VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2025; PAGES 12 ₹4

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India, Portugal agree to strengthen cooperation in UN

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'EVEN AFTER 25 YEARS IN PUNJAB, CHAMAK REVEALED INDUSTRY SECRETS I NEVER KNEW'

10



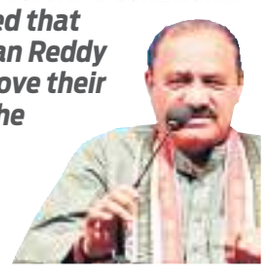
Nani to postpone his film *The* PARADISE?

P12

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

The BRS sold thousands of acres during its 10-year rule. The BJP should explain why it failed to question the BRS government. Why didn't the BJP question the BRS government when it deforested lakhs of acres? The BJP and the BRS have a secret understanding. People of Telangana would not tolerate communal politics and demanded that Union Ministers Kishan Reddy and Sanjay should prove their sincerity by making the Centre enact a law providing 42 per cent reservations for BCs



- Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC Chief

P4

DON'T MISS...

Road connectivity to all tribal hamlets: PK

Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan has pledged to provide road connectivity to every tribal habitation in Andhra Pradesh, aiming to end the long-standing practice of carrying patients on slings due to lack of motorable roads. Participating in multiple programmes at Dumbriguda on Monday, Pawan Kalyan launched the 'Adavi Talli Bata' scheme, under which roads will be laid to connect tribal villages. He also laid the foundation stone for several road works and assured the tribal communities of the government's full support...

-PAGE: 4

'Suspense over CLAT good for students'

The Delhi High Court on Monday began hearing a batch of petitions, transferred to it from the various high courts, over certain errors in the CLAT-2025 questionnaire, and said "suspense and anxiety" were not good for the aspirants. A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said it intended to complete hearing on the petitions at the earliest for the results to be declared. There was an urgency in the petitions concerning the undergraduate examinations and the petitions for post...

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FM to attend India-UK Dialogue

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will embark on a weeklong official visit to the United Kingdom and Austria on Monday to participate in the India-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue, besides investor roundtable. During her visit, Sitharaman will participate in 13th Ministerial round of India-UK Economic & Financial Dialogue, besides bilateral meetings, engagement with think tanks, investors, business leaders in both the United Kingdom and Austria. "Union Minister for...

-PAGE: 8

Nehra's advice helped after car crash: Pant

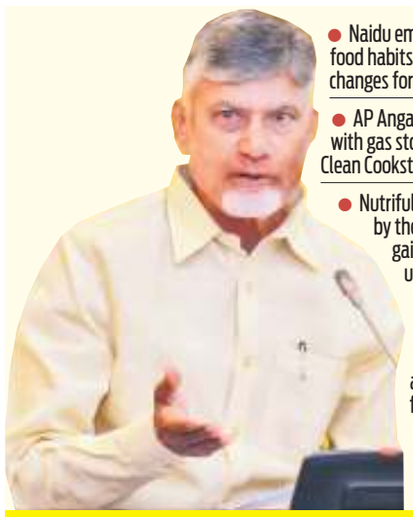
The flamboyant Rishabh Pant on Monday acknowledged the influence and guidance of Ashish Nehra after he survived his horrific car accident, saying the former India seamer's advice to "stay happy" stood the keeper-batter in good stead during a difficult phase.Pant met with the accident on the Delhi-Dehradun highway on the night of December 30, 2022. His car caught fire but he made a lucky escape even though his injuries were quite severe and needed multiple surgeries. "I think one advice which really...

-SPORTS

CM firm on 'Healthy AP'

'MEGA MEDICITY' PLANNED IN AMARAVATI THROUGH PPP MODEL

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



- Naidu emphasises healthy food habits and lifestyle changes for better health.
- AP Anganwadis equipped with gas stoves under the Clean Cookstoves Scheme.
- Nutriful App developed by the NTR Trust has gained over four lakh users and won a SKOCH award.
- Naidu calls for creating awareness among farmers to adopt natural farming practices.
- State plans to introduce food habit education in school curricula.
- Andhra Pradesh leads in Ayushman Bharat health account implementation with 88 per cent population coverage.
- A Digital Nerve Centre being set up in Kuppam, to be expanded across the State in phases.
- Virtual hospitals, DigiLocker-based health records, mobile testing, and online consultations are being planned.
- With Tata and the Gates Foundation's support, AP will adopt global health tech and practices.
- Each constituency will get a 100- to 300-bed multi-speciality hospital.



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has emphasised that adopting healthy food habits and lifestyle changes can significantly improve overall health. He underlined the importance of regular exercise, yoga, and meditation for better health outcomes. A daily 30-minute walk and a focus on spirituality can help reduce stress, he added. Yoga, which is India's heritage, is now being embraced across the globe. He said that avoiding tobacco, drugs, and alcohol could substantially lower the risk of cancer, liver, and kidney problems. The Chief Minister recommended cutting down on junk food and polished rice while promoting the consumption of millet, unpolished rice, fibre-rich foods, and vegetables.

Addressing media persons at the State Secretariat, the Chief Minister presented district-wise health reports and reiterated his vision of transforming the State into a "Healthy Andhra Pradesh." He stated that the Government is working towards building a Healthy, Wealthy, and Happy Andhra.

He opined that for a family of four, 600 grams of salt per month is sufficient for good health. He recommended that oil consumption be limited to two litres and sugar intake to not more than three kilograms per month, warning that excessive consumption of these items could lead to health complications.

Suggesting that food should be consumed in smaller portions across multiple times in a day, the Chief Minister said that reducing salt intake alone could lower the risk of heart attacks by 40 per cent. Referring to initiatives in other States, he noted that the Kerala Government has introduced sugar-free meals in schools, and Tamil Nadu is supplying glucose test strips free of cost at ration shops.

In Andhra Pradesh, gas stoves have been distributed to Anganwadis under the Clean Cookstoves Scheme, he said. Controlling mosquito-borne threats can help prevent many diseases, he observed. The Nutriful App, developed by the NTR Trust, has already won a SKOCH award, with four lakh users actively engaging with it, he added.

He stressed the need to raise awareness among farmers to adopt natural farming practices. The State Government is also considering introducing food habit education in school curricula.

Highlighting healthcare initiatives, the Chief Minister said Andhra Pradesh is leading in the implementation of Ayushman Bharat health accounts, with nearly 88 per cent of the population already covered.

A Digital Nerve Centre is being set up in Kuppam as a pilot project, with Chittoor district to be covered in Phase 2, and the entire State in Phase 3.

Continued on Page 2



Naidu moots advisory panel to enhance good governance

Plans 'Drone City' near Orvakal, envisioned as a hub for IoT, satellite systems and deep tech

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to take swift steps towards establishing a special advisory council to enhance governance in the state. The council will comprise experts from esteemed institutions including the Gates Foundation, IIT Madras, and other leading organisations. The directive came during a review meeting on the Real-Time Governance System (RTGS) held at the Secretariat on Monday.

Naidu set a deadline of June 12 for all government services capable of being delivered digitally to be made accessible via the 'Manamitra' WhatsApp Governance app. He stressed the need to accelerate data integration with RTGS to facilitate this transformation. Highlighting the importance of expert insight, the Chief Minister called for the immediate formation of an advisory panel to explore innovative ways to improve public service delivery. He underscored that citizens should no longer be required to visit government offices for availing services — everything should be available through their mobile phones.

As part of the digital push, the government is targeting to expand WhatsApp-based services to over 500 by June. Currently, 254 services are already live, with more being added weekly.

The long-term goal is to provide more than 1,000 services through the app. Feedback from citizens and officials is being collected to prioritise the most in-demand services.

In a major technological initiative, Naidu also discussed the development of a 'Drone City' near Orvakal, envisioned as a hub for drones, IoT, satellite systems, and deep tech.



JEE aspirants miss exam, blame Dy CM's convoy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A political row has erupted in Andhra Pradesh after around 30 students reportedly missed the JEE Advanced exam on Monday morning, allegedly due to a traffic block caused by Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan's convoy near the Pendurthi ION Digital exam centre in Visakhapatnam.

The students claimed they were delayed by police controlling traffic for the Minister's convoy and reached the gate just minutes after the 8:30 AM closure. Despite pleas, they were denied entry and could not sit the paper. The affected candidates have appealed to Pawan Kalyan to intervene and request authorities to allow a re-exam, stating that the delay was beyond their control.

However, Vizag police have refuted the allegations, stating the convoy passed the area only at 8:41 AM, well after the gate closed. They clarified that per exam rules, candidates had to report by 7:00 AM. Police also noted that 61 students were marked absent in the first shift, the lowest absentee count since the exam began on April 2.

CM lauds Finance Min, officials for GSDP feat

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, on Monday, congratulated the Finance Minister, Payyavula Kesav, and the officers of the Finance Department on the State's climb to the second position in the country in Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) growth.

Expressing happiness for the State coming back on track in economic growth within 10 months of coming to power, the Chief Minister appreciated the efforts of the senior officers of the Economic and Planning Departments in the State Secretariat.

As the Finance Minister is on a visit to the district he could not meet the Chief Minister personally. The Chief Minister, however, congratulated the Principal Secretary (Finance), Piyush Kumar, and other senior officers who called on him at the Secretariat. Chandrababu presented them with Araku Coffee packets as gift packs for them to achieve this.

AP to set up panel as aqua sector faces US tariff blow

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has expressed serious concern over the impact of newly imposed US tariffs on Andhra Pradesh's aqua sector. In a review meeting on Monday, he underscored the fisheries sector's contribution to the state's GDP and assured that the government would stand firmly by affected farmers.

To tackle the crisis, the CM proposed a committee comprising aqua farmers, experts, exporters, MPEDA representatives, and officials to study the issue and recommend solutions. The government will act on the panel's advice. Naidu noted that over three lakh farmers are directly involved in aquaculture, with around 50 lakh depending on it indirectly. He observed that the sector was already under stress, and the US tariffs had only worsened matters. Ecuador's aquaculture policies were also discussed as a reference point.

The CM said that he had written to the Centre and urged it to initiate talks with the US. He supported free trade agreements with countries like South Korea and the EU and promised state–Centre coordination on this front.

He also instructed traders to maintain Rs220 per kg for 100-count prawns and emphasised better water quality to improve yields. "Do not lose hope. We'll tide over this together," he told stakeholders.

Kadapa gears up for landmark Mahanadu

TDP's top brass scouts venues for grand event

PNS ■ KADAPA

In a significant development, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) has set the wheels in motion to host its prestigious annual conclave, Mahanadu, in Kadapa for the first time. A special ministerial team visited the city on Monday to assess potential venues on the outskirts for the mega event, which will coincide with the birth anniversary of party founder and former Chief Minister, Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR).

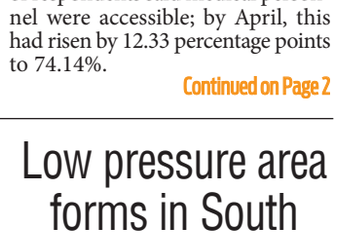
The site inspection was led by TDP State President Palla Srinivas Rao, who, along with senior party leaders, visited three locations—Jayaraj Gardens near Pulivendula Road in CK Dinne Mandal, the Satellite Township site near the airport, and land near the NGO Flats close to the sub-jail.

The inspection team included Revenue Minister Anagani Sathya Prasad, BC Welfare Minister and YSR District In-Charge Minister S Savitha, MLC and Zone In-Charge Ravi Chandra, Government Whip Kalva Srinivasa Rao, members of the State Political Bureau, and District President Srinivasa Reddy. Several key local leaders also participated, including DRO Vishweshwar Naidu, MLC Ram Gopal Reddy, and MLAs Putta Sudhakar Yadav (Maidukuru), Varadaraju Reddy (Proddutur), and Putta Chaitanya Krishnareddy (Kamalapuram), among others.

Continued on Page 2

Public trust in govt hospitals grows

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Public perception of government hospitals has seen a marked improvement over the past three months, according to a recent IVRS survey. However, cleanliness continues to be a key area of concern.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reviewed the findings of the survey on Monday. Conducted four times—on January 27, February 7, March 5 and April 7—the survey covered 32 hospitals under the Directorate of Medical Education (DME) and 242 hospitals under the Directorate of Secondary Health.

The survey reveals notable improvements in the availability of doctors and staff. In January, 66% of respondents said medical personnel were accessible; by April, this had risen by 12.33 percentage points to 74.14%.

Continued on Page 2

TARIFF TURMOIL TRIGGERS

MONDAY MAYHEM

SENSEX TANKS 2,227 PTS



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Stock markets crumbled on Monday with benchmark Sensex sinking by 2,226.79 points – its steepest single-day decline in 10 months – as a global market carnage following US President Donald Trump's tariff hikes and retaliation from China fanned fears of economic slowdown.

The 30-share BSE Sensex crashed 2,226.79 points or 2.95 per cent to settle at 73,137.90, recording its third day of decline. During the day, the index slumped 3,939.68 points or 5.22 per cent to 71,425.01. The NSE Nifty tumbled 742.85 points or 3.24 per cent to settle at 22,161.60. Intra-day, the benchmark dropped 1,160.8 points or 5.06 per cent to 21,743.65. All Sensex shares, except for Hindustan Unilever, ended with losses. Tata Steel fell the most by 7.33 per cent followed by Larsen & Toubro which cracked 5.78 per cent.

Tata Motors, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Infosys, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, HCL Technologies and HDFC Bank were the other big laggards. Hindustan Unilever ended marginally higher.

"The market tumbled as the carnage over high US tariffs and the retaliation by other countries may kickstart a trade war. Sectors like IT and metals have underperformed relative to the broader market due to the risk of high inflation with slower growth that may result in a potential recession in the US," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

As many as 3,515 stocks declined while 570 advanced and 140 remained unchanged on the BSE. Notably, 775 stocks hit their 52-week lows while 59 firms were at 52-week peaks on the BSE

As many as 3,515 stocks declined while 570 advanced and 140 remained unchanged on the BSE. Notably, 775 stocks hit their 52-week lows while 59 firms were at 52-week peaks on the BSE.

"After US markets plunged on Friday, it was writing on the wall for other global equity indices which fell like a pack of cards amid fears that Trump's policies on reciprocal tariffs may lead to recession and higher inflation in the US going ahead. "Already, commodity prices of crude oil and several metals are seeing a downward slide, which is an indication of a slackening demand if the current trend persists," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

LPG dearer by Rs 50 from today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The domestic cooking gas LPG price on Monday was hiked by a steep Rs 50 per cylinder across India and CNG by Re 1 per kg, while the government raised taxes on petrol and diesel to shore up its revenues.

The increase in cooking gas price will be for the Ujjawala - poor beneficiaries who got LPG connection free of cost - and general users, and will be effective from April 8 and has been necessitated due to the rise in input cost, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

Cooking gas for Ujjawala users will cost Rs 553 per 14.2-kg cylinder from the current Rs 503 in the national capital. The same for general users will now cost Rs 853.

The rates, which vary from state to state depending on local incidence of taxes, were last revised in March last year when they were cut by Rs 100. Also, CNG prices were hiked by Re 1 per kg in the national capital and adjoining cities after the government last week raised input natural gas prices by almost 4 per cent. CNG in the national capital will cost Rs 75.09 per kg, Indraprastha Gas Ltd - the city gas retailer - said in a post on X.

This follows the price of input natural gas being hiked from USD 6.50 per million British thermal units to USD 6.75 from April 1.

Alongside, the government hiked excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 2 per litre each to raise about Rs 32,000 crore additional tax revenue.

Low pressure area forms in South Bay of Bengal

PNS ■ GUNTUR

A low pressure area has formed over the central parts of the South Bay of Bengal due to an upper air cyclonic circulation over the southeast Bay of Bengal and its surrounding region, the Meteorological Centre here reported on Sunday.

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds reaching speeds of 30 to 40 kmph are likely at isolated places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next five days, and in Rayalaseema on April 10 and 11, the forecast said. Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are expected at isolated places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days.

Continued on Page 2

URBAN DEVELOPMENT PUSH

MA&UD Principal Secy reviews progress in civic bodies

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



A major highlight of the meeting was the emphasis on completing all pending AP TIDCO housing projects by 12 June, marking one year of the current government. The Principal Secretary stated, "The Chief Minister has directed that 2 lakh houses be handed over to beneficiaries without any delay." Municipal Commissioners were instructed to visit TIDCO housing colonies, monitor progress, and resolve infrastructure bottlenecks. Re-allotment of houses to beneficiaries must be completed by 30 April, as per government orders.

Principal Secretary of Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MA&UD), S Suresh Kumar, held a comprehensive review meeting with Municipal Commissioners across Andhra Pradesh to discuss key priorities in urban governance. The meeting focused on expediting housing project completion, improving sanitation, ensuring water supply during summer, and implementing citizen-centric initiatives.

A major highlight of the meeting was the emphasis on completing all pending AP TIDCO housing projects by 12 June, marking one year of the current government. The Principal Secretary stated, "The Chief Minister has directed that 2 lakh houses be handed over to beneficiaries without any delay." Municipal Commissioners were instructed to visit TIDCO housing colonies, monitor progress, and resolve infrastructure bottlenecks. Re-allotment of houses to beneficiaries must be completed by 30 April, as per government orders. In terms of sanitation, all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) were tasked with achieving 100% door-to-door garbage collection and waste segregation at source by 2 October 2025. Commissioners were directed to oversee these activities personally and to conduct awareness campaigns in coordination with NGOs, civil society organisations, and local communities. Desilting of all drains before the monsoon and development of Swarna Andhra parks in every ULB were also prioritised.

Regarding water scarcity, special attention was given to 39 ULBs facing potential shortages. Municipalities such as Eluru, Gudivada, and Machilipatnam were instructed to ensure uninterrupted water supply by coordinating with District Collectors and relevant departments to fill summer storage tanks.

The review also included Anna Canteens, with instructions to Commissioners to carry out regular inspections and interact with citizens to ensure quality service. Strategies for revenue improvement—such as tax rebates and interest waivers—were discussed to enhance property tax and water charge collections.

Other directives included streamlining building permissions with a two-day approval target, promoting rooftop solar installations under the PM Surya Ghar Yojana, and implementing e-waste management as part of the Swachh Andhra Swarna Andhra initiative.

Key officials from various departments attended the meeting, which strongly emphasised regular monitoring and timely reporting of these high-priority initiatives.

Forged land deals during YSRCP rule exposed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Irregularities and corrupt practices during the previous YSRCP government are gradually coming to light, leaving the victims to struggle for justice. Shockingly, officials concerned are reportedly forcing the affected persons to run from pillar to post. One such case involves the ordeal of senior citizen S. Anjan Goud.

Between 2021 and 2023, during the YSRCP regime, several land scams were reported in Sri Sathya Sai district, particularly around NH-42 at Bathalapalli village in Dharmavaram mandal. Anjan Goud, a senior citizen battling a critical illness, has been trying in vain to reclaim three acres of land allegedly misappropriated during a resurvey conducted in 2020. Despite repeated appeals to various government authorities, he has not received any justice. Shockingly, all his grievance petitions were closed on Friday, 6 April 2025, without any resolution.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Anjan Goud's daughter Swapna said large-scale misappropriation occurred in a 50-acre parcel of land (Survey No. 270-2), from which her father's three acres were removed from official records during the 2020 resurvey. She said 0.91 acres of the land were taken for the NH-42 bypass project, but compensation of Rs 27.3 lakh was given to one J. Ramenjenulu, who allegedly has no rightful claim to the property.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Anjan Goud's daughter Swapna said large-scale misappropriation occurred in a 50-acre parcel of land (Survey No. 270-2), from which her father's three acres were removed from official records during the 2020 resurvey. She said 0.91 acres of the land were taken for the NH-42 bypass project, but compensation of Rs 27.3 lakh was given to one J. Ramenjenulu, who allegedly has no rightful claim to the property.

She alleged that a forged document (No. 1902/2000) was registered during a freeholding process in December 2023, transferring her father's land to one Anju Swetha and Anju Sravani without consent or any prior transaction. However, official records from 1985 to 2024 reportedly confirm no valid registration of the said land.

Swapna further claimed that several revenue officials, including former MRO Yogeswari Devi, VRO Bhargava, Sub-Registrar Ramarao and others, were involved in facilitating the forgery. Although some of them were suspended in January 2024, the family alleges that both former and present officials continue to delay and dismiss their claims.

Despite filing multiple grievances (such as SSTS202412105646 and SSTS2025011723880) and the issue being brought to the notice of Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad, no concrete action has been taken.

MRO Swarnalatha reportedly issued ROR and passbooks to the other party without supporting revenue documents. Even after the case was escalated to the Inspector General of Registrations in January 2025, the matter remains unresolved.

Swapna alleged that officials from the MRO to Joint Collector levels across two districts are colluding to suppress evidence and shield those responsible.

Despite clear indications of forgery and irregularities, the authorities continue to advise the family to approach the High Court.

Critical documents have been ignored in CCLA reports, and important files related to the case are reportedly missing.

Anjan Goud and his daughter continue their relentless fight for justice against a system riddled with corruption. Their struggle highlights the plight of many others who are victims of land scams, clinging to the hope that sustained pressure on higher authorities will lead to accountability.



Lokesh promises to make Mangalagiri a model segment

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Education, IT, and Electronics Nara Lokesh has pledged to transform Mangalagiri into a model constituency, highlighting it as a key hub of development in Andhra Pradesh. Speaking at the Mana Illu – Mana Lokesh programme on Monday, he urged residents to cooperate in making Mangalagiri the most developed area in the State.

