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118 Pak forward posts fully destroyed by BSF: Amit Shah

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9

Mahesh Babu's Khaleja roars back to life, dominates re-release BOX OFFICE

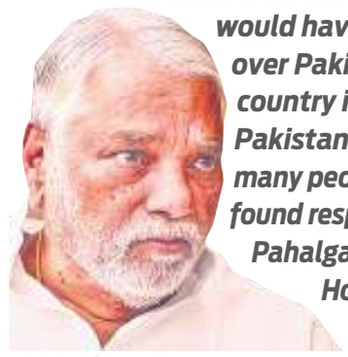


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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

"Have any international papers written anywhere that we won the war..No one else has written it except our paper..If there is no ceasefire, we would have won the war over Pakistan...No country is saying that Pakistan has lost...How many people have been found responsible for the Pahalgam incident. How many people are there?"



- K Keshava Rao, Adviser to the TG (Public Affairs)

P2

DON'T MISS...

Kothagudem becomes Municipal Corporation

As part of strengthening civil administration in Telangana, a significant development has taken place with Kothagudem Municipality being upgraded to a Municipal Corporation. In this expansion process, the state government has issued a Government Order (GO) forming the Kothagudem Municipal Corporation by merging Kothagudem and Palwancha municipalities along with seven village panchayats underSujathanagar mandal. The official gazette notification regarding the ...

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'Time up for Pak's dangerous game'

Pakistan should hand over UN designated terrorists Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar to India if it is serious about talks between the two countries, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Friday. In an interaction with the naval warriors onboard aircraft carrier INS Vikrant off Goa, Singh said if Pakistan resorts to anything "evil or unethical" against India, it will face the firepower and ire of the Indian Navy this time. If Pakistan tries to cast an evil eye, the opening of New Delhi's response will be at the hands of the ...

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Mallika shares her beauty journey

Renowned Bollywood actress Mallika Sherawat has finally unveiled the secret behind her radiant skin and luscious hair, crediting RediClinic's premium Biotin and Glutathione supplements as her go-to wellness duo. In a recent Instagram video that has been trending among beauty enthusiasts, Mallika opens up about her journey toward achieving natural glow and health from within, moving beyond superficial skincare routines. In her recent announcement she says "Beauty isn't just ...

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India's gold rush continues at AAC

Long-distance runner Gulveer Singh shattered a decade-old meet record, high-jumper Pooja Singh delivered a personal best show, while heptathlete Nandini Agasara rose to the occasion after a setback as the trio added three more gold medals to India's kitty on the penultimate day of the 26th Asian Athletics Championships here on Friday. The country's overall tally swelled to 18, including eight gold, seven silver and three bronze medals. India look well on course to match or better the 27 medals ...

-SPORTS

Miss World Org sues Miss England

Only Rs 20 crore spent on Miss World event

Private players raised Rs 30 to Rs 40 crore

SAMUEL JOSHUA
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HYDERABAD

The Miss World Organisation has filed a defamation case in a British court over the allegations made by Miss England Milla Magee, Jayesh Ranjan, the Special Chief Secretary of the Tourism and Culture Department, said.

He said the Telangana government found no truth in the contestant's claims after reviewing facts. The seating at the Chowmahalla Palace dinner, a point of controversy, was jointly handled by the tourism department and Miss World Organisation authorities, but had no connection to the incident involving Milla, Jayesh said.

He said the purpose of hosting the Miss World 2025 event was not to chase glamour or profit, but to brand Telangana globally and promote its culture and heritage.

"The real impact will start after June 2. Telangana will begin to gain visibility and international branding," he said.



Miss England Milla Magee

The finale on May 31 at Hitex will be attended by international guests, Bollywood stars, Ministers of various states, and ambassadors of foreign countries, he said.

Jayesh said that he personally oversaw VIP seating for 1,000 public guests.

If 109 contestants visit Telangana, take pictures, create reels, write blogs, and give interviews, why not be the next visitor yourself?

While critics have questioned the event's cost, Jayesh clarified that only about Rs 20 crore has been spent so far, and not Rs 200 crore as alleged.

He said that sponsors like Auro Realty, the Sudha Reddy Foundation, and Honor Homes collectively raised Rs 30 to Rs 40 crore to fund the event. The government bore only a part of the expenses, and at least 10 sponsors were involved.

