



The Pioneer

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Pawan Kalyan prioritises films amid political COMMITMENTS

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

I will welcome if the BRS leadership is handed over to KTR. My leader is KCR. Whatever KCR says, I will obey without question. Many rumours are doing the rounds. Let me say it once again. I have always stood by the party and KCR from the very beginning. I will never cross the line. Governance is not about throwing mud at the opposition. It's about solving problems. This government is sleeping while farmers are collapsing in queues



- Harish Rao, BRS MLA

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DON'T MISS...

Dalit uplift govt's priority: Anitha

Home and Disaster Management Minister Vangalapudi Anitha has said that the alliance government led by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has prioritised the welfare and development of Dalits in its first year in office. During her visit to the Tanuku constituency, she stated that the government is committed to inclusive governance and equitable progress for all communities. As part of her tour, the Minister laid foundation stones and inaugurated development works worth Rs 6.5 crore, including CC roads, drainage systems...

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Life term for 9 in Pollachi case in TN

A Mahila Court here on Tuesday convicted and sentenced nine men to "life imprisonment till death" in the sensational Pollachi sexual assault case, six years after the incident came to light and sent shockwaves over the audacity of the perpetrators that had prompted widespread calls for justice to the victims. The court ruling saw archrivals DMK and AIADMK hit out at each other over women's safety during their respective rules. Judge R Nandhini Devi, who pronounced the quantum of punishment, ordered...

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Inflation cools to 6-yr low of 3.16 pc

Retail inflation eased to a nearly six-year low of 3.16 per cent in April mainly due to subdued prices of vegetables, fruits, pulses, and other protein-rich items, creating enough room for the Reserve Bank to go for another round of rate cut in the June monetary policy review. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation was 3.34 per cent in March and 4.83 per cent in April 2024. It was 3.15 per cent in July 2019. NSO data showed a sharp decline of 91 basis points in food inflation in April 2025 in comparison to...

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Zara is top Indian at Queen Sirikit Cup

Zara Anand was the top Indian at Tied-12th after the first round of the Queen Sirikit Cup here on Tuesday. Zara, one of the most promising amateurs in India, shot 1-over 73 with three birdies against four bogeys in the round. Two of those bogeys came on the 14th and the 18th. The other two Indians in the prestigious competition are Heena Kang (76) at T-21 and Mannat Brar (77), who had an off day and was T-25. Heena had two birdies, four bogeys and a double bogey, while Mannat had two...

-SPORTS

ADAMPUR AIRBASE INTACT



PM Modi's visit to Adampur airbase debunked Pakistan's claim of destroying India's S-400 air defence system



Modi salutes soldiers

Lauds military's valour, sends message of 'Lakshman Rekha' to Pak from border IAF base

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With an S-400 missile defence system in the backdrop, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sent a firm message Tuesday from Adampur Air Base to Pakistan: Not only have you failed to harm any of India's military installations but you will be annihilated if terrorism continues from your soil.

In his first speech to the armed forces since Operation Sindoor, Modi lauded the military for humbling Pakistan in the four-day engagement that resulted in the destruction of nine terror sites, killing of over 100 terrorists and damage to its eight military installations.

"Aatank ke viruddh Bharat ki Lakshman Rekha ekdam spasht hai. Ab phir koi terror attack hua to Bharat jawab dega, pakka jawab dega. (India's Lakshman Rekha against terrorism is now crystal

INDIA EXPELS PAK OFFICIAL

NEW DELHI: India on Tuesday expelled a Pakistani official working at the Pakistan High Commission for indulging in activities not in keeping with his official status. The External Affairs Ministry said the official has been given 24 hours to leave India. The action came amid heightened tension between the two countries following their four-day military confrontation. India also issued a demarche to Pakistani Charge d' Affaires in New Delhi on the activities of the official.

clear. India will respond and definitely respond if hit by a terror attack)," he said, in an over 27-minute speech which echoed the message of his address to the nation on Monday night.

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Pak: Will stand by ceasefire arrangement

Criticises Modi's remarks

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday reiterated its commitment to stand by the ceasefire arrangement even as it criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks during his address to the nation. In his first address to the nation after Operation Sindoor, Prime Minister Modi on Monday sternly warned Pakistan that India will not succumb to nuclear blackmail and sent a clear message to the world: terror and trade, terror and talks cannot go together. Pakistan categorically rejects the "provocative" assertions made by the Indian Prime Minister in his address yesterday, the Foreign Office said in a statement Tuesday. It said that at a time when international efforts are being made for regional peace and stability, his comments have the potential to escalate the situation.

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India briefs foreign defence attaches

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Jagan consoles parents of martyred soldier

PNS ■ KALLI THANDA

Former chief minister and YSRCP president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy consoled the grieving family of martyred soldier Murali Naik at their residence in Kalli Thanda village of Gorantla mandal on Tuesday. In a deeply emotional setting, the parents repeatedly broke down as memories of their son were recalled.

Squatting on the floor with the bereaved family, Jagan paid floral tributes and offered words of comfort. He announced an ex gratia of Rs 25 lakh on behalf of the party, stating that the YSRCP government had set a precedent of honouring fallen soldiers with Rs 50 lakh in compensation.

SC relief to Midhun in liquor case



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Supreme Court has granted significant relief to YSR Congress Party MP P.V. Mithun Reddy in connection with the Andhra Pradesh liquor policy case, setting aside the Andhra Pradesh High Court's earlier order rejecting his anticipatory bail plea.

The apex court has directed the High Court to conduct a fresh hearing on Mithun Reddy's anticipatory bail petition within four weeks. In the meantime, it has made it clear that the MP shall not be arrested.

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Bharati Cement ED arrested in scam

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Executive Director of Bharati Cement Pvt Ltd, Balaji Govindappa, has been arrested by a SIT of the Andhra Pradesh police probing the Rs 3,200 crore liquor scam that had allegedly taken place during the previous YSRCP regime, an official said on Tuesday.

Govindappa is one of the several accused in the case and was picked up from Mysuru in neighbouring Karnataka. "Govindappa has been arrested in Mysuru today," the official said.

According to a source, SIT officials searched Govindappa's residence in Hyderabad three days ago, followed by his arrest on Tuesday.



'Horticulture key to doubling farmers' income'

P3



Vamsi gets bail

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Gannavaram MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsi, arrested for the alleged kidnap of TDP functionary M Satyavardhan, was granted bail by the Special Court for SC/ST Cases after over 90 days in judicial custody. Four co-accused were also granted bail.

This was Vamsi's third bail plea, with the court earlier rejecting two.

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AP set to attract major IT investments: Lokesh

Says 91 top companies have expressed willingness to begin operations in State

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh is set to emerge as a major destination for investment in the IT and electronics sectors, with 91 prominent companies expressing interest in establishing operations in the state, announced Minister for Education, IT and Electronics, Nara Lokesh.

In a high-level review meeting held at his residence in Undavalli with senior officials from the IT, Electronics and RTGS departments, the Minister issued key directives aimed at expediting industrial development.

Minister Lokesh emphasised the need to appoint a dedicated nodal

officer for each company to ensure swift approvals and effective coordination. So far, companies have proposed investments worth Rs 91,839 crore, with the potential to generate over 1.41 lakh jobs. He instructed officials to fast-track approvals and initiate consultations with company representatives to facilitate the prompt establishment of units.

Outlining the government's objective, Lokesh stated that Andhra Pradesh aims to create five lakh jobs in the IT and electronics sectors over the next five years. He also underlined the importance of transforming Visakhapatnam into a global IT hub powered by advanced technologies. Pending incentive dues to IT



firms must be cleared immediately, he added.

On the digital governance front, Lokesh called for the integration of all government services onto platforms such as WhatsApp Governance and the 'Mana Mitra' app, which currently offers 317 services. The target is to expand this number to 400 by the end of the

month. All public service certificates should be linked with blockchain technology and QR codes to enhance security and verification.

He further directed municipal, panchayat, and corporation offices to issue property tax dues and alerts via WhatsApp, and instructed the RTGS to incorporate KPIs and real-time weather alerts. He also said

preparations must begin immediately for the National e-Governance Summit scheduled to be held in Visakhapatnam on June 9-10.

Minister Lokesh reiterated the need for a unified, AI-enabled platform to consolidate government applications, GOs, and departmental data to improve transparency and efficiency.

Enhancing the ease of doing business and introducing a single certification system for MSMEs using QR code and blockchain technologies were among the key tech-driven reforms discussed at the meeting.

Senior officials, including IT Secretary Katamneni Bhaskar, Special Secretary B. Sundar, EDB CEO Saikanth Varma, AP Technology Services MD Surya Tej, and RTGS CEO Prakhkar Jain, attended the session.



<ul style="list-style-type: none">CM stresses the importance of the Electronics, IT, and Services sectors in driving revenue growth.Expresses concern over low tax revenues from gold consumption despite high usage in the State.Strict measures to prevent tax evasion and improve transparency called for.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">CM emphasises the creation of a central Data Lake and AI teams in all departments.Stringent action against illegal liquor sales from neighbouring states directed.CM questions the State's low transport revenue and seeks immediate corrective policies.A committee may be formed to facilitate the international sale of red sanders stocks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The revenue target for 2025-26 has been set at Rs 1,34,208 crore, a 29% increase from last year.Commercial taxes and forest revenues decline; stamps and registration revenue up.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Central government transfers to Andhra Pradesh drop by 26% compared to the same period last year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The new excise policy boosts revenue to Rs 28,842 crore in 2024-25, but it remains low compared to other southern states.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Excise revenue for April 2025 stood at Rs 2,116 cr, with the year's total expected to reach Rs 33,882 cr.

take stringent steps to prevent the illegal sale of liquor from neighbouring states. The entire process—

from supply to retail—must be tracked in real-time to ensure transparency.

[Continued on Page 2](#)



Naidu unveils grand plan for port-based economy in State

Centre to invest Rs 3,500 crore, and the State will contribute land as equity

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has announced an ambitious strategy to build a port-based economy in Andhra Pradesh by capitalising on the state's 1,000-km-long coastline. The plan envisions the establishment of a port or fishing harbour every 50 km to drive economic development, generate employment, and enhance infrastructure.

During a high-level review meeting at the State Secretariat with officials from the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, including Union Secretary TK Ramachandran, Naidu underscored the need to fast-track port and maritime infrastructure.

A major highlight of the discussions was the proposal to develop a Shipbuilding and Repair Cluster at Dugarajapatnam in Nellore district, as part of the Central

Government's bifurcation-era assurances. The project, backed by a preliminary feasibility report, will be developed across 2,000 acres with joint support from the Centre and State.

The greenfield port project will include four dry docks, outfitting jetties, and a ship-lift facility. Of the total area, 1,000 acres will be reserved for core shipbuilding operations, while the remaining will host ancillary industries.

The Centre will invest Rs 3,500 crore, and the State will contribute land as equity.

A Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) will be established to attract global leaders in shipbuilding. Officials informed the Chief Minister that the initiative is expected to draw investments totalling Rs 26,000 crore, provide direct employment to 5,000 individuals, and indirectly benefit around 30,000 more.

[Continued on Page 2](#)



Satya Kumar unhappy with healthcare delivery in R'seema

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav on Tuesday conducted a comprehensive review of primary healthcare centres (PHCs) and secondary hospitals across the state, with a sharp focus on the performance disparities between regions.

The review revealed that Krishna, Vizianagaram, and Prakasam districts are performing well in deliv-

ering healthcare services, while districts in the Rayalaseema region, particularly Anantapur, are significantly lagging. Expressing strong dissatisfaction, the Minister pulled up district medical and health officers (DMHOs) and district health service coordinators (DHSs) in the underperforming areas and instructed them to take immediate corrective measures.

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People should not be misled by misinformation

Tensions along the border of India and Pakistan have forced millions of people on both sides to spend sleepless nights. It may not be a full-fledged war between the two nations that have an umbilical cord relationship, as both countries were part of undivided British India. Although many Indians still subscribe to the concept of Akhand Bharat (Undivided India), the situation that exists between the two nations is certainly discouraging for all peace-loving people.

Religious fanatics of the Sangh Parivar are chanting the mantra of Ekta (unity) and Akhandata (state of being united). But some groups in the Sangh Parivar prefer to exploit religion, focusing on Islamic Pakistan. Everybody knows that it is easy to incite people using caste, religion and place of origin.

When it comes to the issue of Pakistan, religious polarisation automatically comes to the fore. Tensions are always high if the issue is connected to Pakistan. In the case of the other neighbouring countries, the same feelings won't come into the minds of those who perpetrate these things. Indian rulers, whichever party they may belong to, treat the issue on the basis of religion.

The conflict between India and Pakistan has many shades. Many groups in both countries are trying to fan religious tensions. Both countries accuse each other of the latter's hidden hand in developments on their soil. India is blaming Pakistan for promoting terrorism on its soil. Pakistan accuses India of trying to divide it by helping Balochistan separatists.

During the United



The conflict between India and Pakistan has many shades. Many groups in both countries are trying to fan religious tensions. Both countries accuse each other of the latter's hidden hand in developments on their soil. India is blaming Pakistan for promoting terrorism on its soil. Pakistan accuses India of trying to divide it by helping Balochistan separatists.

Progressive Alliance (UPA) administration headed by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, he issued a statement agreeing to discuss India's role in Balochistan affairs. The Pakistani political fraternity tried to interpret it as 'confirmation' from the horse's mouth. Dr Manmohan's comments partly gave credence to Pakistan's claims. National Security Adviser Ajit Doval recently commented that Pakistan will lose Balochistan in case it carries out another attack like the 2008 Mumbai terror attack.

It is a known fact that terrorism along J&K's Line of Control has been continuing despite the Indian armed forces maintaining constant vigil. Some questions were raised regarding the terror attack on Indian forces at Pulwama. The incidents in which Pakistani infiltrators were killed on the LoC are proof of our armed forces



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alertness. But the huge quantity of explosives used in the Pulwama attack was brought from Pakistan. How was it possible for the infiltrators to smuggle in such huge quantities of explosives has been the big question.

The terrorists who carried out the Pahalgam attack sur-

prised our country with their presence there. The failure of our Intelligence agencies is a question that remains to be answered. During the Kargil war in 1999, Intelligence failure had come to the fore. Then the opposition, including the Congress, had demanded a discussion on the Kargil issue in Parliament. But the Vajpayee Government rejected the demand, saying that it would damage the morale of our armed forces. In Kargil, Pakistani infiltration was first noticed by local shepherds, and they raised an alarm. The armed forces then swung into action and threw out the Pakistani infiltrators. Around 300 Indian soldiers lost their lives in the Kargil war.

During the Chinese aggression in 1962, there was a gross Intelligence failure. Some border villagers saw Chinese soldiers at a roadside tea stall having tea. This alerted our armed

forces, but they faced a humiliating defeat at the hands of China. This incident badly damaged Pandit Nehru's image. He accused China of violating the Pancha Sheel agreement with India, which clearly ruled out aggression.

In matters of war, people should be cautious and should not allow themselves to be misled. The media should be more responsible while publishing war news. Some TV channels had to face criticism over their news. Justice Markandeya Katju, who is known for his impartial criticism, said that one TV channel captured Lahore last night and another TV channel seized some other Pak cities, but they let those cities go from their 'captivity' for recapturing them the next night. The comments of this legal luminary show how the news aired by TV channels has become ridiculous.

It is objectionable for TV

channels and the print media to take sides while publishing war news. People who cover wars usually take sides and denigrate the soldiers on the other side.

President Donald Trump claimed that he stopped a nuclear war between India and Pakistan that would have killed millions of people on both sides. Our Prime Minister has not responded to this so far. This shows that both India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire brokered by the US.

It may be recalled that India had earlier categorically said that there would be no mediation by another country between India and Pakistan. But contrary to that, current developments indicate that India agreed to end hostilities after the US entered the scene. The people of India will come to know the facts only when our Prime Minister spills the beans.

House panel reviews welfare budget allocations for 2019-2022

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly Estimates Committee, chaired by Mandapeta MLA Vegulla Jogeswara Rao, convened on Tuesday at the Assembly Committee Hall to review the budget estimates for the financial years 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22. The review focused on allocations to the Social Welfare, Tribal Welfare, Minority Welfare, and Panchayat Raj and Rural Development departments.

The committee commenced its proceedings with the Social Welfare Department at 11:00 a.m., followed by the Tribal Welfare Department at 2:00 p.m. and the Minority Welfare



Department at 3:30 p.m. Senior officials from each department presented reports on budget allocations, utilisation, and implementation outcomes over the three years.

The committee will continue its review on Wednesday, 14 May, with the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development

Department at 11:00 a.m. This session, too, will be chaired by MLA Jogeswara Rao and held at the Assembly Committee Hall. The ongoing review is intended to assess the effectiveness of government spending in key welfare and development sectors, aiming to enhance transparency and

accountability in public finance management.

Committee members Akhila Priya, Dr Parthasarathi, Madipati Venkataraju and Nimmaka Jayakrishna were present, along with Assembly Deputy Secretary Raj Kumar and senior departmental officials.



Subudhi appointed OSD for CM in Delhi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has appointed Susanta Subudhi as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) for Media Relations to the Chief Minister, based in New Delhi.

The appointment is on a contract basis, as per GO Rt No 905 issued by the General Administration (Protocol.B) Department.

The order was issued by Mukesh Kumar Meena, Principal Secretary to Government (Political).

Min Lokesh unveils roadmap to boost jobs via skill development

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Education and IT, Nara Lokesh, has instructed officials to take all necessary steps to generate lakhs of employment opportunities in Andhra Pradesh over the next five years through focused skill development initiatives. He chaired a comprehensive review meeting with department officials at his residence in Undavalli on Tuesday.