At the Yerabalem Don Bosco School, Lokesh distributed house pattas to residents of Penumaka, Undavalli, and Ippatam villages in Tadapalli mandal. He described the distribution as the fulfilment of a long-pending dream, stating, "Earlier, people spent over Rs 10,000 just for document photocopies. I promised land titles during the elections, and I am honouring that promise within 10 months of taking office."

In the first phase, 3,000 people will receive titles. He assured that those residing on Endowment, Railway, forest, and irrigation lands would be covered in upcoming phases. Recalling his 2019 electoral loss by 5,300 votes, Lokesh said it only strengthened his resolve to serve the people better. He highlighted welfare schemes such as NTR Sanjeevani for public health, free medicine distribution, women's empowerment programmes, and new children's playgrounds.

APNGGO Association stresses need for PRC appointment

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Association president KV Siva Reddy and general secretary A Vidyasagar stated that these key issues had already been brought to the state government's notice. They assured that the association would continue its efforts until a resolution is achieved.

The Andhra Pradesh Non-Gazetted and Gazetted Officers (APNGGO) Association has reaffirmed its commitment to employee welfare, highlighting the urgent need for the appointment of the 12th Pay Revision Commission (PRC) Chairman and the clearance of pending Dearness Allowances (DAs).

Addressing the NTR District Executive Committee meeting held at the APNGO Home in Gandhinagar, Vijayawada, on Monday, Association president KV Siva Reddy and general secretary A Vidyasagar stated that these key issues had already been brought to the state government's notice. They assured that the association would continue its efforts until a resolution is achieved.

The meeting was chaired by district associate president P Ramesh. Following the elevation of A Vidyasagar as State general secretary — who previously served as NTR District President — the committee unanimously elected D Satyanarayana Reddy, the present district secretary, as the new district president. VV Prasad was elected associate president and P Ramesh was appointed the new district secretary.

Siva Reddy congratulated the newly elected executive members of the NTR District branch and urged district and city leaders to prioritise employee grievances and ensure regular communication with the state association. He acknowledged the state's economic constraints and said the State Joint Action Committee (JAC) had already submitted representations to the government seeking redressal of issues affecting employees, teachers, workers, and pensioners.

State general secretary Vidyasagar noted that the APNGGO leadership had recently met with the Chief Minister, Finance Minister, and senior officials to press for immediate release of pending dues. He said that following the meeting, the government released Rs 6,300 crore to clear arrears.

However, the PRC — due from July 2023 — remains pending, as the chairman appointed by the previous government resigned last year and no successor has been named, even two years after the term ended.

Those present at the meeting included State Treasurer Ranga Rao, Guntur district president G Srinivasa Rao, city president S Suryam, Cooperative Department Employees' Association State general secretary G Suresh Naidu, and West Krishna Executive Committee members B Satish Kumar, V Nagarjuna, M Rajubabu, G Ramakrishna, R Srinivasa Rao, M Gopalakrishna, BV Ramana, Ch Dilip Kumar, D Vishwanath, and Y Ravi. City Executive Committee members CVR Prasad, SK Nazirhudeen, DSN Srinivas, and employees from various departments also participated.

VC urges students to embrace innovation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Dr K Ramji, Vice-Chancellor of Krishna University, has called on students to pursue innovative projects, start-up ventures, and rural development programmes, stressing the importance of adapting to global changes to enhance their skill sets.

He was speaking at the Achievers' Day celebrations held at Sri Durga Malleswara Siddhartha Mahila Kalasala (SDSMK) in Vijayawada on Monday, where he distributed certificates to meritorious students.

In his address, Dr Ramji encouraged students to contribute meaningfully to society by harnessing their creativity. He lauded the achievements of Siddhartha Mahila Kalasala students in academics, sports, cultural events, and other areas.

Highlighting the college's success in placements, he noted that many students had secured jobs in leading multinational software companies, including Infosys, Accenture, TCS, and WIPRO. He congratulated both the students and the college management for their efforts and support.

Ch Krishna Rao, Convener of Siddhartha Mahila Kalasala, stated that the Siddhartha Institutions provide a strong foundation for students' futures and expressed pride in the numerous national and international accolades earned by them.

The event was presided over by College Principal Dr S Kalpana, and attended by Junior College Principal Dr S Padmaja, Academic Convener S Sudharani, IQAC Convener Dr SVD Mohana Rao, Placement Cell Officer P Harika, Academic Officer A Harika, and other dignitaries.

CREDAI-Vizag elects new office-bearers



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam Chapter of the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI) has ushered in a new executive committee for the 2025–26 term, marking a fresh phase of leadership aimed at driving the city's real estate development with renewed purpose. V. Dharmender has been elected as the new Chairman of the chapter, while E. Ashok Kumar will take charge as President. The crucial role of General Secretary has been entrusted to Sri V. Sreenu.

The leadership team also comprises Vice Presidents P. Narasimha Rao, KVR Raju (Ramesh), and G. Karthik. Supporting them in administrative functions are Joint Secretaries Ch. Govinda Raju, N. Srinivas Rao, and M. Krishna Mohan Rao. The chapter's financial responsibilities will be overseen by Sri Kancheti Srinivas Rao, who has been appointed Treasurer. Expanding the committee's core strength, the executive board will also include Ganapathiraju Rajesh, Kiran Kumar Rajana, K. Satyanarayana, S.S. Naga Raju, and M. Ranganadham as members.

In a bid to promote broader inclusion and groom future leadership, the chapter has given focused attention to youth and women's representation. Pavan Sanka will serve as the Youth Wing Co-ordinator, with N. Bharanidhar stepping in as Youth Wing Secretary.

CM firm on 'Healthy...

Continued from Page 1

The Government aims to establish virtual hospitals within 26 months, store health records in DigiLocker, and track individual health from childhood. Health alerts will be issued to predict risks, mobile medical vans will enable home testing, and doctors will be accessible both online and offline.

With support from Tata and the Gates Foundation, the State will adopt world-class healthcare technologies and practices. Each constituency will have a 100- to 300-bed multi-speciality hospital.

A global-level Mega Medicity will be developed in Amaravati under a public-private partnership. The Centre is also planning to establish 25 Medicities across India, with discussions underway to locate one in Amaravati.

The proposed Medicity will span 200 acres—100 acres for healthcare services, 40 for residential use, and 20 for commercial purposes.

This initiative, jointly managed by the Health Department and CRDA, will also promote health tourism, the Chief Minister said.

Kadapa gears up for....

Continued from Page 1

Palla Srinivas Rao remarked that this year's Mahanadu would be historic, as the party enters its 44th year. "Chief Minister and TDP National President N Chandrababu Naidu has approved the proposal to hold the event in Kadapa, making it a moment of pride for the region," he said. He also expressed confidence that the event would be held in a grand and organised fashion, reflecting the party's legacy. Among the three sites reviewed, the expansive 500-acre plot near the NGO Flats was said to be a prime contender. A technical team will be deputed shortly to conduct a feasibility study before the final decision is conveyed to Naidu and TDP National General Secretary Nara Lokesh.

Srinivas Rao extended his appreciation to the local leadership and district cadre for their enthusiastic support and active participation in the inspection. "TDP has always functioned systematically with a vision to groom future leaders who will serve the public with dedication," he added.

Public trust...

Continued from Page 1

Similarly, satisfaction with the availability of prescribed medicines grew from 57% to 67.63%, an increase of 18.65 percentage points.

A significant drop in perceived corruption was also reported. In January, 63% of respondents observed corruption in government hospitals. This figure has now fallen to 41.17%.

Secondary hospitals mirrored these improvements. Positive feedback regarding the accessibility of doctors and staff rose from 58% in January to 74% in April—a 27% increase. Reports of corruption declined from 61% to 41%, while satisfaction with medicine availability rose from 59% to 79%.

Despite these gains, cleanliness remains a persistent problem. Satisfaction with cleanliness in DME hospitals dropped from 60% in January to 49% in April. Secondary hospitals also saw a decline—from 67% to 50%.

Low pressure...

Continued from Page 1

Rainfall occurred at one or two locations in these regions during the past 24 hours. Kurnool in Rayalaseema recorded the highest maximum temperature of 39.5 degrees Celsius on Sunday.

The Met Centre stated that the low-pressure area was observed at 0830 hours, with the associated cyclonic circulation extending up to 5.8 km above mean sea level.

The system is expected to move northwestwards over the southwest Bay of Bengal until April 8, and then likely to shift northwards over the west-central Bay of Bengal during the following 48 hours.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi:	
Ekadasi:	Apr 07 08:00 PM to Apr 08 09:13 PM
Dwadasi:	Apr 08 09:13 PM to Apr 09 10:55 PM
Nakshatram:	
Ashlesha:	Apr 07 06:24 AM to Apr 08 07:55 AM
Magha:	Apr 08 07:55 AM to Apr 09 09:57 AM
Rahukalam:	3:22 PM to 4:54 PM
Yamagandam:	9:13 AM to 10:45 AM
Varjyam:	08:56 PM to 10:40 PM
Gulika:	12:17 PM to 1:50 PM
Amritakalam:	05:29 AM to 07:11 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:53 AM to 12:42 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Heavy Thunderstorm
Temp: 37°c
Humidity: 69%
Sunrise: 5.57 AM
Sunset: 6:22 PM

Updated: April 7, 2025 5:00 PM

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

e-Tender Notice No. For 2025-26

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation invites tender for the work of Appointment of MJP Empanelled Consultant for preparation of DPR, Various Permission Including Technical Sanction (TS)/SLTC etc. and Tender Process Up till Issue of Work Order for the work of Providing House Service Connection & Supply, Installation Commissioning and Giving Satisfactory Test Trial of Battery Operated Ultrasonic/ Electromagnetic AMR Water Meter under HAM based for Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation, Dist. Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar. The Detailed tender document is available at www.mahatenders.gov.in from 07/04/25. The right to accept and reject the tender has been reserved by the Hon. Commissioner Cum Administrator, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation.

Sd/-
City Engineer
Municipal Corporation
Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar

Date: 07/04/2025

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The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | TUESDAY | APRIL 8, 2025

MPUP School in Kundavari Kandrika to be upgraded as ZP High School

Following efforts by MLA Bonda Uma, School Education Department gives nod for upgradation

Upgraded school will offer Classes 6 to 9 in 2025-26 academic year, Class 10 will be added in 2026-27

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Mandal Parishad Upper Primary (MPUP) School in Kundavari Kandrika village, presently managed by the Vijayawada Rural Mandal Parishad under the 64th Division of Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, is set for a major upgradation. Starting from the 2025–26 academic year, the school will be elevated to a Zilla Parishad High School, coming under the purview of the erstwhile Krishna Zilla Parishad.

Currently offering education from Classes 1 to 8, the upgraded school will cater to Classes 6 to 9 initially, with Class 10 to be added in the 2026–27 academic year. This move is aimed at improving educational infrastructure and accessibility for students in the region, ensuring they have access to secondary education within their locality.

This development follows the cancellation of G.O. No.117, after which the State government planned to establish a Model Primary School in every mandal. Initially, the government had proposed converting the MPUP School, KV Kandrika, into a Model Primary School. However, strong opposition from residents led to a change in direction. Citizens demanded instead that the school be upgraded to a High School, citing the growing need for secondary education facilities in the area.



MPUP School, KV Kandrika School

Responding to public sentiment, Government Whip and Vijayawada Central MLA Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao visited the school and interacted with residents. Acting on their concerns, he held discussions with NTR District School Educational Officer (DSEO) UV Subba Rao and directed the necessary steps to initiate the upgradation.

Thanks to the active efforts of Bonda Uma, the School Education Department agreed to upgrade the existing MPUP School to a Zilla Parishad High School. As per government norms, a school with more than 60 students in Classes 6 to 8 qualifies for high school status. The MPUP School currently has approximately 65 students in these classes, meeting the requirement.

Meanwhile, the Education Department has proposed to shift primary classes (1 to 5) to the Primary School at Pathapadu, which will be developed as a Model Primary School in line with the State government's broader educational reforms. This initiative marks a significant milestone in local education development and reflects the government's commitment to inclusive and quality education across the State.

Mandal Educational Officer - 2 (MEO) Suribabu confirmed to The Pioneer that the Education Department has approved the start of high school classes for the academic year 2025-26.

He also mentioned that primary classes, specifically grades 1 to 5, will be relocated to the Mandal Parishad Primary School in Pathapadu. Additionally, there are plans to develop this school into a Model Primary School.

AMARAVATI CAPITAL PROJECT

Centre released over Rs 4,200 cr to AP: Sr official

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Union government has released over Rs 4,200 crore to Andhra Pradesh for the Amaravati Capital development project after it (Centre) received the first disbursement of USD 205 million from the World Bank, a senior official has said.

The World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) together committed to fund USD 1600 Million (Rs 13,600 crore), USD 800 Million each, for Amaravati capital city phase-I development, while the Centre will be contributing remaining Rs 1,400 crore, out of the Rs 15,000 crore committed by the Central Government for phase-I of the development.

According to the World Bank documents the project became effective on January 22 this year and the first disbursement of USD 205 million for program advance was done last month.

"Out of this total Rs 15,000 crore, there is a sharing between the World Bank, ABD and the centre. The ADB also may have given same amount (USD 205 million). I do not know exactly how much the ADB has given to



the Government of India. The Centre has also released its matching amount of around Rs 800 crore. So we have received a total of Rs 4,285 crore from the Centre on April 1," the official said.

According to the official , the Centre has agreed to give 25 per cent of the total committed amount as "Mobilisation Advance" and the amount that was released is under this head.

The next instalment of the committed amount will be released after the state government shows some progress and submit bills or utilisation certificates, the official added.

"That (second tranche of funds) will take time. It will take at least six months, because the works have just started and in another two to three months they will pick up," the bureaucrat said.

On some complaints lodged with the World Bank expressing concerns over the environmental and livelihood issues, he said the World Bank and ADB have their own strong mechanism for redressing the grievances which is independent of their board also.

In fact, a delegation of six members, three each of WB and ADB visited Amaravati last month and expressed satisfaction after an inquiry.

AP chief secretary K Vijayanand recently said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will relaunch Amaravati greenfield capital city construction in April, which will entail the resumption of works worth about Rs 1 lakh crore.

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), part of the World Bank which provides loans and guarantees among others, to middle-income and creditworthy low-income countries will be funding USD 800 besides ADB.

According to the WB document, the Department of Economic Affairs at the Centre is the borrower while the Andhra Pradesh Capital Regional Development Authority is the implementing agency.

Girl students should grab job opportunities in Amaravati: MP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) encouraged women students in Amaravati to capitalise on emerging employment and business opportunities in the region during his address at the Career After Graduation programme held at Maris Stella College on Monday. The event, aimed at providing career guidance to final-year degree students, saw the MP engaging with students from diverse fields, including Microbiology, Tourism, Life Sciences, Agriculture and Journalism.

In his speech, the MP stressed that women in Amaravati should not feel compelled to move to cities like Hyderabad, Bengaluru or Chennai for better career prospects. "With the rapid development of Amaravati," the MP stressed, "the region will soon be brimming with opportunities, enabling women students to secure a bright future close to home."

The MP assured the students that the Kesineni Foundation would establish a career counselling centre to guide them in their professional journey. He also advocated for the creation of skill development centres, which would help enhance the students' proficiency in various sectors, thereby improving their employability.

Highlighting the forward-thinking leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, MP Sivanath cited the example of Hyderabad's IT revolution and stated that Amaravati would soon witness a quantum computing revolution. He assured the students that job opportunities would not be limited to engineering graduates, but would also be available to those with degrees in other fields with an emphasis on strong communication skills.

The MP further discussed the establishment of various industries in the region, including those focused on mechanical, automobile, artificial intelligence, and defence technology. He mentioned that the Ratan Tata Innovation Hub would soon be launched in Amaravati, further strengthening the region's industrial landscape. Additionally, a light industrial area would be developed in Jakkampudi within five months, providing ample opportunities for young entrepreneurs.

MP Kesineni Sivanath also stressed the importance of empowering women and encouraged them to become self-reliant. He referenced the Entrepreneurship, Learning and Innovation Program (ELIP) for women industrialists, established in 1995 by CM Chandrababu Naidu. The ELIP recently organised a workshop in Vijayawada, attended by over 1,200 women entrepreneurs, each generating turnover in the hundreds of crores.

The MP highlighted the success of women entrepreneurs in Vijayawada, noting that over 1,40,000 women members in the Micro Enterprise Promotion Association (MEPA) were running businesses like sari-making and pickle preparation, significantly contributing to the local economy.

The event saw participation from various dignitaries including Principal Dr Sister Jessintha Quadras, Marpu Trust Chairman Suji, Career Counselor Sampath Taj Mani, Chartered Accountant Parvez and MSME NTR District Program Coordinator M Gurunatham.

Govt vows support to aqua sector amid US tariff blow

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has assured full support to the aqua sector in the wake of increased tariffs on seafood exports imposed by the United States.

At a review meeting on the aqua sector crisis, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development and Fisheries Minister K Atchennaidu emphasised the need to focus on four critical areas — aqua farmers, seed and feed traders, and exporters. He called for coordinated efforts from all stakeholders to steer the sector out of its current challenges.

To mitigate the impact of the US tariffs, the Minister said the state is working to boost domestic consumption. He revealed that the government is considering forming a committee, akin to the poultry sector's panel, involving shrimp producers to expand local demand and reduce dependence on exports.

In a key relief measure, the Minister announced a subsidised electricity rate of Rs 1.50 per unit for aqua farmers



across the state. He assured swift and inclusive action, with registration for government benefits open to all farmers regardless of region.

Deputy Speaker Raghurama Krishnaraju viewed the crisis as a potential opportunity. He urged for greater awareness about the health benefits of shrimp, including its cholesterol-reducing properties, and proposed its inclusion in the army's food menu.

Special Chief Secretary (Fisheries) Budithi Rajasekhar echoed the Minister's view, stating that increasing domestic consumption could transform the crisis into an opportunity. He added that the US tariffs impact all exports, not just the aqua sector.

MLA Gadde Ram Mohan Rao underlined the employment potential in the sector and advocated promoting shrimp as a protein-rich food to stimulate demand within the country.

Advanced Vertigo & Epilepsy Clinic opened at Aster Ramesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A specialised Vertigo and Epilepsy Clinic was inaugurated at Aster Ramesh Hospitals at its MG Road branch in Vijayawada on Monday.



The Vertigo Clinic aims to provide cutting-edge medical care for patients suffering from vertigo and balance disorders. Dr B Lakshmi Anusha, a neurologist and specialised vertigo expert, highlighted the clinic's state-of-the-art diagnostic tools, including Video Nystagmography (VNG), Electronystagmography (ENG), Vestibular Evoked Myogenic Potentials (VEMP), and Posturography. These advanced instruments enable comprehensive vestibular evaluations and assist in delivering personalised treatments, such as Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) and Canalith Repositioning Procedures (CRP).

The Epilepsy Clinic, led by renowned Epileptologist Dr Pavuluri Harini, brings cutting-edge treatment options for individuals affected by epilepsy. The clinic is equipped with advanced diagnostic technologies, including a 64-channel Video EEG, CT scans, and MRIs.

NTR district wrestlers excel at State-level championship

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Wrestlers from NTR district put up a stellar performance at the State-level Wrestling Championship held at SVPC Convention Hall, Rajamahendravaram, on April 5 and 6. Competing in the under-15 and under-20 categories, the young athletes demonstrated outstanding skill, discipline, and determination.

Thanks to their commendable efforts, NTR district secured second place overall in the championship, earning accolades from district sports officials and coaches. Their success was marked by a tally of four gold, five silver, and seven bronze medals, amassing a total of 42 points. According to the NTR District Wrestling Association, B Kumar, Ch Tunil, B Hemanth Sai Teja, and G Sailaja clinched gold medals and have now qualified for the National Wrestling Championship. S Kumar, D Santosh, T Sneha Latha, and P Deepika brought home silver medals, while Ch Mohan Vamsi, S Kumar Reddy, M Siva Naga Lakshmi, T Chittemma, T Veena Madhuri, K Sushanth, and Ch Bindu earned bronze in the inter-district competition.

Association in-charge secretary D Srinivasa Rao extended his appreciation to Physical Directors MV Satya Prasad and T Sri Latha for their dedicated coaching and mentorship, which played a vital role in the district's good show.

R&B Minister lays stone for road project

PNS ■ BANAGANAPALLE



Minister for Roads and Buildings, Investments and Infrastructure BC Janardhan Reddy, on Monday, laid the foundation stone for the construction of a new road connecting Papili, Yaganti and Banaganapalle with an investment of ?12.5 crore. The road project aims to enhance connectivity and improve infrastructure in the region.

Speaking at the event, Minister Janardhan Reddy stressed that under the coalition government's leadership, there has been a significant push for better roads to improve the convenience of the people. He also revealed that plans are underway for road development projects across the State with a budget of ?3,000 crore.

The project will upgrade the existing single-lane road into a four-lane highway to ensure better connectivity between these regions. Additionally, the Minister directed officials to plan the construction of bridges at locations with dangerous curves, with an investment of ?4-5 crore to prevent accidents and enhance safety.