On infrastructure development, he pointed out that roads, logistics, hotel accommodations, and guides were improved at sites visited by contestants. These upgrades, he said, would

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AWARDS ANNOUNCED FOR THE YEARS 2014 TO 2023

'Bahubali' 'RRR' chosen for TG govt's Gaddar Film Awards

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Ace film director SS Rajamouli's 'Bahubali-2' and 'RRR' were among the selections for the Telangana Government's Gaddar Film Awards announced for the years 2014 to 2023.

Senior actor, producer Murali Mohan, who headed the award selection jury, announced the names of the winners of six other awards on Friday.

Veteran director Mani Ratnam has been chosen for the Paidi Jairaj Film Award (Indian Film Personality). Murali Mohan said the first, second and third Best Films for 2014 were 'Run Raja Run,' 'Pathashala' and 'Alludu Srinu' respectively.

'Rudrama Devi,' 'Kanche' and 'Srimanthudu' were the first, second and third Best Films of 2015.

'Sathamanam Bhavathi,' 'Pelli Chupulu' and 'Janatha Garage' were the first, second and third Best Films respectively of 2016.

In 2017, 'Bahaubali - Conclusion', 'Fida' and 'Ghazi' were the first, second and third Best Films.

'Mahanati,' 'Ranga Sthalam' and 'C/o Kancherapalem' bagged the awards for 2018, while 'Maharshi,' 'Jersey' and 'Mallesham' were selected for the honours for 2019.



'Ala Vaikuntapuramulo,' 'Colour Photo' and 'Middle Class Melodies' were the first, second and third Best Films respectively of 2020.

'RRR,' 'Akhanda' and 'Uppena' were selected for the awards for 2021, while 'Sitaramam,' 'Karthikeya-2' and 'Major' bagged the honours for 2022. 'Balagam,' 'Hanu Man' and 'Bhagavanth Kesari' secured the 2023 awards. 'Praja Kavi Kaloji' got the Special Jury Award.

Murali Mohan said director Mani Ratnam has been selected for the Paidi Jairaj Film Award (Indian Film Personality). Paidi Jairaj, a Telangana native, is a veteran actor and director of Bollywood who has also bagged the Dadasaheb Phalke award.

Seasoned actor N. Balakrishna has been selected for the NTR National Film Award (Artiste). Balakrishna is the legendary actor, NT Rama Rao's son.

Director Sukumar of 'Pushpa' fame bagged the BN Reddy Film Award (Telugu Film Director).

Senior film producer Atluri Purnachandra Rao has been selected for the Nagireddy and Chakrapani Film Award (Telugu Producer). Young hero Vijay Devarakonda won the Kantha Rao Film

Continued on Page 2

KTR showcases TG's success at London Bridge India Week

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



BRS working president K. Taraka Rama Rao made a compelling case for Telangana as a national and global model of development at the London Bridge India Week 2025 summit, where he delivered the keynote address on Telangana's economic and welfare trajectory over the past nine years. His address drew praise from global political and business leaders in attendance, with many describing his speech as the highlight of the event.

Highlighting how strong leadership and policy-centric governance can change lives, KTR said Telangana's progress under BRS rule from 2014 had set a benchmark for other Indian states and even countries to emulate. He laid out how Telangana had balanced economic growth with inclusive welfare, turning policy innovations into impactful governance.

He described Telangana's leap from 12th to 1st place in per capita income rankings within a decade as a defining achievement, noting a 156 percent rise in income. "In just ten years, Telangana became the only Indian state to show such a dramatic turnaround," he said. He cited the state's

Continued on Page 2

'TG govt set record in procuring paddy'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Friday said that the state had achieved a record in paddy procurement under the Congress Government.

Telangana procured the largest quantity of paddy in its 11-year history this year, and has surpassed the quantity procured in United Andhra Pradesh, he said.

Speaking at a review meeting of the erstwhile Nalgonda district at the Suryapet Collector's office on paddy procurement, agriculture, Indiramma houses, and Bhu Bharathi, Uttam said that during the last Kharif, farmers cultivated paddy on 46.7 lakh acres and produced a record 103.5 lakh tonnes of paddy.

During the ongoing Yasangi season, cultivation has increased to nearly 60 lakh acres, and the expected yield is 130 lakh tonnes.

