, showcasing its beauty and creating avenues of growth for various extensions of the entertainment industry.

This had a huge bearing and created fertile conditions for the coming up of tourist destinations, hotels, markets for local handicrafts, the Kashmiri 'apple' and 'dry fruits', shikara (houseboats) — all of which generated tremendous employment for the people of the State.

In 1955, over 50 thousand domestic and foreign tourists visited J&K; this number crossed 74 thousand by 1960, to over 1.5 lakh by 1968, and stood at around 5.85 lakhs in 1980. Srinagar, in the 1960s and 70s, had approximately 5-9 daily flights from many Indian cities and was relatively well connected back in the days.

According to a Government survey, J&K welcomed 7 lakh tourists in 1987, and this went down to a mere 6,000 three years later. This proved the sheer economic damage that the State suffered due to instability and mischievous propaganda of vested interests. Things improved a little post-1989, and unfortunately the region was embattled in the Kargil War in 1999. Things did take a turn for the better, and by 2010 — 30 years after 1980 — the number of tourist arrivals touched the 5-lakh mark, going on to show that despite some recovery, the State made no real progress in this area in 30 years due to the prevailing uncertainties and an environment of terror.

In 2019, when the Government took the bold step of abolishing Article 370, and firmly conveyed its position — that enough is enough — J&K once again began an era of unprecedented economic and all-round progress. The improved overall environ-



ANIL RAJPUT

ment and sentiment was first and foremost reflected through the tourist arrivals that broke all records. In 2021, 1.13 crore tourists visited the UT; 1.89 crore in 2022; this increased to 2.12 crores in 2023 and 2.36 crores in 2024. This has also resulted in many multinational and domestic hotel chains opening new properties in the UT, and the region currently offers 62,488 registered tourist beds across hotels, guest houses and houseboats.

In addition, J&K is developing 75 new tourist destinations, 75 heritage/cultural sites, 75 Sufism/religious sites and 75 adventure treks/sites — potentially attracting tourists for all the four seasons.

ACCORDING TO A GOVERNMENT SURVEY, J&K WELCOMED 7 LAKH TOURISTS IN 1987, AND THIS WENT DOWN TO A MERE 6,000 THREE YEARS LATER. THIS PROVES THE SHEER ECONOMIC DAMAGE THAT THE STATE SUFFERED DUE TO INSTABILITY AND MISCHIEVOUS PROPAGANDA OF VESTED INTERESTS.

There has also been a massive increase in the daily flights to Srinagar, which is today witnessing around 45-50 daily flights in summer and 35-37 flights in the winters. To complete a full circle, as many as 300 movies and web series were shot in J&K in two years (2022 and 2023) — a clear signal that the atmosphere was back to the pre-1989 days. In fact, here it is critical to mention the laudable and impactful steps that the Central and the UT Government have taken since 2019: the Prime Minister's Development Package — 2015 was accelerated and 53 projects pertaining to 15 ministries are being implemented at a cost of ₹58,477 crores in various sectors such as roads, power, health, education, tourism, agriculture, skill development and much more — out of these, 29 projects have been completed with many others in advanced stages of production.

A new Central Sector Scheme was notified in 2021 for the industrial development of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, with an outlay of ₹28,400

crores. In addition, J&K has received investment applications of more than ₹54,000 crores, out of which projects worth more than ₹36,000 crores have been allotted industrial land. The construction work of 17,601 km of roads under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana was completed up to March 2022, and this has connected over 2,074 places. Two AIIMS, seven new medical colleges, two cancer institutes and 15 nursing colleges have been taken up and operationalised, along with reviving power projects for about 3,000 MW capacity.

Three major irrigation projects that include Ravi Canal (₹62 crore), third stage of Tral Lift Irrigation Scheme (₹45 crore) and the comprehensive flood management plan of river Jhelum and its tributaries — Phase I, costing ₹400 crores — have been completed. In addition, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir has carried out recruitment in the public sector from 2019 onwards, totalling nearly 30 thousand employments. Another 5.2 lakh persons are estimated to be employed through self-employment schemes from August 2019 up to June 2022. A hundred per cent saturation has also been achieved in 17 individual beneficiary-centric schemes, including Saubhagya, Ujala, Ujjwala and Indradhanush schemes. Therefore, things really began to look up, and the period from 2019 onwards is actually the golden period for the Valley and the UT of J&K.

That is, till the recent and most unfortunate and orchestrated attack that happened at one of the UT's most famous tourist destinations — Pahalgam. It was clear that the recent development of the region, and the overall environment of prosperity, did not go well with a neighbouring state which has an evil eye on J&K — and their frustration led to this desperate attempt to damage the economy and derail the progress being made by the local population. It has always been the people of the UT who have, today and in the past, remained the biggest sufferers and have paid a steep price for such senseless acts. It is my firm belief that the best is yet to come for the Valley and its people. Ultimately, the answer for J&K's growth and a bright future lies in the local Kashmiri's resolve and ability to recognise and call out the sinister agenda of external forces. They need to awaken and defeat these evil designs for their own good, and for this to happen — cooperating and trusting the local administration, which has always tried to ensure their safety and security, along with that of their future generations — is the need of the hour!

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

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

IN BRIEF



Dr Reddy's Lab Q4 profit up 21 pc to Rs 1,587 cr

Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Friday said its consolidated net profit increased 21 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1,587 crore during the March quarter, aided by strong sales across all regions, including the US and India. The Hyderabad-based drug firm had reported a net profit of Rs 1,307 crore during the January-March period of the previous fiscal year. Revenue increased to Rs 8,506 crore for the period under review as against Rs 7,083 crore in the year-ago period, Dr Reddy's Laboratories said in a regulatory filing. For FY25, the drug firm posted a net profit of Rs 5,724 crore as compared with Rs 5,568 crore in the 2023-24 fiscal year, registering a growth of 3 per cent. Revenue increased to Rs 32,553 crore for the last fiscal year as against Rs 27,916 crore in FY24. "We achieved double-digit growth across our businesses, driven by successful product launches, increased revenues from key products in the US and the integration of the acquired NRT business," Dr Reddy's Laboratories Co-Chairman & MD G V Prasad said.



Birla Corp consolidated Q4 net profit rises 32.7 %

Consolidated net profit of Birla Corporation Limited, the flagship company of M P Birla group, increased 32.7 per cent at Rs 256.60 crore during the fourth quarter of 2024-25 as compared to Rs 193.34 crore in the corresponding previous period. The company informed the courses after a board meeting held on Friday that consolidated total income increased 6.8 per cent at Rs 2,863.14 crore as against Rs 2,680.13 crore in the previous similar period. Primarily a cement manufacturing company, the board of Birla Corporation approved the proposal for issue of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) aggregating up to Rs 200 crore on private placement basis in one or two tranches. The board also approved capital expenditure towards increasing capacity by way of setting a greenfield cement grinding unit with a capacity of 2.80 million tonnes per annum at Gaya in Bihar in a phased manner. The debt-equity ratio of the company at the end of March 2025 quarter decreased to 0.56 as compared to 0.67 in the previous corresponding period.



Mahindra seeks CCI nod to acquire stake in SML Isuzu

Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) has sought approval from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to acquire majority stake in commercial vehicle maker SML Isuzu. The company had earlier announced that it would acquire 58.96 per cent stake in SML Isuzu for Rs 555 crore. "The proposed combination relates to acquisition of shareholding by the acquirer (M&M) in the target (SML Isuzu Ltd)," a notice filed with the Competition Commission of India (CCI) said on May 5. The proposed combination is notified under section 5(a)(i)(A) of the Competition Act, 2002, it added. M&M is the flagship company of the Mahindra group, which is engaged in various sectors such as automotive, farm equipment, financial services, IT aerospace, real estate & infrastructure, logistics and hospitality. For the assessment of CCI, the parties said "the proposed combination will not lead to any change in the competitive dynamics, let alone cause any appreciable adverse effect on competition in India, delineation of a relevant market can be left open".

ABB India profit rises 3% to Rs 474 cr in March qtr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Electrification and automation major ABB India on Friday posted a 3 per cent rise in net profit to Rs 474 crore during the March quarter compared to the year-ago period, primarily on the back of higher revenues. The company follows January-December financial year. "The company reported profit after tax of Rs 474 crore at the end of Q1 CY2025 (January-March 2025) as compared to Rs 460 crore in Q1 CY2024," a company statement said.

According to the statement, the company achieved a revenue of Rs 3,160 crore for the first quarter (January-March 2025) which is higher than Rs 3,080 crore in the same period a year ago.

The company's cash position continues to remain robust at Rs 5,756 crore at the end of Q1 2025. "In our 75th year of manufacturing in India, I am proud of the solid start to 2025. We continue to enjoy trust of our customers and partners, who are served impactfully by the ABB India team. In an increasingly uncertain global market, ABB India stands steady posting consistent growth across all key financial parameters for the past several quarters, including Jan-Mar quarter CY2025," said Sanjeev Sharma, Country head and Managing Director, ABB India.

Investors' wealth erodes Rs 7 lakh cr in 2 days as markets tumble

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 7 lakh crore in two days as stock markets became jittery following the escalation of the India-Pakistan conflict.