25% of nursing colleges set up in violation of norms: Health Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav has emphasised the urgent need to overhaul the establishment and management of nursing education institutions in the state, in strict adherence to regulatory norms. He shared his views with the newly appointed Chairman of the High-Powered Committee (HPC), former High Court Judge Justice U Durgaprasad Rao. Justice Durgaprasad Rao assumed charge on Sunday and met the Minister on Monday to discuss several key matters.



The Minister stated that during the review of nursing institutions, several irregularities had come to light, including large-scale corruption and unlawful activities. He stressed the need for stringent action to curb such malpractices.

In Andhra Pradesh, nearly 30,000 nurses graduate annually from around 560 educational institutions. Of these, 133 institutions—approximately 25%—were established between 2019 and 2024. The Minister revealed that during this period, several violations of Indian Nursing Council regulations were observed, with 28 institutions having been set up without a parent hospital, raising serious concerns.

The Minister clarified that, over the past ten months, the coalition government had permitted the establishment of only 15 nursing colleges, following rigorous scrutiny. He noted that proposals to approve institutions lacking parent hospitals were firmly rejected, despite mounting pressure.

Underscoring the vital role of nurses, who are expected to serve patients with compassion, the Minister highlighted the importance of ensuring that nursing institutions provide quality education. He warned that corruption or illegal practices in such institutions could have severe consequences and urged the new HPC Chairman to take necessary measures to prevent such occurrences.

SRM hosts 'University Distinguished Lecture'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



SRM University-AP hosted the 21st edition of its University Distinguished Lecture (UDL #21), featuring Prof Pramod K Varshney, a renowned expert from Syracuse University's Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. The lecture, titled 'Six Blind Men of Indostan: Theory and Application of Distributed Inference', explored the role of sensors in collecting data and its diverse applications in fields like security, surveillance, disease detection, and military services.

The event was attended by prominent figures from SRM University, including Vice-Chancellor Prof. Manoj K Arora, Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof. Ch Satish Kumar, Registrar Dr R Premkumar, Dean of Research Prof Ranjith Thapa along with faculty, staff and students.

Minister Kollu receives grievances from people

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Mines, Geology and Excise Kollu Ravindra and Madiga Corporation Chairperson Undavalli Sridevi received grievances from people at TDP central office on Monday. Several grievances were lodged with the District Collector's office, highlighting a range of issues affecting individuals from different regions. Among the complaints were reports of corruption, land encroachments, personal disputes and fraud.

P Yedukondalu, a visually impaired individual from Mogalthur mandal, West Godavari, filed a grievance stating that P Srinivas had taken ?7.6 lakh from him under the pretext of helping him secure a compassionate appointment at SBI. The victim has requested intervention to retrieve his money and receive the promised assistance.

Yeluri Chinna Rajendra Prasad from Pedda Gopulapalli in Prakasam district filed a grievance accusing former Village Revenue Officer (VRO) and his son, Punugubati Ravilu, of encroaching on 111 acres of government land and illegally acquiring ownership documents. He has requested the government to revoke these illegal land titles and reclaim the land.



Anka Nirmala from Guntur has alleged that her brother-in-law, under the guise of a lease agreement, had forged her signature and illegally registered her property. She has requested the authorities to annul the fraudulent registration and restore her property rights.

K Venkata Ramana from Veeraballi mandal filed a grievance accusing members of the YSRCP and journalist Ramana from Sakshi TV of assaulting him when he raised concerns about land encroachment by his in-laws in the MRO office. He further stated that false charges were filed against him by the same group and requested action.

P Srinivas Rao from Ponnekallu village in Tadikonda mandal, Guntur district, has alleged that a person named E Devendra Reddy deliberately destroyed his crops and caused financial loss. Additionally, he claimed that Reddy had filed false charges against him, leading to further harassment. Despite his complaints to the police, no action was taken.

Manda Rani from Karempudi mandal, Palnadu district, filed a grievance accusing YSRCP member Ch Srinivasa Rao of illegally occupying and selling her land. She has requested an investigation into the matter and justice for the illegal activities.

Vallabhaneni Nandini from Nidamanuru in NTR district filed a grievance against K Bhavani and Sridhar, who had promised to help her daughter study abroad.

They took ?13 lakh from her under the pretext of paying her daughter's college fees, but later cheated her. Nandini requested that action be taken against the culprits and justice be provided.

Special Deputy Collector killed in road accident

PNS ■ KADAPA



Special Deputy Collector of the Handri-Neeva Sujala Sravanthi (HNS) Project, Unit-2, died after the car she was travelling in collided with another vehicle at Yerraguntla village in Sambepalli mandal of Annamayya district on Monday.

According to the police, Sugali Ramadevi (55), Special Deputy Collector of Peleru Unit-2 under the Handri-Neeva Canal Project, sustained severe injuries in the collision. She was immediately shifted to the Government General Hospital in Rayachoti, where doctors declared her brought dead. The mishap occurred while she was on her way to Rayachoti from Peleru to attend a public grievances redressal programme.

Ramadevi was also serving as the Coordinator for the Annamayya District Collectorate's grievances cell. A native of Kalyanadurgam in Anantapur district, she was known for her dedicated public service. Four revenue department employees travelling with her were also injured in the accident.

Annamayya District Collector Ch. Sridhar, Joint Collector Adarsh Rajendran, DRO Madhusudhan Rao, and RDO Srinivasulu visited the hospital to enquire about the condition of the injured employees. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed his condolences over the untimely demise of the Special Deputy Collector and instructed district officials to ensure the best possible medical care for the injured.

Transport Minister M. Ramprasad Reddy also expressed shock and sorrow over Ramadevi's death and conveyed his sympathies to the bereaved family.

All arrangements in place for celestial wedding at Vontimitta



PNS ■ KADAPA

Endowments Minister Aanam Ramnarayana Reddy has confirmed that all arrangements have been completed for the grand celebration of Sri Sitaramula Kalyanam at the renowned Vontimitta temple on 11th April.

The Endowments Minister, along with BC Welfare and District In-charge Minister S Savitha, held a review meeting on Monday with District Collector Ch. Sridhar, TTD Vigilance SP Vishnuvardhan Raju, TTD JEO Veerabrahmam and other senior officials to assess the preparations. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Ramnarayana Reddy said that the celestial wedding of Lord Rama and Sita will be performed with full devotion and grandeur, and thousands of devotees are expected to attend.

He informed that 121 galleries, categorised into 12 types, have been constructed to accommodate up to 80,000 devotees. Over 47,000 packets of anna prasadam will be distributed on the day. In terms of security, more than 150 CCTV cameras have been installed, and drones will be deployed to monitor crowd movement, the Minister added.

He stated that designated parking arrangements have been made for RTC buses arriving from Kadapa and Rajampet, as well as for vehicles from other districts. Free shuttle buses will transport devotees from the parking areas to the temple premises.

Minister Savitha noted that a large number of VIPs are expected to attend the Sitaramula Kalyanam and said special security arrangements have been made to ensure their safety. She emphasised that officials are following a well-defined action plan to ensure the smooth conduct of the event. "We are taking every measure to avoid any stampede despite the expected large turnout. Arrangements have been made to ensure the orderly distribution of prasadam, and drinking water will be provided throughout the event," she said.

Collector Cherukuri Sridhar stated that security arrangements have been planned, taking into account the presence of dignitaries. Measures have also been put in place for sanitation, electricity supply and traffic regulation. He added that a police control room and medical camps will be set up near the temple, with 108 ambulances kept ready for emergencies. The temple premises have been fully illuminated and decorated with flowers.

SP Ashok Kumar, TTD Vigilance SP Harshavardhan Raju, and TTD JEO Veerabrahmam also addressed the gathering.

Later, the Ministers and officials inspected the ongoing arrangements at the Vontimitta temple, including galleries, the kalyana vedika, barricades and parking areas, and offered several suggestions for further improvement.



5 robbers arrested; Rs 1.10L cash and two bikes recovered

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

The police have arrested five notorious robbers and recovered Rs 1.10 lakh in cash along with two motorcycles from them at the Elurupadu check-post.

DSP R.G. Jayasurya informed the media on Monday that a police team led by CI Jagadeswara Rao and SI Srinivasa Rao apprehended five habitual offenders involved in multiple crimes, including thefts. The gang was also linked to two theft cases reported under the Akividu and Kalla police station limits.

The arrested individuals have been identified as T. Kishore, B.M. Krishnam Naidu, Dasari Hari, M. Jashuva, and Pakalapatu Naresh. In addition, the police have detained two minor boys in connection with theft cases.

The DSP explained the gang's modus operandi: they targeted individuals travelling alone at night and robbed them of cash and valuables at secluded locations.

During the second week of March, the gang committed a robbery at Kolanapalli village, snatching a bag containing Rs 2 lakh from a victim. Another robbery was carried out at knifepoint on 4 April.

3 hurt as learner driver rams car into tea stall

PNS ■ NANDYAL

A car belonging to a driving school, operated by a trainee driver, crashed into a tea stall near the old bus stand in Done town, Nandyal district, on Monday, injuring three persons.

According to police, the incident occurred when the victims—identified as Dasharath, Srinivas and Ramakrishna—were having tea at the stall. The vehicle, reportedly driven by a trainee named Avinash Reddy, lost control and rammed into the group, also damaging three parked two-wheelers.

Residents rushed the injured to a nearby hospital. While one of the victims sustained minor injuries, the other two were referred to a hospital in Kurnool for advanced treatment due to the seriousness of their injuries.

A formal complaint has been filed with the police, seeking legal action against the driving school owner for alleged negligence. Authorities have launched an investigation and are currently verifying the credentials of both the driving school and the instructor involved.

Officials told to stock 18L MT of sand

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY



East Godavari District Collector P. Prasanthi has instructed officials to stock 18 lakh metric tonnes of sand in designated stockyards in preparation for the forthcoming monsoon season.

A district-level sand committee meeting was convened at the Collector's camp office on Monday. Addressing the gathering, Collector Prasanthi emphasised the need to improve infrastructure and roads in villages where sand reaches are operational.

"In view of the approaching monsoon, it is essential to identify appropriate locations to ensure adequate sand is available in stockyards for construction activities in both government and private sectors. A total of 18 lakh metric tonnes of sand should be stored at various stockyards," the Collector said. She advised the Revenue Divisional Officers (RDOs) to identify suitable locations within their respective constituencies and submit proposals accordingly.

The meeting also discussed plans to establish stockyards in layouts where housing projects are under development. The Collector stressed the importance of ensuring that these stock points are accessible for transportation and equipped with adequate surveillance systems for proper monitoring.

Collector Prasanthi noted that 57.82 lakh metric tonnes of sand would soon be available from ten sand reaches that have received environmental clearance under the semi-mechanised category. The committee agreed to manage and supervise the sand ramps at Katavaram, Singavaram, Kumaradevam, Tadipudi, and Pendyala, which have been allocated to other districts under the DLSCs of West Godavari, Kakinada, Visakhapatnam, Anakapalle, and Eluru.

District Mines Officer D. Phani Bhushan Reddy informed the meeting that mining in the district had generated an income of Rs 390 crore, surpassing the target of Rs 380.3 crore.

Additional SP Muralikrishna, RDOs Krishna Nayak and Rani Susmita, RWSS B. V. Giri, District Geological Survey Officer Y. Srinivas, Assistant Motor Vehicle Inspector Sampath Kumar, Irrigation DE Anand Babu, and other officials were present at the meeting.

30 people take ill after consuming 'contaminated' toddy

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

In the Kamareddy district, over 30 individuals, including several women, took ill after consuming toddy, suspected to be contaminated, in several villages on Monday.

Among them, four were reported to be in critical condition, with one patient being moved to the Government General Hospital in Nizamabad for more intensive care.

Those affected experienced stomachache and body pains. Some of them fainted after drinking the toddy.

Special health camps were promptly established in the villages to provide immediate medical assistance. Subsequently, the patients were transferred to the government hospital in Banswada for treatment.



Lord Rama charms devout in Venuganalankara avatar

PNS ■ VONTIMITTA

Devotees were captivated by the enchanting Venuganalankara guise of Sri Kodandarama during the second day of the annual Brahmotsavams at Vontimitta on Monday morning.

The utsava murthi of Sri Rama, adorned in the attire of Lord Krishna, was taken in a grand procession amid vibrant paraphernalia and traditional dance performances. The divine sight of Rama playing the flute left devotees in awe.

Later, at 11 a.m., the ritual of *Snapana Tirumanjanam* (sacred celestial bath) was performed with devotion. Deputy Executive Officer Sri Natesh Babu and other temple officials took part in the ceremony.

Gottipati highlights AP's investor-friendly climate

PNS ■ ONGOLE



Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar inaugurated a private granite factory at Murikipudi in Chilakaluripet mandal on Monday, highlighting the Prakasam district's reputation for exporting high-quality granite to various countries.

Speaking at the event, the Minister said that Andhra Pradesh is an ideal destination for industrial investment, catering to small, medium, and large enterprises. He noted that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is actively promoting industrial growth across all sectors by offering incentives and subsidies to investors. "The coalition government is committed to supporting those who step forward to invest in the State," he said, adding that AP now ranks second among Indian states in terms of growth rate, owing to the CM's initiatives aimed at boosting investor confidence.

Taking a swipe at former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, the Minister alleged that during the previous regime, businessmen were burdened with unofficial payments. In contrast, he said, the present government is fostering an environment of free trade and ease of doing business.

YSRCP urges SEC to ensure fair by-poll in Venkatagiri

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A YSRCP delegation comprising former MLA Malladi Vishnu, State Employees and Pensioners Wing President N Chandrasekhar Reddy, and SC Cell Working President Kommuri Kanaka Rao met State Election Commissioner Nilam Sawhney in Vijayawada on Saturday.

The delegation raised concerns over alleged undemocratic actions by the ruling party in relation to the April 9 Venkatagiri Municipal by-election. They claimed that despite YSRCP winning 25 councillor seats earlier, a no-confidence motion was undemocratically pushed through to destabilise their hold.

The YSRCP leaders accused the government of conspiring to postpone the by-poll using threats and pressure tactics.



TPCC chief B Mahesh Kumar Goud addressing the media on Monday at Gandhi Bhavan

BRS sold thousands of acres during its 10-year rule: Mahesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said that the BRS sold thousands of acres during its 10-year rule and asked the BJP to explain why it had failed to question the BRS government regarding that.

"Why didn't the BJP question the BRS government when it deforested lakhs of acres in the state?" he asked, saying that the BJP and BRS have a secret deal.

Mahesh also criticised BRS leaders for making Kanche Gachibowli lands an issue.

Speaking to the media at the Gandhi Bhavan on Monday, Mahesh demanded that BJP leaders should tell what they have done for Telangana. "The BJP won eight seats in the Lok Sabha elections, however, the Centre did not allot funds to TG," he said.

He made it clear that the people of Telangana would not tolerate communal politics and demanded that Union Ministers Kishan Reddy and Sanjay should prove their sincerity by making the Centre enact a law providing 42 per cent reservations for BCs.

Mahesh said that there would be collective decisions in the Congress unlike the BJP in which decisions are taken autocratically. He said the Congress is ready to extend cooperation to the Centre to develop Telangana.

He said that the BJP, which engages in 'division' politics criticising other political parties is like the devil chanting scriptures. He said the BJP fielded its candidate in Hyderabad local body MLC elections although it has no strength. The Congress did not field a candidate as it had no strength, he added.

He said the party did not take any decision on supporting other parties and that the University of Hyderabad issue is in court.

Pawan vows road connectivity to every tribal hamlet

PNS ■ PADERU



The government has allocated Rs 1,005 cr for tribal welfare, contrasting it with the Rs 92 cr reportedly spent during the five-year rule of the YSRCP. "We will not stop at laying foundation stones; we will ensure that works are pursued until completed."

Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan has pledged to provide road connectivity to every tribal habitation in Andhra Pradesh, aiming to end the long-standing practice of carrying patients on slings due to lack of motorable roads.

Participating in multiple programmes at Dumbriguda on Monday, Pawan Kalyan launched the 'Adavi Talli Bata' scheme, under which roads will be laid to connect tribal villages.

He also laid the foundation stone for several road works and assured the tribal communities of the government's full support.

Addressing a large public gathering, he said the Chandrababu Naidu-led government has allocated Rs 1,005 crore for tribal welfare, contrasting it with the Rs 92 crore reportedly spent during the five-year rule of the YSRCP. "We will not stop at laying foundation stones; we will ensure that works are pursued until completed," he declared.

The Deputy CM pointed out that of the 2,605 tribal habitations in the State, 1,177 still lack road connectivity. As part of the 'Adavi Talli' initiative, 1,069 such habitations will be connected through 558 new roads. He recalled his 2018 visit to the Araku region, where he witnessed the hardships faced by tribal communities.

"Roads will be built to every tribal village so that patients no longer need to be carried on slings to hospitals," he said.

Pawan Kalyan also stated that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu immediately sanctioned Rs 49 crore upon his request for tribal road development. He added that funds have been released to all 13,326 panchayats to carry out development works, with allocations increased in line with earlier promises.

Highlighting Araku Valley's tourism potential, he called for its development into a premier tourist destination.

Earlier, Pawan Kalyan visited Pedapadu village and a tribal hamlet, where he interacted with locals and listened to their concerns.

Tribal Welfare Minister and district in-charge Gummidi Sandyarani, Council Whip Pidugu Hariprasad, MLAs P Ramesh Babu and S Vijay Kumar, Special Chief Secretary Sheshi Bhushan Kumar, Commissioner Krishnateja, and District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar accompanied him during the visit.

Woman, son die of food poisoning in Sircilla dist

PNS ■ RAJANNA - SIRCILLA

A tragic incident happened in Rajanna-Sircilla district where a woman and her six-year-old son lost their lives reportedly due to food poisoning on Sunday night. The tragedy struck mother and son at Rudrangi village on Saturday night.

According to the police, the 35-year-old Kadasu Pushpalatha and her son Nihal, ate chapati for dinner on Friday night. Shortly after, both started experiencing symptoms of vomiting and diarrhoea around midnight. They were immediately taken to a private hospital in Korutla for treatment, but due to the severity of their condition, they were later transferred to a hospital in Karimnagar for further care.

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | TUESDAY | APRIL 8, 2025

ACROSS THE STATES



Running AC bus catches fire in Kolkata

A number of passengers sustained minor injuries when an air-conditioned bus caught fire while plying through Paikpara here on Monday, police said. Two fire tenders were pressed into service to extinguish the blaze, which is suspected to have been caused by a short circuit, officials said. "The bus had started from Belgharia and was moving along BT Road when suddenly black smoke started billowing from the engine. At the time, there were a significant number of passengers on board. They panicked and tried to get off the bus, and in the process, a few were injured. Only after the passengers deboarded, the fire broke out," a police officer said. Police said a forensic test would be conducted on the vehicle to ascertain the cause of the fire.



ASHA workers' stir enters day 57 in Kerala

Talks held between Kerala Labour Minister V Sivankutty and ASHA workers—who have been protesting outside the Secretariat here for the past 57 days—failed to reach a consensus on Monday, as the agitators stood firm on their long-standing demand for an honorarium hike. Sivankutty invited the protesters for fresh talks after multiple rounds of discussions with Health Minister Veena George had failed. Following the meeting, ASHA leaders told reporters that while the minister had put forward some suggestions to end the strike, they informed him that the agitation would continue until the government accepted their demand for an honorarium hike. V K Sadanandan, state president of the Kerala ASHA Health Workers Association (KAHWA), said they also submitted a memorandum to the Labour Minister outlining their various demands. "The Labour Minister told us he would take up the matter with the Health Minister."



Rajasthan HC extends Asaram's interim bail

The Rajasthan High Court at Jodhpur on Monday extended the interim bail of the self-styled godman Asaram till July 1 in a 2013 rape case. He had surrendered in the Jodhpur Central Jail on April 1 after the completion of his interim bail on March 31. A division bench comprising Justices Dinesh Mehta and Vineet Kumar allowed Asaram's plea on the same conditions as laid down by the Supreme Court, which included prohibition on any sermon or gathering with his devotees. Asaram's plea was heard on April 2, in which the respondent's advocate P C Solanki objected to the reprieve and argued he had violated the bail conditions by holding sermons for the devotees at his Indore ashram. Solanki submitted in court video evidence to support his claim, following which the court sought an affidavit from Asaram. Asaram's counsel Nishant Bora said the affidavit was submitted in the court on Monday and added, "The court accepted the affidavit and granted our prayer for extension of interim bail till July 1." The self-styled godman was admitted at a private Ayurveda hospital on the night of April 1 after he surrendered in jail.

Judiciaries thrive through collaboration, stresses CJI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Judiciaries thrive through collaboration and mutual respect and the signing of a MoU with the Supreme Court of Nepal will build institutional comity for the future, Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna said on Monday.

The signing of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) is not a mere formal exchange but the reaffirmation of a centuries-old bond, renewed with a spirit of collaboration, mutual respect and shared purpose, he said at the event.

"India and Nepal are more than just neighbouring countries. Our connection is etched in history and civilisational values. From the sacred Himalayas to the spiritual heritage of Gautam Buddha, our ties transcend borders and have withstood the test of time. These ties are not only visible in our traditions but also in the institutions that underpin our democracies," Chief Justice of India (CJI) Khanna said.

"Among these institutions, the judiciary holds a sacred place. It guards the Constitution, upholds the rule of law, and ensures justice for all. It is in this context that the evolving cooperation between our judicial institutions carries significance," he said.