Emphasising the need for coordination among key agencies — the Skill Development Corporation, NACK, CDAP, and OMCap — Lokesh directed officials to ensure the Skill Portal functions as a unified platform connecting youth with industry. He also called for sector-wise tracking of training programmes and placements.

District-wise action plans should be prepared based on local industrial requirements, he said. Kurnool will be developed as a renewable energy hub; Chittoor and Kadapa as electronics manufacturing hubs; East and West Godavari as aqua hubs; Anantapur as an automobile manufacturing centre; and Prakasam as a biofuel hub. Skill training must align with these focus areas, he added.

Lokesh also stressed the



importance of training youth to seize opportunities linked to the construction of Bhogapuram Airport, Amaravati development, and other airport infrastructure. He directed that international-level construction training be offered through NACK.

Stating that five lakh IT jobs would be created over the next five years, Lokesh pointed to emerging opportunities in aviation, aquaculture, electronics manufacturing, and compressed biogas. He noted a current shortage of skilled AC mechanics, lift operators, and solar technicians — areas requiring targeted training.

To bolster job creation through ITIs, polytechnics, and vocational education, the Minister proposed curriculum revision in collaboration with leading industries and inclusion of national and international certi-

fications. He also urged officials to track school dropouts and offer them training under the National Curriculum Framework to enhance employability.

At the school level, he suggested introducing financial literacy and basic knowledge of agriculture and trades. Colleges and universities must also ensure students graduate with industry-relevant skills, he added.

Skill Development Secretary Kona Shashidhar, APSDC MD & CEO G Ganesh Kumar, Director of Collegiate Education Narayana Bharat Gupta, Director of Intermediate Education Kritika Shukla, CDAP Chairman Deepak Reddy, CEO Narayana Swamy, International Skilling Advisor Seetha Sharma, and APSDC Executive Director K Dinesh Kumar attended the meeting.



5 kids drown in tank

PNS ■ KADAPA

In a tragic incident, five children drowned in an irrigation tank at Mallepally village in Brahmanagari Matam mandal on Tuesday.

According to the police, the victims — Tarun, Charan, Parthasarathi, Harshavardhan and Deekshit — had entered the tank for a bath when they accidentally slipped and drowned. All the deceased were aged below 12 years.

The bodies were later retrieved and shifted to the Government General Hospital for post-mortem.

CM's vision is to nurture an entrepreneur from every family: Minister Anagani

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Ministers Anagani Satya Prasad and Gottipati Ravikumar, accompanied by MLA Nimmakayala Chinaraajappa and Collector Shanmohan, laid the foundation stone for the establishment of an MSME Park at Peddapuram, near here, on Tuesday.

The MSME Park is being set up at a cost of Rs 13 crore. Speaking on the occasion, Revenue Minister Satya Prasad reiterated that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's vision is to nurture an entrepreneur in every household. He said the Chief Minister is working tirelessly to make Andhra Pradesh the leading state in terms of development in the country.

"Earlier, Chandrababu Naidu had called for the emergence of an IT professional from every household—a vision that was once



mocked. Now, two decades later, the concept has borne fruit. As part of the Vision-2047 goal, industrialisation across the state is crucial, and establishing an MSME Park in every constituency is part of that strategy," the Minister said.

Energy Minister Ravikumar stated that while India continues to rely heavily on agriculture, Chief Minister Naidu recognised the significance of industrial

development for overall progress.

He affirmed that the state government is committed to setting up large-scale MSME Parks in every constituency to encourage local industries and provide employment to at least ten youth in each unit, in alignment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Make in India' initiative.

Collector Shanmohan noted that there are seven Assembly constituencies in

Kakinada district and that an MSME Park would be established in each. The Peddapuram park is being developed on 29 acres of land at an estimated cost of Rs 13 crore.

MLA Nimmakayala Chinaraajappa also spoke on the occasion. KUDA Chairman Tummala Rama Swamy, Joint Collector Rahul Meena, APHC Zonal Manager M. Ramana Reddy and DLDO K.N.V. Prasad Rao were among those present.

Later in the day, Energy Minister Gottipati Ravikumar laid the foundation stone for a 33/11 KV power sub-station at Achampet village in Samalkot mandal. The sub-station is being established at a cost of Rs 3.04 crore. Minister Anagani Satya Prasad, MLC Karri Padmasri, MLA Chinaraajappa and Joint Collector Rahul Meena were also present.

Modi salutes soldiers...

Continued from Page 1

But the significance of the speech was immense. It was delivered from the Adampur base, merely 100 km from the Pakistan border, which Pakistan claimed to have destroyed along with the S-400 missile defence system. India had rubbished the claims and TV cameras following Modi corroborated that. Reiterating that Operation Sindoor is India's new normal, he praised the soldiers, saying what they have achieved is unprecedented, unimaginable and amazing, making every Indian proud and indebted.

Modi toured the base and greeted uniformed personnel who shouted 'Bharat Mata ki jai' after he arrived there unannounced early Tuesday morning. After interacting with the soldiers, he delivered the speech with an S-400 system in the backdrop, wearing a Western Air Command cap with its trademark trishul embroidered on it. He asked them to remain on guard and asserted, "This is the new India, this India seeks peace. But if humanity is attacked, it

also knows how to crush the enemy on the battlefield." He said Operation Sindoor is no ordinary campaign but a trinity of India's policy, intent and decisive capability, affirming that the country is the land of Buddha, the messenger of peace, as well as Guru Gobind Singh, who had galvanised the Sikh army against enemies. His speech interspersed with enthusiastic soldiers raising the slogan of 'Bharat Mata ki jai', Modi said it is an Indian tradition to take up arms to establish 'dharma' (righteousness). "When the sindoor of our sisters and daughters was wiped away, we crushed terrorists in their hideouts." He said, "Patrons of terrorism have realised that casting an evil eye on India will have only one consequence: destruction. There will be only one consequence of killing innocents: destruction, total annihilation."

He said terrorists thought they had the protection of the Pakistani armed forces. The Indian Air Force, Army and Navy humbled the Pakistani forces and conveyed to them that there is no place in Pakistan where terrorists can feel safe.

Pak. Will stand...

Continued from Page 1

"Pakistan remains committed to the recent ceasefire understanding and taking necessary steps towards de-escalation and regional stability," it claimed.

India carried out precision strikes under 'Operation Sindoor' on terror infrastructure early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack. Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10. India and Pakistan reached an understanding on Saturday to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

The Foreign Office claimed that the portrayal of Pakistan as seeking a ceasefire in "despair and frustration" is yet another "blatant lie".

Satya Kumar unhappy with...

Continued from Page 1

Minister Yadav pointed out that while PHCs in rural areas have shown improvement, secondary hospitals in Rayalaseema are falling short of their targets. He raised concern over the low percentage of surgeries recorded under the Dr NTR health services in the YSR district—just 3%—and

noted that overall, less than 25% of treatments in Rayalaseema were being conducted under the NTR scheme.

Addressing complaints of corruption in district offices, the Minister called for stringent action to root out bribery and ensure transparency. He instructed medical officers to uphold merit-based recruitment

ment and to eliminate the practice of collecting money from candidates during appointments. He also emphasised the need for enhanced training for district health officers to strengthen their administrative capabilities and reduce over-reliance on subordinate staff.

The Minister expressed concern over the prolonged tenure of some administrative staff, which he said was contributing to irregularities.

SC relief to Midhun..

Continued from Page 1

The Supreme Court observed that the High Court had failed to properly evaluate the evidence submitted during the earlier proceedings. It emphasised that the High Court must reassess the details of the investigation conducted so far, including the materials collected by the Investigating Officer.

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‘MY Bharat’ urges youth to join Civil Defence Volunteer Force

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a focused effort to strengthen community-based disaster response, MY Bharat—a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports—has called upon the youth to enrol as Civil Defence Volunteers.

The initiative aims to build a trained and resilient volunteer force to support civil authorities during emergencies such as natural disasters, accidents, and public crises. It also addresses the growing need for civilian preparedness in the face of increasing security and climate-related challenges.

Volunteers will be trained in rescue operations, first aid, traffic management, crowd control, and rehabilitation activities, thereby enhancing public safety and emergency response capacity. G. Maheshwar Rao, Deputy Director of MY Bharat – Visakhapatnam, appealed to the youth to actively participate. “Well-trained youth can make a critical difference in times of crisis,” he stated. Registrations are open at <https://mybharat.gov.in>. For more details, contact G. Maheshwar Rao at 8074605109.

RTC cracks down on graft: Kadapa V&SO, 9 others suspended

Employees Union welcomes MD’s bold action, demands compensation for affected families

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a decisive move to tackle corruption within the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC), Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao, Commissioner of the Andhra Pradesh Public Transport Department (APPTD) and Vice-Chairman & Managing Director of APSRTC, has taken stringent action against erring officials in the Vigilance and Security Department.

Acting on allegations of corruption in the Kadapa and Vijayawada zones, the Kadapa Vigilance & Security Officer (V&SO) was suspended, along with nine security personnel who allegedly acted as intermediaries in illicit dealings. In a related development, the Vijayawada V&SO voluntarily surrendered to the RTC Head Office.

Employees Union (EU) president Palisetty Damodara Rao and general secretary GV Narasaiah, on Tuesday, welcomed the MD’s firm action and commended the leadership’s resolve for transparency and institutional integrity.

The union leaders revealed



Acting on allegations of corruption in the Kadapa and Vijayawada zones, the Kadapa Vigilance & Security Officer (V&SO) was suspended, along with nine security personnel who allegedly acted as intermediaries in illicit dealings

that they had submitted a letter to the MD urging repayment to families affected by a mismanaged, Rs.52-lakh fixed deposit in the APSRTC Credit Cooperative Society (CCS).

They said that the amount was reportedly mishandled under the supervision of suspended V&SO Rahiman. They also demanded that supporting women members be compen-

sated and that punitive measures taken against staff who refused to pay bribes be revoked.

“The MD’s actions have rekindled hope among honest employees and sent a strong message to corrupt elements. We fully support this long-overdue cleanup,” Damodar Rao and Narasaiah stated. They further emphasised the importance of safeguarding whistleblowers and ensuring that victims of internal exploitation receive justice.

Speed up construction works at Indrakeeladri: EO

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Executive Officer (EO) of Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam, VK Seena Naik, has directed officials to expedite the ongoing construction works at the Indrakeeladri shrine, in line with the State government’s vision to provide enhanced facilities to devotees.

On Tuesday morning, EO Seena Naik conducted a field inspection to review the progress of various development activities, particularly at the temple, and to assess preparations for the inauguration of the Navagraha Mandapam, the new Yagasala, and the new Puja Mandapam.

Temple Executive Engineer KVS Koteswara Rao and other officials and staff were present.



Horticulture key to doubling farmers’ income: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has underlined the pivotal role of horticulture in boosting farmers’ income and announced plans to expand horticultural cultivation across Andhra Pradesh, excluding the Godavari and Krishna delta regions. At a high-level review meeting held at the Secretariat on Tuesday, the Chief Minister directed officials to ensure that farmers earn a minimum income of Rs 1 lakh per acre annually through horticulture.

To achieve this goal, the government will develop 24 horticulture clusters across the state, focusing on 11 priority crops — chilli, banana, mango, oil palm, cocoa, dragon fruit, cashew, coffee, coconut, tomato and onion. The Chief

Minister stressed the need to build strong support systems within these clusters to ensure sustainable income growth.

At present, horticulture is practised over 18.23 lakh hectares in the state. The Chief Minister has set an ambitious target to double this area within the next five years. He highlighted the growing demand for crops such as oil palm, cocoa and coconut in both domestic and international markets. Pointing out that India accounts for less than 1 per cent of global cocoa cultivation, he called for its expansion to at least one lakh acres. Farmers will also be trained in post-harvest quality management and encouraged to set up small-scale processing units to enhance value addition and profitability.

Mr Naidu also laid empha-

sis on the expansion of micro-irrigation systems and directed officials to ensure optimal use of subsidies offered by both the Centre and the State. Priority will be given to SC, ST, and small and marginal farmers for the installation of drip irrigation systems. For those who already have such systems in place, automation equipment will be installed to further optimise water and fertiliser usage. “Farmers must be made aware of the benefits of these technologies in conserving resources and improving productivity,” he said.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that fruit covers worth Rs 32 crore had been distributed to orchard farmers on a subsidy basis, covering 10,000 hectares and generating an additional income of Rs 120 crore.

NTR symbolises public welfare: Kesineni Sivanath

Foundation laid for Patamata NTR circle modernisation works worth Rs 20 L

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath and East MLA Gadde Rama Mohan, on Tuesday, laid the foundation stone for the modernisation of NTR Circle at Patamata in the city, a landmark named after legendary actor and former Chief Minister Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR). The modernisation works are being undertaken at a cost of Rs.20 lakh.

The modernisation project aims to enhance Patamata NTR Circle’s visual appeal and cultural significance, reinforcing its place as a key civic and emotional landmark in Vijayawada.

Speaking at the event, the MP described NTR as an “idol of the Telugu people” and a visionary who transformed

both cinema and politics. “He was an uncrowned king in both fields,” he said, adding that NTR played a decisive role in national politics and helped shape the leadership of the country, including influencing the appointment of Prime Ministers.

Sivanath emphasised NTR’s swift political rise, recalling that the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) came to power within just nine months of its formation under NTR’s leadership. “Wherever you go in Andhra Pradesh or Telangana, you will find a statue of NTR—such is his impact on the Telugu people,” he stated.

Further, he praised MLA Rama Mohan’s efforts to initiate the modernisation of the circle where the statue was installed two decades ago, noting that it would now be



Annual Credit Plan of Rs 83,500 cr unveiled for NTR dist in 2025–26

Minister Satya Kumar Yadav urges banks to drive inclusive growth, focus on priority sectors

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a major financial roadmap for the upcoming fiscal year, the Annual Credit Plan (ACP) 2025–26 for NTR district was formally unveiled with a proposed total outlay of Rs.83,500 crore, marking an increase of Rs.10,500 crore over the previous year. Minister for Health, Family Welfare & Medical Education and NTR district in-charge, Satyakumar Yadav, released the Annual Credit Action plan.

Meetings of the District Coordination Committee (DCC) and the District Level Review Committee (DLRC) were held at the Sri Pingali Venkaiah Conference Hall at the NTR District Collectorate in Vijayawada on Tuesday. Presiding over the event, Satyakumar Yadav emphasised the crucial role of banks in fulfilling the development and welfare vision of both the Central and State governments.

“The banking sector must play an active role in achieving ACP targets to ensure public welfare, economic progress, and inclusive growth,” said the Minister. He announced that for 2025–26, the loan targets include Rs.13,500 crore for agriculture and Rs.17,000 crore

for the MSME sector, with the total priority sector target set at Rs.33,000 crore. A further Rs.2,495 crore has been earmarked for other priority areas. The non-priority sector target stands at Rs.50,500 crore, he said.

Meanwhile, he urged banks to step up loan disbursement and to launch widespread awareness campaigns, particularly about the PM Suryaghar Yojana, which encourages consumers to become producers through rooftop solar installations. Special focus was laid on the ‘One Family–One Entrepreneur’ initiative.

Minister Yadav noted that banks must support grassroots entrepreneurship through Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, Stand-Up India, PMEGP, PM Vishwakarma, and AP TIDCO. He called for hassle-free support to TIDCO beneficiaries and the disbursement of Rs.855 crore in livelihood loans to women from Self-Help Groups (SHGs), enabling them to become successful entrepreneurs.

Collector stresses speed, innovation, inclusion

Meanwhile, NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha reiterated the need for banks to expedite loan sanctioning with

the spirit of Ease of Doing Business. He said the district will support the establishment of industrial units under the One Family–One Industrialist programme, encouraging innovative business models. “To achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 and Swarnandhra @2047, banks must align with the government’s development agenda,” said the Collector.

He also called for support to organic farmers and highlighted that animal husbandry and horticulture offer significant opportunities to boost the district’s Gross Value Addition (GVA).

The Employment Guarantee Scheme is promoting horticulture cultivation in every village, he added.

The meeting was attended by DCC Convener and UBI Regional Head MV Tilak, RBI Lead District Officer Ch Naveen Kumar, NABARD District Development Manager Milind Chausalkar, Lead District Manager K Priyanka, RSETI Director Amareshwar, District Agriculture Officer DMF Vijayakumari, TIDCO Executive Engineer Chinnodu, DRDA Additional Project Director K Kiran Kumar, and officials from various banking and government departments.



Durga Temple Executive Officer VK Seena Naik presenting a portrait of the deity to Minister Nadendla Manohar at the temple in Vijayawada on Tuesday

Nadendla Manohar offers prayers at Kanaka Durga Temple

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Food & Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Nadendla Manohar, visited the revered Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam on Indrakeeladri Hill in Vijayawada on Tuesday. He was accompanied by Legislative Council member Hari Prasad and several corporation chairmen.

The Minister stated that national leaders who had

delivered a strong and strategic response to adversaries during Operation Sindoor had come to the temple to seek the blessings of goddess Kanaka Durgamma for continued divine strength and courage.

The temple authorities, led by Executive Officer VK Seena Naik, received the dignitaries with traditional temple rituals. After offering prayers and having darshan of the goddess, the guests were honoured with Vedic blessings and presented with a portrait of the deity.