India on Thursday night swiftly thwarted Pakistan's fresh attempts to strike military sites with drones and missiles, including in Jammu and Pathankot, after foiling similar bids at 15 places in northern and western regions of the country as tensions soared between the two countries.

Extending its previous day's decline, the 30-share BSE benchmark gauge Sensex tanked 880.34 points, or 1.10 per cent, to settle at 79,454.47, in a largely range-bound trading.

The NSE Nifty dropped 265.80 points, or 1.10 per cent, to 24,008.

In two days, the BSE benchmark tumbled 1,292.31 points, or 1.60 per cent.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded Rs 7,09,783.32 crore to Rs 4,16,40,850.46 crore (USD 4.86 trillion) in two days. "Domestic factors continued to weigh on Indian markets

even as global indices stayed firm, as rising tension due to Indo-Pak conflict prompted investors to flee local equities," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the Sensex firms, ICICI Bank, Power Grid, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, Bajaj Finserv, Adani Ports, ITC,



and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the laggards. Titan Company, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro and State Bank of India were the gainers.

The BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.30 per cent, and the midcap index dipped 0.10 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, realty tumbled 2.08 per cent, utilities (1.50 per cent), financial services (1.40 per cent), power (1.11 per cent), bank (1.04 per cent), FMCG (0.65 per cent), and services (0.63 per cent).



INDO-PAK CONFLICT

Officials told to assist bordering states' farmers with sowing ops

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday directed officials to be prepared to assist farmers in bordering states with sowing operations to ensure that they do not face difficulties due to the ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan.

During a review meeting held at Krishi Bhavan here, Chouhan said he would speak with the chief ministers of bordering states like Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab regarding requirements in case villages need evacuation. "Villages are often evacuated

during conflict. We are assessing which crops are currently sown there, so we can keep seeds and planting material ready," Chouhan said in a statement.

The government will address farmers' needs if sowing is delayed, he added.

The minister was also informed about the status of crop sowing, foodgrain production, and fruit and vegetable availability.

The government has designed a framework for the upcoming kharif season, beginning from July.

The minister noted that foodgrain stocks are sufficient,

with "bumper production" of wheat. About 267.03 lakh tonnes of wheat have been procured so far.

"It is a matter of satisfaction that our food reserves are full at this time," with total foodgrain production of 347.44 million tonnes in the 2024-25 crop year (July-June).

Chouhan said while Indian soldiers are responding to Pakistani attacks, the agriculture and rural development ministries are "fully prepared" to fulfil their duties.

The ministry officers and employees will donate blood on May 14 as part of their service to the country.

PSU banks refute rumours, say ATMs well stocked, functional

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Dismissing rumours, public sector banks including State Bank of India and Punjab National Bank on Friday said their ATMs are fully functional, well-stocked, and that digital services are operating smoothly.

The announcements came against the backdrop of reports on social media that ATMs are likely to be shut in the coming days on account of rising tension between India and Pakistan.

They also said that all their digital services are operating smoothly.

"All our ATMs, CDMs/ADWMs and digital services are fully operational and available for public use," India's largest bank, State Bank of India, said in a post on X.

India's largest lender also advised its customers not to rely on unverified information.

Similar messages have been posted by Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank, Union Bank of

India, Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank and Punjab & Sind Bank.

"All our digital services too are operating smoothly, ensuring a seamless banking experience from the comfort of your home," Punjab National Bank said in social media post.

Union Bank of India MD and CEO A Manimekhalai has said the bank has asked its staff in the border states to be cautious and follow all the guidelines issued by the local state level banking committee.

Apart from that, the bank is ensuring that adequate cash is kept at the branches and ATMs so that economic activities are not impacted, the CEO said, adding that it has also upped the cybersecurity defence.

Canara Bank in a post on X said, "all our ATMs are functioning as usual. Please don't fall prey to the rumours. Canara Bank is always at your service and your money is safe with us."

Govt warns traders against hoarding of essentials

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Friday said the country has ample food stocks to meet domestic demand but warned traders and wholesalers against hoarding of essential food items that could create artificial shortage.

The warning came as the conflict between India and Pakistan widened with Pakistan resorting to unprovoked shelling and drone attacks in border towns.

In a social media post, Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said, "Don't believe in propaganda messages regarding food stocks in the country. We have ample food stocks, far exceeding required norms. DONT PAY HEED TO SUCH MESSAGES".

"Traders, wholesalers, retailers or business entities which engage in trading of Essential Commodities are directed to cooperate with Law Enforcement agencies. Any person indulging in hoarding or stockpiling, shall be prosecuted under relevant sections of



the Essential Commodities Act," Joshi said.

India on Wednesday struck at nine sites in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Pakistan, its deepest strike inside Pakistan in decades, in retaliation for a deadly terrorist attack in Pahalgam two weeks before.

On Thursday also, Joshi had urged people not to pay heed to rumours about the need to hoard essential items, saying the country has more than enough stock of all essential goods.

"In certain parts of the country, rumours are spreading, causing people to rush to collect essential food items and other daily necessities," he said.

The minister had categorically said, "We have more than

enough stock of everything required across the country".

"Our stock is many times larger than what is needed, and there is absolutely no reason for anyone to rush to the markets in any part of the country," the minister asserted.

Joshi said there is no shortage whatsoever and no one should give any value to such rumours.

In the current 2024-25 crop year (July-June), the government has set a target of 341.55 million tonne of foodgrain production. Foodgrains include paddy, wheat, coarse cereals and pulses.

Already, the country's foodgrain production has reached 330.92 million tonne in the Kharif and rabi seasons of the current 2024-25 crop year. The production estimates for summer (zaid) sowing are yet to be released. The Food Corporation of India, the nodal agency for foodgrains procurement and distribution, had wheat stock of 13.55 million tonne as on April 1 this year as against the buffer requirement of 7.46 million tonne.

The minister noted that foodgrain stocks are sufficient,

Morningstar DBRS upgrades India's rating on reforms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global rating agency Morningstar DBRS has upgraded India's sovereign rating to 'BBB', with a stable trend, citing structural reforms through infrastructure investments, and digitisation, besides macro economic stability.

The credit rating balances India's public finance challenges with the economy's high growth potential, DBRS Inc (Morningstar DBRS) said while upgrading India's Long-Term Foreign and Local Currency Issuer Ratings to BBB from BBB (low).

"The upgrade reflects Morningstar DBRS's view that the cumulative and ongoing benefits of India's structural reform efforts are facilitating fiscal consolidation and helping sustain India's high potential growth rate. The upgrade also reflects a more resilient banking system," DBRS Morningstar said. It said that although heightened external risks due to the imposition of US tariffs could impact growth in the coming quarters, the Indian economy is not particularly reliant on trade.

'TRAI spectrum pricing balances satellite services'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Space Association (ISpA) on Friday said TRAI's recommendations on pricing of satellite spectrum balances the need for government revenue with the imperative to keep satellite services affordable and accessible along with a level-playing field.

The industry body lauded the regulator for its "forward-looking approach" and "clarity" in the ongoing spectrum assignment process for satellite-based communication services.

"The proposed framework for spectrum charges in the TRAI recommendations bal-



ances the need for government revenue with the imperative to keep satellite services affordable and accessible along with a level-playing field," ISpA said in a statement.

The association said it looks forward to continued collab-

oration with Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and all stakeholders to realise the full potential of satellite communications in India.

It exuded confidence that these progressive measures

will contribute significantly to a digitally inclusive and connected nation.

"We welcome TRAI for its forward-looking approach and clarity in the ongoing spectrum assignment process for satellite-based communication services. The Administrative Allocation of Satellite Spectrum enables shared access, fosters competition, and ensures maximum efficiency in spectrum utilisation-objectives that are critical for the growth of India's satellite ecosystem and for bridging the digital divide," A K Bhatt, Director General, Indian Space Association (ISpA) said.

Sebi mulls tweaking disclosure format for corporate governance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Friday proposed tweaking its format for disclosure of corporate governance framework by High Value Debt Listed Entities (HVDLE).

An entity having outstanding value of listed non-convertible debt securities of Rs 1,000 crore

are referred to as 'High Value Debt Listed Entities'.

Under the proposal, an HVDLE should submit a secretarial compliance report in such form as specified by Sebi, to stock

exchanges, within 60 days from end of each financial year, the regulator said in its consultation paper.

Further, the HVDLE should submit a periodic compliance report on corporate governance to the recognized stock exchanges within 21 days from the end of the period along with details of all material transactions with related details of all material transactions with related parties.

With regard to the disclosure and obligations of HVDLEs in

relation to Related Party Transaction (RPT), it has been suggested to specify the information should be placed before the audit committee, debenture trustee and the shareholders for consideration of RPTs.

It has been proposed that information be reviewed by the audit committee for approval of RPTs and by debenture trustee for providing no-objection certificate for RPTs.

"The audit committee shall also review the status of long-term (more than one year) or recurring RPTs on an annual basis. Further, an RPT for which the audit committee has granted omnibus approval shall continue to be placed before the shareholders if it is material in terms of ... the LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirement) Regulations," Sebi suggested.

The notice being sent to the shareholders seeking approval for any proposed RPT should, in addition to the requirements under the Companies Act, include certain information as a part of the explanatory statement.