"No government in the past has achieved such large-scale procurement," he declared, adding that the Congress Government is ensuring that every single grain from every farmer is procured.

Turning to the Public Distribution System (PDS), Uttam said the government is determined to strengthen food security by providing ration cards to all eligible families in Telangana, whether below or above the poverty line.

He criticised the BRS government for halting the process of issuing ration cards for nearly a decade, leaving many deserving families without access to subsidised food grains. "We are committed to rectifying this injustice and ensuring that no family is left behind," he said.

He said that every beneficiary under the Congress Government now receives

Continued on Page 2



SC Collegium recommends repatriation of Justice Reddy, Justice Lalitha, Justice Sumalatha back to Telangana

SC repartiates three judges to TG

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium in its meeting held on 26th May, 2025 has recommended repatriation of the following Judges of High Courts to Telangana: C. Sumalatha, (PHC: Telangana) Karnataka-Telangana., Lalitha Kanneganti, (PHC: A.P.) Karnataka-Telangana., AnnireddyAbhishek Reddy, (PHC: Telangana) Patna-Telangana.

Harish demands white paper on Hydel Project in Himachal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



Former minister Harish Rao on Friday launched an attack on the Revanth Reddy-led Congress government for signing an MoU to construct a 510 MW hydel power project in Himachal Pradesh with an estimated cost of Rs. 6,200 crore, despite having no Detailed Project Report (DPR), feasibility report, or even board approval from TS Genco. Calling it a "white elephant" project, he demanded the immediate release of a white paper and a discussion in the Assembly.

Harish questioned how a government that claims it cannot repay farm loans or fund welfare schemes is ready to splurge thousands of crores on an infeasible power project in a snowbound region where even NTPC and private giants backed off years ago. "This government says it cannot fund Rythu Bandhu, Aasara pensions, gold for brides under Kalyana Lakshmi, or even pay pensions to retired employees. But it found Rs. 26 crore for upfront payment to Himachal and is ready to pay another Rs. 26 crore without a DPR. From where is Revanth getting this money?" he asked.

He pointed out that even Moser Baer, a reputed

Continued on Page 2

L&T main culprit in Kaleshwaram scam: Ponguleti

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HYDERABAD



L&T is the main culprit in the Kaleshwaram scam, and Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy is looking into the matter, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said.

During a chit-chat with journos on Friday, he said the BRS had not realised its mistakes, even though the people had made it sit in the opposition.

He said that they would have summoned the main culprit, KCR, in the Kaleshwaram scam if the Congress government had been running the Kaleshwaram Commission. The Kaleshwaram Commission's probe is going on independently, he said.

"Who ran the L&T? L&T is one of the main culprits. Irrigation Minister Uttam is looking into the matter. We will make all reports public after the Kaleshwaram Commission's report comes out. We will take action after discussing all reports in the Cabinet. KCR's 99 mistakes have already been completed, and the Kaleshwaram mistake is the 100th one," he said.

Ponguleti said that KCR would have kept us in

Continued on Page 2

Kavitha warns against BJP merger; blasts Operation Kagar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha made it clear that she has no personal agenda and would not tolerate any disrespect towards her father BRS founder K Chandrasekhar Rao. She reiterated that her recent letter was written in anguish and is intended only to protect the party she loves.

Kavitha was speaking to the media on Thursday while visiting the family of late journalist Munir.

Referring to her time in prison, Kavitha revealed that BJP leaders had approached her with a proposal to merge the BRS with the BJP.

"I strongly opposed it. No matter the circumstances, I will never accept a merger with the BJP. Parties that allied with the BJP have not fared well," she said and warned her party to avoid any such move.

She recalled how the BRS Jagruthi commemorated icons like Bhagya Reddy Varma and PV Narasimha Rao and created opportunities for youth in SCCL, especially in legacy jobs, thanks to KCR's vision.

"When Kaleshwaram probe notices are being served on KCR, why are senior

Continued on Page 2

Peace group demands halt to Op Kagar 2

Agasara Nandini makes history, wins gold in Asian Heptathlon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



A new chapter in Telangana's sports legacy was written on Friday as Agasara Nandini, a student of the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Degree College, Sangareddy, clinched the gold medal in the Heptathlon event at the 26th Asian Athletics Championship held in Gumi, South Korea. With a total of 5941 points, Nandini not only secured the top position but also hoisted the flag of TGSWREIS on the global stage.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy extended his congratulations, remarking, "Nandini has proven Telangana's mettle on the world stage. I wholeheartedly bless her to achieve even greater success in the future."