CM neglecting Vijayawada’s development: YSRCP

Naidu accused of harbouring resentment toward the city due to its association with NTR

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Party has flayed Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for neglecting Vijayawada, a city of historical and cultural importance. Speaking at the YSRCP’s central office, NTR district president Devineni Avinash flayed Chandrababu for harbouring resentment toward the city due to its association with NTR, leading to discriminatory policies that threaten Vijayawada’s growth. “Chandrababu’s disdain for Vijayawada is evident in his failure to initiate even a single development project in nearly a year of coalition rule,” Avinash said.

The CM is conspiring to undermine Vijayawada by planning to close Gannavaram Airport and relocate the Health University to Amaravati. What answer does Chandrababu have for the farmers who sacrificed their land for Gannavaram Airport,” he questioned. He also con-



demned plans to seize land in Ibrahimpatnam for a sports city, threatening local crusher businesses and displacing residents.

In contrast, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy’s tenure brought significant progress to Vijayawada. Avinash highlighted YS Jagan’s completion of the Kanakadurga and Benz Circle flyovers, resolving traffic issues neglected by Naidu. YS Jagan advanced the Western and Eastern Bypass projects, ensuring smooth travel during festivals. A Rs. 382-crore retaining wall protected Vijayawada from Krishna River floods, safeguarding areas like Ranigaritota and

Krishnalanka. Jagan rebuilt 44 temples demolished by Chandrababu, funded Kanakadurga Temple’s development, and built healthcare facilities, including a Rs. 150 crore super-specialty block at GGH, which saved lives during COVID.

Avinash slammed the government for disrespecting Dr. BR Ambedkar, whose Rs 400 crore statue and Smruthivanam, developed by YS Jagan, have been neglected. “No garland has been offered to Ambedkar in a year, and lighting was removed during national holidays,” he said, emphasising the government’s deliberate neglect.

“The YSRCP vows to protect Vijayawada’s 16 lakh residents and its identity. We support Amaravati’s growth but won’t allow Vijayawada’s destruction,” Avinash warned. The party demanded that Chandrababu prioritise Vijayawada’s development, protect its institutions, and respect its heritage.

200 kg of ganja seized, four held

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a joint operation, the Visakhapatnam City Task Force and the Anandapuram police arrested four persons and seized 200 kg of ganja during a vehicle inspection at Boyapalem Junction on Tuesday. Acting on a tip-off, a team led by CI S. Bhaskara Rao and SI G. Santosh intercepted a Bolero SUV and a motorcycle after the drivers attempted to evade a police check. The search led to the discovery of 40 packets of ganja concealed in four bags.

Preliminary investigation revealed the accused were transporting the contraband from Jammuguda village in Odisha’s Koraput district to Visakhapatnam for illegal sale. The accused, identified as Raghu Hantal (27), Narendrapangi (28), Binaya Mandal (30), and Rabindra Khila (24), confessed to smuggling the narcotic for quick monetary gain. The police also seized the vehicles and four mobile phones. A case has been registered under the NDPS Act, and the accused will be produced in court.

CPM demands ordinance to revive G.O. No. 3

Conduct special DSC for Agency areas: State chief Srinivasa Rao

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) State committee has urged Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu to promptly issue an ordinance to revive G.O. No. 3 for Tribal Agency areas. Also, the party requested a postponement of the current District Selection Committee (DSC) recruitment process in those regions until the ordinance is enacted. The party demanded that a special DSC recruitment be conducted exclusively for Agency areas to ensure justice for tribal youth.

In a press release issued on Tuesday, CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao stated that a review meeting involving top officials and the Chief Minister took place on Tuesday. The meeting discussed three options. However, Srinivasa Rao emphasised that 100 per cent reservation in Agency areas is the only fair and viable solu-

tion to protect the interests of unemployed tribal youth. Any departure from this approach would result in significant injustice.

Furthermore, he reminded the Chief Minister of his election promise made during a recent visit to Araku, where he assured the revival of G.O. No. 3. Also, he said the party urged the government to address technical issues in the earlier version of the G.O. and to introduce a new, legally sound ordinance that is protected from judicial challenges.

With the application deadline for the DSC set on May 15, Srinivasa Rao stressed the urgency of the situation and called for the suspension of the ongoing DSC process in Agency areas until the ordinance is enacted. Additionally, he reiterated the demand for a dedicated DSC recruitment drive for tribal regions, ensuring both full reservation and legal clarity.

594 lost or stolen mobile phones recovered



So far, under 15 phases of the lost/stolen mobile phone recovery drive, the district police have traced and recovered 2,976 mobile phones valued at Rs 4.75 crore. Several of these were recovered from other districts and even other states.

PNS ■ ELURU

The Eluru district police have recovered 594 lost or stolen mobile phones and handed over several of them to their rightful owners.

Superintendent of Police Pratap Shiva Kishore informed the media that the Combined Crime Squad (CCS), cyber-crime and law and order personnel jointly recovered mobile phones worth Rs 71.28 lakh.

So far, under 15 phases of

the lost/stolen mobile phone recovery drive, the district police have traced and recovered 2,976 mobile phones valued at Rs 4.75 crore. Several of these were recovered from other districts and even other states.

The SP cautioned the public that buying or selling stolen goods is a punishable offence. A case can be registered under Section 317 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which carries a punishment of up to three years of imprisonment.

He also expressed concern over the rising number of cybercrimes, such as obscene video calls and UPI frauds, and urged the public to remain vigilant. In the event of a lost or stolen mobile phone, individuals are advised to lodge a complaint with the police and register it through the CEIR portal.

SP Shiva Kishore also advised the public to stay alert in crowded areas such as bus stations, railway stations, ATMs, and farmers' markets.

16th C Virabhadra idol discovered in Palnadu



PNS ■ MACHERLA

A rare 16th-century miniature sculpture of Virabhadra, dating back to the Vijayanagara period, has been unearthed near an ancient Shiva temple in Bhairavunipadu village, Macharla mandal, Palnadu district.

The discovery was confirmed by eminent archaeologist and CEO of the Pleach India Foundation, Dr E Sivanagi Reddy, following a tip-off from local heritage enthusiast Munnangi Jagannadham. The intricately carved idol was found partially buried in shrubbery close to the temple. It measures 12 inches in height, 6

inches in length, and 2 inches in thickness.

Dr Reddy explained that the idol portrays Virabhadra in a classical Tribhanga posture, holding an arrow and sword in his right hands and a bow and shield in the left—features characteristic of the Vijayanagara art tradition. He noted

that the sculpture was most likely used for domestic worship and showcases the refined craftsmanship and religious devotion of the era. Commending Jagannadham for safeguarding the artefact, Dr Reddy praised his decision to place the sculpture within the temple premises. He appealed to the villagers to preserve the piece as a valuable part of their cultural legacy.

Dr Shyamsunder Rao, Design In-Charge of the Buddhavanam Project, also participated in the visit and stressed the importance of community involvement in protecting historical heritage.



Four farm workers killed as mini-truck collides with lorry

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

In a tragic road accident, four agricultural workers lost their lives and three others were injured when a mini-transport vehicle collided with a lorry at Sivapuram village in Vinukonda mandal of Palnadu district on Tuesday.

According to the police, seven agricultural workers were on their way to harvest a papaya crop when the mini-transport vehicle they travelled in collided head-on with a lorry. The accident claimed the lives of Pagadala Subbamma, Ramana Reddy, Bottu Ankamma, and Bottu Ramanji.

The injured - mini-truck driver Kadiri Nageswara Rao, Pagadala Shivamma, and Kanneboina Nagalakshmi - were rushed to the government hospital in Vinukonda. Driver Nageswara Rao's condition is reported to be critical.

The police cleared the wreckage and restored traffic flow. All the victims were residents of Gaddameedipalli village in Yerragondapalem mandal of Prakasam district.

Andhra Pradesh Governor S Abdul Nazeer expressed deep sorrow over the deaths and directed the district administration to ensure quality medical treatment for

the injured. He conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.

IT Minister Nara Lokesh also expressed shock over the incident. He spoke with district officials, instructing them to provide the best possible medical care to the injured and assured the families of full support.

Transport Minister M Ramprasad Reddy directed officials to ensure that all medical treatment is provided free of cost.

Former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy also expressed grief and extended his sympathies to the families of the deceased.

Divine strength must guide our armed forces: Min

PNS ■ KAKINADA

In a spiritually significant gesture, Andhra Pradesh Minister for Tourism, Culture and Cinematography Kandula Durgesh offered special prayers at the revered Sri Kumaraswamy Subrahmanya Swamy Temple in Bikkavolu on Tuesday. The minister underscored the need for divine blessings to strengthen the Indian Armed Forces and its leadership, particularly in the wake of the successful 'Operation Sindoor' against Pakistani militants.

Acting on the directives of Jana Sena Party President and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, party leaders, MLAs and Veera Mahilas across Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and other states organised special pujas at prominent temples, especially Shiva and Subrahmanya



kshetras, seeking divine support for the nation's security forces.

As part of this coordinated spiritual initiative, Minister Durgesh participated in Vedic rituals, abhishekam and pujas at the Bikkavolu temple, offering prayers for the protection and success of Indian soldiers. "The entire country stands united behind our soldiers operating under tense condi-

tions," he stated, expressing hope that divine power would fortify the military's strength and resolve.

Earlier in the day, Minister Durgesh commenced a bus yatra from Nidadavolu to Bikkavolu, halting at the ancient Lakshmi Ganapathi Temple in Vemagiri to seek blessings for a smooth and meaningful programme. Accompanied by party work-

ers, he performed circumambulations at the Subrahmanya temple and received blessings from temple priests.

Addressing the media outside the temple, Durgesh remarked that while India is strong both economically and militarily, divine grace remains crucial. He praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and commended the armed forces for their role in defending the nation. Referring to the recent loss of 26 innocent tourists in Pahalgal, he hailed Operation Sindoor for delivering justice.

"We offered prayers to ensure such threats are kept at bay. The nation owes a debt of gratitude to the brave soldiers who sacrifice their lives for our safety," he said, concluding the event with patriotic slogans, including "Jai Jawan", "Bharat Mata Ki Jai", and "Jai Ho Bharat."

Savitha lays foundation for MSME park

Calls upon youth to embrace entrepreneurship

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Minister for BC Welfare S. Savitha reiterated the government's commitment to developing infrastructure to promote industrial growth and support aspiring entrepreneurs.

On Tuesday, the Minister performed bhoomi pooja for the establishment of a new MSME Park at Roddam in Penukonda constituency. The park is set to come up on 59.37 acres of land. Addressing the gathering, Minister Savitha urged entrepreneurs to set up industries in their hometowns to boost local development and employment. She announced that 50 MSME units would be established in the park during the first phase.

"In the initial phase, small-scale industries will be set up across



20 acres in the Roddam MSME Park. Land is being allocated to 115 industrial units at a rate of seven cents each. Roads, canals and street lighting facilities are being developed at Rs 7 crore," she stated, encouraging young entrepreneurs to seize the opportunity.

She highlighted Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's vision of nurturing at least one entrepreneur in every household and reaffirmed the government's commitment to the all-round development of Rayalaseema through industrialisation.

Steps are also underway to improve irrigation and drinking water facilities in the region, she added.

Recalling the transformative impact of the KAI factory, Savitha said industrial activity in Anantapur gained momentum under Chandrababu Naidu's leadership. Criticising the previous YSRCP government, she alleged that industrialists were harassed and driven out of the State, bringing industrial progress to a standstill during its tenure.

TTD to resume VIP break darshan on recommendation

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) has taken a temporary decision to resume accepting the recommendation letters of MP, MLA and MLC of these two Telugu states for Srivari darshan in Tirumala.

TTD will accept the recommendation letters of Public Representatives belonging to the twin Telugu States from May 15 onwards. However, the decision taken earlier on the recommendation letters other than this will continue.

Devotees who are allotted VIP Break Darshan tickets at per the rules will be provided Srivari darshan from May 16 onwards.



3-day training programme to strengthen natural farming

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Chief Executive Officer of Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS), B Rama Rao, has stressed the importance of promoting natural farming to ensure chemical-free, safe food and sustainable income for farmers.

A three-day Training of Trainers (ToT) programme commenced here on Tuesday. Addressing the participants, Rama Rao stated that the primary objective of the Andhra Pradesh Community-managed Natural Farming (APCNF) initiative is to supply chemical-free food to consumers, enhance the well-being of small and marginal farmers, and improve soil health.

He referred to socio-economic surveys that indicate higher incomes for farmers practising natural farming compared to those following conventional methods. He called for greater collaboration between the Agriculture Department and APCNF, particularly through Village Agriculture Assistants (VAAs), who work closely with farmers at the grassroots level.

Rama Rao lauded the visionary leadership of T Vijay Kumar, Executive Vice

Chairman of RySS, for conceptualising and scaling up the APCNF model across the state. He said the training sessions are designed to impart detailed knowledge of APCNF's scientific, low-input, and sustainable farming techniques.

Dr D V Raidu, Senior Consultant at RySS, also spoke at the event, highlighting critical issues such as the overuse of fertilisers and chemicals, declining organic carbon content in soil, and increasing soil compaction. The programme covers various topics, including an introduction to APCNF, the transition from the Green Revolution to new farming paradigms, and the significance of pre-monsoon dry sowing and its impacts.

Participants will also be exposed to published scientific studies on natural farming in Andhra Pradesh, including findings from resilience and Brix studies. Additional sessions will focus on marketing, certification, health, nutrition, and crop models.

As part of practical learning, attendees will visit natural farming fields to observe techniques firsthand and interact with experienced farmers.

Mock drill enhances disaster preparedness in Eluru

PNS ■ ELURU

In line with the guidelines of the State Disaster Management Authority, a comprehensive mock drill was conducted at the Collectorate on Tuesday to enhance preparedness for disasters such as floods, fire accidents, and other natural calamities.

The drill was overseen by District Collector K. Vetriselvi, who emphasised the importance of such exercises in improving public safety and readiness. "Mock drills raise awareness about the necessary steps to take during a disaster, helping people respond swiftly without panic," she said. She added that the drills also train people in evacuation techniques and basic self-defence.



Collector Vetriselvi noted that the coordination between emergency services—including the fire brigade, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), police, and medical teams—was significantly improved through these exercises, which play a

vital role in ensuring efficient rescue operations during actual emergencies. She stressed that regular mock drills could help minimise loss of life and property in the future.

Personnel from the Fire Services, SDRF, police, medical

and health department, Apadamitra volunteers, NCC, and the electricity department actively participated in the exercise.

SDRF personnel demonstrated rescue techniques for evacuating people from affected buildings, administering first aid, and transporting the injured to the hospital by ambulance.

The District Medical and Health Department also conducted awareness sessions on cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), stretcher use, and emergency medical care. Collector Vetriselvi personally supervised the entire operation.

DRO V. Visveswara Rao, District Fire Officer Ch. Ratnababu, and APEPDCL SE P. Solomon Raju were among the officials present.

'Nitya Annadanam' in 16 more temples: Anam

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Endowments Anam Ramanarayana Reddy has announced that the Nitya Annadanam Prasadam programme will be extended to 16 more major temples across the State. Addressing the media here on Tuesday, the Minister said that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had directed that Anna Prasadam be implemented extensively in temples, with a daily menu, hygienic cooking practices, and high-quality meals for devotees.

Reddy informed that the Anna Prasadam distribution is already being carried out in seven major temples, and the Chief Minister has instructed that the programme be launched in 16 additional prominent temples. Measures are being taken in this regard, he added.

If BRS's reins are given to KTR, I will welcome it: Harish

'Whatever KCR says, will do without any questions'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a striking remark that set tongues wagging among political observers, senior BRS leader Harish Rao said that he would "wholeheartedly welcome" if the party's leadership is handed over to KTR.

Reiterating his loyalty to the BRS and its chief, Harish stated, "My leader is KCR. Whatever KCR says, Harish Rao will do without any questions."

Speaking at the Telangana Bhavan, Harish hit out at the Congress government over the paddy procurement crisis and what he described as the CM's misplaced priorities.

"While farmers are battling at procurement centres to sell their produce, the Chief Minister is

busy overseeing beauty pageants. Those who should be walking around paddy heaps are now circling glamour ramps," he said.

Harish said that four lakh tonnes of paddy are awaiting procurement, and Rs 512 crore in bonus dues remain unpaid for fine variety paddy. "This government's love for farmers is as fake as its promises," he said, adding that even basic paddy procurement facilities were missing.

He accused the government of failing to deliver on its promise of buying 70 lakh tonnes of paddy this Yasangi, saying it hadn't even crossed 40 lakh tonnes. "They boasted about paying within 48 hours. It's been 10 days. Not a single rupee has reached farmers' bank

accounts," he said, calling the delay "a betrayal."

Listing the recent deaths of farmers who collapsed at paddy procurement centres due to long waits and poor conditions, Harish said, "These are not natural deaths. These are murders due to government negligence." He demanded that the CM be held responsible for the deaths. He also demanded an end to "weight deductions in the name of taalu and taragu," and warned that the BRS will soon announce an agitation plan supporting farmers.

"Governance is not throwing mud at the opposition. It's about solving problems. This government is sleeping while farmers are collapsing in queues," he said.



Dalit welfare a priority for coalition govt: Min

PNS ■ TANUKU

Home and Disaster Management Minister Vangalapudi Anitha has said that the alliance government led by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has prioritised the welfare and development of Dalits in its first year in office. During her visit to the Tanuku constituency, she stated that the government is committed to inclusive governance and equitable progress for all communities.

As part of her tour, the Minister laid foundation stones and inaugurated development works worth Rs 6.5 crore, including CC roads, drainage systems, and a community hall in Tanuku and Attili.