Illegal sale of walkie talkies: Notices to 13 e-commerce players

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Government watchdog CCPA has issued notices to 13 e-commerce players like Amazon, OLX, TradeIndia, Facebook, Indiamart, VardaanMart, Jiomart, Krishnamart, Chimiya, Talk Pro Walie Talkie and MaskMan toys.

The crackdown focuses on the sale of walkie-talkies without proper frequency disclosure, licensing information, or Equipment Type Approval (ETA), constituting a violation of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Earlier, Union Food and Consumer Minister Pralhad Joshi in a social media post

commerce platforms. These platforms are: Amazon, Flipkart, Meesho, OLX, TradeIndia, Facebook, Indiamart, VardaanMart, Jiomart, Krishnamart, Chimiya, Talk Pro Walie Talkie and MaskMan toys.

The crackdown focuses on the sale of walkie-talkies without proper frequency disclosure, licensing information, or Equipment Type Approval (ETA), constituting a violation of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Earlier, Union Food and Consumer Minister Pralhad Joshi in a social media post



said: "The sale of non-compliant wireless devices not only breaches statutory obligations but may also pose significant risks to national security operations."

These violations contravene multiple legal frameworks, including the Consumer Protection Act, Indian Telegraph Act, and Wireless Telegraphy Act, he said.

In its preliminary analysis, CCPA has found 467 listings of walkie-talkies on Amazon, 314 on Flipkart, 489 on Meesho, and 423 on TradeIndia, indicating the widespread scale of the issue.

The regulator has sought information regarding the name and contact details of each seller, product URLs and listing IDs of the walkie-talkie devices, details of frequency specifications and the number of units sold per listing from January 2023 to date.

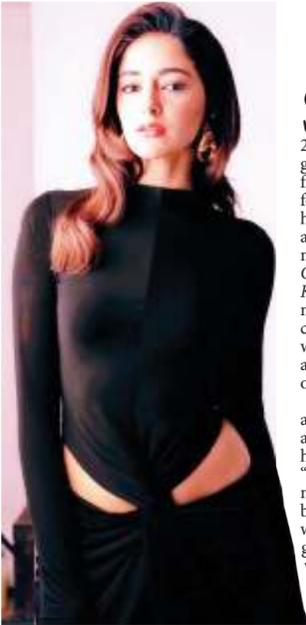
"The illegal sale of walkie-talkies is a matter of public

safety concern. We have found an alarming volume of listings of these devices on e-commerce websites," CCPA Chief Commissioner Nidhi Khare said.

The guidelines will be drafted soon in view of the rampant non-adherence to existing legal provisions by e-commerce entities, she said.

The minister said the CCPA will issue formal guidelines under Section 18(2)(l) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, aimed at strengthening compliance and consumer safeguards in digital market-

'I DON'T WANT TO BE REDUCED TO JUST GLAMOUR'



Since stepping into Bollywood with *Student of the Year 2* in 2019, Ananya Panday has gradually transformed from a debutante to a performer determined to push her own boundaries. With a diverse filmography that now includes titles like *Gehraiyaan*, *CTRL* and *Kesari Chapter 2*, Ananya is no longer content with conventional stardom—she wants depth, substance, and storytelling that resonates.

In a latest interview, the actress opened up about her artistic evolution and the hunger that now drives her. "Maybe unconsciously and now consciously, it's always been a choice. But I don't want to be reduced to just glamour or just my face. I want to do more and I am hungry for more." That hunger, she confessed, has

only grown stronger with time and experience. "Because now I've tasted blood," Ananya said, a statement that underscores her growing commitment to complex and emotionally rich characters. One of her most notable performances came in *Kesari Chapter 2*, where she played Dilreet Gill alongside Akshay Kumar and R. Madhavan. Directed by Karan Singh Tyagi, the historical drama earned critical praise and grossed approximately Rs 81.50 crore in its first three weeks, with Ananya receiving acclaim for bringing emotional depth to her character.

The actress revealed that she's fallen in love with the process of "surrendering" to a role. It's no longer just about being seen on screen—it's about the story she's helping to tell. "If I

limit myself, it would be disappointing for my female audience as well," she explained. "Because I'm portraying them onscreen and telling their stories." Apart from her film work, Ananya also explored the OTT space with *Call Me Bae* on Amazon Prime Video, further expanding her range as a performer.

Looking ahead, the actress has an exciting line-up. She will be seen next in *Tu Meri Main Tera Tu Meri*, a romantic drama where she stars opposite Kartik Aaryan. Directed by Sameer Vidwans, the film is scheduled to hit cinemas on February 13, 2026. She's also teaming up with *Kill* actor Lakshya for *Chand Mera Dil*, helmed by Meenakshi Sundareswar director Vivek Soni.

Housefull 5 teaser pulled from YouTube over copyright dispute



Housefull 5, one of the year's most eagerly awaited films, has hit a surprising bump in the road. Just days after its vibrant teaser was released on the official YouTube channel of Nadiawala Grandson Entertainment, the video has now been taken down due to a copyright claim, leaving fans puzzled.

The teaser, which dropped on April 30 to mark the 15th anniversary of the original *Housefull* film, promised a riotous comedy set against the backdrop of a luxury cruise. Packed with glimpses of grand sets and light-hearted chaos, the teaser generated massive online traction within hours of its release. However, it has now mysteriously disappeared from the platform. Anyone attempting to view it is met with a message stating, "The video is no longer available due to a copyright claim by Mofusion Studios."

So far, neither the production house nor any member of the film's team has issued a statement to clarify the situation or explain the involvement of Mofusion Studios. The silence has only added to the intrigue surrounding the teaser's sudden removal.

The 1-minute and 16-second teaser showcased Akshay Kumar returning to his signature comic avatar, hinting at the madness that will unfold aboard a luxury cruise. The visuals were high on energy

and entertainment, offering brief but exciting glimpses of the film's massive star cast. Apart from Kumar, the film also features Ritesh Deshmukh, Abhishek Bachchan, Jacqueline Fernandez, Sonam Bajwa, Nargis Fakhri, Fardeen Khan, Shreyas Talpade, Chitrangda Singh, Dino Morea, Chunky Panday, Johnny Lever, Nikitin Dheer, Soundarya Sharma, Ranjeet, Jackie Shroff, Sanjay Dutt and Nana Patekar.

Despite the setback, the teaser had already succeeded in building momentum and setting high expectations for the film. With a franchise known for its over-the-top humor and star-packed narratives, *Housefull 5* was already on track to deliver another crowd-pleasing entertainer. The unexpected removal of the teaser may be temporary, but it has certainly stirred curiosity among fans and industry insiders alike.

'NOBODY GAVE THEM Rs 25 CR FILMS' Nawazuddin laments Bollywood's treatment of Irrfan, Om Puri

Veteran actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui has expressed discontent with the long-standing trend in Bollywood of sidelining some of its most powerful performers from the mainstream spotlight. In a recent interview with Pinkvilla, the actor spoke candidly about how legends like Om Puri, Naseeruddin Shah, Irrfan Khan, Manoj Bajpayee and Pankaj Kapur were often restricted to niche cinema and never given the platform of big-budget films—despite their immense talent and fan following.

"These are the greatest actors of our industry," Nawazuddin said, calling them the real GOATs (Greatest of All Time) of Hindi cinema. "But sadly, nobody ever thought of casting them as leads in Rs 20-25 crore films. Even though the audience loved watching them, their films didn't reach the masses the way they should have."

The *Gangs of Wasseypur* actor questioned the industry's often hypocritical standards when it comes to acknowledging true talent. He noted

that while fans and filmmakers alike now celebrate names like Irrfan Khan and Om Puri posthumously, their full potential was never explored during their lifetimes.

"Today, everyone speaks of Irrfan with reverence. But when he was alive, who gave him a Rs 25 crore film?" Nawazuddin's remarks underline a larger issue in the film industry—the divide between "industry's actors" and "public's actors." While the latter command massive respect and loyalty from audiences, they are often excluded from the kind of commercial projects that define mainstream success. The result, Nawaz says, is a deep disconnect: "The films of these public-loved actors never reached the public."

Siddiqui's comments serve as a powerful reminder that fame and fandom do not always guarantee opportunities, especially in an industry where commerce often overshadows craft. As conversations around inclusivity and fair representation continue to grow louder in Bollywood, Nawaz's words may just reignite a much-needed debate.



Aamir Khan ditches OTT for bold new move with *Sitaare Zameen Par*



In a bold shift from the industry's current norm, Aamir Khan is reportedly breaking away from the conventional OTT release model for his upcoming film *Sitaare Zameen Par*. Instead, the actor-producer is considering a pay-per-view release post its theatrical run, signaling a new direction for Bollywood's digital distribution landscape.

The comedy-drama is slated for a theatrical release on June 20. But in a move that challenges the usual eight-week window before films drop on streaming platforms, *Sitaare Zameen Par* will not follow the standard OTT route. Instead, Aamir is planning a pay-per-view launch on YouTube two months after its big-screen debut.

A source close to the project told Hollywood Reporter India, "Aamir doesn't want to release his films directly on streaming after their theatrical run, as it discourages viewers from watching movies on the big screen. It is also a reason why there is no streaming logo on the poster of *Sitaare Zameen Par*."

This approach isn't entirely new for Aamir. Initially, he intended for *Laal Singh Chaddha* to stream on Netflix six months after its August 2022 release. However, the film ended up on the platform just eight weeks later, following the standard window.