Her individual performance in the Heptathlon was a display of consistency and excellence

100m Hurdles: 13.67s (1026 points)
High Jump: 1.69m (842 points)
Shot Put: 13.54m (763 points)
200m: 24.02s (979 points)
Javelin Throw: 34.18m (556 points)
800m: 2:15.54 (885 points)

A final-year BBA student, Nandini's journey from TSWRS Junior College in Narsingi to international acclaim is rooted in years of rigorous training. Her transformation was steered by the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TGSWREIS) through long-term athletics coaching camps. The partnership forged with ace badminton coach Pullela Gopichand enabled systematic mentoring under Dronacharya awardee N Ramesh, while international coaches like Saji and Nagaraju supervised her training at the Gachibowli stadium.

The cumulative score earned her the gold medal, making her the pride of India and an icon for the

Continued on Page 2

CWC to study congestion in 6 TG streams

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



Amid concerns over the drainage congestion triggered by the backwaters of the Polavaram Irrigation Project (PIP), the Central Water Commission (CWC) has been tasked with conducting a detailed study on six major streams in Telangana.

The move follows an inter-state meeting held on April 8 between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, where it was decided to scientifically assess the backwater impact of Polavaram in Telangana's low-lying basins.

Responding to a formal request from the Polavaram Project Authority (PPA), the Hydrology (South) Directorate of the CWC has sought specific data and cross-sections from the Telangana government to begin the fieldwork.

A letter dated May 23 from Chief Engineer Vishal Garg outlines the detailed requirements, including survey intervals, upstream limits, and GPS coordinates for each of the six affected streams.

The directive says that the streams identified for the study are the Turubaka Vagu River (up to 33 km upstream, cross-sections every 750 metres), the Yetapaka local stream (up to 3.5 km, every 500 metres), the Edullavagu River (up to 19.5 km, every 750 metres), the Peddavagu

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The Pioneer
HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | MAY 31, 2025

New districts, old vacancies: Demand grows for notification of posts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A delegation of concerned citizens and activists has urged the Telangana government to immediately issue fresh notifications and create new posts to support the functioning of offices established in the newly formed districts and local bodies. Highlighting that it has been six years since 23 new districts and several mandals, revenue divisions, municipalities, and gram panchayats were created, they pointed out that no corresponding staff positions have been sanctioned.

Speaking to the media, the representatives said most new offices continue to function using old staff structures, forcing officers to manage multiple offices as in-charges. "It is unacceptable that one officer is being made to oversee three or four offices. For effective governance, full-time appointments are necessary," they stated.

The delegation emphasized that while 40 district-level departments and thousands of new administrative units such as 131 mandals, 30 RDO offices, 76 municipalities, seven municipal corporations, 25 DSP offices, 31 police circles, seven commissionerates, and 4,383 new gram panchayats have been established, sanctioned posts have not kept pace. Crucially, Group-1, Group-2, and Group-4 posts have yet to be allocated properly to these new units.

They demanded that the government calculate the number of posts required under direct recruitment quota—estimated at 50 percent for Group-1 and around 30 to 40 percent for Group-2—and immediately notify them for recruitment.

Another key issue flagged was the lack of a waiting list and option system in the recruitment process. Merit candidates often get selected across six to seven categories simultaneously—such as Group-1, Group-2, Group-3, Group-4, teachers, lecturers, and professors—choosing only one, leaving the remaining posts unfilled. Without a waiting list or options, those vacancies are wasted.

The delegation proposed reforms such as Introduction of an option-based selection system, A time-bound waiting list for unfilled posts and Simultaneous announcement of results for all categories to ensure transparency and avoid overlap

They also highlighted that recruitment notifications for different categories of teaching positions (government schools, SC/ST/BC/Minority gurukuls, and model schools) are issued separately, resulting in merit candidates getting selected in multiple streams. "One candidate joins only one school, and the rest go vacant," they said, calling for a consolidated recruitment and counselling system.