She also unveiled statues of Dr B.R. Ambedkar and Babu Jagjivan Ram, describing them as the "two eyes" of the Dalit community, symbolising unity and strength.

Addressing a public meeting, Anitha strongly criticised the previous YSRCP government, accusing it of committing atrocities against Dalits.

She cited the alleged mistreatment of Dr Sudhakar,

who she claimed was labelled mentally ill and driven to death, and the harassment of a female officer. She further alleged that YSRCP leaders were responsible for the murder of a Dalit man, and mocked the previous regime's so-called "door delivery" of crimes.

Anitha lauded Tanuku MLA Arimilli Radhakrishna as a leader who understands the struggles of the people. Referring to the "Bangaru Kutumbam" vision and the P4 model of governance, she said that Chief Minister Naidu is focused on the uplift of backward and marginalised communities through inclusive development.

She also distributed sewing machines to women under the Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Cooperative Finances Corporation scheme to promote self-employment among underprivileged women.

Anitha said the overwhelming public mandate in the 2024 elections was a clear reflection of people's trust in the alliance, and affirmed the government's resolve to honour that trust through reforms and welfare initiatives.

ACROSS THE STATES



Mumbai-bound local train overshoots platform

A local train heading to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) in Mumbai overshot a platform at a station in neighbouring Thane district on Tuesday afternoon, officials said. The incident occurred at the Thansit railway station on the Central Railway (CR) route in Shahapur taluka around 4.10 pm, they said, adding that an inquiry will be conducted into it. Overshooting a platform means the train continues to move beyond its intended stopping point on the platform, going past the designated area for passengers to board or alight. "Six coaches of the local train went ahead of the platform at the station in Kasara-Kalyan section on the main line of the CR," an official said. Following the incident, the train was detained at the station for eight minutes before it departed for further journey towards Kalyan, he said. No injuries or disruption to services were reported due to it, the official said, adding that the train crew was changed in Kalyan. An inquiry will be conducted into the incident, the official said.



Officials seize painting by Pak artist at IGI Airport

The Customs department here has seized a Pakistani artist's painting, which was imported via London, officials said on Tuesday. The painting was detected during the routine screening of goods at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport here, they said. "A painting was detected during the regular screening earlier this month. Upon thorough examination, it was noticed that it was made by a Pakistani artist and routed to India via London," said a senior customs official. The art work is declared worth Rs 5.5 lakh, the official said, adding that the customs department has decided to confiscate it. The move comes after India on May 2, 2025 banned "direct or indirect import or transit of all goods originating in or exported from Pakistan..." through a notification issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) in the wake of last month's Pahalgam terror attack.



LF takes out rally against 'war hysteria', terrorism

The Left Front on Tuesday took out a rally in Kolkata against "war hysteria and terrorism" and to seek communal harmony among the people. The procession was organised after India and Pakistan reached an understanding on Saturday afternoon to halt military actions with immediate effect. The understanding was reached after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes. The rally was led by Left Front chairman Biman Bose, CPI(M) West Bengal secretary Mohammed Salim and other leaders of the front. Front constituents CPI(M), CPI, Forward Bloc, RSP, CPI(ML) Liberation, SUCI (C) were among the political parties which participated in the rally from Esplanade to Sealdah in central Kolkata. Maintaining that "those who want war do not go to the battlefield and those who go to war do not want it, the participants displayed posters and festoons which spoke of peace and harmony. India launched 'Operation Sindoor' early May 7, hitting terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation to the dastardly Pahalgam terror attack on April 22.

Crowd watches as woman commits suicide

Rescue bid by cop wins hearts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A 43-year-old woman committed suicide by jumping into the sea from the Marine Drive promenade, even as hundreds of people present at the popular spot watched the incident unmoved, while some of them recorded it on their mobile phones. The woman jumped into the sea at 7.30 pm on Monday during a high tide when the sea was choppy, a police official said on Tuesday. The depth of Marine Drive's promenade relative to sea level varies along its length. While the crowd stood still, a traffic police constable, Suresh Bhikaji Gosavi, jumped into the sea to rescue the woman, who remains unidentified. Gosavi pulled her out of the water with the help of his associate and tried to administer CPR.

Kashmir issue is bilateral between India and Pak: MEA



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday said its longstanding position on Kashmir has been that it is a bilateral issue between New Delhi and Islamabad and there is no change of this stand. The assertion came against the backdrop of US President Donald Trump's renewed offer to mediate on the Kashmir issue. "We have a longstanding national position that any issues pertaining to the Indian Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir have to be addressed by India and Pakistan bilaterally," external affairs ministry spokesperson

Randhir Jaiswal said. "That stated policy has not changed. As you are aware, the outstanding matter is the vacation of illegally occupied Indian territory by Pakistan," he said. Jaiswal was responding to a question on Trump's offer. On speculation on nuclear war by Trump, Jaiswal said the military action was entirely in the conventional domain. "There were some reports that Pakistan's National Command Authority will meet on May 10. But this was later denied by them. Pakistan foreign minister has himself denied the nuclear angle on record," Jaiswal said.

Military officer briefs foreign defence attaches on Operation Sindoor

NEW DELHI: A top officer of the Indian military on Tuesday briefed defence attaches or their representatives from a large number of countries on the "successful conduct of Operation Sindoor", officials said. The briefing held at Manekshaw Centre in Delhi Cantonment, was done by Lt Gen D S Rana, Director General, Defence Intelligence Agency, and lasted about 30 minutes. Defence attaches of several major countries who are part of many international groupings, as also of several Islamic countries attended the briefing, sources said. Defence attaches from Sweden, Nepal, the Philippines, Egypt, among other countries, also attended it. The Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff in a post on X, said, "Lt Gen DS Rana, Director General Defence Intelligence Agency #DG DIA briefed the Foreign Service Attaches of 70 nations on the successful conduct of

#OperationSindoor that has set #NewNormals in India-Pakistan relations, highlighting India's demonstrated strength and national resolve through military superiority in the new-age warfare." Lt Gen Rana elaborated on "deliberate planning process" for selection of targets with "confirmed terror linkages", officials said. The integrated, precise and prompt response by the Indian armed forces to achieve the stated objectives, executed through intense multi-domain operations was also highlighted during the briefing, they said. "Synergised Force application through jointness and integration achieved in #OpSindoor with demonstrated battle effectiveness of indigenous kinetic force multipliers was showcased to the #FSAs, while highlighting Technological Superiority of the Indian armed forces in niche non-kinetic domains of space, cyber and electronic warfare," the Headquarters.



Pak will cease to exist if it indulges in misadventure: Chouhan

PNS ■ AMBIKAPUR

Union minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday said Pakistan will cease to exist on the world map if it resorts to any misadventure against India. He also urged the people of Chhattisgarh to support Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'one nation, one election', saying that frequent polls hinder the country's progress and cause a burden to the exchequer. The Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare and Rural Development was addressing 'Mor Awas Mor Adhikar', a Chhattisgarh government's programme in Ambikapur, the headquarter of Surguja district, to allocate houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) to the state.

"Pakistan used to show a lot of arrogance but it could not stand even for three days. PM Modi gave a free hand to our soldiers to take action. More than a hundred terrorists were killed and their bases were turned into heaps of rubble. Even today, the PM has said that it (Operation Sindoor) has not been stopped yet, it has

"Today, everyone should salute the Indian Army, their valour, bravery and accurate aim and the precise strategy of PM Modi. By completely destroying the training bases of terrorists who wiped off 'sindoor' of our daughters, India has shown to the world that we will not mess with anyone, but if someone messes with us, we will not spare them."

only been suspended. If Pakistan fires a 'goli' (bullet), India will respond with a 'gola' (shell). If Pakistan resorts to any misadventure, it will cease to exist on the world map. This is India's valour", Chouhan said. India is a sovereign nation and we take decisions on our own. In three days, Pakistan's army bent down on its knees and begged the world to save it. Hence the ceasefire was put in place.

J-K: Major exercise underway to clear border villages of unexploded shells

PNS ■ RAJOURI/JAMMU

The bomb disposal squads of Army and police are undertaking a major exercise in Jammu and Kashmir's border villages to defuse the unexploded artillery and mortar shells fired by Pakistan. Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo said they are monitoring the situation and will facilitate the return of the displaced border residents after getting clearance from the security agencies and will also ensure early compensation to those whose houses were damaged in the indiscriminate shelling on civilian areas.



The officials said dozens of unexploded explosives were destroyed by the experts along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri and Poonch districts and along the International Border in Jammu and Samba which witnessed intense cross-border shelling and drone attacks from May 7 to May 10. The intensity in the shelling

from Pakistan intensified on May 7 after the India armed forces carried out missile strikes at nine terror targets across the border under Operation Sindoor in retaliation to Pahalgam terror attack on April 22 that had left 26 persons, mostly tourists, dead.

The ceasefire violations from Pakistan had started from north Kashmir immediately after the Pahalgam terror attack and extended to the areas along the LoC and IB in Jammu division, prompting effective retaliation by Indian troops before the deadly four-day-long clashes.

BJP secures landslide victory in Assam panchayat polls

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The BJP on Tuesday registered a landslide victory in Assam rural polls, winning 219 of 397 Zilla Parishad seats and 901 of 2,192 Anchalik Panchayat constituencies, officials said.

According to Assam State Election Commission (ASEC) data, the BJP got 901 members of Anchalik Panchayat (AP) constituencies, while its ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) bagged 147 so far. The opposition Congress secured 271 seats, while 33 have been won by AIUDE, eight by Rajior Dal, three by Trinamool Congress, two by Assam Jatya Parishad, one by AAP and 117 by Independents.



Notification for fresh recruitment in Bengal schools soon: Official

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The West Bengal School Service Commission (SSC) will soon issue a notification for recruitment of teachers and non-teaching staff following a Supreme Court order, a senior officer said on Tuesday. The apex court on April 3 invalidated the appointment of 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff in government-sponsored and -aided schools in West Bengal, calling the entire selection process of the SSC in 2016 'vitiated and tainted'. Later, the top court directed the state government to initiate a fresh recruitment process by May 31 and complete it by December 31. It had also instructed the SSC and the state to file a compliance affidavit detailing the initiation of the recruitment process by the deadline. "The school education department has fine-tuned the draft of the new notification to start the process of new recruitment in consultation

with us. Once the government gives the final nod, we will issue the notification. It is only a matter of days," the senior SSC official said. SSC Chairman Siddhartha Majumdar earlier said the Commission will issue the notification for conducting the recruitment test afresh, and all 22 lakh teaching and non-teaching aspirants who had written the papers in 2016 can again apply if they produce the valid documents. The SSC is also sending the full list of vacant seats to the department in a day or two, he said. In another development, a group of teaching and non-teaching staff has decided to gherao the education department headquarters Bikash Bhavan on May 15 demanding that the state take up the issue of their permanent reinstatement with the Supreme Court. It was announced by the 'Deserving Teaching-Non-Teaching Employees Forum' spokesperson Chinmoy Mondal.

Life term for 9 accused in Pollachi sexual assault case

TN CM, EPS spar over women's safety

PNS ■ COIMBATORE (TN)

A Mahila Court here on Tuesday convicted and sentenced nine men to "life imprisonment till death" in the sensational Pollachi sexual assault case, six years after the incident came to light and sent shockwaves over the audacity of the perpetrators that had prompted widespread calls for justice to the victims. The court ruling saw



archivals DMK and AIADMK hit out at each other over women's safety during their respective rules. Judge R Nandhini Devi, who pronounced the quan-

tum of punishment, ordered an overall compensation of Rs 85 lakh to the eight women victims. The nine accused--Rishwanth alias N Sabarirajan, K Thirunavukkarasu, M

Sathish, T Vasanthakumar, R Manivannan alias Mani, P Babu alias 'Bike' Babu, K Arulanantham, T Haronimus Paul, and M Arunkumar - all aged between 30 and 39 - were brought to the court from the Salem Central Prison earlier in the day amidst tight security. Arulanantham is a former AIADMK functionary who was expelled from the party in the wake of his alleged involvement in the crime. The AIADMK was in the ruling saddle when the incident happened.

Won't take up any official post after retirement: CJI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna on Tuesday said though he wasn't going to accept any post-retirement official assignments, he would continue his innings in law. Justice Khanna, who was elevated to the top court in January 18, 2019, was appointed as the CJI on November 11, 2024 and would be demitting office on Tuesday. After the conclusion of the ceremonial bench proceedings, the CJI met journalists in the apex court premises and said, "I will not accept any post-retirement post ... perhaps will do something with law." Many former apex court judges begin their innings in arbitration post judgeship. "I will have a third innings and will do something related to law," the CJI



said. Responding to a query related to the cash discovery controversy involving high court judge Justice Yashwant Verma, he said, "Judicial thinking has to be decisive and adjudicatory." He added, "We see plus and minus points and decide the issue, then rationally we weigh various factors that help us to make a right decision."

The CJI dealt with the cash row controversy following a news report, prompting him to take several steps, including a preliminary inquiry by Delhi High Court Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya, judicial work being taken away from Justice Verma in the Delhi High Court, and later his transfer to the Allahabad High Court sans judicial work.

'UNNECESSARY' COFFEE BREAKS OF HC JUDGES

Prompts Apex Court to call for performance audit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

High court judges taking breaks "unnecessarily" and too often found a mention in the Supreme Court on Tuesday, which called for their performance audits.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh said the top court was receiving several complaints against high court judges and it was a high time to assess the expenditure on them vis-a-vis their output. "There are some judges who work very hard but at the same time there are judges who are



unnecessarily taking coffee breaks; this break or that break. What is for lunch hour? We are

hearing a lot of complaints about the high court judges. This is a larger issue which

needs to be looked into. What is the performance of the high court judges? How much we are spending and what is the output? It's high time we do a performance audit," Justice Kant said. The judge's remark came on a plea of four persons, who moved the top court claiming that the Jharkhand High Court reserved its order on the criminal appeal against conviction and life sentence in 2022 but the judgement was not pronounced. Advocate Fauzia Shakil, appearing for them, said after the top court's nudge in the matter, the high court on May

5 and 6 pronounced the verdicts in their cases in which three of the four were acquitted while the remaining resulted in a split verdict and the matter was referred to the high court chief justice and he was granted bail. This morning, Shakil pointed out that despite the pronouncement of the verdicts by the high court a week ago, the acquitted three persons were not released from jail and in the judgements, the high court did not mention the date of reserving the orders. Taking exception, the bench asked the Jharkhand govern-

ment counsel to immediately release them before the lunch break and posted the matter post 2 pm. When the matter came up for hearing, the state counsel informed the bench that the convicts were released and it was due to the non-availability of release orders from the trial courts that delayed the process. Shakil said it was due to the apex court that the four of them were "breathing fresh air" and had the high court delivered the verdicts on time, they would have been out of jail three years ago.

Editor's TAKE

There is limit to India's patience

PM Modi addresses the nation, says war paused but fight against terrorism continues

In a forceful national address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi broke his silence following a tense military confrontation with Pakistan, declaring that India has 'only paused' its operations and vowing firm retaliation in response to any future acts of terror.

Prime Minister Modi addressed the nation for the first time after Operation Sindoor. The remarks came just days after both nations stepped back from the brink of a potential fifth war, following a fierce exchange of missile strikes and artillery fire across the Line of Control and international border. "This is not an era of war, but this is not an era of terrorism, either," Modi said during his televised address from New Delhi. He emphasised that India will not distinguish between "Governments that support terrorism and terrorist groups," asserting that the country's response to any provocation will come "on its own terms."

India launched Operation Sindoor — a bold and coordinated tri-service military operation aimed at dismantling terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK). The offensive was a direct response to the Pahalgam terror attack of April 22nd, 2025, in which 26 civilians were killed.

The attack is attributed to The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). The conflict, which flared up on May 6, following Indian missile strikes targeting terrorist infrastructures in Pakistan — administered Kashmir, resulted in the deaths of at least 60 civilians across both sides, according to partial tallies. Indian army hit nine terrorist dens in POK and Pakistan. The attacks were India's response to an April 22 assault in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, in which 26 tourists were killed — a strike which has its roots in Islamabad-supported militants, a charge Pakistan denies. However all indications point the finger at Pakistan's involvement.

While a ceasefire was brokered with assistance from the United States, with President Donald Trump claiming his administration helped avert "a nuclear conflict," Modi's speech signalled no softening of India's stance — instead, it was a clear message of vigilance and readiness. Modi strongly criticised Pakistan for what he described as choosing to "attack" rather than combat terrorism. He warned that every step of Pakistan would be monitored, emphasising that India would no longer tolerate what he referred to as "nuclear blackmail."

In his address, the Prime Minister also drew attention to India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty — a long-standing water-sharing agreement brokered by the World Bank. "Terror and trade cannot go together, water and blood cannot flow together," Modi declared, hinting that strategic leverage over water may be part of India's new approach.

Despite the ceasefire, military leaders in both countries remain on alert. Talks between top Indian and Pakistani military commanders were postponed but expected to resume shortly, with analysts noting their primary objective will be to establish technical safeguards and avoid future escalations.

India's Lieutenant General Rajiv Ghai, DGMO of the Indian Army, has stressed that "any threat to sovereignty and safety will be met with decisive force." Meanwhile, airports previously shut down during the height of hostilities have reopened, and reports from Kashmir suggest a tense calm has returned — at least temporarily.

While the guns may have temporarily fallen silent, the geopolitical climate remains volatile. Both sides remain on high alert and one wrong move on either side could break the fragile ceasefire. In fact one spark could quickly lead to a nuclear catastrophe as both the countries have sizable nuclear arsenals. In this situation need for measured dialogue and clear communication is a must and should be the top priority.