Industry insiders suggest that this new strategy reflects Aamir's growing concern about the impact of streaming services on theatrical attendance,

especially for non-spectacle films. "There's a growing perception that more intimate or character-driven stories are better suited for OTT, which keeps audiences away from theatres. The pay-per-view model changes that—it asks the viewer to pay specifically for a film, creating a sense of exclusivity and urgency," the source added.

The move also gives filmmakers greater control over their content while encouraging audiences to invest in individual titles instead of passively consuming them through a subscription. With *Sitaare Zameen Par*, Aamir Khan is testing the waters to see if pay-per-view can become a viable middle path between theatres and OTT platforms.

FUN

ARCHIE



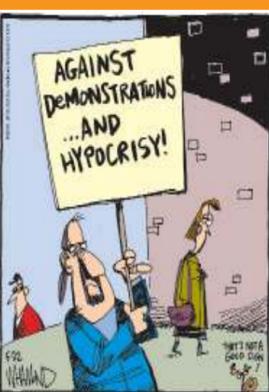
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



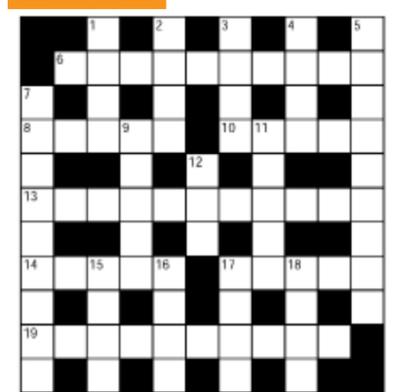
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

Yesterday's solution

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

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

- 6 Television advertisement
 - 8 Group of eight
 - 10 A black and white animal in China
 - 13 A kind of small glass tube for showing temperatures
 - 14 Time of darkness
 - 17 Comes to a standstill
 - 19 Rang up
 - 9 Our planet
 - 11 Watchful, ready for anything that might happen
 - 12 Plaything
 - 15 A very strong wind
 - 16 Adhesive strip
 - 17 Shortly
 - 18 Unlock
- SOLUTION
- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | P | I | D | I | E | R | S | P | O | T |
| A | B | P | A | R | A | W | | | | |
| F | A | I | L | P | O | L | I | T | | |
| L | E | A | R | A | R | N | | | | |
| G | R | A | S | S | I | T | | | | |
| T | H | I | S | T | A | I | Y | | | |
| I | S | D | I | G | E | S | T | | | |
| E | U | N | I | N | K | S | | | | |
| V | I | O | L | I | N | L | I | N | | |
| R | A | R | E | D | R | A | G | O | N | |

DOWN

- 1 Mistaid
- 2 Leave out
- 3 Put paper around something
- 4 A large African cat
- 5 A very large seabird
- 7 Lucky

GINGER MEGGS



'NEVER WANTED TO BE A PLAYBACK SINGER — I WANTED TO BE A VOICE'

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Chhavi Sodhani's journey defies the conventional arc of stardom. A child prodigy who once captured hearts on national television, she has since evolved into a fiercely independent voice in India's music scene — unfiltered, unafraid and unforgettable. Her songs don't just carry melodies; they carry movements. With compositions like *Banna Re*, *Jaag*, *Yakeen*, and award-winning compositions like *Yaman*, Chhavi blends poetic vulnerability with powerful commentary, turning each track into a resonant act of storytelling. In an industry often driven by formula, she stands out for forging her own path — with courage, craft and a deep conviction in the transformative power of music.

In this candid conversation, she reflects on her beginnings, the layers behind her art and what it takes to thrive as an independent artist in today's saturated music landscape.

Chhavi blends poetic vulnerability with powerful commentary, turning each track into a resonant act of storytelling. In an industry often driven by formula, she stands out for forging her own path — with courage, craft and a deep conviction in the transformative power of music.

Chhavi's roots in music trace back to her childhood in Hyderabad. Though no one in her family pursued music professionally, the love for it ran deep.

"My grandfather was extremely fond of music and could naturally play multiple instruments. He was keen that my sister and I formally learn music," she recalls. She began training in Hindustani classical music early and eventually

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, singer-songwriter **Chhavi Sodhani** opens up about her fearless approach to music, her evolution from a child performer to an unapologetically original artist, and why she believes in creating songs that speak to the soul. Known for emotionally charged anthems like *Jaag* and *Yakeen*, Chhavi delves into the intimate, the political, and the poetic — all through her distinct musical lens. In a landscape often shaped by trends, she remains rooted in authenticity, using her voice to amplify stories that matter

moved to Mumbai for further guidance.

"He prompted my parents for my sister and me to move to Bombay since the industry was here. That's how I came here," she shares.

Her big break came in 2005, when she became a Top 12 finalist on the singing reality show *Fame Gurukul*. That launched her into the live circuit.

"From then on, I started doing a lot of live shows, touring all over the world. Today, I have a band with my sister — we do a lot of folk and semi-classical music," she says.

Over time, she also embraced music production. "In 2020, JioSaavn signed me as their label artist and I started releasing my singles. My first EP *X Axis* released in September 2024."

What makes Chhavi's music res-

onate so widely is its emotional honesty.

"I don't like to make very generic music. There has to be a new idea or thought behind the song. I lay great emphasis on what the song is trying to say," she says.

She believes emotions are universal, and capturing them authentically is key. "I think we all go through similar emotions, just in varying intensities. And that's what resonates with listeners."

Whether it's a soft ballad or a folk-dance number like *Banna Re*, she ensures every element — lyrics, melody, production — is crafted with intention.

Being a singer, composer, lyricist and poet isn't easy. For Chhavi, though, it's always been second nature. "Very naturally, I took to writing. Singing was



you're adding life to a preexisting visual. You need to follow the narrative, the tonality, the era — everything.

Whereas independent music is free from brief. You can swing genres, follow your mood, and truly express yourself."

That freedom, she says, is essential for artistic growth. "With the independent music scene opening up, it's a great release for artists to keep their creative juices flowing."

Her composition for the film *Yaman* — which won "Best Music" at the LA LGBT International Film Festival — remains close to her heart.

"It was a beautiful story about a couple who part ways because one of them realizes he's homosexual. Both are musicians, hence the title *Yaman*. It's about deep love — not necessarily romantic — but profound nonetheless."

The emotional weight and musical soul of the story made composing for it a special experience. "That award means so much to me because the music is so close to my heart."

Chhavi recently joined the KOLAB HER MUSIC CAMP 2025, an initiative bringing diverse musicians together for spontaneous creation.

"I jumped at the idea. It's a hotpot of talent — everyone coming in with their own sensibilities. Being a music

producer on this project allowed me to produce both my own and others' compositions."

She collaborated with artists like Sasha Tirupati, Shaira and Priya Saraiya. "Watching Shaira write so fast, working with Sasha's phenomenal voice and feeding off Priya's lyrical mastery — it was all awe-inspiring." Her idea of success has shifted over the years.

"As you go deeper into your craft, you realize how much there is to learn. The benchmarks in music are so high. Some days, you feel enriched. Other days, you doubt your skill. But that's the artist's journey — a constant push to grow and stay true to your voice."

Despite the democratisation of music distribution, Chhavi acknowledges the hurdles of standing out.

"There's just so much music being released daily. The biggest challenge is getting people to listen. That's why having your own narrative, your own sound — your 'why' — is so important."

She continues to explore her identity and voice in this ever-expanding ecosystem.

Where does Chhavi draw inspiration from? The answer is simple.

"Life. Your own life. The lives around you. There's a song hidden in every situation — in your life, in a friend's, in a stranger's. If you're an observer, you'll always find something to write about."

While independent music has grown, Chhavi believes there's still room for more institutional support.

"Artists need platforms that not only promote music but also make it more discoverable. It's about bridging the gap between meaningful art and the listener." Chhavi Sodhani continues to evolve as an artist — bold, expressive and deeply connected to her roots. Her journey is one of constant reinvention, held together by the timeless power of music that speaks — and listens — from the heart.

SMART BUYERS WIN

Why now is the time to negotiate your dream home!

India's real estate sector has shown robust growth in recent years and is poised to grow at a 9.2% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) between 2023 and 2028. In this dynamic market, there are always opportunities for those who leverage the right information, strategy and support to make the most of the market at any time.

As the popular saying goes, the right time to buy a home is always five years ago. Let's explore why today might be one of the most favourable moments to negotiate your way into your dream home.

THE CURRENT MARKET PULSE

India's housing landscape has evolved rapidly, primarily driven by changing consumer preferences, rising disposable incomes and the desire for long-term asset security.

According to recent data, new launches have grown by 3% year-on-year (YoY) and are expected to grow by 6-9% in 2025-26 in the top seven Indian cities. The unsold inventory across key Indian cities saw a 5% YoY decline in the fourth quarter of 2024 indicating a healthy balance between supply and demand. Property prices, too, have seen steady appreciation, with an average growth of 4.3% last year in major cities. Demand remains strong, and developers have responded with a surge in new unit launches, reflecting confidence in the sector.

Despite this upward trajectory, developers are becoming increasingly flexible. Many look forward to clear ready-to-move-in inventory or meeting end-of-quarter sales targets. At the same time, competition is heating up across markets, prompting builders to adopt buyer-friendly terms, especially for serious and well-informed customers.