The group welcomed the Chief Minister's commitment to fill two lakh jobs but urged that departments send accurate, realistic proposals for vacancies. They accused some senior officials of underreporting or diverting direct recruitment quota posts for promotions, thereby undermining opportunities for young aspirants.

'Forest laws must be reformed for tribal uplift'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Panchayat Raj Minister Danasari Anasuya Seethakka on Thursday appealed to the Union government to reform forest laws to facilitate development initiatives for tribal communities who live deep inside the forests. Speaking at the South East Zone meeting on PM-JANMAN and Pradhan Mantri Aadi Adarsh Gram Yojana held at Taj Deccan Hotel in Hyderabad, she highlighted Telangana's progress in implementing tribal welfare schemes.

The event, organised by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, brought together senior officials from Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Telangana.

Peace group demands halt to Operation Kagar, calls for talks

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Peace Dialogue Committee has announced a roundtable meeting scheduled for Sunday (June 1) at 2 pm at the Shoaib Hall of the Sundarayya Vignana Kendram in Bag Lingampally, Hyderabad.

The meeting is being held to urge the Centre to immediately call off Operation Kagar and declare a ceasefire, paving the way for peace talks with Maoists.

The gathering is expected to bring together the main non-BJP political parties of Telangana.

The confirmed participants are Congress state President Mahesh Kumar Goud, senior BRS leader Harish Rao, Telangana Jana Samithi President and MLC Professor Kodandaram, Aam Aadmi Party President Dr Sudhakar, CPI state Secretary MLA Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao, CPM state Secretary John Wesley, and New Democracy leader Vemulapalli Venkataramaiah.

The organisers clarified that the move is politically inclusive, but specifically excludes BJP-affiliated representatives.

The roundtable will be presided over by Justice Chandrakumar, with Prof. G. Haragopal representing the National Coordination Committee for Peace, and Kandimalla Pratap Reddy serving as the Vice President of the Peace Dialogue Committee.

Organisers stressed that the meeting aims to arrive at a consensus among opposition parties and civil society leaders, and mount pressure on the Centre to explore a negotiated path instead of paramilitary operations in Maoist areas.

Kavitha's inclusion won't benefit Congress: Keshava

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"Why should we object if the Congress thinks that Kavitha's inclusion would be useful to the party? The Congress did not take Kavitha's words seriously. I think Kavitha's inclusion would not be beneficial to the party," former Congress MP, Adviser to the Telangana Government (Public Affairs) K. Keshava Rao said.

Addressing the media on Friday at his residence, KK said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy spoke emotionally as if the country was proud of him. The BJP should answer Revanth's questions, and Modi should answer Rahul Gandhi's questions.

KK said that India and Pakistan fought six wars. "After the Pahalgam incident, there was a general impression that India was going to do something, but nothing happened. How can some unrelated people say that there is no war and there is a ceasefire? Why is there political involvement in military operations? Revanth raised questions which even Rahul did not ask. The Centre should tell us how many jets we lost," he said.

"Have any international newspapers written anywhere that we won the war. No one else has written it except our newspapers. If there had been no ceasefire, we would have won the war. No country is saying that Pakistan lost. How many people were held for the Pahalgam incident?" KK said.

KK said the Congress government is running on a democratic basis. "If Maoists are\ ready for peace talks, then the Centre should hold talks. I am in the Congress and I will die in the Congress. I had to change party because they did not give Telangana then, KK said.

Don't respond on Kavitha issue, Kishan tells BJP leaders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP chief G. Kishan Reddy criticised the Kavitha, KCR, KTR matter as "a daddy-daughter issue and a sister-brother issue."

Speaking to the media in New Delhi on Friday, Kishan said the Kavitha issue is a fight for assets and positions and made it clear that the BJP will not be a part of the drama.

He challenged KCR to reveal evidence of the discussions held for merging the BRS with the BJP and said that this is an issue that has nothing to do with the people of Telangana. He asked BJP leaders not to respond to the Kavitha episode.

He revealed that the Indian Army had razed terror camps in Pakistan and that within 28 minutes of launching Operation Sindoor, the army destroyed the main terrorist camps.

He said that he would have been happy if Rahul had asked how many terrorists were killed, and that Rahul did not have the maturity to speak on sensitive issues related to national security. Rahul came under fire for speaking in a way that casts doubt on the bravery of Indian soldiers, he added.