As the international community watches closely, Modi's address has made one thing clear: India's patience has limits, and while war has been averted — for now — the path to lasting peace remains fraught. It is a matter of immense relief that a full-scale war has been averted between two nuclear-armed neighbours. However, India cannot afford to mistake this ceasefire for resolution. The real challenge now lies not in military might, but in strategy and diplomacy. New Delhi must focus its energy on exposing Pakistan's long-standing support for non-state actors and its role in exporting terror across the border.

Military deterrence alone is not enough. India's best bet is to build and sustain international pressure — mobilising global opinion, engaging allies, and leveraging diplomatic channels — to isolate Pakistan on the world stage until it is forced to dismantle the networks that breed violence. Only through relentless diplomatic engagement and a unified global stance against terrorism can peace in the region become more than just a pause between battles.

Leaderspeak



Operation Sindoor is not just a name but it's a reflection of the feelings of millions of people of the country. Operation 'Sindoor' is our unwavering commitment to justice. Late night of 6th May and in the early morning of 7th May, the whole world saw this pledge turn into reality. Indian forces attacked terror hideouts in Pakistan and their training centers with precision

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

Modi pauses war, raises stakes

Striking a rare balance between statesmanship and strategic bluntness, Modi laid out a new doctrine for countering cross-border terrorism, signalling a fundamental shift in India's military posture and approach to deterrence

In his 22-minute address to the nation on Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared a 'pause' in the war. The speech was short by his standards — long by standards of traditional war speeches, flashes of which were seen last week in Churchill's V symbol in London.

Modi was statesmanlike, stern and refreshingly non-political. It carried powerful messages and signals for Pakistan and the international community, especially the Trump administration.

His address follows the shortest 4-day non-contact, stand-off war in which only drones, UAVs and missiles crossed the LoC/IB. No Indian Prime Minister had ever carried out dozens of meetings in full public glare with his Defence Minister, NSA, CDS, Service Chiefs and Cabinet members before the war. Op Sindoor, an innocuous codename, was a sheep in wolf's clothing. Similarly, for a brief 72-hour operation and an undeclared war, there was one briefing too many because very little news or value was revealed.

For a fair and balanced picture of hits and misses, and a rough scorecard, it was essential to watch and read, at the very least, BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera, which have their own biases. Popular Indian TV channels were going insane thanks to overzealous and patriotic veterans egged on by competing anchors not competent to cover combat. Having congratulated all uniformed personnel, spy agencies, scientists and the people of India, Modi laid out the parameters of future response to cross-border terrorism emanating from or sponsored by Pakistan.

Leaders never mention the involvement of their clandestine agencies in combat. Modi indicated, first, the paradigm shift in the use of force to counter CBT: from surgical strikes in PoK in 2016 that Pakistan said did not happen; to air strikes in Balakot, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan in 2019 that Islamabad said 'missed the targets'; to Op Sindoor, with demonstrably visible proof of the elimination of terrorist hubs, terrorist leaders and infrastructure in PoK and Pakistan. Second, the total surprise was achieved by delivering Op Sindoor. Third, simply the sophistication in planning, execution and scale of punishment. Fourth, India challenged Pakistan's escape clause of plausible deniability by dispensing with any investigation and exchange of dossiers. Incidentally, the four terrorists — two linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba — got away. This is the first time perpetrators of a heinous terrorist attack have escaped.

Fifth, partial deterrence has been restored, which was severely mauled by a lack of investment in conventional deterrence,



ASHOK K MEHTA

especially in air assets to properly manage a two-front contact war. Sixth, at long last the blur between terrorists and their Pakistan Army sponsors has been removed — though some confusion remains. Initially, the military stated that the targets struck were only terrorist

infrastructure, not civilian or military. Later, as a response to Pakistan striking military targets, India retaliated in kind. To remove the line between proxies and sponsors, both need to be hit ab initio — as Modi hinted. Seventh, Modi has called Rawalpindi's nuclear bluff of lowering the nuclear threshold. Its alleged use of full-spectrum nuclear capability, especially tactical nuclear weapons, has been challenged — though according to Trump, he prevented a nuclear war that would have cost millions of lives.

Eighth, India has established dominance on the escalation ladder by shifting the burden of escalation to Pakistan. During Balakot, after the initial strikes, the IAF declared that the operation was concluded. It did not refer to any Pakistani misadventure, reference to Pak response, that would attract a corresponding retaliation. The dilemma for Pakistan was that to get off-

ramp it had to escalate to de-escalate — or forfeit the opportunity for any retribution for India's devastating assaults. Ninth, Modi has raised the stakes in the rules of engagement. By declaring a terrorist attack an act of war, a red line has been drawn — which will not be easy to maintain and keep sacrosanct. What will define a terrorist attack?

It will also challenge the right to self-defence authorised by UNSC Article 51, circumscribed with 2(4) on the prohibition on the use of force and attribution. Simply put, a rethink is required or it will cause grave turbulence and instability in the region. Tenth, Modi made no mention of the US or Trump — his administration orchestrating the stoppage of all firing in the air, on land and at sea. Details of US intervention have been revealed by US Secretary of State and NSA, Marco Rubio, Vice President JD Vance and Trump himself. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thanked Trump for his effort to maintain peace. In all previous India-Pakistan crises — and there were more than a dozen since 1984 — the US has played a key role in defusing them.

A clarification by the Government on the extent of US involvement is necessary to establish the bona fide of India's strategic autonomy. Eleventh, India's insistence on bilateralism is clouded by the Pakistan National Security Committee decision of April 25th, in response to India's CCS ruling on non-kinetic levies on Islamabad.

Amongst other retaliatory actions stipulated, Pakistan has said it "shall exercise the right to hold all bilateral agreements, including Simla Agreement, in abeyance till India stops fomenting terrorism in Pakistan." Twelfth, Modi's reference to Made in India (with foreign collaboration) and high-cost imports of offensive and defensive tools of war in new-age warfare has to be taken with a pinch of salt. The biggest void in India's high-tech capacity is the inability to design and produce a jet engine. Thirteenth, India has been able to test in a combat environment its state-of-the-art equipment — with China watching with a hawk eye.

Similarly, India has been able to observe the performance of Chinese equipment supplied to Pakistan. Modi said Pakistan has assured it will cease terrorist activity and aggression against India. No victory celebrations appear to be planned in Pakistan. Shehbaz Sharif has declared Op Buniyan ul Marsoon successful. The BJP will extract the political dividend from Op Sindoor in the 11th day Tiranga Yatra that started yesterday. Modi's famous last words were: "no terror and talks, no terror and trade, no blood and river waters flow — together." And talks only on terrorism and PoK. This formulation will not end CBT.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. Views are personal)

The root of all conflict: Why traditional systems fail

SECOND Opinion

BY ASHA IYER KUMAR

On the night of May 7, I received a frantic message from a friend: "War has started." War? Could a war begin so suddenly? As an Indian who wept over the brutal Pahalgam terror attack, I had, in a moment of helplessness fury, hoped for a strong retaliation — something that would put the attackers in place.

But a full-scale war? That seemed unlikely. Who, after all, has the economic muscle or the moral recklessness to push a brittle region into the jaws of crisis? Still, the message came from someone I trusted. I turned to Google, half-expecting it to be social media alarmism. But it was true, though not in the truest sense. India had carried out precision airstrikes on strategic terror hubs in Pakistan, a now-familiar signature response to provocation.

But in the theatre of such events, where state action is celebrated and hashtags fly like flags, one question haunts the quiet corners of conscience: who bears the true cost? Not the decision-makers in glass towers or pundits on television screens, but the innocent caught between sovereign pride and political vengeance. It is the schoolchild woken by air raid sirens, the farmer whose field becomes a frontier, and the mother who doesn't know if her son will return from patrol. The headlines may declare strategy and success, but

the undercurrent is always human sorrow wrapped in frenzied national rhetoric. Why did people on holiday have to lose their lives for something they had no hand in — the Kashmir conundrum? Why must Gazans pay with hunger, rubble, and shattered dreams for conflicts history handed them without consent, carved by colonial compulsions and fed by political pride?

Why must a Ukrainian grandmother shelter in her basement for weeks, a Sudanese child flee bullets across borders he cannot name, Afghan girls watch their futures vanish beneath veils of geopolitics? The places may change, but the pattern remains. It is always the common man, the innocent woman, the nameless child who must bleed for the failures of leaders and the arrogance of ideologies.

And then comes the other war — waged through words, edits, and viral videos. The media, especially in moments of conflict, becomes both sword and shield, shaping not just what we know, but how we feel. In the days after the airstrikes, a deluge of misinformation, doctored visuals, and unverified claims flooded our feeds. It didn't matter which side was speaking.

Both seemed more invested in winning public sentiment than in protecting public reason. That's when I stopped following the details. I wanted to know: will this escalate or resolve? The noise made me sick. We, the people — tired, anxious, hoping for peace — become unwitting pawns in a psychological battlefield. Television anchors shout down nuances. Social media algorithms amplify rage. Patriotism gets conflated with aggression. Rational discourse drowns

in jingoistic zeal. And amid it all, the viewer is left anxious and confused, emotions manipulated by half-truths and hyperbole. This phenomenon isn't new or unique. We saw it in the Russia-Ukraine war and during every Indo-Pak flare-up. When propaganda replaces people, when information becomes ammunition, truth becomes collateral damage. And in the long run, it isn't just bombs that destroy lives, but belief systems built on distortion, where empathy dies a quiet, unnoticed death.

The tragedy of war isn't only in its explosions. It is in how we begin to dehumanise the "other". In how young minds grow up mistrusting neighbours. In how generations are raised on suspicion and hate. It is in how quickly we forget that across borders and beneath uniforms, the heartbeat is the same. As citizens, perhaps the most responsible thing we can do is to think; to question and to resist being swept away by collective fury. We must ask: Who profits from war? Who truly suffers? And what are we consuming in the name of news? Let us not mistake noise for knowledge, or passion for principle. Let us not let our conscience be hijacked by emotionally charged half-truths. Let us remember that the strength of a nation lies not in its loudest voices, but in its wisest. Above all, let us refuse to cheer when we don't fully understand what we're clapping for.

Because in every war, declared or undeclared, there are always casualties beyond the battlefield. And innocence, more often than not, is the first to fall.

(The writer is a Dubai-based author and a writing coach. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Covid claimed more lives than reported

The report titled 'Vital Statistics of India based on the Civil Registration System 2021', which is a compilation of registered births and deaths published by the Registrar General of India, now supports the argument that the number of deaths attributable to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that was previously declared was grossly understated. While India reported 450 lakh COVID cases and 5.33 lakh fatalities, a 2022 World Health Organisation report put the number of "excess" deaths in India for 2020 and 2021 to be around 47 lakhs.

However, a senior Health Ministry official said, "Based on a 6.42 per cent annual increase in deaths from 2016 to 2019, the expected deaths were about 81.3 lakh in 2020 and 86.5 lakh in 2021. Observed deaths were 81.15 lakh in 2020 and 1.02 crore in 2021, resulting in excess deaths of about 15.5 lakh over two years."

After adjusting for the annual increase at 6.42 per cent, the number of 'excess' deaths was 1.78 lakh — 16 times higher than the earlier reported figure of 11,000. The total deaths in 2021 were 13.78 per cent of the 12.92 lakh COVID-19 cases reported. It is clear the disparities between the declared and registered deaths resulted from deliberate understatements of fatalities during the pandemic and the high fatality rate in some states was due to inadequate health care system there.

HARIDARSAN RANJAN | KOZHIKODE

The decline of Indian media

I have been observing, even before the lockdown era, that the quality of Indian media — especially on television, has been steadily declining.

These TRP-hungry outlets will show anything and defame anyone just for a few views.

India now ranks 151st out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index, largely because our media often chooses to distract the public with fake or sensationalist "masala news" instead of providing real, factual information. In times like these, people would be better off avoiding mainstream media altogether and relying solely on information released by official Government sources.

The decline of Indian television media has been evident even before the lockdown era, but the post-pandemic surge in sensationalism has only worsened public trust. Driven by TRP ratings, many channels now prioritise scandal over substance, distorting facts for viewership. The result?

India plummets to 151st in the World Press Freedom Index, an alarming testament to a press more focused on spectacle than service.

From manufactured outrage to viral misinformation, the media frenzy creates a smokescreen, distracting the public from real issues. In such a climate, citizens may be better off trusting official Government channels over the noise of mainstream media.

VASANT JAIN | UJJAIN

King Kohli bids adieu!

One of the most accomplished players in all the formats of the game, King Kohli retiring from Test cricket must have made fans surprised after Rohit Sharma's recent announcement of his retirement from Tests.

Kohli featured for India in a total of 123 Tests, scoring 9,230 runs at an average of 46.85, including 30 centuries and 31 fifties, with the highest score of 254. Be it home or away, Virat ruled the roost with his bat, making his runs do the talking. However, he will probably have one regret, not reaching the 10,000 — run mark in Tests.

Virat can be termed as a modern-day Vivian Richards who has all shots in his books with sound techniques to negotiate both pace and spin with equal ease in style. King Kohli undoubtedly attracted all age groups by his prowess to slice, cut and tear any attack. Vivians and Virats are indeed a rare breed in world cricket. Kohli is one of the most prolific batters who have added more colour to the game of cricket in both red and white ball cricket. In a way it's good — while he makes room for budding young talents, Virat can now look forward to spending more time with Anushka and kids. Good luck to the invincible King of Indian cricket. Wishing him continued success in this new chapter — on and off the field. His contribution to Indian cricket will be remembered for generations. The passion he brought to the pitch inspired millions.

AP THIRUVADI | CHENNAI

HOPES RISE FOR PAWAR FAMILY RECONCILIATION AMID NCP (SP) DIVIDE

Amid speculation over Thackeray cousins Uddhav and Raj coming together for an alliance, a section of leaders in the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar) are hoping for a patch — up between the estranged Pawars.

This comes after frequent meetings between party supremo Sharad Pawar and his rebel nephew Ajit, who had broken away from the parent party in 2023.

However, talks of any possible merger have been publicly downplayed by Sharad and NCP (SP)'s national working president Supriya Sule.

Highly placed sources within Sharad Pawar's NCP said that four party MLAs are of the opinion that the two factions should come together and be part of the state's ruling Mahayuti alliance. These MLAs have been pressuring Sharad for quite some time.

Sharad Pawar's informal interaction with the media in Pune last week

apparently fuelled the speculation when he said that the decision to join hands with Ajit would be "left to the next generation".

He admitted to there being two opinions within the party. One section believes that if work in constituencies needs to be done, then NCP should reunite, while another section believes the NCP (SP) should not come together with Ajit Pawar's faction.

Sharad asserted that he himself had made up his mind to sit with the Opposition, and any decision on the NCP (SP) coming together with Ajit lay with Supriya Sule and state unit head Jayant Patil.

Sule has told the media that, like her father Sharad, she would sit in the Opposition. "My father has decided to stay with the Opposition, and I firmly stand by him."

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

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Operation Sindoor and the silence of modern war

In an era where military might is often measured in decibels and declarations, India's Operation Sindoor rewrote the script. As the red dust settles on a historic week, a new doctrine of deterrence has emerged — one that speaks not through escalation, but through execution

FIRST
Column

South Asia may have just danced on the edge of something darker. But if there's one lesson the world should take from the past week, it's this: modern warfare doesn't need noise. It needs intent and the capacity to follow through.

For decades, South Asia has been a study in controlled volatility. But the 72 hours beginning in the early hours of May 7, 2025, revealed just how perilously thin the line is between control and chaos.

India's decision to launch Operation Sindoor — a precise, joint-services strike deep inside Pakistan — offered a sobering glimpse of 21st-century coercive diplomacy at its most refined.

One might have expected tanks rolling, fiery rhetoric, or the familiar fog that typically shrouds subcontinental crises. Instead, what unfolded was a mission of surgical precision: unmistakably forceful, strategically brief, and executed with a discipline that left no room for improvisation or escalation.

The spark was the massacre in Pahalgam on April 22, where 26 unarmed tourists were killed in cold blood. In the past, such tragedies triggered a well-worn cycle: national outrage, diplomatic démarches, international hand-wringing and eventual inertia. This time, the script was quietly rewritten.

Within hours, India's National Security Council entered what insiders call "audit mode" — a focused, silent review tracing the attack's logistics, mapping militant camps, and assessing the costs and consequences of action.

The usual leaks to the media were absent. Parliament stayed quiet. There was no posturing, only planning. Seventeen days later, the result emerged: Operation Sindoor, named after the vermilion streak worn by Hindu women to symbolise enduring commitment.

At 03:40 hours on May 7, Rafale fighters carrying SCALP cruise missiles soared over the Thar Desert, hugging terrain contours to evade radar. Their targets: Bahawalpur and Muridke — sites long known to intelligence agencies but never previously struck. Minutes later, Heron-TP drones, already circling above, relayed real-time footage to South Block.

As militants scrambled in the wake of the blasts, loitering munitions dove after them. Off the Makran coast, an Indian Navy task group briefly lit up its active radar systems — just long enough to send a message to the Pakistan Navy without triggering open conflict. Army units simultaneously fanned along the Rajasthan border, forcing Pakistan to divert armoured assets while the real blows landed hundreds of kilometres away.

The entire operation lasted under 30 minutes. By sunrise, the shooting had stopped, the message had been delivered, and the jets were home.

Nine terrorist compounds were destroyed, and over 90 militants were killed, according to independent assessments. But the operation's significance wasn't in its body count — it lay in what it chose not to destroy.