WHY THIS IS THE RIGHT TIME TO NEGOTIATE

Whether you are a first-time home buyer or a seasoned investor, today's markets offer a range of options and advantages that you can leverage. Many developers provide outright discounts and a waive-off in floor



rise and stamp duty charges.

Additionally, you can find premium fittings, modular kitchens, or fully furnished units at no extra cost. When looking for your dream home investment, these offerings in the market can be essential in negotiating the right price.

Not to forget, the recent repo rate cut by 25 basis points will make home loan offers more lucrative. This reduction means that the cost of borrowing for home loans has decreased, making it more affordable for buyers. While infrastructural developments are picking up the pace like never before, tremendous growth will be observed in the industry, contributing 18% to the projected \$26 trillion GDP in 2047.

Since prices are expected to rise by 6.5% to 7.5% in 2025 and 2026 respectively, waiting could simply mean paying significantly more, not just for square feet but also for value-added opportunities.

WHAT SMART BUYERS ARE DOING DIFFERENTLY

A successful real estate investment isn't about luck but meticulous planning, the correct information, and the right advisory. Here's what sets smart buyers apart:

- In-depth research:** Before deciding, they study micro-markets, developer track records, and legal clearances.

- Perfect timing:** They strike deals at strategic moments—such as when developers are trying to meet their sales targets at the end of a financial quarter, or during pre-launch phases when prices are often lower.

- Negotiating value, not just price:** Instead of asking only for discounts, they negotiate for things like club memberships, parking waivers, or rental support until possession.

- Using expert support:** They work closely with experienced brokers or real estate advisors who understand market nuances and have the right relationships with developers to unlock better deals.

OPPORTUNITY FAVOURS THE INFORMED

In uncertain times, many people hesitate to act. But savvy buyers know that real estate rewards those who act—not those who wait. With the current market offering both choice and flexibility, the stage is set for well-informed, confident buyers to make meaningful moves.

If you've been considering a home purchase, now is the time to turn your intent into action and negotiate the best possible deal.

(The author, Ashish Kukreja, is the founder and CEO, of Homesfy.in and mymagnet.io)

MAKE HER DAY SHINE

This Mother's Day (May 11), go beyond the ordinary with gifts that capture the essence of your love and appreciation. From personalised hampers featuring heartfelt messages and luxe lip colors to radiant skincare picks and elegant keepsakes, these curated selections are designed to pamper the most important woman in your life. Whether it's a shimmering pendant or indulgent praline treats, each item is a token of gratitude to make her feel cherished—just as she deserves.

SHIMMERING MOMENTS MOTHER'S DAY GIFT COMBO



Celebrate her love with a meaningful Mother's Day gift. This charming combo features a Photo Popup Box with six Polaroids—one reading Mom, The Heart of the Family—and a heart-shaped pendant that unfolds into a string of hearts. Personalise it with her favorite photos for a keepsake she'll treasure forever.

Price: INR 881/-

CELEBRATE MOTHER'S DAY WITH THE GLOW OF RADIANCE FOREVER

The Radiance by Forever Mud Mask + Scrub offers a unique twin-action formula, providing users with two essential skincare benefits in one product. Designed for deep detoxification, it draws out impurities, toxins, and excess oil, while simultaneously exfoliating the skin to improve texture, reduce puffiness, and enhance hydration. Infused with Kaolin and Bentonite clay, Zinc Oxide, Aloe Vera Powder, Rice Bran Oil, and Bamboo Charcoal, the mask nourishes and revitalizes the skin, leaving it fresh and glowing.



ADD EFFORTLESS GRACE TO HER EVERY DAY THE ULTIMATE MOTHER'S DAY GIFT

Honor the woman who does everything with the Gemeria Faux Scrunchie Bun, a fast, chic, and low-maintenance hair solution that adds instant volume and sophistication to any style. Thoughtfully designed to make daily styling easy, this bun is the ultimate gift for moms who adore looking great but don't always have the time. Crafted from 100% genuine human hair, ethically collected from South Indian temples, the scrunchie bun harmoniously integrates with natural hair, giving a flawless, sleek finish. Whether it's a work meeting, school drop-off, brunch with friends, or a family event, she can just wrap it around her natural bun and leave the house with confidence in seconds.



LEVEL UP THIS MOTHER'S DAY!



PIXI +C VIT BRIGHTENING PERFECTOR

Give Mom the gift of glowing, radiant skin with Pixi's +C Vit Brightening Perfectioner. Enriched with Vitamin C, this lightweight serum brightens and evens skin tone, leaving a smooth, luminous finish. A perfect way to brighten her day—and her complexion—this Mother's Day.



Price: INR 1850/-



BEAUTIFUL JADE PLANT IN WHITE PLASTIC POT

Celebrate the warmth of a mother's love with this elegant bouquet by FNP featuring 15 pink roses in soft aqua and deep hues, accented with lush murraya fillers. Beautifully hand-tied and wrapped, it's the perfect gesture to express love and gratitude this Mother's Day.



Price: INR 199/-

GLYCOLIC + TRANEXAMIC 11% BODY EXFOLIATOR

Give Mom the gift of glow. This powerful yet gentle exfoliator blends Glycolic Acid and Tranexamic Acid to smooth rough texture, fade dark spots, and brighten dull skin. A spa-like renewal in every drop—because her skin deserves the same care she gives to everyone else.

Price: Rs.699/-

ORIFLAME'S OH SWEET! DULCE DE LECHE

This Mother's Day, treat your mom to Oh! Sweet Dulce de Leche Eau de Toilette—a playful, gourmand fragrance that's as joyful and comforting as she is. With vibrant peach candy, juicy mandarin, and a heart of rose jelly, it lifts spirits and energizes the mood. The creamy dulce de leche and warm sandalwood base wrap her in lasting sweetness. Every spritz is a moment of happiness, making it the perfect gift to celebrate her love and positivity.



PRICE: INR 1999/-

THE BARE BAR'S CITRUS SLUSH DEODORANT

Description -The Bare Bar's Citrus Slush Deodorant is bright, zesty and refreshing—this citrus-infused formula awakens your senses while keeping odour at bay. Packed with natural odour-fighting ingredients, it keeps you feeling fresh all day with an energising lemony twist. One swipe, and you're instantly cool, crisp, and smelling like a burst of sunshine!



Price: INR 499/-

Chopra, Rohit, Kohli back Indian armed forces amid conflict with Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's sporting icons, including Neeraj Chopra, PV Sindhu, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, have come out in strong support of the country's armed forces for their strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan, hailing them as "the soul of our nation."

India on Thursday night swiftly thwarted Pakistan's attempts to strike its military bases with drones and missiles including in Jammu and Pathankot after foiling similar bids at 15 places in northern and western regions of the country, as tension soared between the two neighbours amid fears of a larger conflict.

"With every passing moment, with every decision taken I feel extremely proud of our Indian Army, Indian Airforce & Indian Navy. Our warriors are standing tall for our nation's pride. It's important for every Indian to be responsible and refrain from spreading or believing any fake news. Stay safe, everyone! #OperationSindoor #JaiHind," Rohit wrote on his X account on Friday.



Modern-day great Kohli posted his tribute on his Instagram page.

"We stand in solidarity with, and salute our armed forces for fiercely protecting our country in these difficult times. We are forever indebted to our heroes for their unwavering bravery and heartfelt gratitude for

the sacrifices they and their families make for our great nation," Kohli wrote.

"We are proud of our Brave Indian Armed Forces who are fighting for our nation against Terrorism. Let's do our part and make sure to follow guidelines to ensure everyone's safety during this time,"

double Olympic-medallist Chopra posted. Two-time Olympic medallist shuttler Sindhu also paid tribute to the courage of Indian armed forces.

"To the brave men and women of the Indian Armed Forces — your courage, discipline, and sacrifice are the soul of our nation. In moments like OperationSindoor, we're reminded of the silent strength and selfless service that keep our tricolour flying high. India stands with you. Jai Hind," Sindhu posted.

Thursday's IPL match between Punjab Kings and Delhi Capitals in Dharamsala was called off due to security reasons following air raid alerts in nearby areas, prompting the BCCI to suspend the league indefinitely.

Former opener Sehwaq blamed Pakistan for the current situation.

"War has been chosen by Pakistan when they had an opportunity to keep quiet. They have escalated to save its terrorist assets, speaks so much about them. Our forces will reply in the most appropriate manner, a manner Pakistan will never forget," Sehwaq posted on X.

Monitoring situation in India, Pakistan: Cricket Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Sydney

Cricket Australia (CA) on Friday said it is "closely monitoring" the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan given that over 20 Australian players and coaches are currently involved in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) and the Pakistan Super League.

The IPL was thrown into uncertainty on Thursday after air raid alerts in nearby cities forced the match between Delhi Capitals (DC) and Punjab Kings (PBKS) to be abandoned midway in Dharamsala.

The disruption has prompted the BCCI and IPL organisers to review the unfolding situation and consider their next steps.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has decided to shift the remaining matches of the Pakistan Super League to the UAE due to growing security concerns.