CJI Khanna said the legal systems of both countries had always been in dialogue and many distinguished members of the Nepali Bar and Bench had received legal education in Indian universities.

"They returned not only with degrees but also with an understanding of our shared legal heritage. It is a legal heritage that is grounded in the principles of constitutionalism and the rule of law," he further said.

The CJI noted Indian courts had drawn on Nepalese judgments for their nuanced interpretations.

"For example, in Navtej Singh Johar v Union of India, the Supreme Court of India referred to the judgment of the Supreme Court of Nepal in Sunil Babu Pant v Nepal government while decriminalising Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. The Indian court noted the Nepalese judgment with approval, particularly drawing inspiration from how it linked the rights of LGBTQ persons to their right to privacy," he said.

"Similarly, our friends in Nepal have incorporated key Indian constitutional doctrines, including the celebrated doctrine of the Basic Structure, into their constitutional discourse. I am happy to note how some of the Indian constitutional principles have found a home in Nepal's jurisprudence," he added.



India, Portugal agree to strengthen cooperation in UN

PNS ■ LISBON

India and Portugal on Monday agreed to strengthen cooperation in the United Nations and other multilateral forums, as President Droupadi Murmu and her Portuguese counterpart Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa held talks here.

President Murmu, who is on a two-day State Visit to Portugal, held a tete-a-tete with her counterpart followed by delegation-level talks during which all matters pertaining to "mutual interests" were discussed.

A statement issued after their meeting at the Portuguese President's official residence, Palácio de Belém, said the two leaders discussed "all important aspects of our bilateral relationship".

"We also discussed global and regional issues of common interest. We resolved to build further on our long-standing bilateral ties, especially in trade and investment, science and technology, information and digital technologies, renewable energy, connectivity and mobility, and to promote people-to-people contacts further," Murmu said.

"We agreed to strengthen our coordination and cooperation in the United Nations and other multilateral fora," she said. Her visit assumes significance as it is coming in the backdrop of significant global economic change, with trade tariffs recently imposed by the US reshaping international commerce and India's growing engagement with Europe.

Trade between India and Portugal is valued at USD 1.5 billion and has been growing steadily, with a 50 per cent increase over the last five years. The President said she had "a constructive and productive meeting" with President Marcelo Rebelo.

"I was happy to launch jointly with the President of Portugal, the commemorative stamps on the occasion of the golden jubilee of our diplomatic relations," she said. The "historic visit" is taking place 27 years after the last visit by an Indian President to Portugal at a time when both countries are celebrating 50 years of re-establishment of diplomatic relations.

Dubai Crown Prince to embark on official visit from today

PNS ■ DUBAI



Dubai's Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum will embark on a two-day official visit to India on Tuesday to deepen bilateral ties across key strategic sectors, it was announced on Monday.

Sheikh Hamdan, also the deputy prime minister and defence minister, will hold talks with senior Indian officials to explore ways to enhance bilateral cooperation and strengthen partnerships across various strategic sectors.

The visit underscores the UAE leadership's strategy of building strategic alliances with key international partners to foster growth, drive innovation and enhance collaboration across vital sectors.

Sheikh Hamdan will be accompanied by a high-level delegation including senior ministers, senior officials and leaders representing different economic sectors.

Others including the delegation include Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, Chairman of Dubai Airports, and Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline and Group; Mohammad bin Abdullah Al Gergawi, Minister of Cabinet Affairs; and Reem bint Ebrahim Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation.

'People should say 'cut' to Suresh Gopi'

PNS ■ PALAKKAD (KERALA)

Launching a sharp attack on Union Minister Suresh Gopi for his recent controversial remarks, Kerala Transport Minister K B Ganesh Kumar on Monday said it is the people—not anyone else—who should say "cut" to the actor-turned-politician.

Responding to a question about Gopi's outburst at mediapersons outside Kochi airport recently, Ganesh Kumar stated, "I'm not the director to say 'cut' to Suresh Gopi. Action and reaction are personal choices. But in the end, it's the public who should say, 'Cut'."



'Trump blew lid off illusion, Modi nowhere to be seen'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Donald Trump has "blown the lid off the illusion" and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "nowhere to be seen", Congress Rahul Gandhi said on Monday as stock markets continued to reel under the effect of US reciprocal tariffs.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said India has to accept the reality and has no choice but to build a resilient, production-based economy that works for all Indians.

The Congress has been attacking the government over its handling of the economy, claiming the issues of rising prices, decreasing private investment and stagnating wages were hitting the common people hard.

Earlier this month, the opposition party flagged a decade-long real income stagnation, a consumption boom entirely driven by the expansion of credit and deepening inequality as the three threats to the economy, and wondered what would it take for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to hear them. "Trump has blown the lid off the illusion. Reality is biting back. PM Modi is nowhere to be seen," Gandhi said in a post on X.

"India has to accept reality. We have no choice but to build a resilient, production-based economy that works for all Indians," the former Congress president said. Stock markets crumbled on Monday with benchmark Sensex sinking by 2,226.79 points – its steepest single-day decline in 10 months – as a global market carnage following US President Donald Trump's tariff hikes and retaliation from China fanned fears of economic slowdown.

The 30-share BSE Sensex crashed 2,226.79 points or 2.95 per cent to settle at 73,137.90, recording its third day of decline.

'Chance meeting' between CM Omar, Rijiju leads to political storm in J-K

PNS ■ SRINAGAR



A "chance meeting" between Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Union minister Kiren Rijiju at Asia's largest Tulip Garden here on Monday triggered a political storm with opposition parties dubbing it as "Waqf law bonhomie".

Sources in the ruling National Conference said that Omar Abdullah was accompanying his father and former chief minister Farooq Abdullah after the latter expressed a wish to visit the Tulip Garden which is in full bloom these days. The sources said the father-son duo bumped into Rijiju, who had also come to visit the garden early in the morning.

The politicians from the opposite sides of political spectrum exchanged pleasantries before heading their separate ways, they said.

Rijiju posted the pictures with the Abdullahs on his X handle, triggering the controversy as opposition parties accused the National Conference of laying out a red carpet for the BJP leader in the aftermath of Waqf Amendment Act.

'Fake' cardiologist: MP CM orders strict action

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday ordered the Health Department to take strict action after NHRC cited a complaint claiming seven persons died in a missionary hospital in Damoh where a fake doctor operated on patients in the name of treating heart disease.

As per a complaint lodged earlier by a local resident with the National Human Rights Commission, the person, using the name of a famous cardiologist from the UK 'Dr N John Camm', purportedly working at the hospital, had shown himself to be educated and trained from abroad.

A case was registered after the name of "Dr Camm" did not appear in the registration on the official website of the Andhra Pradesh Medical Council, thus it seems suspicious at first sight, the FIR stated. He was booked under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections 315 (4) (dishonest misappropriation), 338 (forgery), 336 (3) (creating or altering documents or electronic records with fraudulent intent), 340 (2) (forged documents and electronic records) and 3 (5) (joint criminal liability when a criminal act is committed by several persons in furtherance of a common intention).

"We are aware of the incident. Our government is taking strict action and is continuously in touch with the Central government. I have instructed the health department to take strict action against such practises, if any, at other places (as well)," Mohan Yadav said.

His statement came after the opposition claimed that the "fake cardiologist" is linked to the BJP and is a "habitual hatemonger who vitiated the atmosphere in the country via social media".

Arunachal approves common exam scheme for engineers

PNS ■ ITANAGAR

The Arunachal Pradesh Cabinet on Monday approved the introduction of a common examination scheme for direct recruitment to the posts of assistant and junior engineers.

According to a statement from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), the Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC), in consultation with the respective departments, will finalise the syllabus for the common exam.

AIADMK members evicted from TN Assembly

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The opposition AIADMK legislators were evicted from the Tamil Nadu Assembly on Monday following tumultuous scenes over some issue they wanted to raise.

Immediately after the Question Hour concluded, Leader of the Opposition Edappadi K Palaniswami rose to draw the Chair's attention to 'an important issue.' However, Speaker M Appavu declined his request saying the "matter is sub judice."

The AIADMK members, who came to the Assembly sporting black badges, demanded that Palaniswami be allowed to raise the issue. They suddenly flashed placards containing the words: "Andha thiyagi yaar? - TASMAC" (who is that martyr - TASMAC). This evoked the ire of the Speaker who initially warned them against taking part in the proceedings with black badges and placards.

However, the unrelenting opposition MLAs raised slogans and continued to stall the proceedings.

CLAT-2025: Suspense, anxiety not good for students: HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday began hearing a batch of petitions, transferred to it from the various high courts, over certain errors in the CLAT-2025 questionnaire, and said "suspense and anxiety" were not good for the aspirants.

A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said it intended to complete hearing on the petitions at the earliest for the results to be declared.

There was an urgency in the petitions concerning the undergraduate examinations and the petitions for post graduate course would be taken up separately, it added.

"There is urgency as far as UG is concerned. What we propose is we could complete the hearing at the earliest so that results are declared. UG may start," the court said.

The bench went on, "There has been so much suspense, anxiety. That we want to avoid. That is not good for the students. we can start the hearing."

The court heard the counsel appearing for the Consortium of National Law Universities (CNLUs) for some time and said it would continue hearing the matter on April 8.



The common law admission test (CLAT), 2025, held in December last year, determines admissions to undergraduate and postgraduate law courses in national law universities in the country.

Multiple pleas were filed in different high courts alleging several questions in the exam were wrong.

On February 6, the Supreme Court transferred all the petitions over the issue to the Delhi High Court for a "consistent adjudication".

The top court passed the direction on the transfer petitions of CNLUs.

Several students wanted the cases to be transferred to the Delhi High Court, saying it passed a favourable order for some petitioners by identifying errors in two questions of the CLAT-UG 2025 exam and directing the consortium to revise their results.

On December 20, 2024, a Delhi High Court's single judge directed the consortium to revise the result of CLAT-2025 over the errors in the answer key. The single judge's verdict, which came on the plea of a CLAT aspirant, ruled the answers to two questions in the entrance test were wrong.

The plea challenged the answer key published by the consortium on December 7, 2024 while seeking a direction to declare correct answers to certain questions.

The single judge said the errors were "demonstrably clear" and "shutting a blind eye" would amount to injustice.

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Editor's TAKE

Bridging devotion and development

The Pamban Bridge is a powerful testament to the spirit of a new India

This is the New India we live in today — an India that no longer apologises for its past, yet is boldly committed to progress, innovation, and forging meaningful connections with the modern world. In a monumental step towards engineering excellence and spiritual connectivity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the New Pamban Bridge in Rameswaram on the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami. This architectural marvel — the first vertical lift sea bridge in India — not only symbolises the seamless integration of tradition and technology but also stands as a proud testament to New India's relentless pursuit of innovation.

The New Pamban Bridge, spanning 2.08 kilometres with 99 spans and a central vertical lift span of 72.5 metres, is a spectacular feat of modern engineering. With an investment of over Rs 550 crore, this bridge connects Rameswaram — an ancient pilgrimage site — to the Indian mainland.

The vertical lift mechanism can raise the bridge deck up to 17 metres, allowing the passage of large ships. This capability positions India among a select group of nations with such advanced infrastructure. Equipped to handle dual railway tracks and designed with a special polysiloxane coating for long-term resilience against the corrosive marine environment, the New Pamban Bridge represents a blend of robust functionality and future-readiness.

The original Pamban Bridge, built in 1914 by British engineers, served as a lifeline for over a century. It was a cantilever bridge featuring a Scherzer rolling lift mechanism that allowed ships to pass. Over time, marine corrosion and growing transportation needs highlighted the need for a stronger, smarter structure.

In 2019, the Modi government approved the construction of this replacement, entrusting the project to Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL), a Navratna PSU under the Ministry of Railways.

Now, the new structure stands not only as a replacement but as a remarkable upgrade — one that signals India's emergence as a global player in infrastructure development.

Prime Minister Modi's inauguration of the New Pamban Bridge, coupled with the flagging off of the Rameswaram–Tambaram Express train, reflects a broader national narrative — one where development is deeply intertwined with cultural and spiritual heritage.

On Ram Navami, as devotees across the country celebrated the birth of Lord Ram, the launch of this bridge served as a symbolic gesture: uniting devotion with dynamism, faith with functionality.

Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India has been ticking off one technical milestone after another — be it the world's highest rail bridge in Jammu & Kashmir, the Atal Tunnel in Himachal Pradesh, or the rollout of Vande Bharat trains.

The New Pamban Bridge joins this league of transformative infrastructure, reaffirming the nation's resolve to modernise without losing touch with its roots. The message is clear: New India is not just building bridges of steel and concrete; it is also building bridges of trust, tradition, and transformation. With every project, it is asserting its place on the global stage — not by imitating the West, but by setting its own benchmarks.

As the sun rises over the sacred shores of Rameswaram, the New Pamban Bridge gleams not just as a symbol of connectivity, but as a beacon of a nation on the move — where devotion meets development, and where the future is already under construction.

A call for commitment in education

With quality in higher education intrinsically tied to a strong foundation laid at the primary level, the real transformation lies in empowering and inspiring teachers and fostering ethical academic environments



The successful implementation of the New Education Policy NEP – 2020 depends on its total acceptance at every level. Most important among them are the State governments and then those implementing it at the grassroots. The level of excellence and quality in higher education organically depends on the quality and excellence achieved at the primary school level and sustained up to the senior secondary level. This is the simplest equation, obvious to all those working in the arena. In education, one could safely attribute the attainment of excellence and innovations to the teachers, and what happens between them and the learner, at the professional level and also at personal, emotional and empathetic levels. It is the total commitment of the individual teacher, right from the primary school to the highest levels, that alone would make a positive difference in an objective and purposeful implementation of the policy.

It would be worthwhile to recall an example of a nation that overcame its destruction and humiliation through serious attention to education, beginning with school education. After WWII, devastated, destroyed and humiliated, Japan began its reconstruction by prioritising education in its primary schools and respecting and supporting their teachers. Maximum learning, brain development, and the essence of growing up take place there. If a child observes all along a dedicated and committed work culture, observes how much value is accorded to the maximum utilisation of time, and finds his teachers always full of inspired confidence, proud of being the creators of the future of the nation, could he ever forget any one of these attributes when he takes over the reins of some assignment as his time approaches? In contrast to this, a reluctant, unconcerned, lethargic approach to the change in an educational institution could indeed be injurious to all concerned.

Unfortunately, we in India suffer from such an approach on a pretty wide scale. This is supported by several other factors. Some of the State governments are opposing the NEP–2020; they have declared their intention to have their own policy of education. Technically, they may do so, but will it serve the larger cause of the nation, its progress and development? Will it help the young, sensitive learners with loads of dreams before them? The NEP–2020 is an outcome of an unprecedented consultation in which everyone had a chance to participate.

The need to move ahead as a single, integrated and cohesive national unit is the only alternative in the fast-changing world of education, which is moving much beyond the mere knowledge society or even a wisdom society! It is not easy even to predict what would be the shape of the academic scenario in the next ten years! On one side, the ICTis pouring in new potentialities that could transform the learning opportunities and alternatives, and greatly impact the nature of the age-old teacher — taught relationship! On the other, new concerns are developing because of human migrations, and consequent demographic, cultural and social changes. It would necessarily impact education, culture, and mother-tongue related sensitivities, apart from those of religions and faiths. The single-modal situations are getting converted into multi-modal in several nations, and that requires a fresh strategy for handling it. These are not easy propositions, as is made evident from reports emerging from several countries that had earlier experience only of a single language, monolithic culture and one religion! India is lucky in this respect, but it is creating issues that could seriously impede even the much-needed implementation of a dynamic education policy. It is beautifully expressed by Robert Carneiro: "Indeed, we are witnessing the emergence of a new breed of culture: that developed by Homo connectus or colleagatus — a culture of online networking made possible by the immediacy of modern information and communication technologies. It is important to note that the initial stages of connectivity are directly linked to the needs of Homo economicus, increasing his mastery of the world."

Let it also be realised that new knowledge being discovered and created is mostly for development, growth and progress. Mostly, it focuses on bringing the best out of the mind only, completely ignoring the 'Heart', out of the synergy of the trio that Gandhi had proposed much earlier: bring the best out of 'Head, Hand and Heart'! India just cannot ignore the other two, because of its specific needs. Actual priorities could be readjusted depending on the emerging scenario. The majority of the young persons in India aspire to get a job after completing their education. They are neither trained in adequate skills nor transformed in attitude to consider the power of ideas and imagination they are blessed with, along with the skills of creativity and inherent human curiosity! Another factor that deserves serious deliberation was pointed out by Albert Einstein around a century ago: "The most important human endeavour is the striving for morality in our actions. Our inner balance and even our existence depends on it."



JS RAJPUT

This must become the prime objectiveof NEP–2020, in its implementation. Too much technology and AI could create more obstructions in this sphere shortly. In other words, almost the entire process of knowledge development is for a cosmocratic society that is already in a pretty well-established state, and occupying increasingly larger space for itself. Needless to reiterate, the social, cultural, economic, linguistic and religious factors shall always make their presence felt — but sadly enough, handling these would gradually become more and more complex, if sensible and sensitive actions are not properly initiated well in time and with sincere and ethical considerations. The implementation of the NEP–2020 shall have to remain alert to such developing situations. Academic autonomy is often the subject of certain actual and presumed intrusions that academics do not necessarily relish. It is ultimately the responsibility of universities, colleges and other institutions to decide how they will implement the policy, and harmonise with the indications given to them by central and State agencies. The professional credibility of every institution is determined by the academic stature and professional contributions of its academic faculty.

Faculty members need to remember that no profession diminishes in public esteem and credibility due to external factors — it is always internal factors that matter, and the most significant is the moral and ethical component, as has been proved in numerous instances. The quality of the academic contributions, the new knowledge generated, and the new applications suggested make a very positive difference in restoring it! Maintaining high professional standards requires a serious commitment to both the profession, values and the learners.Education policies have to be dynamic — more dynamic than in the past. In the future, changes will occur more frequently than in the past.

The most significant consequence of this will be the increasing acceptance of professional responsibility by academics. Regardless of the level at which they impart knowledge, create knowledge, and acquire new knowledge, it is their personal as well as institutional confidence that 'we are the creators of future generations and builders of new India' that would make all the difference. Aim at perfection, excellence will certainly follow and become visible.

(The writer works in education, social cohesion and religious amity. He is an Atal Fellow with PMML, New Delhi; Views are personal)

Leaderspeak



The Supreme Court must clarify who is deserving and who is not. Give us the list. No one has the right to break the education system. In NEET, many allegations surfaced. The Supreme Court did not cancel the examination. Why is Bengal being targeted? We want to know. You are scared of Bengal's talent

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

Nurturing Bharat's adolescents for the future

SECOND Opinion

BY RAHUL KUMAR

Summer vacations are here again, bringing excitement and anticipation for children and parents alike. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his 120th episode of Mann Ki Baat aired on 30 March 2025, passionately encouraged schools, families, and communities to use these months meaningfully. With hashtags like #MyHolidays and #HolidayMemories, PM Modi beautifully highlighted that vacations could be more than just leisure; they could nurture holistic growth in young minds.In this context, it's essential to reflect on how the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and institutions like the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) are shaping the future of Bharat, particularly focusing on adolescents. The NEP 2020 is celebrated worldwide for its visionary stance on education that bridges traditional cultural wisdom with modern interdisciplinary practices.

It recognises adolescence as a vital stage of personal and emotional growth — a truth vividly captured in Netflix's recent series Adolescence, where teenagers struggle to find their identity amid cultural and emotional complexities. Anthropologist Margaret Mead once remarked, "The young, free to act on their initiative, can lead their elders in the direction of the unknown," aptly summarising the potential and restlessness of youth.

Here, CCRT steps in effectively, translating the vision of NEP 2020 and National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2023into reality. CCRT has been actively promoting arts and cultural education by blending age-old wisdom with contemporary teaching methods. UNESCO's Framework for Culture and Arts Education highlights precisely this — cultural literacy is not just beneficial but essential for sustainable and cohesive societies.

Globally, successful educational models, such as those in Finland, South Korea and Japan, underscore the importance of cultural education. Finland, often praised for its education system, integrates cultural appreciation deeply within its curriculum. Similarly, South Korea has earned global recognition for infusing its educational framework with a rich cultural heritage.

Bharat, long celebrated as a Vishwaguru, now has the opportunity to reclaim its leadership by implementing cultural education initiatives guided by policies like NEP 2020. CCRT's initiatives (under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India) — which include the Digital District Repository (DDR) Project and specialised teacher-training workshops in art-based pedagogy — have profoundly influenced adolescents, especially at the grassroots level.

These initiatives foster a genuine sense of cultural pride and self-awareness, helping young people navigate identity struggles similar to those depicted realistically in Adolescence. With the summer holidays upon us, the timing couldn't be better. PM Modi's appeal resonates with CCRT's vision of turning leisure time into learning adventures.

Imagine our children swapping mundane afternoons of screen time for immersive storytelling sessions, theatre workshops, or hands-on experiences in traditional crafts. Certainly, these experiences promise far richer holiday stories to share with hashtags #MyHolidays and #HolidayMemories!