Pakistani military installations were spared. Rail and radar infrastructure remained untouched. The message was clear: India could escalate but chose not to. It was a strike on the ecosystem of terrorism, not on the Pakistani state — a display of both strength and restraint.



RAJIV MALHOTRA

By May 10, Islamabad was on the defensive. At 3:35 pm a call from Pakistan's Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) to New Delhi requested a ceasefire. India agreed — on its terms. The strategic objectives had been met.

Then came a startling signal. A US Department of Energy Gulfstream, tail number N111SZ, landed in Islamabad — an aircraft that only flies

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AT 03:40 HOURS ON MAY 7, RAFALE FIGHTERS CARRYING SCALP CRUISE MISSILES SOARED OVER THE THAR DESERT, HUGGING TERRAIN CONTOURS TO EVADE RADAR. THEIR TARGETS: BAHAWALPUR AND MURIDKE — SITES LONG KNOWN TO INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES BUT NEVER PREVIOUSLY STRUCK.

in the event of suspected radiological threats. Either a strike had landed too close to a nuclear storage site at Noor Khan Airbase, or the mere proximity of the attack had alarmed Washington. Both scenarios reflect how dangerously close even a "limited" counter-terror operation can come to nuclear tripwires.

Domestically, India saw an unusual political consensus. Even the Congress Party swiftly endorsed the armed forces. Television anchors — usually quick to polarise — focused instead on operational details and strategic implications. Markets, too, responded with calm confidence: the Sensex dipped and then rallied, rewarding defence stocks.

Meanwhile, Karachi's exchange fell by 5 per cent in a single day. In modern warfare, capital flight, like artillery, follows confidence — and confidence firmly backed New Delhi.

Diplomatically, India moved swiftly. Within 48 hours, Indian envoys shared intercepts and high-resolution imagery with Washington, London, Riyadh, Moscow, and Paris, establishing

a clear link between the Bahawalpur camps and the Pahalgam attackers.

The global reaction or lack thereof — was telling. No resolutions at the UN, and no condemnations from the European Union. Even Beijing limited itself to standard statements on sovereignty, perhaps wary of drawing attention to its practices in Xinjiang.

Yet none of this ensures long-term stability. Pakistan still maintains tactical nuclear weapons under its full-spectrum doctrine. A misread blip on a radar screen, or a rogue field commander, could undo everything. In both nations, political dynamics could reintroduce volatility: having demonstrated precision, a future Indian Government may feel compelled to show magnitude. Pakistan, for its part, must weigh whether hosting proxy militants remains a strategic asset or a glowing target.

External powers should take note. Applause is not enough. Real steps are needed: converting the 2003 DGM0 hotline into a secure video link, and nudging Pakistan's legislature to criminalise, not just ban, UN-listed terrorists.

For India, Operation Sindoor now joins the canon of decisive military acts — alongside Pokhran II and Balakot — not because of the destruction wrought, but because it shattered old assumptions. First, Pak-based terror groups are no longer protected by geography. A cruise missile can skim the desert and strike with impunity. Second, global diplomatic instinct may be shifting — from privileging fragile stability to acknowledging the legitimacy of precise, rules-based retaliation.

And then, there's the operation's name. In Indian culture, sindoor is not decorative. It is declarative — a daily reaffirmation of commitment. New Delhi's invocation of that symbol was not mere flourish. It was a vow: that counter-terrorism is not a spam, but a doctrine.

Some may call that symbolism excessive. Yet nations run on symbols as much as they do on steel and silicon.

Pakistan too has its emotive vocabulary. But unless it separates its nationalism from its reliance on non-state militancy, it will continue to operate at a disadvantage — forever uncertain which of its sanctuaries might next become a crater.

Operation Sindoor has not ended but the red dust has settled — for now. But the operation redrew boundaries, both real and conceptual. The week of May 7 was not an anomaly. It was a signal. In this age, where resolve travels by drone, missile, and market ticker, the quietest wars may leave the loudest echoes. And the margin for error has never been thinner.

(The writer is an IPS officer working as DIG/Additional Director, UPSIFS, Lucknow. He holds a post-graduate degree in International Diplomacy from JNU, had also worked as a peace-keeper in the United Nations Missions, besides having had a stint in NYPD. Views are personal)

BJP's biggest challenge in Bihar: Balancing alliances and strategy

With cracks appearing within the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), rising seat demands from allies, and a resurgent Mahagathbandhan banking on traditional vote banks, the BJP's path to power hinges on its ability to navigate these turbulent waters

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) faces one of its toughest electoral battles in Bihar. Its primary challenge is to win the upcoming elections by maintaining unity within the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and increasing its vote share. The pressing question is: Can the NDA stay united? Will the smaller allies support the BJP once again in its bid for power?

This uncertainty looms over NDA leaders, compounded by political speculation around Nitish Kumar's repetitive public statements. Yet, this moment presents a golden opportunity for the BJP to reclaim power.

BJP's chief strategist, Amit Shah, is acutely aware of the situation. Like Abhimanyu in the Mahabharata, he finds himself surrounded, fighting almost alone in the Bihar campaign. His allies in the state come from a socialist background, which may not provide the desired leverage in caste-based calculations.

Moreover, the BJP risks losing a significant portion of the Muslim vote bank following the controversial Waqf Amendment Bill. Historically, Muslim voters have backed the party most likely to defeat the BJP. The poor performance of JDU in the 2014 Lok Sabha and 2020 Assembly elections is evidence of this trend.

This time, the BJP aims to benefit by keeping all NDA factions united while consolidating their individual vote banks under its own umbrella. In essence, BJP must win the election on its own terms — while still working alongside JDU. Achieving this will require testing new political and caste equations daily and forging consensus — an undeniably difficult task.

On the other side stands the Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance), comprising RJD, Congress, and the Left parties. Here, the Yadav-Muslim (MY) equation remains intact — an undeniable strength, possibly strengthened further by the Waqf Amendment Bill.

Although backwardness in Bihar is routinely criticised, the state has long been a testing ground for political experiments. Currently, the BJP faces several challenges: its allies are demanding more assembly seats, and the party itself is striving to boost its vote percentage.

There are few dedicated and well-regarded grassroots workers within the BJP. Many active members have defected from other parties and are not fully accepted by the core cadre. Several former Union Ministers have lost ground and credibility, making them unreliable assets. Some sitting MPs may be fielded in the assembly elections, and similar suggestions have been made for JDU candidates. However, the escalating and often unreasonable



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

seat demands from allies are becoming a point of tension. To tackle this, BJP has introduced the caste census as a strategic move.

It claims this step is a leap toward social justice, aimed at attracting OBC and EBC voters — key electoral blocs in Bihar, where caste equations largely decide outcomes. According to sources within the RSS, BJP is in favour of reuniting the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) in its original form, believing that a split will divide its vote share.

Chirag Paswan's announcement to contest the elections and the dissatisfaction within Pashupati Paras's faction have only intensified the family

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CURRENTLY, THE BJP FACES SEVERAL CHALLENGES: ITS ALLIES ARE DEMANDING MORE ASSEMBLY SEATS, AND THE PARTY ITSELF IS STRIVING TO BOOST ITS VOTE PERCENTAGE. THERE ARE FEW DEDICATED AND WELL-REGARDED GRASSROOTS WORKERS WITHIN THE BJP.

feud. The Chief Minister face remains unresolved. If BJP openly endorses Nitish Kumar, it risks alienating its core workers and supporters, many of whom may become disillusioned or inactive. In such a scenario, disenchanted BJP voters could shift their support to Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraj. Interestingly, BJP could still benefit if anti-incumbency votes are diverted away from RJD.

Meanwhile, AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi has signalled his intent to contest, which may again disrupt the MY equation, as witnessed in previous elections. Historically, three regions in Bihar have shaped the trajectory of socialist politics.

This time, these regions are once again at the heart of the contest. Mithilanchal has emerged as a key battleground since the days of Mandal politics and Lalu Yadav's social engineering — now largely overseen by NDA Rajya Sabha MP

Sanjay Jha. These areas, where the MY equation has thrived, are once again central to BJP's strategy. Amit Shah and Prime Minister Modi have already made multiple visits to the region, and a state-wide "Bihar Marathon Tour" by the Prime Minister is being planned. This will feature the politics of "Makhana" and airport announcements — strategic "revidis" aimed at wooing voters.

Despite opposition, BJP and JDU have entrusted Sanjay Jha with the coordination efforts. Two Bhumihar leaders from Munger-Begusarai were recently inducted into the cabinet, despite limited political returns. They may also be positioned as caste-specific candidates in the assembly elections. The focus will later shift to Nitish Kumar's strongholds — Nalanda and Rajgir — where BJP is already making inroads.

The role of Nitish's son, Nishant Kumar, is also under consideration, as are other leaders close to Nitish. Some MPs and Nitish's trusted allies might be fielded for the assembly polls. Discussions are also ongoing about new names. Several Rajput leaders have shown influence in the name of Veer Kunwar Singh.

Among them, Anand Mohan stands out. The Thakur leader reportedly has sway in multiple Lok Sabha constituencies, especially in Shivhar and Vaishali. JDU is reportedly wary of his growing proximity to BJP. Anand Mohan is also active in his home region, Kosi.

However, the real battlefield for BJP remains Seemanchal. Amit Shah is expected to return there, with Prime Minister Modi likely to follow — using the Purnia Airport and Greenfield Expressway as political touchpoints. Analysts suggest Seemanchal is also where Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraj is gaining ground, especially with its aggressive stance against Lalu Yadav.

The MY formula dominates here, with added support from Dalit and backward communities. RJD maintains strongholds across the region, except in Purnia. In the last election, Owaisi tried to penetrate the Muslim vote bank.

Since then, Seemanchal's economic conditions have evolved, but the region's political leadership remains rooted in the past.

Recognising this, BJP is preparing to sideline old leadership figures across Bihar and introduce fresh faces — possibly Amit Shah's most important move. This strategy could help transform Bihar into a BJP stronghold. As the countdown begins, several more visits from the Prime Minister are expected. These may bring clarity to the ongoing speculations and political equations.

(The writer is a political analyst who writes primarily on political issues. Views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Gems, jewellery exports dip by 4.62 pc at USD 2,037.06 mn

India's overall gems and jewellery exports dipped by 4.62 per cent to USD 2,037.06 million in April, as compared to the same month of the previous financial year, according to the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) data. The country's total gems and jewellery exports stood at USD 2,135.7 million in the same month of the previous year, GJEPC data released on Tuesday said. The overall export of 'Cut and Polished' diamonds declined by 6.12 per cent to USD 1,108.74 million in April, compared to USD 1,180.99 million in the same period a year ago. The total shipment of gold jewellery witnessed a dip of 5.41 per cent at USD 684.51 million during the month under review, as compared to USD 723.63 million for the same period of the previous year. Gross export of 'Polished Lab Grown Diamonds' in April was almost flat with a growth of just 0.41 per cent at USD 110.74 million, over USD 110.29 million in the same month of FY25. Silver jewellery exports in April too declined by 12.03 per cent at USD 38.3 million.



IFFCO starts production of nano-liquid DAP

Cooperative IFFCO, one of the major fertiliser firms in the country, has commenced commercial production of nano liquid DAP (di-ammonium phosphate) at two new plants in Uttar Pradesh, each having a capacity of 2 lakh bottles per day. In a social media post, IFFCO said it has 'started the commercial production of IFFCO Nano DAP Liquid at its two more nano plants at Aonla, Bareilly and Phulpur, Prayagraj, both in Uttar Pradesh.' Both nano fertiliser plants have a capacity of producing 2 lakh bottles (500 ml) per day each, it said. 'This production enhancement will increase the supply of Nano DAP Liquid in the country and will be easily available to our farmers across the country,' IFFCO said. The total capacity of five IFFCO nano fertiliser plants is 9.5 lakh bottles per day which includes both nano urea and nano DAP. 'Nano DAP Liquid is a better option than traditional DAP as Nano DAP has particles under 100 nanometers, making it more effective. It boosts soil nutrients compared to traditional fertilisers.



Britannia expects gradual demand recovery

Britannia Industries is expecting a gradual recovery in demand in the current financial year, Vice Chairman & Managing Director Varun Berry has said. Berry, in the post-earnings investors' call, said he is 'reasonably optimistic' on the demand recovery happening and expects FY26 to be reasonably good. However, he also cautioned that 'it's not going to be a hockey stick... We have seen gradual recovery, and I do think that this trend is going to continue into the next year (FY26) as well'. Britannia, which reported 9 per cent growth in sales to Rs 4,375.57 crore for the March quarter, helped by pricing actions, expects this trend to continue. He also said the company may go for another set of price increase in the current quarter, depending on inflation. However, it would also be assessed based on how trends evolve during the quarter. 'We are hoping that we will be able to grow revenue and volumes. Obviously, there will be a delta because we have taken a pretty high price increase in the last quarter,' said Berry.

India only reserved right to impose retaliatory duty on US goods

May resolve issue via BTA talks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has "only" reserved its right under WTO norms to impose retaliatory duties on certain American products over the US' steel and aluminium tariffs and it may choose to resolve the issue through the ongoing bilateral trade agreement (BTA) negotiations between the two countries, an official said on Tuesday.

The official said earlier also a similar notification has been issued to the World Trade Organization (WTO) by India against the European Union over EU's steel safeguard measure of 2019 and 2021, but it has not been implemented to date.

"Accordingly, India's current notification to WTO Council for Trade in Goods against US' steel and aluminium tariffs only reserves India's right under the Agreement on Safeguards to retaliate at any future date. However, it is for India to decide whether to effectuate these proposed retaliation after 30 days of the notification or later or resolve it as part of ongoing BTA negotiations," the official said.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will lead a team of senior Indian officials to Washington starting May 17 for discussions with their US counterparts on



the proposed BTA. The chief negotiators of both countries will hold meetings from May 19-22.

The two countries are negotiating the pact to boost two-way commerce to USD 500 billion by 2030 from the present USD 191 billion.

According to trade experts, India's move to reserve its retaliation rights could serve as a bargaining chip in the proposed trade deal.

This is not India's first brush with safeguard retaliation.

In June 2019, India imposed higher tariffs on 28 US products after the US removed India from its Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and continued its 25 per cent and 10 per cent tariffs on certain steel and aluminium products. That action, which covered about USD 240 million in trade value, marked

India's first use of WTO-sanctioned retaliation.

However, the duties were withdrawn in September 2023, following the decision of both countries to resolve seven WTO disputes.

That time also, the US had initially imposed additional duties on certain steel (25 per cent) and aluminium (10 per cent) products in March 2018. On May 18, 2018, India notified WTO Council for Trade in Goods of India's proposed suspension of concessions.

This notification reserved India's right to effectuate the proposed suspension, however, it was implemented by India after a year, in June 2019.

"Additionally, regarding the EU definitive steel safeguard measure, India had notified WTO of India's proposed suspension of concessions, reserving its right to effectuate the same.

Goyal to lead team to Washington for trade talks

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will lead a team of senior Indian officials to Washington starting May 17 for discussions with their US counterparts on the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA), an official said on Tuesday. During the visit, Goyal will hold meetings with US Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer and US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on the agreement. The four-day talks (May 17-20) come against the backdrop of both countries exploring the possibility of an interim trade arrangement in goods to secure 'early mutual wins' ahead of finalising the first phase of the trade agreement by fall (September-October) this year. The official said the chief negotiators of both countries will hold meetings from May 19-22. Goyal will reach Washington on May 16. The main issues that will figure in the negotiations include market access, rules of origin, and non-tariff barriers. India's proposal to impose retaliatory duty on certain US products over American tariffs on steel and aluminium would also figure in the BTA deliberations.

Himachal govt considering hike in wool MSP: CM

PNS ■ SHIMLA

The Himachal Pradesh government is aware of the hardships being faced by the Gaddi community and is committed to resolving their issues, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said here on Tuesday.

Addressing a delegation of the Gaddi community led by newly appointed Himachal Pradesh Wool Federation Chairman Manoj Kumar, Sukhu said the state government was contemplating enhancing the minimum support price for wool, and a decision would be taken after consulting all stakeholders.

The state government would ensure that sheep and goat rearers receive remunerative prices for their hard work, thereby strengthening the rural economy, a statement issued here quoted the chief minister as saying.

The chief minister said that, adopting a sympathetic approach, the state govern-

ment has enhanced the compensation manifold for the affected families during the monsoon disaster of 2023 by offering a special relief package.

Under this initiative, the state government enhanced the financial assistance from Rs 4,000 to Rs 6,000 for the death of sheep, goats and pigs.

He said that in the coming times, this financial assistance would be further enhanced to support the livestock rearing community.

Earlier, Kumar expressed gratitude for the appointment and assured that he would work with dedication to meet the expectations of the chief minister.

Kumar said his appointment was a matter of pride for the entire Gaddi community residing in Chamba and Kangra district.

Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Anirudh Singh was also present on the occasion.



PNB to divest entire stake in ISARC for Rs 34 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Punjab National Bank (PNB) on Tuesday said it has entered into an agreement to sell its entire stake in India SME Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (ISARC) for Rs 34.04 crore.

The bank said the Reserve Bank of India in March had granted approval for change in sponsor of the asset reconstruction company and equity raise from M/s Authum Investment and Infrastructure Limited.

"The bank has entered into a definitive agreement...today, i.e. 13.05.2025, to sell its entire stake in M/s India SME Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (ISARC), an associate company of the bank," PNB said in a regulatory filing.