"We continue to closely monitor the situation in Pakistan and India, including obtaining regular advice and updates from the Australian Government, the PCB, BCCI and local government

authorities" "...And maintaining communication with our players and support staff currently in the region," CA said in a statement.

Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head and coaches Ricky Ponting and Brad Haddin are involved in the IPL while the likes of former batter David Warner, pacers Ben Dwarshuis, Riley Meredith and Sean Abbott are competing in the PSL.

According to local media reports, several Australian players have expressed concerns about their safety and are keen to leave India as soon as possible.

IPL chairman Arun Dhimal on Thursday said government directives are being awaited before deciding on whether to continue with the league.

"We are reviewing the situation right now. It is an evolving situation. We haven't received any directive from the government. Obviously the decision will be taken keeping all the logistics in mind," Dhimal said on Thursday night.

However, he confirmed that Friday's match between Lucknow Super Giants and Royal Challengers Bengaluru would go ahead "as of now."

Yashasvi Jaiswal wants to continue playing for Mumbai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal has requested the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) to allow him to remain with the domestic giants, a month after asking for a No Objection Certificate (NOC) to switch to Goa.

In April, Jaiswal surprised everyone by writing to the MCA to seek its approval for a shock move to Goa. On its part, the MCA too had swiftly approved Jaiswal's request.

PTI is in possession of Jaiswal's email to the MCA in which he said he is available to represent Mumbai in the next domestic season.

"I the undersigned would request your goodwill to consider my request in withdrawing my NOC given to me as I had some family plans in shifting to Goa which for now has been curtailed," Jaiswal wrote.

"So I sincerely request MCA to allow

me to play for Mumbai this season! I have not submitted the NOC to BCCI nor to Goa Cricket Association!," he added.

Jaiswal, who moved from Uttar Pradesh's Bhadoli to Mumbai as a young player and rose through the ranks to make his debut across formats for India over the last couple of years, was also believed to have shifted to Goa from Mumbai owing to the prospect of becoming their captain.

A packed international calendar perhaps would not have allowed the 23-year-old Jaiswal a lot of time to spend with Goa, but becoming their skipper would have given him some experience in major leadership roles.

The secretary of the Goa Cricket Association, Shamba Desai had earlier confirmed to PTI that Jaiswal would be their captain with the Goa team being promoted from Plate division to Elite ahead of the 2025-26 season.

Why scrapping of Asia Cup is best option for BCCI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The currently suspended Indian Premier League's (IPL) 16 remaining games can be completed during a 10 to 12 days window in September as the Asia Cup is now uncertain due to the rising armed hostilities between India and Pakistan.

It would be a miracle if Asia Cup, which is supposed to be hosted by India (at a supposedly neutral venue), goes ahead given the raging conflict which was triggered by the killing of 26 people in a terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam.

The nearly non-existent sporting ties are unlikely to resume at any level till tensions ease. The Asia Cup was given a 19-day window in September where at least two Indo-Pak matches were to take place apart from the possibility of a final clash between the bitter rivals which would have assured the broadcasters of high advertising revenue.

"It is extremely bad optics if cricket continues when there is a possibility of war

with a rogue nation (Pakistan). Sports can continue when everything is normal. Plus it is very natural for foreign players and coaches to be wary and wanting to return home," a senior BCCI official told PTI on condition of anonymity after the league was suspended indefinitely on Friday.

Incidentally, the Asian Cricket Council is now headed by Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi and the onus will be on him to deal with financial losses that the Asia Cup cancellation would cause.

It is understood that the BCCI top brass' decision to suspend the league was well thought out call as only a handful of matches are left which can be completed in a 10-day window with possible double-headers.

The options for BCCI?

The IPL has a dedicated window from March end to May end during which no international cricket is scheduled allowing the best of world cricket to ply their trade in the league. Now that the schedule has gone haywire, the BCCI will have to

explore the available options.

The Indian team will be touring England from first week of June to first week of August and that schedule cannot be changed. The only period that looks good right now is between the second and fourth week of September where the BCCI can also negotiate with the various cricket boards to allow their players (except for freelancers who don't need permission) to come back and complete the assignment.

Why not August?

In August, India have a six-match white ball away series against Bangladesh which could have been stalled for IPL. However, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB)'s "The Hundred" will be played between August 5 to 31 where most of the top T20 players, who also play in IPL, will be taking part.

Most IPL franchise owners like Reliance and RPSG group have bought stakes in "The Hundred".

Also Australia will be hosting South Africa for a six-match white ball series

through the month of August so players from both countries won't be available.

Why September is best option

From August 15 till September 22, the Caribbean Premier League will also be held where some of the top West Indies players are going to take part. But during the second week of September, a fair number of West Indies players can be made available for their respective IPL teams.

England and South Africa have a six-match white-ball series from September 2 to 14. Given the cordial relationship that BCCI shares with both the ECB and Cricket South Africa, it can request them to allow the players important to their IPL teams to be released during the window.

After All SA20 is also a league that runs on investment from IPL franchisees.

By end of September, India's WTC (World Test Championship) commitments against the West Indies and South Africa will commence followed by a white-ball tour of Australia in October-November.

Chelsea advances to Conference League final against Real Betis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Chelsea rested its regular starters and still comfortably advanced to the Conference League final by beating Djurgården 1-0 in their semifinal second leg. The Premier League club advanced 5-1 on aggregate to set up a May 28 title match against Real Betis, which prevailed in extra time for a 4-3 aggregate win over Fiorentina to reach its first European final.

At Stamford Bridge, midfielder Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall collected a through pass from Tyrrique George before scoring the winner with a low left-footed shot in the 38th minute.

"Amazing to be in the final," Dewsbury-Hall told TNT Sports.

"We set our sights at the start of the season to get as far as we can in this tournament and it has been a long couple of months but one more game to go and hopefully we can lift that trophy." Chelsea remains on course to become the first club to win all major European competitions. The Blues have claimed the Champions League (2012, '21), the Europa League (2013, '19), Cup Winners' Cup (1971, '98) and Super Cup (1998, '21). The final takes place in Wroclaw, Poland.

Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca used only Marc Cucurella from the team that beat the new Premier League champion Liverpool 3-1 on Sunday.

Sixteen-year-old midfielder Reggie Walsh was given his first career start and drew frequent fouls from the opposition defense. When he was used as substitute in the first leg, he became the third youngest player for Chelsea, the club said. The Conference League champion is rewarded with a place in the second-tier Europa League next season, hardly a desirable bonus for Chelsea given that it is fighting in the Premier League for a Champions League spot.

Chelsea, in fifth place in the Premier League, should have fresh legs Sunday when it plays at Newcastle.

In Florence, Antony crossed for substitute Abdessamad Ezzalzouli in the 97th minute to score past goalkeeper David De Gea for a 2-2 draw that sent Betis to the final. Ezzalzouli also scored in the first-leg 2-1 victory in Sevilla last week. Betis increased its aggregate lead from the first leg to 3-1 with a goal from Antony in the 30th.

The midfielder, who is at Betis on loan from Manchester United, netted with a curling free kick that hit the post before bouncing into the net for his fourth goal in the competition.

Fiorentina's equalizer — on the evening — came four minutes later from a header by Robin Gosens off a corner kick.

UAE set to decline PCB request to host PSL games

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

The Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) plans to conduct the remaining Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches in the UAE may not succeed as the Emirates Cricket Board is "unlikely to approve" its request due to the border tensions between India and Pakistan.

A source close to the developments in the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) has indicated that the Board is set to reject the request from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), which has already announced that the PSL would be held in the UAE.

The source has cited "security concerns potentially emanating from the rising tension between India and Pakistan."

It is learnt that the recent developments have made the Emirates Cricket Board "vary of being perceived as an ally of PCB," which it believes the act of hosting the PSL may suggest.

"The Emirates Cricket Board has enjoyed a strong relationship with BCCI in recent years having hosted the 'India' edition of the ICC T20 World Cup 2021, editions of the IPL as well as India matches during ICC Champions Trophy

2025," the source further stated.

Dubai is also the headquarter of the International Cricket Council, which is currently headed by former BCCI secretary Jay Shah.

"The UAE has a diverse South Asian population which enjoys cricket. Hosting a tournament like the PSL in the midst of such tense circumstances could vitiate harmony, pose security risks and stir unnecessary friction between communities," the source said.

The PCB said early this morning that the last eight PSL fixtures, which were previously scheduled in Rawalpindi, Multan and Lahore, will now be staged in the UAE.

Schedule of matches, outlining the dates and venues, will be shared in due course, a statement said.

On Thursday, the PCB called off a scheduled match between Peshawar Zalmi and Karachi Kings at the Rawalpindi stadium.

India launched missile attacks on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan Occupied Jammu and Kashmir a fortnight after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were killed.

FIFA's President Infantino plans to visit Saudi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Geneva

FIFA President Gianni Infantino will go to Saudi Arabia next week during US President Donald Trump's state visit while the soccer body's 211 member federations gather at their annual Congress being held in Paraguay.

It is unprecedented in modern times for a FIFA president to skip any part of the days-long congress program, where FIFA voters in soccer's six continental bodies caucus ahead of the main meeting often called the sport's parliament.

"The FIFA president has accepted invitations to attend a series of important events with world leaders, where FIFA World Cups will also be discussed," soccer's governing body said in a statement.