Furthermore, cultural and heritage education nurtures empathy — an indispensable quality in our rapidly globalising world. It also offers emotional resilience, equipping adolescents with the confidence to address modern-day challenges. So, as summer camps begin and cheerful voices echo through activity-filled sessions, let us recognise the perfect harmony between NEP 2020's vision and CCRT's mission. Together, they foster culturally conscious, globally minded citizens deeply rooted in Bharatiya traditions. Indeed, Bharat, as the original Vishwaguru, is well-positioned to lead by example in educational innovation. Cultural education is not merely about preserving traditions — it is about empowering the next generation.

Let's wholeheartedly embrace this idea, transforming this summer vacation into an unforgettable journey of cultural discovery and growth for Bharat's adolescents.

(The writer is Deputy Director, Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT), an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Culture, New Delhi; Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

INDIA AND SRI LANKA: THE WAY FORWARD

Madam — This is in response to the article "Building Bridges with Sri Lanka" published on 7 April. Prime Minister Modi's visit to Sri Lanka, following President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's December visit to India, holds great significance.

Our bilateral relations faced turbulence during Ranil Wickremesinghe's tenure, as Sri Lanka drew closer to China. Given the island nation's strategic location, India cannot afford to ignore it. When the left-leaning Dissanayake assumed office, there were concerns about further deterioration in ties. However, India's consistent support during Sri Lanka'seconomic crisis appears to have had a positive impact.

It is encouraging that President Dissanayake has recognised India as a vital ally. The agreements signed between the two countries, covering defence, energy, and trade, are a step in the right direction. His categorical assurance that Sri Lankan territory will not be used against India is particularly reassuring.This marks a promising new chapter in Indo–Sri Lankan relations, grounded in our longstanding people-to-people and cultural ties. Both nations must now maintain momentum through dialogue and mutual respect. That is the path to regional peace and shared prosperity.

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

END OF GLOBALISATION?

Madam — The UK's recent declaration on the end of globalisation (as reported in The Pioneer, April 7, 2025) was unsurprising. The WTO, once strongly promoted by its creators, has now been sidelined in favour of free trade and bilateral agreements tailored to specific national interests. Globalisation initially promised the free movement of capital, goods, labour, and services, and aimed to dismantle protectionist policies.

However, in practice, a few powerful countries gained disproportionately, while others were left behind. Now, under leaders like Mr Trump, protectionism has made a strong comeback — highlighting concerns about domestic markets being exploited by foreign powers.A major shift is underway — perhaps towards a new economic order that is more inclusive. Yet, we must acknowledge that capital inherently seeks monopolisation and can act predatory in the process.

If this turning point helps lift populations mired in poverty, especially the 1 billion Indians currently excluded from market participation due to poverty, hunger, and malnutrition — it will be a truly welcome development.Let us hope for a new policy direction that genuinely boosts the purchasing power and quality of life of the marginalised.

AG RAJMOHAN | ANANTPUR

The WAQF ACT 2025: WHO BENEFITS?

Madam — Apropos the concerns our civil society has long expressed about blind nationalism and far-right extremism, these now appear increasingly justified. It has become clear that blind nationalism and majoritarianism are two sides of the same coin — where excessive devotion to one's own religion and country, accompanied by prejudice against others, ultimately fosters majority dominance and marginalisation of minorities.

During debates on the Waqf Board in Parliament, several opposition MPs warned that such actions would not remain confined to Muslims. They feared that Christians, Sikhs, Jains, and Parsis would also be targeted. Their fears were confirmed when, shortly after the Bill was passed, the RSS-affiliated English magazine Organiser published an article comparing the landholdings of the Catholic Church and the Waqf Board, questioning: "Who owns more land in India?"

The article claimed that the Catholic Church owns over 7 crore hectares of land, making it the largest non-government landowner. The RSS continues to guide this government, and its priorities often take precedence. The Waqf Bill will not benefit Muslims; instead, it risks transferring community land to corporate allies. And after the Muslims, the Catholic Church will likely be next. Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Parsis may soon find themselves similarly targeted.

JANG BAHADUR SINGH | JAMSHEDPUR

PAMBAN BRIDGE INAUGURATED: BRIDGING PROGRESS AND DEVOTION

There could be no more auspicious occasion than the day of Ram Navami to inaugurate one of India's engineering marvels – the New Pamban Railway Bridge. This bridge connects mainland India to Rameshwaram Island.

An investment of ₹704 crore has resulted in not only a state-of-the-art engineering masterpiece but also a structure of deep spiritual significance for the nation. As India's first vertical-lift railway sea bridge, capable of rising up to 17 metres in just five minutes, it stands as a true symbol of technological progress and enhanced durability, with minimal susceptibility to corrosion.

The 2.08 km-long railway line of the New Pamban Bridge is more than a physical link — it's a connection to the spiritual heart of Rameshwaram for millions of Indians. Indian Railways, particularly the Railway Vikas Nigam Ltd., deserve immense praise for turning this visionary project into a reality. The bridge will also provide a significant boost to the Char Dham project.

We hope this new bridge will elevate India's economic, spiritual, and social cooperation to the next level.

As the New Pamban Railway Bridge opens on this sacred day of Ram Navami, it marks not just the unveiling of a monumental infrastructure project, but also the strengthening of India's cultural and spiritual fabric.

This marvel will serve as a beacon of innovation, faith, and unity — ushering in a new era of connectivity and development. With heartfelt congratulations to all who made this dream a reality, we look forward to the many journeys this bridge will carry, both worldly and divine.

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR

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

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | TUESDAY | APRIL 8, 2025

The unfinished journey of India–China relations

From the optimism of Panchsheel to the shadows of the 1962 war, the story of the Dragon and the Elephant is one of trust gained and lost, of cooperation in multilateral arenas, and of a shared yet often conflicting vision for Asia's future

FIRST Column



The relationship between India and China, two of the oldest civilisations in the world, has been a saga marked by both shared history and contentious moments. As the two nations now celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of their diplomatic ties, the journey of their complex relationship reveals a fascinating story of aspirations, trust, mistrust, and evolving geopolitical realities.

When India and China first established diplomatic ties in 1950, it was a moment of promise. India was the first non-socialist country to formally recognise the People's Republic of China (PRC) following its establishment after a bloody civil war. India, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, was focused on promoting a vision of peaceful coexistence and non-alignment during the Cold War. Nehru saw a future where the two Asian giants could cooperate to achieve regional peace and stability. This vision was encapsulated in the Panchsheel Agreement signed in 1954, based on five guiding principles: respect for territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

The relationship, however, was fraught with challenges from the start. China's refusal to honour the McMahon Line, which demarcated the border between Tibet and India, and its invasion of Tibet in 1950, created early tensions. India, under Nehru's leadership, viewed China's expansionist ambitions with increasing suspicion.

The fact that India offered sanctuary to the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, following an uprising in Tibet in 1959, was seen by China as a direct affront to its sovereignty. Beijing accused India of meddling in its internal affairs, especially over the Tibet issue, and the relationship began to sour.

Nehru, ever the optimist, sought to engage with China diplomatically. He believed that forging closer ties would help India address its security concerns and create a stable, peaceful environment in Asia.

However, the signing of the Panchsheel Agreement in 1954 did not resolve the underlying issues. By the early 1960s, border skirmishes between Indian and Chinese forces were becoming increasingly frequent.

The situation escalated in 1962, leading to the war that India would later describe as a crushing defeat. In just a matter of weeks, India lost over 3,000 soldiers and territory in Aksai Chin — an area China had already occupied by the time of the conflict. The defeat left deep scars in the Indian psyche and marked the lowest point in India–China relations. Over the years, both nations struggled to reconcile their differences. In the aftermath of the 1962 war, the relationship remained largely antagonistic for decades, with distrust growing over time. Even as the world around them shifted dramatically, with the Cold War coming to an end, the rise of globalisation, and China's economic liberalisation — India and China found themselves caught in the crosscurrents of global politics. China's increasing engagement with the West, especially the United States, was viewed with suspicion in India, especially as India cultivated deeper ties with the US in the 21st century. The early optimism of Panchsheel began to fade as both countries realised that their interests in Asia and on the global stage — were often at odds.In the 1980s, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988 marked a thaw in bilateral relations. China's economic reforms under Deng Xiaoping were yielding positive results, and India, too, was opening up its economy. Gandhi, in his visit to China, reaffirmed India's stance on territorial integrity, especially over disputed areas like Aksai Chin.



SANTHOSH MATHEW

Despite the thaw, however, the spectre of the 1962 war continued to hover over the relationship, and issues such as the status of Tibet, the Dalai Lama, and China's growing influence in Asia remained unresolved. In the years that followed, both countries began to recognise the importance of cooperating in global forums. The rise of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) in the 2000s highlighted the growing significance of emerging economies on the global stage. Yet, even as China and India engaged in multilateral settings like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), their bilateral ties were continually tested.

For China, the SCO provided a platform to assert its leadership in Central Asia and, by extension, its influence over the Global South. For India, the organisation offered a way to engage with its neighbour while simultaneously countering China's growing assertiveness in the region. The SCO, however, could never completely shield the two nations from the larger geopolitical currents that often drove them apart.

As China's economic power and military capabilities grew, India's strategic positioning within the global order became more important. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) presented both opportunities and challenges for India. While China promised infrastructure investment across the developing world, including in South Asia, India expressed concerns over the so-called "debt-trap diplomacy" that came with these investments.

India feared that Chinese loans to smaller countries could lead to unsustainable debt burdens, eventually giving China undue political leverage. India's concerns were particularly acute in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and other neighbouring countries, where Chinese investments were seen as part of a broader strategic move to establish Chinese dominance in South Asia.

The issue of the Dalai Lama continues to be a thorn in the side of Sino–Indian relations. For India, offering sanctuary to the Dalai Lama has been a symbol of its support for the Tibetan cause. For China, however, the Dalai Lama remains a figure of contention — seen as a challenge to its sovereignty over Tibet.

In recent years, as India has taken a stronger stance on human rights and has deepened its strategic ties with the West, China has become increasingly critical of India's stance on Tibet and other issues.

India's rising ties with the US have further complicated its relationship with China. The two countries' growing strategic partnership — especially in the context of the Indo–Pacific — has led to increasing tensions between Beijing and New Delhi. China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea, its Belt and Road Initiative, and its growing military presence have placed India in a difficult position.

Despite attempts at dialogue, there is an undeniable tension between India's desire for a more secure and independent global role and China's pursuit of regional and global dominance.

In the past two decades, both India and China have had to grapple with the geopolitical realities of an interconnected world. India's participation in BRICS and the SCO, its deepening ties with the US, and its increasingly assertive stance in regional and global politics have put it at odds with China's ambitions. Meanwhile, China's global footprint has only expanded, further complicating bilateral ties.

The Dragon and the Elephant, once bound by common aspirations of peace and prosperity, now find themselves facing a more competitive and uncertain future. As the two countries celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of their diplomatic ties, the relationship between India and China remains as complex as ever.

While cooperation in multilateral forums like BRICS and SCO continues, unresolved issues, mincluding border disputes, the Tibet question, and the growing competition for global influence — continue to challenge the bilateral relationship.

The journey of the Dragon and the Elephant is far from over, and it remains to be seen whether these two great nations can navigate their differences and work toward a future of peaceful coexistence or if history will continue to repeat itself.

Yet, the geopolitical realities of the 21st century present an opportunity for these two giants, often described as the "Dragon" and the "Elephant", to transform their cooperation into a force capable of reshaping global power dynamics.

As emerging economic powers, India and China have the potential to create a partnership that could challenge existing global structures and bring about a new era of economic collaboration, technological innovation, and global influence.

The comparison to a "sleeping giant" is fitting in this context: just as China's rise was once predicted to "shake the world", the cooperation between India and China holds the potential to disrupt and transform the global order.

If both nations can overcome their historical grievances and align their interests, their combined influence in global forums such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) could lead to an era where their collective strength could rival any other power bloc.

The future of their relationship, while uncertain, offers a tantalising possibility: if the Dragon and the Elephant truly cooperate, they could shake the world in ways that extend far beyond their regional borders — creating a new, more balanced world order.

(The writer is a professor at the Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies and Social Sciences, Pondicherry Central University; Views are personal)

India and Sri Lanka: Coping with shared myths and divided realities

Revered in Sri Lanka as a wise and noble king, Ravana's dual identity reflects a broader narrative of cultural divergence, geopolitical entanglement, and historical amnesia between two nations whose fates remain intricately intertwined



Ravan Mandir in Uttar Pradesh, as I observed during my recent visit, a temple claiming to mark the birth place of Ravana, the central character in the Ramayana — remains largely forgotten, drawing little attention from the masses. Situated in an area characterised by extreme poverty and surrounded by the harsh realities of modern Indian inequality — despite India's projected rise as the third-largest global economy by 2030 — the temple's isolation reflects the broader disconnection between India and Sri Lanka.

While Ravana is demonised across India during the annual Dussehra festival, where effigies of the Lankan king are burnt in a symbolic ritual of good triumphing over evil, Sri Lanka holds him in high regard, revering him as a heroic, spiritual leader and a legitimate ruler of ancient Lanka. This contrasting portrayal of Ravana, as a villain in India and as a revered leader in Sri Lanka — highlights the profound contradictions at the heart of Indo–Sri Lankan relations, which remain largely absent from mainstream discourse.

This intertwined relationship — rooted in myth and cultural heritage but shaped by geopolitics, has been marked by moments of unity and tension. There have been times when the two nations worked together, fought side by side, and supported each other unconditionally. During Swami Vivekananda's visit to the US, with a stopover in Colombo, his companion Anagarika Dharmapala generously offered some of his speaking time to Vivekananda, who had not been included on the speakers' list.

This is how Vivekananda's iconic speech at the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, beginning with "Sisters and Brothers of America!", became one of history's most renowned orations. Later, Vivekananda played a decisive role in the establishment of the Maha Bodhi Society.

Furthermore, Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Sri Lanka in 1927, during which he sought to rally support for India's struggle against British colonialism, saw Sri Lankans offering both moral and financial support. Subhas Chandra Bose also visited Sri Lanka during World War II to garner support for the Indian National Army and his fight for Indian independence. Dr B.R. Ambedkar, who converted to Buddhism in 1956, the same year Sri Lanka veered towards deceptive nationalist sentiments — visited the island in 1954 to explore the Buddhist social order. However, tensions between India and Sri Lanka resurfaced dramatically during the 1970s when India became embroiled in Sri Lanka's internal politics. As JN Dixit explained in his Assignment Colombo, "Inter-state relations are not governed by the logic of morality. They were and they remain an amoral phenomenon."

India's covert support for Tamil insurgents in Sri Lanka dates back to the 1970s, well before the acknowledged intervention of the late 1980s. Declassified CIA documents reveal that India provided clandestine aid to Tamil extremist groups, driven by regional ambitions and a desire to exert influence over the Tamil population in Sri Lanka. Dixit recounts a conversation with JR Jayewardene's wife, during which she asked whether Rajiv Gandhi would ensure the President's safety and his continuation in power if he faced the danger of being overthrown.



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

Some reports suggest that Indira's India hoped that supporting the Tamils would counterbalance Sri Lanka's alignment with Western powers. However, this strategy backfired as the situation in Sri Lanka escalated, forcing India to reassess its role.

Amid this turmoil, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's decision to send the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka in 1987 further complicated Indo–Sri Lankan relations. Intended to enforce peace under the Indo–Sri Lanka Accord, this move did little to resolve the Tamil issue and culminated in a disastrous confrontation between Indian forces and the LTTE, with the alleged crimes committed by peacekeepers disappearing without accountability. These events, often seen as mismanagement or poor judgement, were more a result of the power dynamics at play, with Sri Lanka caught between the conflicting interests of major regional powers — India on one side and the West on the other.

The strategic manoeuvring that led to the signing of the 1987 Indo–Sri Lanka Accord was not an isolated event. The agreement itself was the product of years of behind-the-scenes negotiations and geopolitical calculations.

The CIA, with its long-standing involvement in South Asia, is said to have played a role in shaping the Accord, seeking to curb India's influence in Sri Lanka while keeping the island aligned with Western interests.

The Accord, which mandated India's involvement in Sri Lanka's internal conflict, was, in many ways, a forced compromise — a diplomatic solution designed to balance competing geopolitical interests while avoiding a full-blown conflict. But this decision came at a heavy cost. India's intervention in Sri Lanka during the late 1980s remains a point of contention, particularly in light of the subsequent assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 by the LTTE.

Sixteen years after the war ended in May 2009, Sri Lanka continues to face significant challenges, both domestically and internationally, with India playing a pivotal role. In this context, Prime Minister Modi's visit to Sri Lanka assumes even greater importance.

Although not his first visit as Prime Minister, this trip is far more than a mere diplomatic gesture; it comes at a time when Sri Lanka is undergoing fundamental changes in its political landscape. As history has demonstrated, India's involvement in Sri Lanka's future is far from incidental.

The island nation is grappling with multiple crises — economic instability, escalating debt, and regional security concerns. The economy has been hit hard in recent years, further exacerbated by the ISIS-inspired Easter Sunday attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and an increasing dependence on foreign debt.

While Sri Lanka seeks economic recovery, the legacy of Indo–Sri Lanka relations heavily shapes its policies. Despite acknowledging India's importance as a key neighbour and trade partner, Sri Lanka remains wary of excessive reliance on India, especially regarding sensitive issues like the Tamil question and northern sovereignty.

It is well known that Modi's administration has sought to assert a more active role in South Asian geopolitics, and Sri Lanka is no exception. His government has focused on strengthening ties with Sri Lanka, especially in terms of economic cooperation and security partnerships. However, this strategy is not without its challenges. What is undeniable is that Sri Lanka's future — whether its political leaders and citizens accept it or not, is inextricably linked to its relationship with India. As a small island nation, Sri Lanka has limited scope for independent economic and political manoeuvre.

The opportunities for Sri Lankan businesses in India's vast market are immense, but so too are the risks of becoming overly dependent on its powerful neighbour.

Modi's visit, then, presents a crucial moment for both nations to reassess their relationship, not through the lens of past grievances, but with an eye on future possibilities. Whether Sri Lanka can balance its autonomy with the growing necessity for regional partnerships remains uncertain, but the coming years will determine whether it continues to view India as a strategic partner or an imposing neighbour.

Having suffered enough, it's time for Sri Lankans to break free from the fearmongering grip and seize opportunities beyond their shores with bold strategies before the market devours them.

(The writer is a columnist based in Colombo; Views are personal)

The Pioneer
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IN BRIEF



Healthcare hiring grows 62 pc in March: Report

India's healthcare sector witnessed 62 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in March, fuelled by technological advancements and rising demand for medical services, a report said on Monday. "India's healthcare sector is entering a new era where technology and talent are driving transformative change. Our latest data highlights a sharp rise in demand for roles across AI, digital health, and informatics, reflecting a sector-wide pivot toward innovation and patient-centric care," foundit CEO V Suresh said. The sector is creating jobs alongside a growing commitment to gender diversity and inclusion, he added. The report is based on data on its monthly foundit Insights Tracker (fit), a comprehensive monthly analysis of online job posting activity on foundit.in platform. Meanwhile, the report also found that the healthcare sector boasts high women representation (38 per cent of the workforce), yet leadership roles remain disproportionately male-dominated, with women holding only 4 per cent of these positions.



Adani's Colombo terminal commences operations

Billionaire Gautam Adani's firm Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) on Monday said it has commenced operations at Colombo West International Terminal in Sri Lanka. APSEZ, in a statement, said that developed under a public-private partnership, CWIT is operated by a consortium -- comprising India's largest port operator APSEZ, leading Sri Lankan conglomerate John Keells Holdings PLC and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority -- under a 35-year build, operate, and transfer (BOT) agreement. According to the statement, the Colombo West International Terminal (CWIT) project represents a significant investment of USD 800 million and features a 1,400-metre quay length and 20-metre depth, enabling the terminal to handle approximately 3.2 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) annually. It is the first deep-water terminal in Colombo to be fully automated, designed to enhance cargo handling capabilities, improve vessel turnaround times and elevate the port's status as a key transhipment hub in South Asia, the statement added.



Mahindra expands India Design Studio

Mahindra & Mahindra on Monday said it has expanded its Mumbai-based India Design Studio to cater to the evolving needs of its expanding product portfolio. The company has doubled the size of the existing studio and reaffirmed the automaker's commitment to design excellence as a cornerstone of its product development strategy, Mahindra & Mahindra said in a statement. Set up in 2015, the facility was established as a dedicated studio to support the company's auto and farm businesses. With the rapid growth of the company and a broader portfolio spanning auto, farm, and last-mile mobility, the enhanced studio brings fresh investments in design infrastructure, new-age technologies, and global best practices, the company said. "The footprint of the space stands doubled to take on and deliver the ever-expanding project portfolio across businesses," Senior Vice President of Design and Head MIDS Ajay Saran Sharma said.

Manufacturers not overly concerned with tariffs: IT Secy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The electronics and IT sector manufacturers are not "overly" concerned about the recent hikes in import duty by India's largest trading partner the US, a top government official said on Monday.

However, the impact will depend on how the tariff situation plays out ahead, Electronics and IT Secretary S Krishnan said.

"We've been in regular consultation with manufacturers in India. That is something that we are speaking to them on an ongoing basis. They are not overly concerned right now, but it also depends on how this whole situation plays out. It's a dynamic situation," Krishnan told reporters at a Cert-In event.

The US on April 3 imposed an additional 26 per cent tariff on Indian goods, effective April 9.

The sector players are of the view that the Indian industries are better placed as compared to their competitors in the electronics segment.