He said that Rahul and Revanth were speaking about the valour of the army like the paneer poured into ashes, and added that Congress leaders are insulting our soldiers.

Ministers, advisors named to lead Formation Day ceremonies

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's Formation Day celebrations on June 2 will be marked as State functions across all 33 districts, with designated dignitaries — ministers, advisors, and chairpersons — unfurling the national flag and paying floral tributes at Telangana Martyrs' Memorials.

According to the orders issued by the General Administration Department, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy will lead the celebrations in Hyderabad by hoisting the national flag. The ceremonies will commence at 10.00 am across all districts in a formal and befitting manner.

The government appointed notable dignitaries to lead each district's event. Among them, former minister Mohd. Ali Shabbir will preside over the function in Adilabad, while former MP A P Jitender Reddy has been named for Jogulamba Gadwal. Hanamkonda will host Environment Minister Konda Surekha, while Finance and Energy Minister Batti Vikramarka Mallu will officiate in Khammam. Panchayat Raj Minister Anasuya Seethakka will lead the ceremony in Mulugu, and Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy is assigned to Warangal.

The state has also included advisors and heads of various state corporations in the list. Harakara Venugopal Rao and K Keshava Rao are assigned to Mancherial and Medak respectively. Gaddam Prasad Kumar, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, will officiate the event in Vikarabad, while Legislative Council Chairman Guttha Sukhender Reddy has been allotted Yadadri Bhuvanagiri.

In each district, the dignitaries will first pay floral tributes to martyrs at memorials, accompanied by the District Collector and CP/SP.

Harish to present Kaleshwaram PPT to BRS cadre

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the spotlight firmly on the Kaleshwaram project following the recent notices issued to top BRS leaders, including former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao and former Minister Harish Rao, the party has decided to go on the offensive. In a significant move, Harish Rao will deliver a detailed presentation on the project's conception, execution, and allegations of irregularities during a meeting scheduled at Telangana Bhavan on June 2, Telangana Formation Day.

BRS sources confirmed that Harish Rao will present a comprehensive PowerPoint-based briefing aimed at energising party cadres and preparing them with facts and counter-points.

Hari Hara Veera Mallu producer meets TG CM over ticket pricing

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Veteran producer AM Rathnam met with Telangana Chief Minister Anumula Revanth Reddy on Friday to discuss matters relating to the much-anticipated historical epic Hari Hara Veera Mallu. The film, set in the 17th century, is being crafted on a grand scale and is said to differ significantly from conventional commercial cinema.

The meeting, held at the Chief Minister's Office, also covered the issue of ticket price revisions in Telangana, a subject of growing concern among film producers and distributors aiming for viable theatrical runs of big-budget films.

AM Rathnam conveyed his gratitude to the Chief Minister for sparing his valuable time and showing openness to industry concerns. The producer, known for his past collaborations on major blockbusters, expressed optimism that the government would consider revising the existing ticket pricing structure to accommodate the unique needs of historical and high-investment productions.

Is Kavitha fighting for social justice: Kiran

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress's Bhongir MP, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, asked BRS MLC Kavitha to reveal whether her social justice fight is in KCR's residence or in the BRS for an appropriate place or whether she didn't get her cut of the looted money. Kavitha will become nothing if she doesn't have clarity, he added.

Addressing the media on Friday at the Gandhi Bhavan, Kiran said the Congress won't join the issue if she didn't get her share of the looted money. Kavitha should not speak as she liked, he said.

Kavitha warns ...

Continued from page 1

BRS leaders silent? The issues I raised in the letter are what people are already thinking," she said, indirectly questioning the silence within the party.

Later, addressing the media on camera, Kavitha launched a fierce attack on the BJP regarding 'Operation Kagar.' She said the encounter killing of Maoist leader Nambala Keshava Rao was handled in a very inhumane manner. "They didn't even hand over his body to the family for the last rites. Is this the BJP's definition of culture?" she asked. Despite repeated pleas to stop the operation, the BJP continues its violent campaign, she added.

'Sanjay removed from TG BJP Prez post as per KCR-Kishan deal'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC Chief Mahesh Kumar Goud said the BJP's Malkajgiri MP, Eatala Rajender, and BRS MLA T. Harish Rao met at Eatala Rajender's residence as per the directions of former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and discussed the Kaleshwaram Commission's probe.