Infantino is also expected to visit Qatar, the 2022 World Cup host which also is on the US President's Middle East tour schedule. Infantino's close ties to Trump during the president's first term have grown stronger in about 10 meetings together since December, including Tuesday at the White House with a task force to oversee federal plans for the 2026 World Cup being co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The FIFA leader also meets regularly with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, whose kingdom will host the



men's World Cup in 2034. Infantino helped steer those hosting rights to Saudi Arabia in an uncontested vote last December.

Infantino is expected to return from the Middle East in time for the FIFA Congress on Thursday, the last meeting of all FIFA members before they come to the 2026 World Cup.

It also is their first meeting together since before the online votes six months ago that confirmed the Saudi bid for 2034 and sent the 2030 edition to Spain, Portugal and Morocco plus single games in Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay.

He had been due Tuesday in the Paraguayan capital Asuncion to chair an in-person meeting of FIFA's ruling council. It is now moved up four days for an online session Friday that clears Infantino's schedule for the kind of geopolitical trip he has seemed to relish detailing on his Instagram account.

Infantino and FIFA have consistently said he needs to maintain good relations with the Trump administration to ensure the 48-team, six-week tournament is safe and successful. FIFA voters chose the North American bid in 2018 when it was backed by then-President Trump.

Manchester United, Tottenham reach Europa League final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Manchester

For Manchester United or Tottenham, a miserable campaign will end in Europa League glory. Despite both teams languishing in the bottom half of the Premier League, the Champions League is now just one game away.

That's the reward on offer after the two troubled English clubs advanced to the final of Europe's second-tier competition on Thursday. United beat Athletic Bilbao 4-1 in the semifinal second leg at Old Trafford and won 7-1 on aggregate. Tottenham won 2-0 away at Bodo/Glimt to seal a 5-1 aggregate victory. It sets up an all-English Europa League final for the second time in six years after Chelsea beat Arsenal to lift the trophy in 2019.

"If we don't win the final, it means nothing for us," United coach Ruben Amorim said. "It's hard to describe what it's like to be manager of this club. You want to give them (the fans) something, because we've been so disappointing in the Premier League." United came back from 1-0 down at halftime against Bilbao, with Mason Mount coming off the bench to score twice after the break. Casemiro and Rasmus Hojlund were also on target.

Dominic Solanke and Pedro Porro struck for Tottenham against Bodo/Glimt

in Norway.

The final is in Bilbao on May 21. "It's an unbelievable feeling," Spurs defender Micky van de Ven said. "We've had a tough season, but we're one game away from winning silverware." A major title, alone, would be enough to salvage what has otherwise been a season to forget for both United and Spurs. But the added prize of a place in the lucrative Champions League would put the winner back among Europe's elite next term.

That hasn't looked likely for either team for most of the campaign as they have languished closer to the relegation zone than the top five. United is 15th in the standings having lost a club record 16 games in the Premier League. It is also certain to record its worst-ever points total in the modern era, as well as its lowest finish. For Tottenham, it's even worse — sitting one place below United after a club record-equaling 19 losses in the Premier League. Now, one of those teams has the chance to effectively erase their woeful domestic form by winning the final, which will be the fourth time they have faced each other this season.

Spurs won all three of the previous encounters — twice in the league and also in the English League Cup.

"We are struggling, both of us, so I don't



know what is going to happen," Amorim said. "That is a good thing and a bad thing with this team. I never know."

United's two-legged victory over Bilbao defied its performances for most of the season, which saw former coach Erik ten Hag fired in October and his replacement, Amorim, oversee 12 losses in 24 league games. Bilbao, fourth in the Spanish league, trailed 3-0 from the first leg but

79th and Hojlund scored from close range in the 85th.

Mount got his second when he spotted Agirrezabala off his line in the first minute of stoppage time and fired home from near the halfway line.

It is United's third Europa League final in eight years, having won the competition in 2017. United won the FA Cup last year and the League Cup in 2023 and this would be a third trophy-winning season in a row.

It would also be Amorim's first for the club after winning two Portuguese league titles with Sporting Lisbon. He described it as "massive." "For me it's the most important because it's the next one," he said. Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou insists he always delivers a trophy in his second year in charge.

That was true at his previous clubs Brisbane Roar, Yokohama F Marinos and Celtic. But even the most optimistic of Spurs fans must have questioned whether he could maintain that record, given the team's struggles this season.

Now he is one game away from coming good on his statement. Spurs led 3-1 from the first leg against a Bodo/Glimt team that became the first from Norway to reach a major European semifinal. But the trip to the Aspmyra Stadion, located north of the Arctic Circle, with an artificial playing

SINGLE IS ALL LAME JOKES AND NO STORY

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Sree Vishnu delivered a successful hit *Samajavaragamana*, a comedy backdrop, in 2023. After that, he did two films—one an experiment—but both didn't do well. Now, he is back to comedy once again with *Single*, where the trailer became trending because of the controversial dialogues related to the Manchu family. Caarthik Raju is the director, while Ketika Sharma and Ivana play the female leads. Here is the story and how it unfolds.

STORY

Vijay (Sree Vishnu) works in a bank's insurance section and is single, desperately seeking a girlfriend. One day, he sees a girl, Purva (Ketika Sharma), on a Metro train and instantly falls in love. He follows her and finds out that she works at a luxury car showroom. Pretending to be a customer, he visits the showroom regularly to meet her. However, she eventually discovers he lied to her. To teach him a lesson, she pretends to like him and fakes being in love with him.

Meanwhile, Harini (Ivana) is following Vijay and confesses her love. Vijay, however, shows no interest in Harini and rightly rejects her. When he enquires about Harini, he discovers a shocking secret. What is Harini's secret and what does Vijay



REVIEW

Cast: Sree Vishnu, Ketika Sharma, Ivana, Vennela Kishore, VT Ganesh, Rajendra Prasad, Narne Nithin, and others

Music Director: Vishal Chandrasekhar

Cinematographer: R. Velraj ISC

Producers: Vidya Koppineedi, Bhanu Pratap, and Riyaz Chowdary

Writer and Director: Caarthik Raju

Rating: 2/5

decide to do? What happens to Purva—does she realize her feelings and marry Vijay? To know the answers, you'll have to watch *Single*.

ANALYSIS

Sree Vishnu's experimental film *Swag*, in which he played five roles, was a huge flop. Before that, he did *Om Bheem Bush*, where he played a dual role—another failure. His earlier comedy film

Samajavaragamana, however, was a box-office success. So, the actor decided to return to comedy with *Single*.

Caarthik Raju, who doesn't know Telugu, is the writer and director. When you want to make an entertaining film, you can't just throw in some jokes circulating on social media or the internet. A storyline is essential. In *Single*, there's no real story—the protagonist is simply single and desperate for a girlfriend. He falls in love

instantly upon seeing a girl, as is the case in many Telugu films.

From that point on, the director shows how the protagonist tries to impress the girl, with a few scattered scenes.

Meanwhile, another girl, Harini (Ivana), follows Vijay and falls for him. However, Sree Vishnu and Ivana lack any on-screen chemistry. She looks more like his younger sister and there's even a line where Sree Vishnu tells her, "You look

very short and if I want to talk to you, I have to bend down." Throughout the film, he body-shames her, emphasising how young she looks. It's hard to understand the casting logic behind including her and giving such rude dialogues to the protagonist.

More than that, Sree Vishnu is cringe-worthy from start to finish, both in diction and dialogue delivery. If he had spoken normally with a few cringe lines sprinkled in, it might have worked. But he maintains a cringe tone throughout, making it hard to watch after a while.

Even in the second half, the director neglects the storyline and relies on lame jokes. Purva, played by Ketika Sharma, pretends to love Vijay and manipulates him into spending money unnecessarily. These dragged-out scenes become boring due to the lack of a solid narrative.

One decent scene occurs in the second half when Vijay discovers that his close friend, played by Vennela Kishore, is leaking information about him. A few jokes here and there work, but overall, the film falls flat with no story or emotional depth. The climax also misfires, overloaded with too many guest appearances.

PERFORMANCES

Sree Vishnu looks good, but his chemistry with the female leads doesn't work. His comedy timing in *Samajavaragamana* was on point, but here his dialogue delivery is off as he maintains the same

cringe tone throughout. He also mimics many actors' dialogues.

Vennela Kishore appears throughout the film and delivers a few laughs, but his role feels repetitive, similar to many of his previous films. Ketika Sharma looks pretty, but her character lacks strength. Ivana appears very young and her pairing with Sree Vishnu doesn't work at all. However, she is hyperactive and does justice to her role.

Rajendra Prasad has a cameo, but it leaves no impact. VT Ganesh is also present, but his character is routine and uninteresting.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

On the technical front, the film has good production values. The cinematography is visually appealing, showcasing Hyderabad's locations effectively. The music, however, is a major drawback. Both the songs and background score are below average. Dialogues are partly entertaining, as many are lifted from social media or internet sources.

VERDICT

Single offers a few laughs here and there thanks to some jokes. However, it lacks a storyline, emotional content, and meaningful character chemistry. The director seems to have aimed for a joke-driven film, but forgot to add a plot. The much-hyped satirical lines related to the Manchu family—which helped the trailer trend—were ultimately removed from the film.