While the US has imposed an additional 26 per cent import duty on India, its competitor Vietnam is facing a 46 per cent tariff, China 34 per cent, Indonesia 32 per cent, Taiwan 32 per cent and Thailand 36 per cent.

Mobile phone is the biggest contributor to India's electronics manufacturing landscape, with Apple and Samsung being the top exporter in the country.

The majority of iPhones are made in China followed by India, while Samsung has its biggest factory in Vietnam after India.

Commenting on the possible impact of these tariffs, telecom gear maker GX Group CEO Paritosh Prajapati said the 26 per cent tariff will impose a notable cost barrier on Indian hardware exports to the US.

Govt stepping up efforts to help exporters

Group to monitor possible import surge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The government has set up an inter-ministerial group to monitor a possible surge in imports from countries like China, Vietnam and Thailand, fearing a surge in inbound shipments following the imposition of high reciprocal tariffs by the US on these countries, sources said.

The product categories that may see an upsurge in diversion of imports from the US to India include consumer goods, electronics, chemicals and steel.

The clear signals for these rises in imports are likely to manifest from June to July, they said, adding the "import monitoring group" will include officials from the departments of commerce, revenue and the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

The concerned line ministries and industry associations have also been asked to provide inputs on the surge in imports and its impact on the domestic industry.

"The idea is to observe these imports and see if any measures need to be taken. It will look at all the data points closely, including shipments coming from air and sea routes. While intense watch is required, volatility in imports is normal," the sources added.

As sweeping tariffs have been imposed on India's competitors including China, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia, their goods become expensive in the US market and this would lead to diversion of goods into countries like India after some months.

While the US has imposed an additional 26 per cent import duty on India, its competitor Vietnam is facing 46 per cent tariff, China 34 per cent, and Indonesia 32 per cent, and Thailand 36 per cent.

However, they added that this situation also provides an opportunity to the domestic industry to procure intermediate goods at affordable rates.

One of the sources said that the government is also stepping up efforts to help exporters explore new markets.

The commerce ministry is fast-tracking formulation of its export promotion mission to support exporters in areas such as providing credit at affordable rates; and negotiations of proposed free trade agreements with the European Union, Oman, New Zealand and the UK.

Additionally, concerned officials have been directed to hold a series of bilateral meetings with the identified 20 countries such as Australia, Brazil, China, and France for pushing India's exports.

These developments come at a time when exporters and industries have raised concerns that the additional 26 per cent import duty imposed by the US on India may hurt them.

The identified 20 countries are Australia, Brazil, Bangladesh, China, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Turkiye, the UAE, the UK, the US and Vietnam. Huge opportunities are there in these nations for Indian exporters.

'Global uncertainty taking a toll on IT industry's showing'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Rising global uncertainty and fear of slowdown in its biggest market, the US, is seen taking a toll on the Indian IT industry's showing, with several analysts now warning that a possibly weak exit for the just-ended FY25 may be followed by an "unexciting guidance" or outlook pullbacks for FY26 as well as pain up ahead in verticals such as retail and manufacturing.

Discretionary spends, they say, would most likely come under cloud, again, dashing any hopes of its near-term recovery. Market watchers further warn that the next 3-6 months could see a build up of negative news -- including earnings cuts and potential pullbacks in FY26 guidance.

Retail and manufacturing verticals are being called out by industry pundits as particularly vulnerable, amid global aftershocks, and market carnage.

That said, some believe that "survival spend" may come into focus, as also GenAI. While near-term prospects remain muted, outlook could turn favourable in the second half of FY26, driven by macro stabilisation and demand growth from AI, some experts believe.

The big earnings week for export-led tech companies commences this week in the shadow of US' far-reaching global tariffs, and its economic aftershocks worldwide.

IT heavyweight Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is scheduled to make its earnings announcement on Apri 10. Infosys' Q4 and full-year FY25 report card will be out on April 17, Wipro (April 15), HCLTech (April 22) and Tech Mahindra (April 24).

"The fallout from the Liberation Day tariffs has wreaked havoc on Indian IT service stocks, pushing the sector into the eye of the storm. While the full impact will take time to unfold, discretionary spend is likely to be put on hold again," Motilal Oswal said in a note.

This shock bears resemblance to both Covid and the GFC (global financial crisis) -- periods that ultimately triggered powerful tech adoption cycles, according to it.

"Economic shocks often mark the beginning of new tech cycles -- and GenAI's moment may have finally arrived. That said, near-term volatility remains high," it said.

HDFC Securities said the IT sector is anticipated to report a weak exit for FY25 and provide unexciting guidance for FY26 amid rising global uncertainty.

Nabard, HSBC invest Rs 80 cr for 10 pc stake in OPL

PNS ■ MUMBAI

OPL, a digital credit infrastructure company, has received funding of about Rs 80 crore from Nabard and HSBC, officials said on Monday.

The funding will be used to drive innovation in digital ecosystems, according to a statement.

The statement didn't specify the funding amount, but officials pegged it at around Rs 80 crore for a 10 per cent stake.

Nabard's chairman K Shaji said the apex institution for rural development is committed to leveraging technology to enhance financial inclusion and promote sustainable growth in rural India.

"This partnership represents a significant step towards achieving our strategic goals," he added.

HSBC's group head for ventures Moran Levinovitz said the investment in OPL is a step forward in its mission to enhance digital lending capabilities in India.

Gold tumbles Rs 1,550 to Rs 91,450/10 g

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices tumbled by Rs 1,550 to Rs 91,450 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid heavy selling by jewellers and stockists as well as weak global trend, according to the All India Sarafa Association.



On Friday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had finished at Rs 93,000 per 10 grams.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity plunged by Rs 1,550 to Rs 91,000 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 92,550 per 10 grams in the previous market close.

"Gold price slipped...on Monday as panic selling in the equity market and other asset classes continues to weigh down on safe-haven precious metals," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Continuing the losing streak for the fifth consecutive day, silver prices slumped by Rs 3,000 to Rs 92,500 per kg from Friday's closing level of Rs 95,500 per kg.

In the past five sessions, the metal had tanked by Rs 10,500 per kg.

On the global front, spot gold fell USD 10.16 or 0.33 per cent to USD 3,027.20 per ounce.

"Sentiment remained cautious with investors looking for further clarity from the US on its next course of action, especially amid escalating trade tensions," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

The upcoming US Consumer Price Index (CPI) data is expected to play a crucial role in shaping rate interest cut expectations, which could influence gold's direction globally, Trivedi said.

For domestic markets, he stated that investors will also closely watch the Reserve Bank of India's policy meeting later this week, he added.

However, spot silver in the Asian market hours rose 1.65 per cent to USD 30.04 per ounce.

According to Kotak Securities, gold prices saw a sharp decline, in line with a broader market slump, as US President Donald Trump's tariffs and China's retaliatory measures dampened market sentiment.

Sitharaman to attend India-UK Dialogue in London

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will embark on a weeklong official visit to the United Kingdom and Austria on Monday to participate in the India-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue, besides investor roundtable.

During her visit, Sitharaman will participate in 13th Ministerial round of India-UK Economic & Financial Dialogue, besides bilateral meetings, engagement with think tanks, investors, business leaders in both the United Kingdom and Austria.

"Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman will embark on an official visit to the United Kingdom and Austria from 8th to 13th April 2025, today," a finance ministry statement said.

The 13th round of the India-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue (13th EFD) is scheduled to be held in London, United Kingdom, on April 9, 2025.

The 13th EFD dialogue will be co-chaired by the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs and the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The 13th EFD is a significant bilateral platform between the two countries that offers opportunities for candid engagement at the minister-level, officer-level, working groups and between the respective regulatory bodies in various aspects of financial collaboration, including investment matters, financial services, financial regulations, UPI interlinkages, taxation matters, and illicit financial flows.

The key priorities of the 13th EFD dialogue for Indian side include cooperation in IFSC GIFT City, investment, insurance and pension sectors, FinTech and Digital economy, and mobilising affordable and sustainable climate finance.

On the sidelines of India-UK 13th EFD, Sitharaman will engage in bilateral meetings with key dignitaries, participate in investor roundtables and other meetings with heads of key financial institutions and companies.

VIL expands 5G services to cricket stadiums across 11 cities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After the recent launch of its 5G services in Mumbai, Vodafone Idea on Monday said it has now expanded these services to major cricket stadiums across 11 cities.

Cricket fans will be able to experience Vodafone Idea's 5G in stadiums in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, and Visakhapatnam, a release by the telecom operator said.

"Vi customers with 5G-enabled handsets can experience unlimited Vi 5G at these stadiums, by simply switching on 5G usage in their mobile settings," it said, listing out Wankhede Stadium (Mumbai); Arun Jaitley Stadium (Delhi); Chinnaswamy Stadium (Bengaluru); Dr Y.S.R ACA-VDCA Stadium (Vizag); and Eden Gardens (Kolkata).

Other sites include Ekana Stadium (Lucknow); M. A. Chidambaram Stadium (Chennai); Maharaja Yadavindra Singh Cricket Stadium Mullanpur (Chandigarh); Namo Stadium (Ahmedabad); Rajiv Gandhi Stadium (Hyderabad); and Sawai Mansingh Stadium (Jaipur).

To ensure high-speed connectivity to the lakhs of spectators flocking stadiums for live action, the network infrastructure has been strengthened, it said.

"For a seamless 5G experience in high footfalls venues like stadiums, Vi has deployed additional 5G network sites and strengthened its network with technologies like BTS and Massive MIMO (Multiple-Input Multiple-Output)," it added.



Indian banks recovered over Rs 14k cr, twice what I owed: Mallya

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Fugitive liquor baron Vijay Mallya has claimed that Indian banks have got access to his properties worth Rs 14,131.6 crore, more than twice the amount that he owed to public sector banks.

Mallya cited purported reference to the details of restoration done by the Enforcement Directorate against wilful defaulters in the Finance Ministry's annual report 2024-25 to say that banks have already recovered Rs 14,131.8 crore against Rs 6,203 crore awarded by the Debt Recovery Tribunal.

"Finally, against a DRT judgment debt of Rs 6,203 crore, admitted recovery of Rs 14,131.8 crore, which will be evidence in my UK bankruptcy annulment application. Wonder what banks will say in an English Court," Mallya said in a post on X.

Sharing details of fugitive economic offenders, including Mallya and 10 others, the report said a total of 44 extradition requests have been sent to various countries in respect of 36 individuals.

As per the annual report of the ministry, a complete amount of attached properties worth Rs 14,131.6 crore has been successfully restored to the Public Sector Banks in the case of Vijay Mallaya.

The efforts of the ED have resulted in successful representation before Competent Court abroad in the extradition of various fugitive economic offenders and other accused, the report said.

"In this regard, it is pertinent to mention that the UK Court has approved extradition of few high profile accused persons to India following effective representation of the Directorate in coordination with other LEAs (law enforcement agencies) and Indian mission abroad," it said.

The DRT bench of Bengaluru in 2017 had ordered the SBI-led consortium of banks to start the process of recovering Rs 6,203 crore, at an annual interest rate of 11.5 per cent, from embattled Mallya and his companies in the Kingfisher Airlines case.

Mallya, who fled to the UK in March 2016, is wanted in India over a default of Rs 9,000 crore that was loaned to esrtwhile Kingfisher Airlines (KFA) by several banks.

India has been seeking Mallya's extradition from the UK. He had in the past offered to repay 100 per cent of "public money" but accused the banks and government of refusing his offer.

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | TUESDAY | APRIL 8, 2025

'ROUND 2 FOR ME... I STILL GOT THIS': TAHIRA KASHYAP REVEALS BREAST CANCER RELAPSE



Writer-director Tahira Kashyap, wife of actor Ayushmann Khurrana, has revealed that her breast cancer has relapsed. Taking to Instagram on World Health Day, Tahira shared a heartfelt and empowering post about her diagnosis—marking her second battle with the disease after first being diagnosed in 2018.

"Seven-year itch or the power of regular screening—it's a perspective. I'd like to go with the latter," she wrote in a note shared with her followers. "Round 2 for me… I still got this." Tahira used the moment to advocate for regular screenings, particularly mammograms, encouraging others to take charge of their health. In the caption accompanying the post, she added a philosophical and poetic twist to her message:

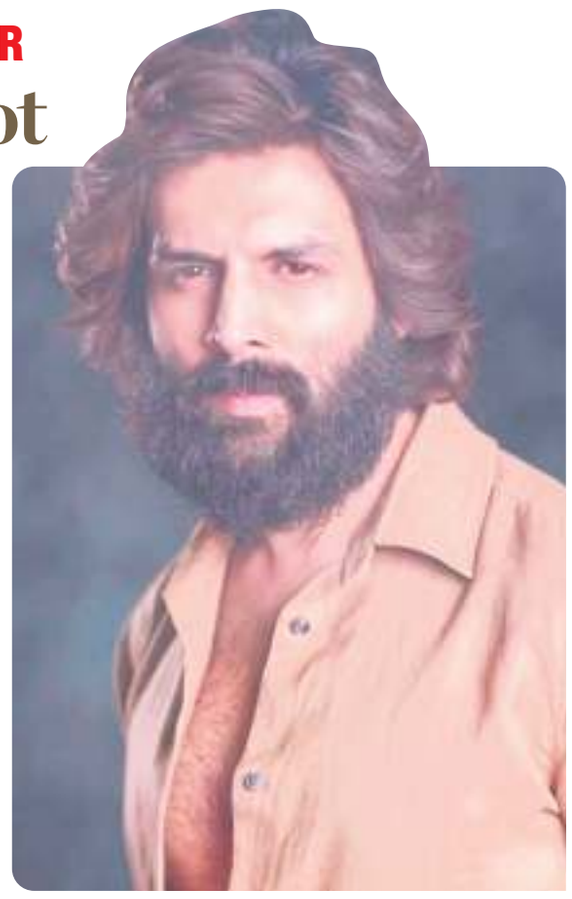
"When life gives you lemons, make lemonade. When life becomes too generous and throws them again at you, you squeeze them calmly into your favourite 'kala khatta' drink and sip it with all the good intentions. Because for one, it's a better drink, and two, you know you will give it your best once again."

She ended her message with hashtags that reflected strength and hope, including #onemoretime, #regularscreening and #letsgo, reminding everyone to prioritise their health.

Her resilience moved many, including her husband Ayushmann, who responded with a simple but emotional tribute: "My hero", adding a heart and teary-eyed emoji. Her brother-in-law, actor Aparshakti Khurana, also showed his support, writing, "Big tight hug bhabhi! We know *Tussi ainu viii lamaaa paa laaonge*," cheering her on with affection and faith.

KARTIK AARYAN CLEARS THE AIR

'I'm single and not dating anyone'



Bollywood heartthrob Kartik Aaryan has finally addressed the long-running speculation around his love life — and he's setting the record straight. The *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3* actor confirmed that he is currently single, putting an end to the buzz linking him with Janhvi Kapoor, Sara Ali Khan and Telugu star Sreeleela.

In a candid chat with Filmfare, Kartik opened up about how constant rumours about his dating life have followed him over the years. "I'm currently single and not dating. In the past, there was a lot of speculation about my dating life, some true, some not."

Reflecting on his early days in the industry, Kartik revealed that it initially felt strange to be romantically linked to someone just because of a photograph or a brief public interaction. He admitted that these headlines used to surprise him, but with time, he's learned to take them in stride and be more mindful about the optics of such situations.

When asked about his thoughts on dating someone from within the industry, Kartik responded with maturity, saying he's open to the idea. He believes being with someone from the same profession could help in understanding the chaotic schedules, long shoots and constant public attention that come with the job.

Despite the buzz, Kartik seems focused on his work and isn't in a rush to jump into a relationship — though he's not closing the door either.



Kiara Advani set to make her met gala debut this year

Kiara Advani is set to represent India at the prestigious Met Gala, marking her debut at fashion's greatest event. With a goddess-like aura, she will step onto the grand fashion stage and this moment will be a significant milestone in her personal and professional journey, symbolizing her beauty and strength.

The Met Gala, known for its celebration of artistry and cultural significance, will now feature Kiara, whose influence continues to expand beyond the Indian film industry. Her debut is not just about style—it is about rewriting narratives, embracing evolution, and showcasing the undeniable force of a woman in her prime. Last year, she represented India at the Red Sea Film Foundation's Women in Cinema Gala Dinner at Cannes, highlighting India's growing influence in the international film landscape. Her look from Cannes, in a striking pink and black gown with intricate lace detailing, went viral, garnering widespread praise and setting new trends in fashion.

Beyond fashion, Kiara has established herself as one of the most successful and versatile Indian actresses of her generation. She has starred in seven global blockbusters, showcasing her immense popularity and box office appeal.

Kiara's presence on such prestigious platforms continues to set new standards for Indian representation at global events. Her career, marked by critically acclaimed performances and commercial success, now extends beyond films into global fashion circles. Her Met Gala appearance signifies another milestone in her ever-expanding international influence, further solidifying her place on the world stage. Hitting new milestones both personally and professionally, Kiara's debut at the Met Gala adds another feather in her cap, soaring higher and higher.

22 YEARS LATER, ANUPAM KHER'S DIRECTORIAL COMEBACK SHINES WITH *TANVI THE GREAT*



Anupam Kher has finally revealed the first look of his deeply personal and long-gestating project *Tanvi The Great*, offering audiences a glimpse into a story that celebrates uniqueness and inner strength. The veteran actor, who also directs the film, shared the powerful teaser on Instagram, calling it a "piece of my heart."

"Is she extraordinary? Is she unique? Does she have a superpower? We don't know," Kher captioned the video. "What we know is that… Tanvi is different but no less!"

The first look introduces us to a mysterious young girl — a character wrapped in innocence, dreams and quiet power. She doesn't speak, yet her presence speaks volumes. There's a palpable sense of magic in her every movement, suggesting she carries a secret or strength that sets her apart.

The film, directed by Anupam Kher and scored by Academy Award-winning composer M. M. Keeravani, marks Kher's return to the director's chair after 22 years, his last being *Om Jai Jagadish* in 2002. Produced under Anupam Kher Studios in collaboration with NFDC, *Tanvi The Great* promises to be a heartwarming journey about identity, acceptance, and self-worth.

The actor reflected on the journey of making this film, saying, "I decided to make *Tanvi The Great* almost four years ago! And then it took four years to write and make it. Now, it's time to share it with all of you — slowly, and with lots of love."

On April 1, Kher had announced the project with visible emotion, tearing up as he shared the film's title and his vision. With this first look, he has given a soulful introduction to a story that could become a milestone in his creative journey.

NETRA VS RIHANNA:

Campus beats 5 heats up the rivalry

Amazon MX Player's hit teen dance drama *Campus Beats is back, and Season 5* promises to be its most explosive chapter yet. The newly released trailer sets the stage for a gripping love triangle, high-stakes dance-offs and emotions that run deeper than ever before.

With Netra and Rihanna now pitted against each other not just on the dance floor but for Ishaan's heart, the lines between passion and obsession blur. Rihanna is ready to push boundaries, break rules and challenge fate to win Ishaan back—just as he begins to find real connection with Netra. But in a world where love collides with ambition and loyalty gets tested at every beat, nothing is ever as simple as it seems.



Set against the backdrop of the World Dance Championship, *Campus Beats* returns with more power-packed performances, heart-wrenching twists and fierce rivalries. Directed by Palki Malhotra, the new season features the return of fan-favorite stars including Shantanu Maheshwari, Shruti Sinha, Sahaj Singh Chahal, Tanvi Gadkari, Harsh Dingwani, Tanya Bhushan, Dhanshree Yadav, Teriya Magar, Adnan Khan, Manish Poonam, Dipankana Das, Manasvi Vashist and Rohan Pal.

Shantanu Maheshwari, who plays Ishaan, shared his excitement for the new season saying, "*Campus Beats* has been a great experience for me, both as an actor and a performer. With every season, the narrative has deepened, the emotions have heightened, and the dance has just gotten more intense. Season 5 raises the bar—more drama, higher stakes, and some of the toughest choreography we've attempted so far."