Both Eatala and Harish also spoke to KCR from there, and they decided that they have to give the same answer to the Kaleshwaram Probe Commission, he said.

Addressing the media on Friday at the Gandhi Bhavan, Mahesh said that Bandi Sanjay Kumar was removed from the Telangana BJP president's post due to the understanding between KCR and Kishan Reddy.

He said that the BRS has become a sinking ship and that the fight in the KCR family is over the money on the sinking ship.

"If the BRS joins hands with the BJP, which has only eight seats, the BRS will also get reduced to eight seats. Does Kishan Reddy have the guts to respond to Raja Singh's remarks? BJP leaders must first respond to their MLA Raja Singh's statements. The country needs clarity on the nature and outcome of the war with Pakistan. The comments of Kavitha and Raja Singh reveal the alliance between the BJP and the BRS," Mahesh said.

KTR showcases ...

Continued from page 1

industrial-friendly policies for attracting tech giants like Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and Facebook, which chose Hyderabad for their second-largest campuses globally.

KTR said the number of IT jobs in the state had risen from 3.23 lakh in 2014 to over 10 lakh by the time BRS left office, and IT exports grew from Rs. 56,000 crore to Rs. 2.41 lakh crore. He credited this growth to the vision and guidance of K. Chandrashekar Rao.

Referring to flagship infrastructure projects, KTR equated the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme with China's Three Gorges Dam in terms of engineering marvel, saying it lifted water from 80 to 600 meters above sea level to irrigate 45 lakh acres every season. He emphasized that despite being a democracy with complex approvals, the project was completed in just three years with all legal clearances and proper compensation.

KTR also spotlighted Mission Bhagiratha, calling it the first initiative in the country to deliver purified drinking water to over one crore households using surface water sources. "Even today, no other state has achieved this," he pointed out.

He also detailed the TS-iPASS policy, which provides industrial approvals within 15 days. If approvals are delayed, they are deemed approved. "No other state has a system like this," he said, adding that it led to permissions for 28,000 industries, attracting Rs. 3.5 lakh crore in investments and creating 24 lakh direct jobs.

Recounting Telangana's transformation into a global tech hub, he called on investors to choose Telangana as their first choice for its progressive policies, ease of doing business, and visionary leadership. "Telangana is a lighthouse for those who dream big," he said.

L&T main culprit ...

Continued from page 1

jail if Jurala and other projects had collapsed. The Kaleshwaram Project was not constructed as per rules. How can the barrage last if it was constructed on sand? We are not experts. KCR is an expert, and he has to write the report, he said.

He also said the Kaleshwaram Project collapsed during BRS rule. Otherwise, they would have blamed us, saying that the Congress demolished it.

Responding on the Kavitha issue, Ponguleti said that the Kavitha issue is a storm in the teacup.

"I am not such a big leader to speak about Kavitha. I never said I am number 2. I am like a drop of water in the Congress. I have no competence to speak about Kavitha even if she joins the Congress and is given a Minister post," he said.

Ponguleti said that KTR has a good equation with the ED. He knows very well about ED. The ED never came to me, however, it went to my daughter's residence, he said.

CWC to study ...

Continued from page 1

River (up to 24 km, every 750 metres), the Domalavagu River (up to 23 km, every 750 metres) and an unnamed local stream (up to 1 km, every 200 metres).

The latitude and longitude must be provided for all these locations, including the confluence points of the Domalavagu and the Kinnersani rivers with the Godavari.

In a letter issued earlier by Maddala Raghuram, Member Secretary of the PPA, it was said that the initiative is essential given the sensitivity of the issue and its inter-state implications. The PPA has committed to bearing the entire cost of the field study and has deputed an officer, Ch. Sanjeev, to coordinate with the CWC. Officials indicated that the study is not only necessary for scientific clarity on backwater effects, but is also critical for future planning of flood mitigation and land use in affected areas.

With this, Telangana's long-standing apprehension regarding potential inundation from Polavaram's water spread gains technical traction.

Agasara Nandini ...

Continued from page 1

underprivileged and backward communities. TGSWREIS Secretary Dr. V.S. Alugu Varshini praised Nandini's achievement, calling her "an inspiration to every TGSWREIS student." She said, "Nandini's feat reaffirms our vision that with structured training and opportunity, our students can compete at the highest level." She expressed gratitude to coaches Saji and Nagaraju and reiterated the society's commitment to nurturing many more talents like Nandini.