KAMAL HAASAN POSTPONES THUG LIFE AUDIO LAUNCH AMID BORDER TENSIONS

In a move underscoring the importance of national solidarity during times of crisis, veteran actor and filmmaker Kamal Haasan has announced the postponement of the audio launch event for his upcoming film *Thug Life*, originally scheduled for May 16, 2025.

Issuing an official statement on behalf of Raajkamal Films International, Kamal

Haasan emphasized that "Art can wait. India comes first." The decision comes in light of heightened alert along the nation's borders and growing security concerns.

"As our soldiers stand firm on the frontlines with unflinching courage in defence of our motherland, I believe it is a time for quiet solidarity, not celebration," he stated. While a new date for the audio

launch will be announced later, the actor urged fellow citizens to exercise restraint and join in reflection rather than festivity.

"Our thoughts are with the brave men and women of our armed forces who stand vigilant, safeguarding our nation," he added. "As citizens, it is our duty to respond with restraint and solidarity. Celebration must make way for reflection."

Pranav Mohanlal's *Dies Irae* promises dark turn in Malayalam horror cinema

After the critical and commercial success of *Bramayugam*, Night Shift Studios has revealed the title of its highly anticipated second feature—*Dies Irae*, a horror-thriller headlined by rising Malayalam cinema star Pranav Mohanlal. The Latin title, which translates to The Day of Wrath, signals a dramatic and ominous narrative shift, as the film enters post-production.

Written and directed by Rahul Sadasivan, who earned widespread acclaim for his atmospheric and genre-defining work on *Bramayugam*, *Dies Irae* promises to push the boundaries of Indian horror cinema once again. "Compared to my previous films, *Dies Irae* explores a diametrically opposite emotional spectrum which con-

nects to the new generation," Sadasivan shared, hinting at a fresh and emotionally intense narrative style. "While it stays true to the horror-thriller space, it's a very different beast in terms of narrative style and mood."

With principal photography completed, the project is currently in post-production. Specific plot details remain under wraps, but the creative team suggests audiences can expect a cinematic experience that's both bold and distinctive. Night Shift Studios appears to be building a strong horror identity, retaining much of the core team from *Bramayugam*, which was released in 2024 as a black-and-white period horror film starring Mammootty, Arjun Ashokan and Sidharth Bharathan. That film broke new ground for

Malayalam horror, both aesthetically and commercially.

"With *Bramayugam*, we were able to draw global attention to what Indian horror-thrillers could achieve," said Chakravarthy Ramachandra, founder and producer at Night Shift Studios. "*Dies Irae* is the next step in this pursuit. Pranav Mohanlal is set to leave an indelible footprint on this genre." Echoing that sentiment, producer S. Sashikanth added, "Concepts like *Dies Irae* demand not just an edgy idea but also the right mix of talent with uncompromising quality. That's what excites us most about this project."



No! Deepika isn't joining Chiranjeevi's film

Bollywood star Deepika Padukone continues her foray into Telugu cinema, officially signing on for director Sandeep Reddy Vanga's much-awaited action drama *Spirit*, where she will reunite with superstar Prabhas. However, while fans were abuzz with speculation about her possible inclusion in Chiranjeevi's next project with *Dasara* director Srikanth Odela, sources close to the production have firmly dismissed those claims. According to reports, the team behind Chiranjeevi's upcoming film has clarified that Deepika is not being considered for any role in the venture, putting an end to the swirling rumours in film circles.

Meanwhile, confirmation of Deepika's presence in *Spirit* has sparked excitement among fans, especially after her critically praised Telugu debut in Nag Ashwin's *Kalki 2898 AD*. In that futuristic epic, she portrayed the role of Su-Mo, earning accolades for her intense performance alongside cinematic giants like Prabhas, Amitabh Bachchan and Kamal Haasan. Now, the *Pathaan* actress is all set to dive into a gritty cop universe with *Spirit*, where director Sandeep Reddy Vanga is reportedly offering her a well-layered and substantial character. As per other reports, Deepika was deeply impressed by the detailing in both the script and her role.

"It's the most well-written female part in Sandeep Reddy Vanga's cinematic universe," a source revealed. "Deepika was surprised by the nuances—not just in the story, but in her character. She's thrilled to collaborate with Sandeep for the first time." *Spirit* marks another big-ticket Telugu project for Deepika, solidifying her pan-India appeal as she navigates ambitious roles across industries. The film is expected to go on floors soon, with more casting details to be announced in the coming months.

'Vijay Deverakonda is not what the world thinks,' says *Kingdom* producer



Telugu film producer Naga Vamsi on Friday took to social media to share a heartfelt birthday wish for actor Vijay Deverakonda, shedding light on the often contrasting perceptions surrounding the popular star. In a candid note posted on his official X (formerly Twitter) account, Vamsi described Deverakonda as one of the most misunderstood yet humble individuals in the film industry.

Reflecting on his initial assumptions before working with the actor, Vamsi revealed that he and director Gowtam Tinnanuri had certain apprehensions. "Before our first meeting, @gowtam19 and I used to wonder how we'd make a film with a hero with such a strong attitude," he wrote. "But after meeting you, all those thoughts changed."

He went on to praise Deverakonda's genuine personality, noting the striking contrast between the public's perception and the actor's true self. "You're one of the most soft-spoken and humble people. So different from the person the world sees on stage with a mic," Vamsi added.

The producer wished Deverakonda continued success and a string of future hits: "Wishing our dearest @TheDeverakonda a very happy birthday! May the coming years bring you many more blockbusters and continued success."

Naga Vamsi is currently producing the upcoming action-packed entertainer *Kingdom*, directed by Gowtam Tinnanuri. The film stars Vijay Deverakonda in the lead alongside Bhagyashree Borse.

VD turns into mystical warrior for *VD14*

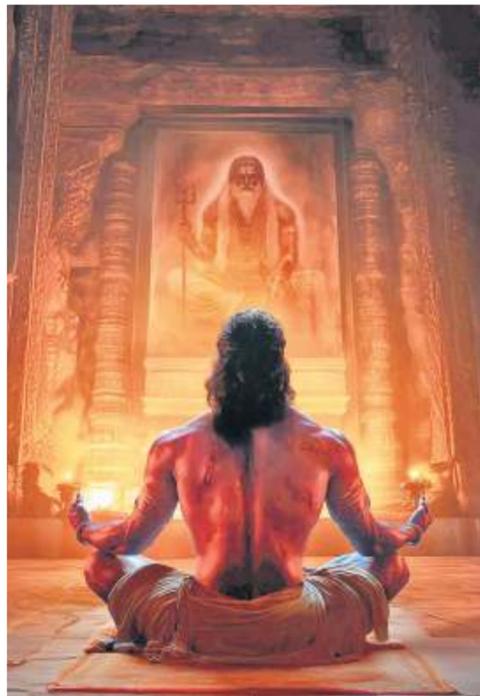
Vijay Deverakonda's 36th birthday brought a surprise for fans as the makers of his upcoming film, *VD14*, released the much-anticipated first look from the project. Directed by *Taxiwaala* and *Shyam Singha Roy* fame Rahul Sankrityan, the film is reportedly set in the era of British colonial rule and promises an intense, period-based narrative with mythological undertones.

The first poster, revealed by production house Mythri Movie Makers on X (formerly Twitter), showcases Deverakonda in a radically different avatar. Dressed as a meditative hermit with a sculpted physique and long flowing hair, he sits solemnly before a sacred altar, exuding a divine calm paired with raw intensity.

"The GODS gave him STRENGTH. War gave him a PURPOSE," read the caption accompanying the first look, as the team extended birthday wishes to their leading man.

The image has sparked immediate excitement across social media, with fans praising his transformation and calling the look "mental" and "goosebumps-inducing." The drastic makeover suggests a character that blends spiritual depth with warrior-like ferocity, setting the tone for what might be one of Deverakonda's most ambitious roles yet.

While details about the storyline remain under wraps, the scale of the film is evident. Lavish sets have reportedly been constructed to recreate the era



Raghava Lawrence comes to the aid of farm labourer who lost savings to termites

Actor, director, and producer Raghava Lawrence has once again proven why he's as admired off-screen as he is on it. In a heartwarming gesture, Lawrence has stepped in to help a farm labourer's family who lost their lifetime savings to an unexpected misfortune—termites.

The heartbreaking incident was recently reported on television channels: a poor family had been storing their hard-earned savings—around Rs 1 lakh—in a box buried underground. To their dismay, they discovered that termites had completely destroyed the currency they had painstakingly saved over the years.

Deeply moved by the family's plight, Lawrence took swift action. Learning of the story through the media, he decided to compensate the family for their loss. Posting on X (formerly Twitter), he wrote: "Hi Everyone, I came across the news

that a coolie family lost one lakh of their many years of savings due to termites. My heart sank thinking about what they must've gone through. So, I'm happy to contribute the lost money for them. Thanks to the media and people involved in reaching this news to me. #Maatram #Serviceisgod."

The actor also shared a touching video in which he personally delivers the Rs 1 lakh to the family, presenting it in a box—mirroring the original form in which the money was stored.

Lawrence, widely known for his philanthropic efforts, earned widespread praise not just for this kind gesture but also for his humble values. In 2023, he made headlines for urging fans not to attend his film events, stating that he did not want to encroach on their personal time and responsibilities.