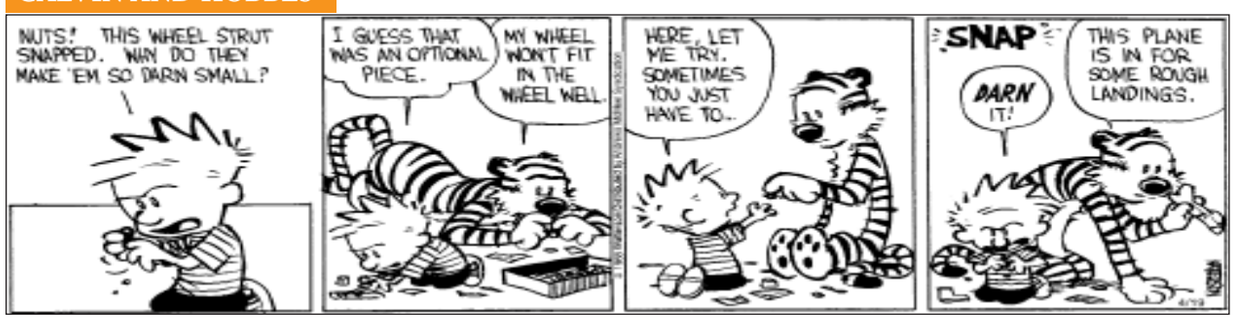
The fifth season of *Campus Beats* premieres exclusively on Amazon MX Player on April 10.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



GARFIELD



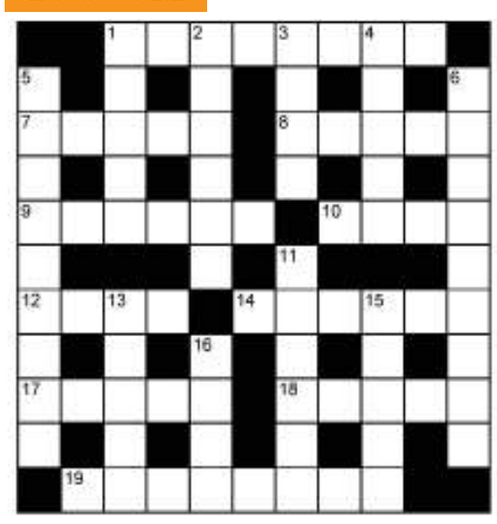
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Quiet and calm
7 A large bird of prey
8 A narrow shelf
9 Thin soft paper
10 Opposite of false
12 Look after for someone
14 Captured
17 Foe
18 This travels on rails
19 Checked the size of
4 Beneath
5 A month
6 Saying again
11 Quicker
13 A female relation
15 Someone who works on 18 across
16 See with these

DOWN

1 Sheets in a book
2 A road with trees along both sides
3 Long slippery fishes

SOLUTION



NANCY



SUDOKU

			4	9			8	7
7	3			2				
1						4		
	9		6				5	
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

GINGER MEGGS



The Pioneer
Vijayawada

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TUESDAY APRIL 8, 2025

'Even after 25 years in Punjab, *Chamak* revealed industry secrets I never knew'

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

In a world where fame comes at a cost and identity is a battlefield, *Chamak* has carved its place as a gripping musical drama set against the gritty backdrop of Punjab's music industry. At the heart of it all is Paramvir Cheema, who returns in Season 2 as Kaala, a man fueled by revenge and haunted by legacy.

In an exclusive conversation with ***The Pioneer***, actor Paramvir Cheema delves into the second season of Sony LIV's *Chamak*, reprising his powerful role as Kaala — a complex character teetering between legacy and rebellion, rage and redemption. With fame finally in his grasp, Kaala's journey in the new season is layered with intensity, emotional depth and high-stakes drama and his performance is poised to push the envelope further.



The *Black Warrant* fame admits he has never personally felt torn between the worlds of legacy and rebellion the way Kaala does. "I've never experienced this in real life," he says with quiet clarity. But when it comes to portraying such turmoil on screen, he's all in.

Reflecting on what fans can expect from *Chamak* Season 2, he promises a version of Kaala that is more fierce, stylish and turbulent than ever. "Audiences can expect a lot of action, a lot of style, and a lot of rage and intensity. We saw Kaala without power and money in season one — now he has recognition, fame and money. The real question is, what will he do with it? Will he forget his revenge or not? There's also the love triangle between Lata, Jazz and Kaala which gets even more interesting."

One moment during the shoot particularly stood out for Paramvir — a helicopter scene with Manoj Pahwa that was left completely to improvisation. "Rohit sir wasn't there. He told us, 'Just play whatever you feel like, stay in character.' I wasn't sure how I had done, but when I saw the final take, it was perfect. We were fifteen days into the shoot and that confidence from the director meant everything."

Cheema feels *Chamak's* exploration of fame's darker side has also helped him reevaluate stardom. "Don't let fame control you. Rather, control yourself. Fame can disappear overnight — so always be prepared. Stay grounded."

To portray Kaala's emotional arc, he focused on building a deep backstory. "A strong backstory reflects on screen. We didn't just discuss the scenes but the life behind the scenes — and that shaped all the nuances."

Even off-camera, Kaala tends to linger. "A lot of times, when I feel I'm being played or playing someone else, I think about how Kaala would react. Sometimes I snap. And whenever I start singing, I just slip into his zone," he chuckles.

Chamak is deeply rooted in Punjab's musical heritage — something that reshaped Paramvir's own musical palette. "Earlier my playlist had old songs. Now I've added a lot of Sufi. I started listening to Arif Lohar, watching his performances. Even being from Punjab, I didn't know some of the secrets Rohit sir showed us about the music industry. It was shocking."

Season 2 also continues to build on the musical foundation, exploring different genres. "Kaala's journey moves from hip hop to folk. We explore every genre this time. And there's Mandy Gill, who's the voice of Kaala — what a brilliant singer! I've been a fan since season one."

Among themes like fame, identity, and legacy, it's identity that resonates most deeply with Paramvir. "It's important to have your own identity. That's Kaala's biggest struggle. In season two, there's a scene where Dimpy hands him his passport — and that moment hit me hard. Without identity, you're nothing. Who's your father? Where do you come from? Why are you the way you are? That defines you." Asked when he found his own voice as an actor, he smiles: "When *Tabbar* released and people started saying, 'Breakthrough performance' — that's when I felt like I had arrived." *Chamak*, he says, also captures the aspirations and struggles of today's youth. "Music is a release for everyone. Revenge, however, is never-ending. Don't waste time on it. Focus on your work, stay with your family, spread love, be humble — that's what truly matters." As for what's next for the actor, he reveals an exciting lineup: *Border 2*, a film with Aanand L. Rai, a Punjabi film, and two web series are all in the pipeline.

A LOT OF TIMES, WHEN I FEEL I'M BEING PLAYED OR PLAYING SOMEONE ELSE, I THINK ABOUT HOW KAALA WOULD REACT. SOMETIMES I SNAP. AND WHENEVER I START SINGING, I JUST SLIP INTO HIS ZONE

SHAPING SKIES, TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF GLOBAL PILOTS



PNS|HYDERABAD

As the aviation industry faces unprecedented growth, the demand for skilled, well-trained pilots has never been higher. At the forefront of addressing this global need is BAA Training, one of the fastest-growing and most comprehensive aviation training academies in the world. With nearly two decades of experience, the institution has evolved far beyond a conventional flight school—offering a full spectrum of training solutions that cater to aspiring pilots, cabin crew, and aviation professionals alike.

Under the leadership of Marijus Ravoitis, CEO of BAA Training, the academy has expanded its global footprint and embraced advanced technologies, international partnerships and region-specific programs to meet the challenges and opportunities of today's aviation landscape. In this interview, Ravoitis shares insights into what sets the academy apart, how it's supporting Indian aspirants through customised programs, and why its global facilities are preparing students for success in a rapidly changing industry.

"What we've learned over the years," says Marijus Ravoitis, "is that it's imperative to cover all the bases of the pilot career journey." This insight has fueled the institution's growth from offering only initial pilot training to becoming a comprehensive academy that provides a wide range of programs. These include Type Rating training and additional specialised courses such as Aviation English, Hour Building, Multi-Crew Cooperation (MCC), License Proficiency Check (LPC), Jet Orientation Course (JOC) and Crew Resource Management (CRM).

Not just limited to cockpit training, they also offer Cabin Crew training, making it a holistic hub for aviation education. "We check all the boxes when it comes to aviation training," he notes.

Their operations are spread across five countries—Lithuania, Spain, France, Vietnam and India—each tailored to specific aspects of aviation training.

He highlights that their Ground School and Simulator Center in Vilnius, Lithuania, currently houses two Airbus A320ceo, one A320ceo/neo, one Boeing 737 NG, and one B737 CL full flight simulators, alongside other flight training devices.

In Spain, the Flight School is based at the Lleida-Alguaire International Airport, which has served as the training base for initial flight operations since 2018. "The location creates an excellent setup for very realistic flight conditions," he says, adding that the proximity to larger airports makes it ideal for skill development. To meet rising demand, BAA Training has invested in an additional 48 Cessna 172 Skyhawk aircraft, expected to be delivered by 2026. This will significantly expand the current fleet of 10 C172S aircraft used for initial flight training.



The Spanish facility is also undergoing infrastructure expansion, including a modern on-site student accommodation, currently under construction and set to be completed by Q3 2025. Moreover, the Simulator Center in Barcelona boasts two A320ceo/neo and one B737 MAX full flight simulators.

The Paris Simulator Center in France recently expanded to include a second A320neo simulator, bringing its total to five full flight simulators, including two B737 NG and one B737-400.

Outside Europe, BAA Training has a significant presence in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, which caters to the Asia-Pacific region. The Vietnam facility houses A320ceo, A320neo, and B737 NG full flight simulators.

In India, they operate through three consultancy centers located in Mumbai, Gurugram and Bengaluru. "Here, we provide a lot of information and consult aspiring pilots from India about the opportunities they can discover at the academy and their studies in Europe as future airline pilots," Ravoitis shares.

With the rising cost of pilot training, concerns are mounting about accessibility, especially in markets like India. "On one hand, it presents financial challenges for aspiring pilots, potentially limiting access to those who can afford the investment. On the other hand, it underscores the growing need for structured financing solutions, scholarships, and airline-sponsored training programs."

Given the booming aviation sector in India, where increasing air traffic and new airlines are constantly expanding, the demand for skilled pilots remains high. "Airlines and training academies are likely to explore alternative models, such as cadet programs and loan partnerships, to ensure a steady pipeline of trained professionals," he adds.

To make aviation careers more accessible, they have introduced the Indian Cadet Program, a dedicated initiative tailored for the Indian market. "It's specially designed to assist aspiring Indian pilots in achieving their dreams of becoming commercial pilots," he explains.

This program is eligible for up to 100% financing of the training cost through several local banks and NBFCs (Non-Banking Financial Companies). "Once a student passes their entry exam, they are eligible to apply for a loan to cover the training costs," he adds.

With three active batches of Indian students and more scheduled to begin in June and September, the program is steadily gaining momentum. "It's a good indicator of the growing popularity of the program," Ravoitis notes.

As India is poised to become the third-largest air passenger market, BAA Training is aligning its efforts to support the country's growth trajectory. "The Indian Cadet Program is what we are promoting in India because it responds to the specific needs of the home market," Ravoitis explains.

While they have quickly expanded its consultancy footprint in India, with three centers in a short span, the focus remains on delivering world-class training in Europe. "Currently, we do not see a very specific need to expand our training facilities in India, but never say never," he remarks, leaving the door open for future developments.

With over 100 airline partnerships worldwide, BAA Training ensures that students are not just trained but also well-prepared for employment. "We combine rigorous training with direct airline partnerships," says Ravoitis. The academy adheres to international aviation standards, and training is conducted using modern simulators and experienced instructors to ensure real-world readiness.

Moreover, career support services, including interview preparation and soft skills development, help graduates make a smooth transition into airline roles.

They are also embracing cutting-edge technology to enhance training outcomes. "Advanced technology, including virtual reality, does play a steadily growing role in our pilot training," Ravoitis says. VR is particularly effective in initial pilot training, offering an immersive environment for practicing cockpit operations, emergency procedures and flight scenarios in a realistic yet controlled setup.

"These technologies complement traditional training methods and ensure that pilots-in-training develop the necessary competencies for certain training stages. As the aviation industry evolves, integrating such advancements helps maintain high training standards and better prepare pilots for real-world operations."

Modern kitchen designs that blend style with functionality

A modern kitchen blends efficiency and style, serving as more than just a place to prepare meals. They are admired by people for its distinctive open floor layout, neutral colours, and clean lines. Rahul Batra, CEO at Elle Decor Kitchens & Wardrobes shares five modern concepts that strike the ideal balance between style and functionality, whether you're creating a new kitchen or remodeling an existing one.

MINIMALIST CABINETRY

Smooth-finished, handleless cabinets with a sleek design are a staple of modern kitchens. Handle-free cabinets with soft-close drawers or push-open features are a practical and elegant addition. The modern aesthetic is enhanced and easy maintenance is ensured by selecting high-gloss or matte-finished surfaces. For a more seamless design, consider using hidden storage areas and built-in organisers. The goal of a minimalist kitchen is to minimize clutter.

SMART KITCHEN TECHNOLOGY

Adding smart technology to the kitchen improves efficiency and convenience. Voice-activated lighting systems, touchless faucets and Wi-Fi-enabled ovens offer smooth operation. Food wastage can be significantly reduced and everyday chores made easier with smart refrigerators that monitor supermarket stocks and expiration dates.

MULTIFUNCTIONAL KITCHEN ISLANDS

A kitchen island is now more than simply an extra countertop; it serves as a multipurpose center point. These days, islands can be used for dining, cooking and storage. To make the most of its use, think about an island with an integrated wine rack, concealed drawers, or built-in shelving. Pull-out breakfast bars and extendable counters are features of some designs that provide additional workspace when needed. A well-designed kitchen island may boost the social mood in the kitchen while easing workflow and increasing the efficiency of meal preparation.

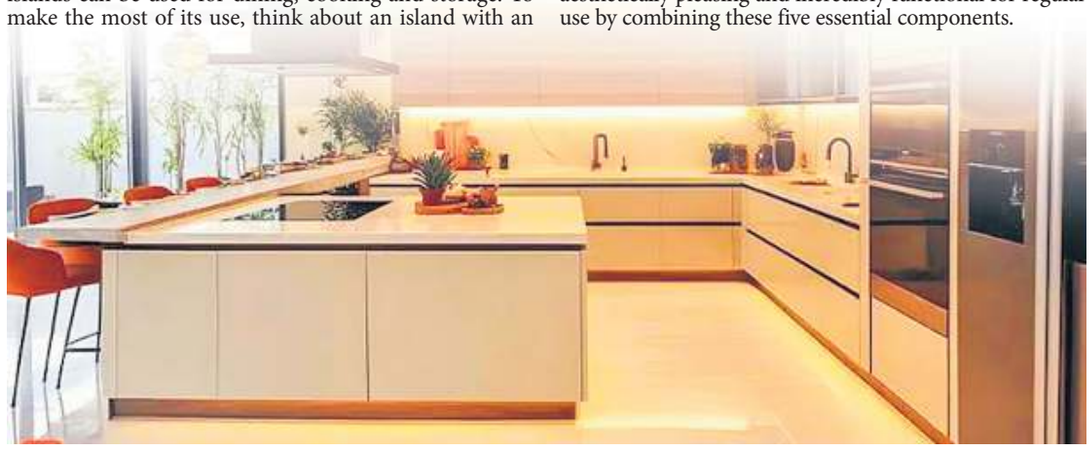
EFFICIENT STORAGE SOLUTIONS

Any modern kitchen needs efficient storage options. Innovative solutions that make the most of available space include deep drawers, corner carousels and pull-out pantry shelves. Baking sheets and cutting boards can be arranged using vertical separators and overhead cabinets with hydraulic lift systems can be installed for convenient access. You can keep a clutter-free kitchen that is yet useful and aesthetically pleasing by making the most of every square inch of available space.

INTEGRATED LIGHTING

Proper lighting is essential for establishing a warm and functional kitchen space. Modern kitchens use tiered lighting, which includes ambient, job, and accent lighting. Under-cabinet LED strips increase visibility while adding a classy touch. Pendant lights above kitchen islands improve both beauty and functionality, whereas recessed ceiling lights provide even illumination. Smart lighting systems can modify brightness and color temperatures based on the time of day and activity.

A modern kitchen with innovative layout is the ideal fusion of style and functionality. You can create a space that is both aesthetically pleasing and incredibly functional for regular use by combining these five essential components.



RISE OF FANTASY HAIR

Hair has always been a form of self-expression, but in recent years, fantasy hair trends like unicorn, mermaid, and e-girl styles have redefined the beauty world. These bold, vibrant looks are more than just a trend—they're a creative revolution, allowing individuals to transform their hair into a visual statement of personality, confidence and imagination.

Unicorn Hair brings magical pastel hues like soft pinks, purples and blues into the spotlight. It's playful and whimsical, giving wearers the chance to embrace their inner dreamer. These rainbow-inspired shades are not just about color—they reflect freedom and creativity, empowering people to stand out and express their uniqueness. Whether it's a soft ombré or vibrant streaks, unicorn hair is all about embracing the extraordinary.

Mermaid Hair, inspired by oceanic hues, brings the beauty of the sea to life with shimmering blues, greens, and silvers. The fluid, beachy waves reflect a sense of natural beauty and adventure, making mermaid hair perfect for those seeking to feel connected to nature and its serene yet powerful forces. This style isn't just a look—it's an experience, evoking the magic of the deep blue sea with every swish.

Then there's E-Girl Hair, a more rebellious and edgy aesthetic that blends bold colors, choppy bangs, and graphic highlights. Think neon streaks or high-contrast colors, offering a futuristic, alternative vibe that's perfect for those who aren't afraid to make a statement. It's a symbol of confidence and individuality in a world that celebrates breaking boundaries.

These fantasy hair trends are here to stay, offering endless ways to express creativity and personality. So why not dive in and transform your hair into a true reflection of yourself?

(The author, Dipti Bhadeshiya, is Hair Expert, at Floractive Professional.)

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | TUESDAY | APRIL 8, 2025

Nehra's advice helped after car crash: Pant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata



The flamboyant Rishabh Pant on Monday acknowledged the influence and guidance of Ashish Nehra after he survived his horrific car accident, saying the former India seamer's advice to "stay happy" stood the keeper-batter in good stead during a difficult phase.

Pant met with the accident on the Delhi-Dehradun highway on the night of December 30, 2022. His car caught fire but he made a lucky escape even though his injuries were quite severe and needed multiple surgeries.

"I think one advice which really helped me was from Ashish Nehra," Pant recalled in a freewheeling chat during CII Eastern Region's interactive session - 'India@100: Leadership Insight from the Sports Economy' here.

"He is a senior from my club also. He just came to me, saw me, and he told me, 'I had lots of injuries. Just one thing if you can do is keep yourself happy. Do things that makes you feel happy. And keep following that'.

"I think that advice really stood with me and helped me to go through my injury," the 27-year-old Pant added.

After a year of intense recovery and rehab, he returned to professional cricket during the Indian Premier League last year and made his international return in the T20 World Cup in the Americas.

For someone who preferred doing everything by himself, losing control over his own body was the most difficult thing to digest.

"I've been playing cricket day in and day out since I was a kid. And just seeing me so immobile in my life — that was the hardest part," he said.

"So even a small thing, brushing my own teeth, was harder for my life. I just couldn't do it for the first one month at least."

It was at that moment Pant realised that he needed to surrender to the process.

"I have to accept that I can't move on from this in one day or two. That is where I calmed myself down and just realised that there is no point being negative and criticising yourself every day. "For me, it might be eating food. For someone else, it might be talking to someone. So you have to find your own way."

Gratitude over everything

The accident changed his perspective on life. "Once your perspective to life changes, the perspective to sports definitely changes. Because how you see life, eventually it will follow," he said.

Pant realised how people often take most things in life for granted.

"Simple things like waking up every day, brushing your own teeth, walking towards your washroom... Small, small things but it plays a huge part. And as day to day life, we take it for granted. I think that is my learning from it."

For a professional cricketer, success is often measured in runs, wickets and records but Pant's brush with the near-fatal accident reshaped his definition of it.

"You want to be successful each and every day. But a lot of time in sport it might not happen," he said.

"But that doesn't mean you are going to beat around the bush and put you down always. You have to have a mindset where you push yourself. 'Yes, I can be better'."

After leaving Delhi Capitals, Pant was acquired by Lucknow Super Giants for an IPL record fee of Rs 27 crore in the mega auction last year, after which he was made the captain of his new franchise.

Pant, who is going through a lean patch in the ongoing IPL, has a simple philosophy to deal with tough times: back the process, trust instincts.

"We should be following a certain process and that is part of my day-to-day life," he said.

"When you keep it very simple, like if you are watching a wicket, how it's going to play, what this batsman is going to do, what we can execute in a better way.

"Like Mahi bhai (MS Dhoni) said, if you can keep it simple for longer period of time, I think you're going to get the fair result." He added, "I'm someone who lets that instinct take over during the game time. Because, in pressure situations, what happens is that you don't back your decision sometimes. So I feel that is really important for me."

For Pant, leadership is about keeping the team like one big family.

"The word 'team' means just one family. We always talk about how we can create an environment where everyone feels comfortable.

"A team for me is like having one goal — collective people having one goal and working towards one goal."

Cricket has also taught him to back people during their worst days.

"Everyone on the field will not have the greatest of day. But at that moment, can you give that guy enough confidence, so he can deliver? You know, one ball matters. One extraordinary something. One extraordinary catch. One extraordinary run out."

Will decide whether I want to play more: Dhoni on IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The legendary MS Dhoni stayed immune to the growing clamour around his future in the IPL, saying the decision to bring curtains on his career depends on how his body reacts to the demands of top-flight cricket and he has "10 months" to take a call.

In this IPL, Dhoni has not been able to make the kind of impact that he usually does while batting in the lower middle-order.

His lack of timing and ineffectiveness, evidenced in the 76 runs that he made from four matches, have prompted several experts to urge the multiple World Cup-winning skipper to move on.

"I am still playing the IPL and it is one year at a time for me. I am 43 now and by the end of this IPL season, I will be 44," Dhoni said on entrepreneur Raj Shamani's podcast recently.

"So, I have 10 months to decide whether I want to play one more year and it's not me to decide as it is my body that decides whether I can play or not," he added.

However, the former Chennai Super Kings skipper, who led CSK to five IPL titles, said he is quite content with his achievements on the field.

"It is not about whether I am happy or unhappy. Whatever has happened has happened. It cannot be changed. It's about accepting all of it. You know, whatever happens I will not be able to add one more run to my international runs, and no one will be able to reduce them," he said.