PNB will sell 2.09 crore shares at Rs 16.29 per share, resulting in a sale consideration of over Rs 34.04 crore.

The stake sale is expected to be completed by the end of the June quarter.

Gold surges Rs 950 to Rs 97,500/10 g amid firm global cues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price rallied by Rs 950 to Rs 97,500 per 10 gram in the national capital on Tuesday amid firm trend in overseas markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.5 per cent purity jumped Rs 1,000 to Rs 97,100 per 10 gram.

On Monday, gold of 99.9 per cent and 99.5 per cent fell sharply by Rs 3,400 each to Rs 96,550 and Rs 96,100 per 10 grams, respectively.

Meanwhile, silver depreciated Rs 250 to Rs 99,450 per kg against the previous close of Rs 99,700 per kg.

"Gold prices have risen again after a sharp correction, as safe-haven demand eased following a pause in the US-China trade war," Abans Financial Services' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta said.

The US agreed to cut tariffs on Chinese imports to 30 per cent from 145 per cent, while



China reduced duties on US goods to 10 per cent from 125 per cent.

This tariff relief brought some calm to global markets, leading to a rally in equities and a pullback in gold over the past two days, Mehta added.

Globally, spot gold quoted higher at USD 3,253.38 per ounce.

"Gold fell over 3 per cent on Monday, lowest closing in nearly two weeks. However, the metal rebounded slightly on Tuesday, edging above USD 3,240 per ounce," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP of

Commodity Research at Kotak Securities, said.

The safe-haven demand emerged amid reports of Israeli airstrikes on Houthi rebel positions in Yemen, she said.

Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities said market participants are closely awaiting the US Consumer Price Index (CPI) data later in the day.

The inflation print could influence the US Federal Reserve's interest rate outlook and, in turn, affect gold's trajectory, Trivedi added.

Stock markets take breather after sharp rally

Sensex tanks 1,282 pts as IT shares retreat

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Stock markets tumbled on Tuesday with benchmark Sensex falling by 1,282 points due to profit-taking in IT, auto and private banking shares a day after a record rally.

The 30-share BSE barometer tanked 1,281.68 points or 1.55 per cent to settle at 81,148.22 with 25 of its constituents closing with losses and five with gains. During the day, it fell sharply by 1,386.21 points or 1.68 per cent to 81,043.69.



The broader Nifty of NSE dropped 346.35 points or 1.39 per cent to 24,578.35. From the Sensex firms, Infosys declined the most by 3.54 per cent.

Defence stocks continue to surge

Defence-related stocks continued to remain in the limelight on Tuesday, with Bharat Dynamics surging over 11 per cent. Shares of Bharat Dynamics zoomed 11.16 %. Axiscades Technologies surged 5 per cent, Data Patterns soared 4.05 per cent, Bharat Electronics jumped 4.01 per cent on the BSE. Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd climbed 3.81%, Mishra Dhatu Nigam rallied 3.44 %, Paras Defence and Space Technologies went up by 2.84 per cent and DCX Systems gained 2.81 per cent.

Power Grid dropped 3.4 per cent, Eternal by 3.38 per cent, HCL Tech by 2.94 per cent, Tata Consultancy Services by 2.88 per cent and Bharti Airtel

by 2.74 per cent. IndusInd Bank, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, NTPC, Maruti, Tata Motors, and M&M were also among the laggards.

Rupee gains 3 paise to settle at 85.33 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee pared most of its initial gains to settle 3 paise higher at 85.33 (provisional) against the American currency on Tuesday, due to rising appetite for riskier assets amid easing trade tariff tensions.

However, rising crude oil prices, a strong US dollar and the emergence of profit booking in domestic equities restricted the rise of the domestic unit, traders said.

At the interbank and foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 84.70 and moved between the intra-day high of 84.62 and the low of 85.48 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.33 (provisional), registering a gain of 3 paise over its previous closing level.

On Friday, the rupee pared its initial losses and settled for the day higher by 22 paise at 85.36 against the US dollar.

The foreign exchange market was closed on Monday on account of Buddha Purnima.

US and Chinese officials said Monday they had reached a

deal to roll back most of their recent tariffs and called a 90-day truce in their trade war for more talks on resolving their trade disputes.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias amid de-escalating geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan. Rise in risk appetite in global markets amid easing trade tariff tensions between the US and China," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

India and Pakistan on last Saturday announced reaching an understanding to stop all firings and military actions on land, air and sea, with immediate effect.

In his first address to the nation after Operation Sindoor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday sternly warned Pakistan that India will not succumb to nuclear blackmail and sent a clear message to the world: terror and trade, terror and talks cannot go together.

"Operation Sindoor is India's new policy against terrorism and our unwavering pledge for justice. It is the new normal.

India looking at MRAs with 10 more nations by Dec: Official

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has signed mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) with customs authorities of nine countries and is looking at inking such pacts with 10 more nations by December this year, a government official said on Tuesday.

Under this agreement, trade facilitation is extended reciprocally.

Akhil Kumar Khatri, Principal Commissioner, Directorate of International Customs (DIC), said these MRAs help promote two-way trade.

"We have signed these agree-

ments with nine countries and by December this year, we are looking at signing with 10 more nations," Khatri said on the sidelines of an event on 'Unlocking Global Trade Synergies: First India-Russia AEO Seminar in association with the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)'.

It was organised by the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) here.

Last year, the CBIC and the Russia's Federal Customs Service signed the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) MRA to provide reciprocal benefits to accredited and trusted exporters of both coun-



tries in the clearance of goods by the customs authorities of the importing country.

India has already signed

such pacts with the customs administrations of South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the US, the UAE, Australia, and

Russia.

India has also signed joint action plans to conclude an MRA with Uganda, East

"We have signed these agreements with nine countries and by December this year, we are looking at signing with 10 more nations," Khatri said on the sidelines of an event on 'Unlocking Global Trade Synergies: First India-Russia AEO Seminar in association with the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs'"

African Community, South Africa, Japan, Bahrain, Singapore, New Zealand, the UK, Belarus, and BRICS.

AEO is a programme under the aegis of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) to secure and facilitate global trade.

It is a voluntary compliance programme that enables Indian customs to enhance and streamline cargo security through close cooperation with the principal stakeholders of the international supply chain including importers, exporters, logistics providers, custodians or terminal operators, custom brokers, and warehouse operators.



Pankaj Tripathi gets emotional as he returns to his roots for new film in Bihar

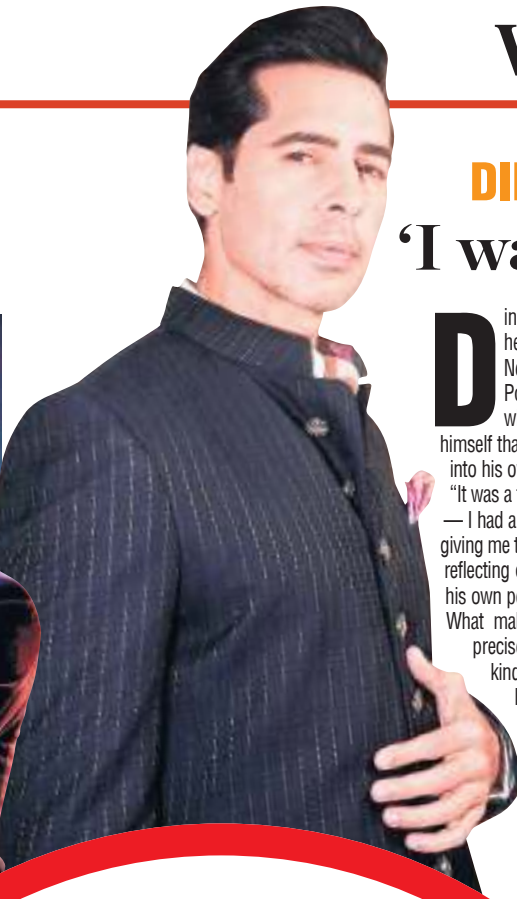
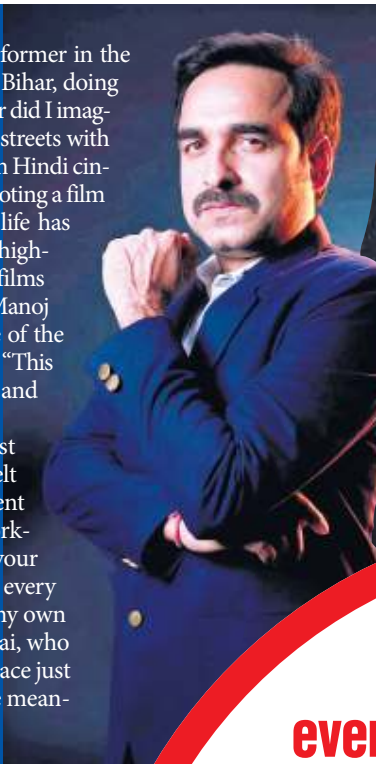
Celebrated actor Pankaj Tripathi, known for his rooted performances and powerful screen presence, has finally fulfilled a long-cherished dream — shooting a film in his home state of Bihar. Despite building a prolific career in Hindi cinema, this marks the first time the actor is working on a project in the land where his journey as a performer first began.

The upcoming untitled film, a socially driven human drama, is helmed by Amit Rai, best known for *OMG 2*. Interestingly, both Rai and Tripathi hail from Bihar, making this project a deeply personal and emotional experience for the duo. The film is being shot extensively across real locations in the state, supported by the Bihar Film Niga and features a talented ensemble including Pawan Malhotra and Rajesh Kumar, alongside several local actors. With a 35-day shooting schedule, the film promises an authentic portrayal of Bihar — not just as a setting, but as a central character in the narrative. Speaking about the milestone, Tripathi shared his overwhelming emotions about returning to his roots.

"It's hard to put into words what this moment

means to me. I started as a performer in the dusty lanes of a small village in Bihar, doing theatre and nukkad natak. Never did I imagine that I'd return to these very streets with a film crew. After over 20 years in Hindi cinema, this is the first time I'm shooting a film in my home state. It feels like life has come full circle." Tripathi also highlighted how rare it is for Hindi films to be shot in Bihar, recalling Manoj Bajpayee's *Shool* in 2003 as one of the last notable productions to do so. "This experience is incredibly special and long overdue," he noted.

For Tripathi, this isn't just another film — it's a heartfelt homecoming. "There's a different kind of magic when you're working on a story that's rooted in your soil. Every scene, every location, every face I see here resonates with my own journey. Working with Amit Rai, who understands the heart of this place just as deeply, makes it all the more meaningful."



DINO MOREA ON PLAYING SALAUDIN

‘I was basically being myself!’

Dino Morea is back with a bang — and this time, he's bringing a riot of charm and eccentricity to Netflix's newly released series *The Royals*. Portraying the unpredictable and delightfully whacky Salaudin, Dino taps into a side of himself that feels less like acting and more like stepping into his own skin.

"It was a fun ride. Fantastic. I had a great time shooting — I had a laugh on set! I just want to say thank you for giving me this opportunity," Dino shared enthusiastically, reflecting on the joy of playing a character who mirrors his own personality. What makes Salaudin such a standout character is precisely what made it so enjoyable for Dino: "I was kind of playing myself. This is me in real life — I like fun, I love fun, I want to have fun! And I was definitely having fun with this character."

Salaudin, a quirky royal figure with a taste for drama and mischief, fit Dino like a glove. "He's a whacky guy. And honestly, on a normal day, I'm also whacky. That made this role even more enjoyable," he added with a laugh.

From his effortless comic timing to his magnetic presence on-screen, Dino breathes life into the role of Salaudin, delivering a performance that adds a refreshing dose of levity and flair to the ensemble drama. His chemistry with the star-studded cast — including Ishaan Khatter, Bhumi Pednekar, Zeenat Aman, Sakshi Tanwar and Nora Fatehi — makes *The Royals* an engaging blend of romance, tradition and contemporary edge.

Directed by Priyanka Ghose and Nupur Asthana, the series is set in the fictional grand city of Morpur, exploring the intersection of royal legacy and modern ambition. With its unique tone and vibrant characters, *The Royals*, which premiered on Netflix last week, is quickly carving a space for itself as a binge-worthy favourite.

‘I wanted a film that would earn me respect’

After a four-year hiatus, actor Sooraj Pancholi is returning to the silver screen with the period drama *Kesari Veer: Legends of Somnath*. The actor, who last appeared in the 2021 dance film *Time to Dance*, says he was waiting for the right project—one that could reintroduce him with dignity



and depth. In *Kesari Veer*, directed by Prince Dhiman, Sooraj steps into the role of Rajput warrior Hamirji Gohil, a figure rooted in valor and legacy. For Pancholi, this wasn't just a role—it was an opportunity to reclaim his space in the industry on his own terms.

"I was listening to many scripts," Sooraj shared, "but I wanted to do a film that would bring me respect. Anyone who works behind the camera or in front of it puts in a lot of hard work. When you are not appreciated for your work, you feel really let down. So I wanted to do a film where people would say, 'Okay, maybe Sooraj is capable.'"

The 34-year-old actor, son of industry veterans Aditya Pancholi and Zarina Wahab, had stepped back from the spotlight in the wake of personal and legal turmoil. Accused of abetting the 2013 suicide of actress Jiah Khan, his then-girlfriend, Sooraj was acquitted in 2023 by a special CBI court in Mumbai due to lack of evidence.

Reflecting on those years, Sooraj said, "I wanted to get my life back on track before returning to work. I sat down one day and spoke to my parents. I told them, 'Let me finish that. I will work later. I'll do whatever I want, but let me finish that first.'"

‘A celebration of every dreamer’: Parul Gulati on her Cannes debut

Actress and entrepreneur Parul Gulati is all set to make a dazzling debut at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival 2025, marking a significant personal and professional milestone. As she steps onto the iconic red carpet, Parul brings with her a unique blend of creative talent and entrepreneurial excellence — symbolizing the evolving identity of modern Indian womanhood. Widely recognized for her performances in acclaimed shows like *Made in Heaven* and her work alongside stalwarts such

as Manoj Bajpayee, Parul continues to expand her artistic canvas. Her upcoming roles in the eagerly awaited web series *Donali*, opposite Barun Sobti and Divyendu Sharma, and a new comedy franchise, further highlight her acting range and mass appeal. Yet, Parul's success story doesn't end with entertainment. Off-screen, she has built a thriving business empire that empowers thousands of women across the country, proving that she's just as impactful behind a boardroom table as she is in front of the camera. Speaking about her Cannes debut, Parul shared her excitement:

"Walking the red carpet at Cannes is not just a personal milestone, but a celebration of every dreamer who dares to defy boundaries. I've always believed that passion has no limits, be it in front of the camera or behind a business." Adding a deeply personal layer to this achievement, Parul recalled a special memory: "When I was shooting for *Made in Heaven* in Southern France, visiting the iconic steps of the Palais des Festivals et des Congrès in Cannes was on my wish list.

After wrapping up my schedule, I went there as a tourist. Being a cinema lover, it felt magical even then. To now return as an official invitee feels like

a full-circle moment — a dream fulfilled."

Swami, Pallavi Joshi, Karan Tacker, Nasser and Shubhangi, *Tanvi The Great* promises a heart-warming and poignant story. The music is composed by Oscar-winner M.M. Keeravani, adding further emotional resonance to the narrative.

Backed by Anupam Kher Studios and NFDC in association with Lower Middle Class Corporation, the film will be showcased at the prestigious Marché du Film in Cannes. The official release date is expected to be announced soon.



Anupam Kher on directing and acting in *Tanvi The Great*: ‘The most difficult thing I’ve done’



Veteran actor Anupam Kher is taking on a dual challenge with his upcoming film *Tanvi The Great* — not only playing the lead role of Col. Pratap Raina but also sitting in the director's chair. The film, an emotional drama set to have its world premiere at Cannes Film Festival 2025, marks a significant creative milestone for the acclaimed performer.

Speaking about the unique experience of directing himself, Kher said, "The most difficult thing is to act and direct a film simultaneously. Luckily, I was surrounded by an extremely experienced technical team and a brilliant set of actors. They made my job slightly easy. Otherwise, Col. Pratap Raina is complex. But he changes. And that change hopefully formulates his performance in *Tanvi The Great*. Watch it and then decide."

The film's first look poster was recently unveiled, introducing audiences to Col. Pratap Raina — a stoic man whose silence speaks volumes, until a mysterious figure enters his world, shifting the emotional landscape. As described by the makers, "Sometimes it makes you laugh, and sometimes you are holding your tears back! And yet Col. Pratap Raina and *Tanvi* are two sides of the same coin."