Dhoni has always been a man of the present. But, for once, he set aside that pragmatic side to reveal his wish of seeing legends like Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Virender Sehwag and Yuvraj Singh assemble in the same team once again.

"I will stick to Indian players. Viru pa opening the innings, Sachin, Dada… and now you imagine everyone at their prime. Then you will get this feeling that there can't be anyone better than them.

"It's tough to pick an all-time eleven. Now, when you see Yuvi hitting six sixes, you will feel that I don't want to watch any other batsman. It's all about enjoying what they have done for India. Some of those talents we have seen are mind blowing," he added.

Big improvement needed in all three departments: Vettori

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hyderabad

Sunrisers Hyderabad head coach Daniel Vettori says their fourth loss in a row in the IPL was down to the sub par showing in all three departments of the game and that will have to change if they are to arrest the slide.

SRH, who made the final last year with an uber-aggressive style of play, have not been able to carry their belligerent run into this season.

Their top three — Travis Head, Abhishek Sharma and Ishan Kishan — have failed to find consistency thus far.

"I think everyone in the room understands that and it hasn't really been close in the last four games.

"But obviously the challenge for us is moving forward because every IPL team at some stage goes through a run of losses and now we have a five-day break before we play Punjab who's been exceptional so far in the tournament. We need to get ourselves up for that game," said Vettori after the loss to Gujarat Titans on Sunday night. However, it is not in his and skipper Pat Cummins' nature to press the panic button.

"It's probably slow. This is glacial, maybe, in terms of starts. I don't think Pat's ever panicked in his life and I think I'm pretty similar. But we understand the ramifications of losing four in a row and how difficult it makes the season. And it's tough because obviously you come into the season with high expectations after last year and then a very good start."

Sunrisers Hyderabad reaped rich rewards for their fearless display at the top of the order but on slower pitches, it has not worked for the team so far in the competition. Their top order has yet to find consistency

Vettori had no qualms in admitting that his team has been far below its best.

"We just haven't been near our best in any of the last four games. And I think that's all three disciplines. I think the barometer of most teams is how their fielding is going and we've been pretty poor in the field. So those will be the work-ons between now and the Punjab game," said the former New Zealand spinner.

SRH reaped rich rewards for their fearless display at the top of the order but on slower pitches, it has not worked for the team so far in the competition.

"So I think we know the style that's going to work, but we have to respect conditions and we have to assess really well. And that's probably something we haven't done as well. And also have to respect how well other teams are bowling, putting a lot of planning into our top three," added Vettori.

Bowling late in the powerplay helping me do my job better

Titans' pacer Prasidh Krishna has been impressive in the middle overs and was one of the star performers on Sunday night alongside Mohammed Siraj.

"So, that is helping me do my job better (bowling late in the powerplay)."

On Siraj, he added: "We've had great sessions together. All the work that he's (Siraj) put in from January or February that he's been working on. Everything is going well. "I think if you look at the wins that we've had, they came with a lot of understanding of what the wicket is behaving like and adjusting our game plans accordingly."

Dhoni's presence affecting balance as CSK face tricky Punjab test

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mullanpur



The distinct lack of firepower in Mahendra Singh Dhoni's death overs batting is a sensitive area that Chennai Super Kings need to address ahead of their away IPL clash against Punjab Kings here on Tuesday. In one of their worst starts to an IPL season, CSK have now completed a hat-trick of defeats, all while chasing. While Punjab Kings lost their previous game against Rajasthan Royals at home but on current form as well as on paper, Shreyas Iyer's side looks more well-rounded than CSK who are grappling with combination problems.

Dhoni's presence at the back-end, which once was considered a boon, is turning into bane for the 'Yellow Brigade'.

But such is the aura of the man playing his 18th IPL season (only one apart from Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma), that no one in the CSK ranks can probably walk up to the man and show him the mirror. While 'Brand Dhoni' still rules the hearts of CSK aficionados and cheer is deafening when he enters the turf, the game against Delhi Capitals was certainly an awakening for his supporters that there is more to a team than their 'Beloved Thala' and probably it's time to move on.

The opposition teams now expect to bat first and somehow score anything above 180 knowing that it would be an uphill task for CSK unless Shivam Dube fires.

Now Dube is a muscular hit and miss kind of a player and odds of his success with his template will always be 50-50.

Dhoni's greatness in all these years has been his immaculate sense of timing whether it is bidding adieu to captaincy or retiring from international game. Will he decide himself once again or wait for the nudge? With Dhoni being the same player and no one to "bell the cat", CSK are in unusual mess with a mis-firing top-order where the skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad has had to give up his opening slot.

"No, that's not my role to put an end to it. I have no idea. I'm just enjoying working with him. He's still going strong. I don't even ask these days. You guys are the ones that ask (about retirement)," head coach Stephen Fleming's helplessness was evident after the 25-run loss to DC where the former skipper didn't even try at times to go for big shots.

Match-up against Chahal could be interesting

Yuzvendra Chahal, the seasoned leg-spinner, will certainly play a key role against Chennai Super Kings as he enjoys a favourable match-up against his former India captain. Chahal and Dhoni have been pitted against each other 10 times in various IPL games and the Haryana bowler has dismissed the legend five times.

For Punjab Kings, skipper Iyer and young Nehal Wadhera's form keeps them in good stead.

TEAMS

Chennai Super Kings: Ruturaj Gaikwad (c), MS Dhoni (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Shivam Dube, Matheesha Pathirana, Noor Ahmad, Ravichandran Ashwin, Devon Conway, Syed Khaleel Ahmed, Rachin Ravindra, Rahul Tripathi, Vijay Shankar, Sam Curran, Shaik Rashid, Anshul Kamboj, Mukesh Choudhary, Deepak Hooda, Gurjanpreet Singh, Nathan Ellis, Jamie Overton, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Ramakrishnan Ghosh, Shreyas Gopal, Vansh Bedi (wk), Andre Siddarth.

Punjab Kings: Shreyas Iyer (c), Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Marcus Stoinis, Nehal Wadhera, Glenn Maxwell, Vyshak Vijaykumar, Yash Thakur, Harpreet Brar, Vishnu Vinod, Marco Jansen, Lockie Ferguson, Josh Inglis, Xavier Bartlett, Kuldeep Sen, Pyla Avinash, Suryansh Shedge, Musheer Khan, Harnoor Pannu, Aaron Hardie, Priyansh Arya, Azmatullah Omarzai

Babar, Rizwan dropped from Pakistan's T20 squad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lahore



Captain Muhammad Rizwan and Babar Azam were on Tuesday dropped from the Pakistan squad for the five-match T20 series in New Zealand.

Salman Ali Agha replaced Rizwan as captain of the T20 outfit with all-rounder Shadab Khan being recalled and named his vice-captain.

Rizwan has been retained as captain of the ODI squad after the team's disappointing show in the Champions Trophy. The selectors have avoided an overhaul in the one-day squad and retained majority of the players who flopped in the ongoing ICC event.

Babar is also retained in the ODI squad but batters Saud Shakil and Kamran Ghulam have been axed.

The selectors have also sidelined fast bowlers Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf from the one-day squad.

Pakistan play five T20s and three ODIs in New Zealand starting March 16. Pakistan will still be without dashing opener Saim Ayub, who is yet to recover from an ankle injury while opener, Fakhar Zaman has also been ruled out of the tour with an injury he sustained in the first match of the CT.

His injury came after making a comeback to the Pakistan squad last month in the three-nation event while Saim got injured while fielding during the Test series in South Africa earlier this year.

PAKISTAN SQUADS:

ODI: Muhammad Rizwan (captain), Salman Ali Agha (VC), Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Akif Javed, Babar Azam Faheem Ashraf, Imam ul Haq, Khushdil Shah, Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Wasim junior, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah Sufyan Muqeem, Tayyab Tahir.

T20: Salman Ali Agha (captain), Shadab Khan (VC), Abdul Samad, Abrar Ahmed, Haris Rauf, Hasan Nawaz, Jahandad Khan, Khushdil Shah, Muhammad Abbas Afridi, Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Haris, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Omair Bin Yousuf, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufyan Muqeem, Usman Khan.

Saim Ayub, Fakhar Zaman set for comeback

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Karachi



Pakistan openers Saim Ayub and Fakhar Zaman are set to return to action in the Pakistan Super League after recovering from injuries, which forced them to miss the Champions Trophy and the white-ball series against New Zealand recently.

A PCB source confirmed that both the left-handed batters had been cleared by the Pakistan Cricket Board's medical panel to return to competitive cricket in the PSL, which begins on April 11.

Saim has been out of action since early January when he fractured his ankle while fielding on the first day of the second Test against South Africa in Cape town.

The more seasoned Fakhar, after returning to action in the tri-nation tournament, injured himself in the opening match of the Champions Trophy.

Fakhar has been grappling with a knee problem in the last two years and had returned to the national side in February after being out of the ODI squad since the 2023 World Cup.

The source said that Saim had joined the Peshawar Zalmi training camp in Islamabad while Fakhar was also with the Lahore Qalandars side.

Saim's absence was felt in the Champions Trophy, hosted by Pakistan, as he had scored two hundreds in the ODI series in South Africa, which Pakistan won 3-0.

Pakistan struggled badly on the recent tour of New Zealand, losing the T20 series 1-4 to a depleted home side and getting whitewashed 0-3 in the ODI series.

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WARM BUT WORN-OUT

HOME TOWN FEELS LIKE A RE-RUN

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
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REVIEW



90's – A Middle Class Biopic, streaming on ETV Win, has emerged as a massive success. Released in January this year, it has become one of the biggest blockbuster Telugu web series in recent years across any OTT platform. The heartfelt performances and nostalgic storytelling transport viewers back to their childhood, striking a strong emotional chord. Featuring Sivaji and Vasuki Anand in the lead roles, the series was directed by Aditya Hasan, with filmmaker Naveen Medaram—considered the driving force behind the project—playing a key role in its making.

Riding on the success of *90's – A Middle Class Biopic*, the same team has now come up with another period drama titled *Home Town*, which is currently streaming on Aha. This new series features veteran actors Rajeev Kanakala and Jhansi in lead roles and is directed by Srikanth Reddy Palle.

PLOT

The story of *Home Town* is set around 2003 in a small village named Hanumanthulagudem in Telangana. Prasad (Rajeev Kanakala) is a photographer who leads a simple life with his wife (Jhansi), and their children—Jyothi (Annie) and Srikanth (Prajwal Yadham). This middle-class family depends solely on Prasad's income from his photo studio. He dreams of sending his son abroad after completing his studies, while he assumes his daughter will get married and leave the house, thus focusing more on his son's future.

However, Srikanth turns out to be a poor student who constantly engages in mischief with his friends. In contrast, Jyothi is a good student and obedient. The web series consists of five episodes, each depicting a slice-of-life moment from this middle-class family and their struggles. The story explores whether Prasad's dream of sending his son abroad will come true and what significant act Srikanth does for his sister despite being irresponsible in studies. To find out more, viewers will need to watch *Home Town* on Aha.

ANALYSIS

Director Srikanth Reddy Palle pens a nostalgic story capturing the everyday challenges of a middle-class family in the early 2000s. The series contains five episodes, each named after pop-cultural or emotional themes like Cricket World Cup, Weekly Magazine, Love, Facebook and Fly. The first three episodes are well-written and narrated with a strong sense of nostalgia. Despite a few scenes that feel stretched or silly, these episodes are still enjoyable.

However, the fourth episode titled Facebook feels underwhelming. The portrayal of Megastar Chiranjeevi replying to a kid, followed by the characters traveling to Hyderabad's Ramanaidu Studios to meet him, appears exaggerated and overly cinematic.

The primary drawback lies in the fact that the makers of *Home Town* had earlier created the web series *90's – A Middle Class Biopic*, which was a massive success on ETV Win. Unfortunately, *Home Town* feels like a near replica of that series. For those who have already seen *90's – A Middle Class Biopic*, this new series may evoke a strong sense of déjà vu.

Additionally, there are factual inconsistencies—for instance, kids in 2003 had some technical know-how, yet in this series, they're portrayed as not even knowing how to use a cricket guard. The Facebook episode particularly drags, while the final episode offers some intrigue but also includes cinematic liberties like memo mark sheets and getting a visa easily. The Love episode fares better with its emotional tone. Much like the earlier series, this one also explores an interfaith angle—shifting from a Hindu-Christian pairing to a Hindu-Muslim one.

Rather than focusing solely on the mischiefs of the three kids, the director could have deepened the emotional core by portraying more of the family's struggles. He references Chiranjeevi's Shankar Dada MBBS to mark the timeline, though the film was released in 2004. While the director does succeed in extracting good performances from the cast, more attention to emotional depth would have elevated the series.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Suresh Bobbili provides a pleasing musical score that complements the nostalgic tone of the series. The cinematography by Dev Deep Gandhi Kundu successfully captures the early 2000s ambiance, further enhancing the series' period setting. Although some scenes lean into melodrama and cinematic exaggeration, the technical aspects overall support the storytelling decently.

PERFORMANCES

Rajeev Kanakala, a seasoned actor, delivers a commendable performance with authentic dialogue delivery. His grasp of the Telangana dialect adds further depth to his portrayal of Prasad. Jhansi, another established performer, matches him step-for-step and gives a solid performance as the family's matriarch. Their on-screen chemistry and emotional presence are highlights of the series.

Prajwal Yadham, who plays Srikanth, the mischievous son, portrays his character naturally and consistently throughout the series. He shows promise as a young actor with a bright future ahead. Annie, known for her childhood role in Nagarjuna's *Rajanna* (2011), convincingly plays the role of the studious daughter and performs her part well.

Sairam stands out with his comic timing and provides several laugh-out-loud moments. Interestingly, he reprises a similar role from *90's – A Middle Class Biopic*. Anirudh Bhaskar, who plays another one of Srikanth's friends, also does a good job in his supporting role.

CONCLUSION

Home Town has its moments—particularly for those who enjoy nostalgic tales centered around middle-class family dynamics. Some segments genuinely take viewers back in time, offering heartfelt moments and relatable mischief. However, for those who have already seen *90's – A Middle Class Biopic, Home Town* might come across as repetitive and derivative. Despite this, it still offers enough charm and emotion to make it worth a watch, especially for fans of coming-of-age dramas and slice-of-life storytelling.

Cast: Rajeev Kanakala, Jhansi, Annie, Prajwal Yadham, Sairam, Anirudh Bhaskar and others

Music Director: Suresh Bobbili

Cinematographer: Dev Deep Gandhi Kundu

Producer: Rajasekhar Medaram

Director: Srikanth Reddy Palle

Rating: 2.5/5



NTR is all praises for *Mad Square* team

After returning from Japan where he was promoting *Devara*, Jr NTR attended the success meet of *Mad Square*. He praised the director and entire team of the film. "When we are in stress, laughter is the only thing that helps us come out of it. Making people laugh is not easy, but director Kalyan Shankar succeeded with *Mad* and now again with the sequel *Mad Square*," NTR said.

He added that creating a sequel that's funnier than the original is a challenge, but Kalyan pulled it off. "Vishnu, who played Laddu, is the soul of the film. He portrayed an innocent boy, which is very difficult. If you ask whether it's harder to play Rama or Ravana, I would say Rama, because we've forgotten how to be innocent," NTR added.

He also appreciated the performances of Sangeeth Shobhan and Ram Nithin. "I met Sangeeth's father, Sobhan garu, once. He was a humble person. I'm sure he's blessing his son from above after seeing his success," said NTR. Talking about Ram Nithin, NTR remarked, "He looks like me when I was younger."

Speaking about his brother-in-law, Narne Nithin, NTR said, "He got married in 2011 and was very shy back then. One day he told me he wanted to become an actor. I told him to do what he loved. Without any help from me, he chose his own scripts and is succeeding now."

During the event, NTR also confirmed that *Devara Part 2* is definitely happening. "In between, I'll be doing a film with Prashanth Neel. And yes, *Devara Part 2* will definitely be made," he confirmed. He also revealed that he is doing a film with producer Naga Vamsi. "Details about that film will be announced by Naga Vamsi," he said.

Nani to postpone his film *The Paradise*?

Actor Nani announced the release date of his upcoming film *The Paradise* as March 26, 2026. Directed by Srikanth Odela, the team released a promotional video a few days ago, giving the impression that the film is a full-fledged action entertainer. Interestingly, although the shooting has not yet begun, Nani went ahead and announced the release date.

Meanwhile, Ram Charan's film *Peddi* also unveiled its promotional video on the occasion of Rama Navami, announcing its release date as March 27, 2026 — just a day after Nani's film. Adding more heat to the March 2026 box office battle, Kannada superstar Yash's pan-Indian film *Toxic* is also set to release on March 19, 2026.

With two massive films releasing back-to-back in the same week, sources suggest that Nani might consider postponing The Paradise. Competing with two pan-India stars may affect the film's revenues, especially since exhibitors may prioritise Ram Charan's film. The source further revealed that Nani might wait to announce a new release date after completing some parts of the film.

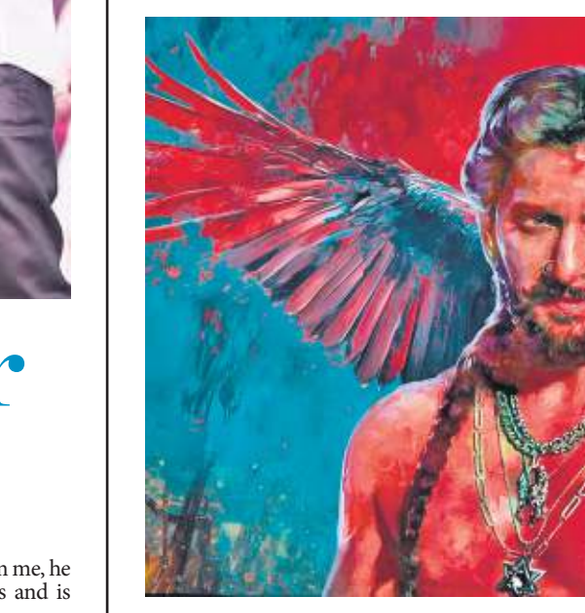


Ashwin Babu returns with a medical action thriller

Ashwin Babu, known for his distinctive film choices like *Raju Gari Gadhi, Hidimba* and *Shivam Bhaje*, is now working on a new film titled *Vachinavadu Goutham*. Directed by Mamidala MR Krishna and produced by T. Ganapathi Reddy, this film has a medical action mystery as its backdrop, which the makers describe as a gripping and unique subject. Sai Ronak will be seen in a cameo.

Ashwin, who consistently opts for offbeat stories and unusual titles, is joined by Riya Suman and Ayesha Khan in key roles. The film also features Murali Sharma, Sachin Khedekar and Abhinaya.

The first look of Ashwin Babu from the film was unveiled on Monday. The makers shared that 90% of the shoot is complete and they will announce the release date after wrapping up the remaining portions.



Sivaji to play a key role in *Dhandoraa*



Producer Ravindra Banerjee Muppaneni, who previously delivered the National Award-winning *Colour Photo* and the blockbuster Bedurulanka 2012, is back with his next venture titled *Dhandoraa*. The team has successfully wrapped up the first schedule and has now begun the second schedule in Dharipally village, located in Medak district, Telangana.

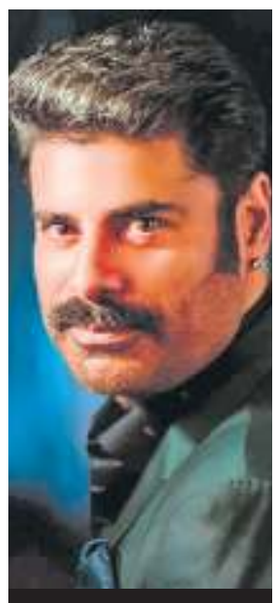
Following his praised performance as Mangapathi in the latest hit *Court*, actor Sivaji has now joined the sets of *Dhandoraa* and will be part of the ongoing shoot. Set against the rustic backdrop of rural Telangana, the film tackles harsh social realities and prevalent evils in society.

The film features Navdeep, Nandu, Mounica Reddy and Bindu Madhavi in pivotal roles. *Dhandoraa* is directed by Muralikanth with music composed by Mark K Robin.



TINSEL TALK

Sun Pictures sent fans into a frenzy with a cryptic post on Sunday evening, hinting at a massive upcoming project. The post described it as a "magnum opus where mass meets magic," leading fans to speculate that it could be the much-rumoured collaboration between superstar Allu Arjun and blockbuster director Atlee.



Actor Sikandar Kher set to make his South debut with a Telugu film

After winning accolades for his powerful performance in *Monkey Man* and securing multiple Bollywood projects, it seems like Sikandar Kher is now eyeing the South Indian film industry. According to sources, the talented actor is gearing up to make his debut in a prominent South film in Telugu language in a dark comedy genre helmed by a debutant director.

A reliable source close to the development shared, "Sikandar has been receiving a lot of appreciation for his recent work, and now, he is all set to explore South cinema. The project is a big one and he will be playing a role that truly justifies his acting prowess. An official announcement can be expected soon. The film is a dark comedy and is being helmed by a debutant director."

Sikandar Kher has steadily carved a niche for himself with his gripping performances and if the buzz is true, his South debut will be another exciting chapter in his career. We will have to wait for an official word, but the anticipation is already building.