Featuring a powerful ensemble cast including Iain Glen, Boman Irani, Jackie Shroff, Arvind

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



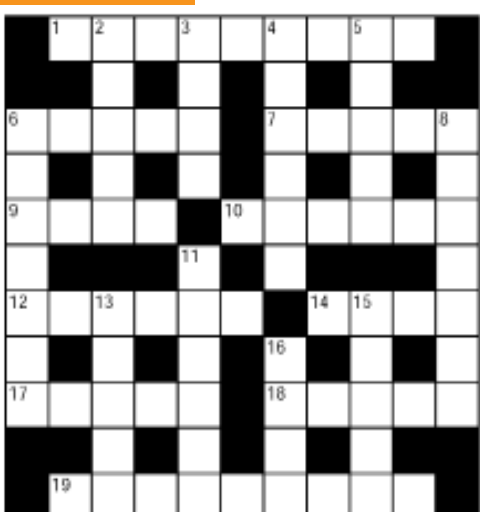
REALITY CHECK



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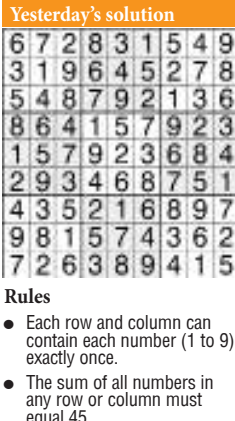
CROSSWORD



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU



ACROSS

- 1 A shawl keeps these warm
- 6 Move along on hands and knees
- 7 Parts of a skeleton
- 9 Young males
- 10 Picture theatre
- 12 Reply
- 14 A hard black fuel
- 17 Vote into power
- 18 Thoughts
- 19 Exactly the same

DOWN

- 5 Wash the soap out of
- 6 A green vegetable
- 8 Housing for horses
- 11 Deceased
- 13 How quickly something moves or happens
- 15 A sung stage drama
- 16 Short skirt



creative collaboration is what brought us close. We started to appreciate each other not just as professionals, but as human beings," she reflects. Shukla, at the time, had just emerged from the public glare of *Bigg Boss*, carrying with him a certain reputation and perception. For Priyanka, the task was both delicate and transformative. "I needed him to step into Agastya's shoes—to become something he wasn't and yet draw from parts of himself. That's how he tapped into emotions with such honesty," she explains. Together, they delved deep into the nuances of the character. "We worked on every single scene—on where the anger stems from, how obsession creeps in, and how far Agastya would go before pulling back. There were intense conversations, rehearsals, and a lot of homework we did together. That process, that trust, is what made the portrayal so layered. I truly believe that's why the show became what it did."

But her memories with Sidharth are not confined to the set. "I have too many," she says, her voice breaking slightly. "They go beyond our time working together. I'm still family to him—and to his family. I remain very, very close to them. His niece is actually my assistant now."

That bond, she admits, is sacred and hard to put into words. "We shared something special. And I don't think I can talk much about it, because losing him... it felt like I lost a part of me. It will always be a very, very delicate topic."

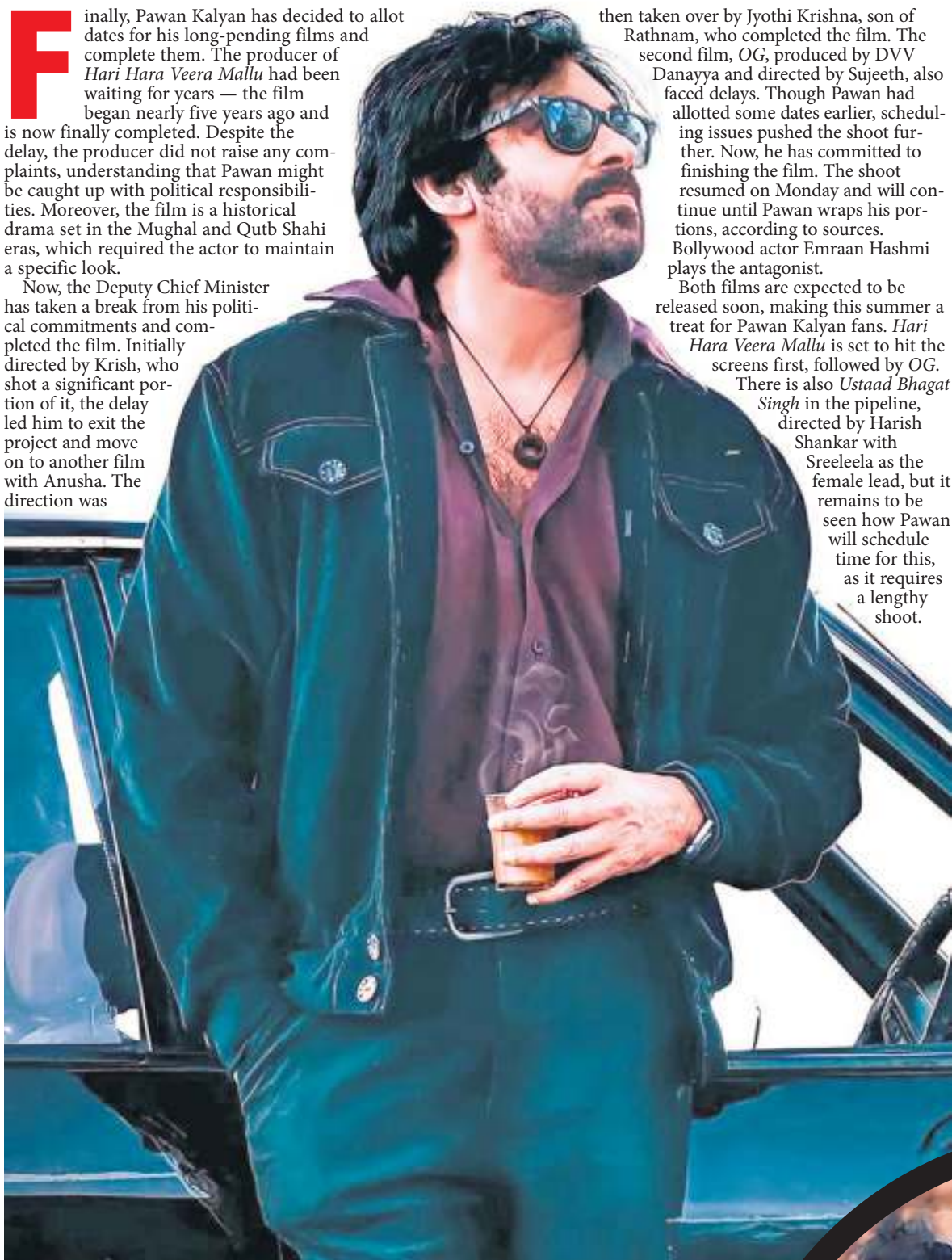
While the grief still lingers, Priyanka continues to pour herself into her work—and there's much room on the horizon. "There are exciting projects coming up," she says. "But I can't reveal anything just yet—I have to wait for official announcements."

She does, however, confirm that she's already on set for her next project. "I'm in the middle of the shoot, and it's something I'm very, very excited about. It's a project that's pushed me to set the bar even higher, and I'm working with some of the finest in the industry. It has a huge ensemble and a story I truly believe in."

There's also more quietly taking shape behind the scenes. "There are other series and films I'm developing parallelly—some new ideas, and maybe some follow-ups to earlier projects. So yes, there's a lot happening. A lot to be grateful for."

As she speaks, there's a mix of calm confidence and

Pawan Kalyan prioritises films amid political commitments

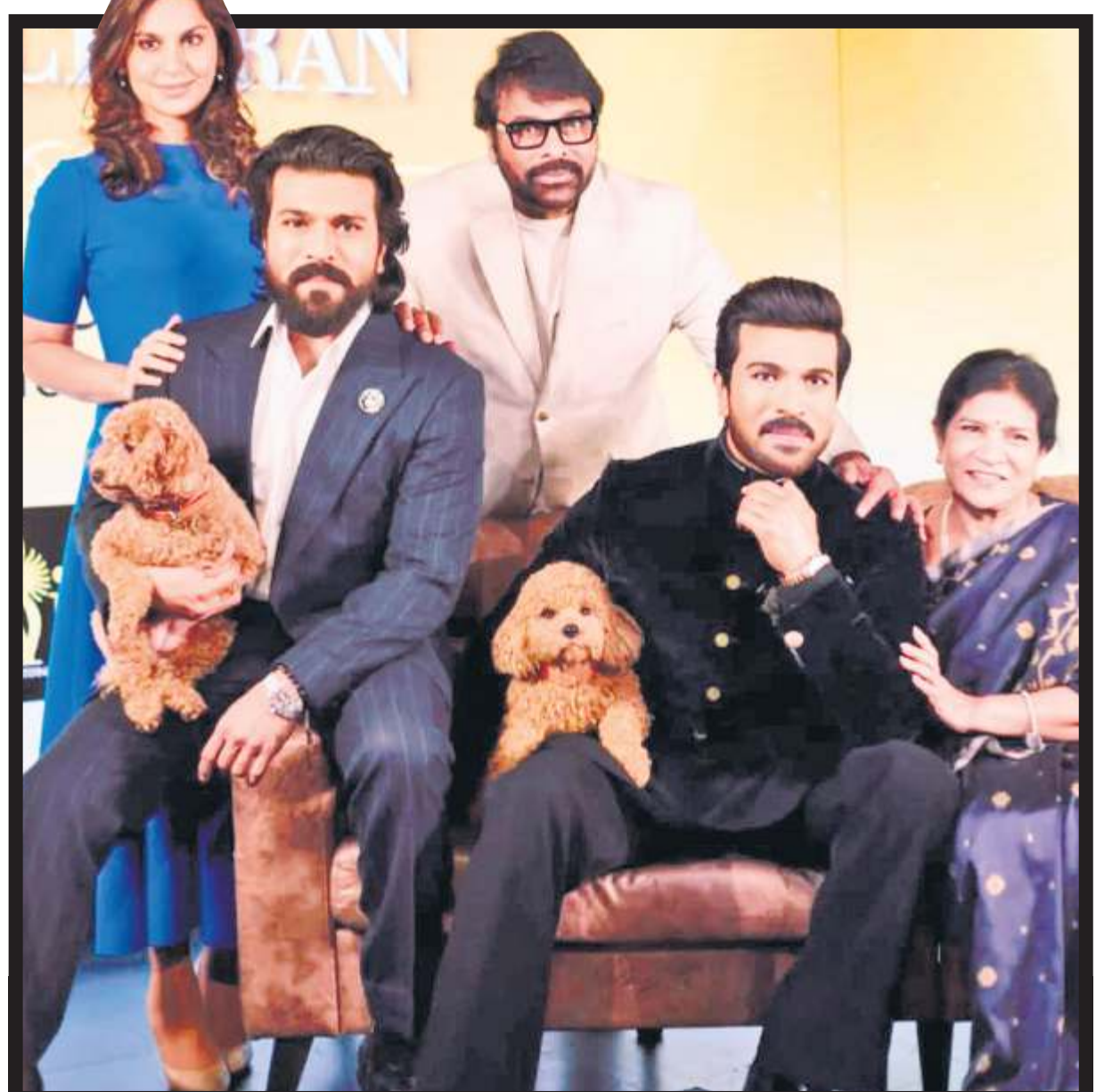


Finally, Pawan Kalyan has decided to allot dates for his long-pending films and complete them. The producer of *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* had been waiting for years — the film began nearly five years ago and is now finally completed. Despite the delay, the producer did not raise any complaints, understanding that Pawan might be caught up with political responsibilities. Moreover, the film is a historical drama set in the Mughal and Qutb Shahi eras, which required the actor to maintain a specific look.

Now, the Deputy Chief Minister has taken a break from his political commitments and completed the film. Initially directed by Krish, who shot a significant portion of it, the delay led him to exit the project and move on to another film with Anusha. The direction was

then taken over by Jyothi Krishna, son of Rathnam, who completed the film. The second film, *OG*, produced by DVV Danayya and directed by Sujeeth, also faced delays. Though Pawan had allotted some dates earlier, scheduling issues pushed the shoot further. Now, he has committed to finishing the film. The shoot resumed on Monday and will continue until Pawan wraps his portions, according to sources. Bollywood actor Emraan Hashmi plays the antagonist.

Both films are expected to be released soon, making this summer a treat for Pawan Kalyan fans. *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* is set to hit the screens first, followed by *OG*. There is also *Ustaad Bhagat Singh* in the pipeline, directed by Harish Shankar with Sreeleela as the female lead, but it remains to be seen how Pawan will schedule time for this, as it requires a lengthy shoot.



RAM CHARAN MAKES HISTORY AT MADAME TUSSAUDS WITH PET DOG RHYME

While many Indian actors have wax figures at Madame Tussauds, Ram Charan has made history by being the first to be immortalised alongside his pet dog, Rhyme. This unique honor places him in rare company, second only to Queen Elizabeth II, who was also portrayed with her pet.

The private unveiling took place in London with his family and close friends in attendance. Originally scheduled for a later date due to ongoing global tensions, the unveiling went ahead as peace and normalcy returned.

The wax figure features Ram Charan in the elegant black velvet bandhgala he wore at the 2023 Oscars. The statue is a tribute not just to his cinematic success but also to his deep bond with Rhyme.

One emotional moment came when Ram Charan's father was moved to tears during the unveiling, showing how significant the occasion was. His mother Surekha and wife Upasana were also present. The statue will be displayed in London until May 19, after which it will be moved to Madame Tussauds Singapore.

Chiranjeevi's classic re-release in 3D falls short of expectations

As Tollywood continues its trend of re-releasing classics, *Jagadeka Veerudu Athiloka Sundari*, starring Chiranjeevi and Sridevi, was brought back to theaters by producer Ashwini Dutt. Despite aggressive promotions by Chiranjeevi, director Raghavendra Rao and Dutt, the re-release didn't make a strong

impact. Although some shows saw good occupancy on the first day, overall response paled in comparison to recent re-releases like *Murari*, *Okkadu*, *Seethamma Vakitlo Sirimalle Chettu* and *Orange*.

Critics and audiences pointed out that converting the film into 3D was a misstep. "Many scenes

appeared blurry due to technical issues," said a viewer. Though the songs once ruled the charts 35 years ago, the film failed to connect with younger audiences. Apart from die-hard Mega fans, turnout was low, making the re-release underwhelming.

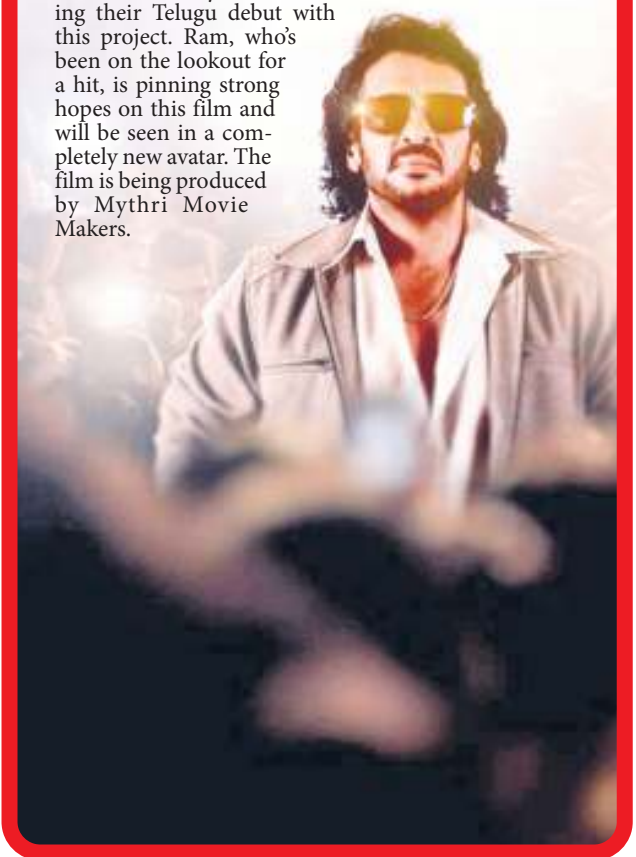


Upendra joins Ram Pothineni's film in a superstar character

Kannada actor Upendra has been roped in to play a Superstar in Ram Pothineni's upcoming film, directed by P Mahesh Babu of *Miss Shetty Mr. Polishetty* fame. The film is progressing at a brisk pace at Ramoji Film City and will soon shift to Rajahmundry for the next schedule.

According to a source, Ram plays the role of Sagar, an ardent fan of a Superstar (Upendra). The story centers around his dream to build a cinema theater in his village. The makers had been searching for the right actor to play the Superstar and finalised Upendra after considering several options.

Bhagyashri Borse plays the female lead. The film also features Rao Ramesh, Rahul Ramakrishna, Murali Sharma and Satya. Music duo Vivek-Mervin are making their Telugu debut with this project. Ram, who's been on the lookout for a hit, is pinning strong hopes on this film and will be seen in a completely new avatar. The film is being produced by Mythri Movie Makers.



Brahmagi to lead investigative thriller set in Amalapuram

After the film *Baapu*, actor Brahmagi is receiving a stream of lead and pivotal roles. He's now headlining a new investigative thriller, marking the directorial debut of Prasanna Kumar Nani. The film was officially launched on Monday, with shooting scheduled to begin next month.

"After a long time, I'm playing a very different character. It's an investigative story where I portray a writer based in a police station," said Brahmagi. The plot follows a case he begins investigating just before his retirement.

Though the director is a newcomer, Brahmagi

shared that he was given a fully bound script and found the story quite compelling. The team plans to shoot in live locations around Amalapuram, returning in August during the monsoon to capture rain sequences essential to the plot.

"The director approached me after watching *Baapu*. These days, many small films are doing well because of strong content," Brahmagi added. The film is produced by Srinivas Kalidindi. Meanwhile, Brahmagi is also set to join the shoots of *Lenin* with Akhil Akkineni and a project with Sree Vishnu.

Sathyaraj-led mythological drama Tribanadhari Barbarik nears release



Following the trend of mythological themes in Telugu cinema, *Tribanadhari Barbarik* is the next big release in the genre. Veteran actor Sathyaraj, best known as Kattappa from *Baahubali*, plays a key role in the film.

Directed by Mohan Srivatsa and produced by Vijaypal Reddy Adidhala, the film is in its final post-production stages. A latest internal screening left the team highly satisfied and confident in the film's quality.

Sathyaraj has been actively promoting the film, especially since his role is central and emotionally charged. His performance in the song *Anaga Anaga Kathala* has already resonated with audiences, building anticipation for the release date, which will be announced soon.