Nandini's triumph not only adds a golden feather to Telangana's sports achievements but also symbolizes hope and possibility for thousands of young athletes across the State.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi:	
Panchami:	May 30 09:23 PM to May 31 08:15 PM
Shashthi:	May 31 08:15 PM to Jun 01 07:59 PM
Nakshatram:	
Pushya:	May 30 09:29 PM to May 31 09:07 PM
Ashlesha:	May 31 09:07 PM to Jun 01 09:36 PM
Rahukalam:	8:59 AM to 10:36 AM
Yamagandam:	1:51 PM to 3:28 PM
Varjyam:	10:10 AM to 11:48 AM
Gulika:	5:44 AM to 7:22 AM
Amritakalam:	02:49 PM to 04:23 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:47 AM to 12:39 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Cloudy
Temp: 34°c
Humidity: 50%
Sunrise: 5:45 AM
Sunset: 6:42 PM

Updated: May 30, 2025 5:00 PM

Harish demands ...

Continued from page 1

private firm, had backed out of the same project in 2009 after paying Rs. 64 crore as premium, and later had to approach the Himachal High Court when the money wasn't refunded. NTPC too withdrew from the same location in 2019, citing technical and financial infeasibility.

"The project was abandoned by others over the last two decades. So why is Telangana government suddenly rushing to revive a dead plan? Is it for public interest or for someone's private gain?" Harish asked. He also questioned why the Telangana government was dealing with the Himachal Pradesh Congress government directly without taking Genco's board approval.

He demanded Bhatti Vikramarka explain how the MoU was signed without standard procedure. "This is no less than a Tughlaq act. While Telangana is in financial distress, why are we investing in a snow-clad, disputed zone 2,000 km away? What secret deal is being cooked up between the two Congress governments – will the Delhi Congress answer, or Himachal or the Telangana Congress?" he asked.

Harish ended his remarks by warning that the BRS has credible information of corruption in this deal. "Very soon, we will expose the entire scam with proof," he said, calling it one of the biggest betrayals of Telangana's public money.

'Bahubali' 'RRR' ...

Continued from page 1

Award (Telugu artiste). Renowned Telugu writer, novelist Yandamoori Veerendranath has been selected for the Raghupathi Venkaiah Film Award (other than film artiste Telugu).

Murali Mohan said the governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have discontinued the presentation of Nandi Film Awards after the 2014 bifurcation.

As all actors hope to be recognised by the government, he said film personalities had been requesting governments over the last 10 years to present the awards. Although the governments were positive, the awards were not announced.

Murali Mohan appreciated Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for his decision to present film awards once again by naming them after folk singer and balladeer Gaddar.

'Kalki 2898 AD' has won the best feature film award, while top Telugu actor Allu Arjun was selected as the best leading actor for his performance in the film 'Pushpa 2' for the state government's Gaddar Telangana Film Awards (GTFA) – 2024 announced on Thursday.

Miss World Org ...

Continued from page 1

benefit tourism in the long run. Asked about any economic gains, Jayesh said the focus was never on instant returns. "If 109 contestants visit Telangana, take pictures, create reels, write blogs, and give interviews, why not be the next visitor yourself?" he said, calling it a long-term branding exercise.

Jayesh, who has served in tourism roles both in United Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, said the project wasn't challenging for him. "Telangana is already among India's top tourist states," he said, adding that tourism branding is not limited to the 20-day contest window. "The world's attention begins after the event, not during it."

Regarding political criticism, he said every action has a reaction, and the government is focused on delivering results. On the possibility of hosting the event again despite backlash, Jayesh said that if the goal of branding Telangana is achieved, they may consider even bigger global platforms.

He downplayed reports of mismanagement and said recent rains caused only minor changes in the schedule. There were no failures in conducting the competitions or tourism trips, he insisted. Jayesh concluded by noting that every Miss World contestant has promised to act as an informal ambassador of Telangana.

'TG govt set ...

Continued from page 1

six kg of rice free of cost. "We purchase rice at ?40 per kg from the open market and distribute it free," he said.

He said the government had already spent ?10,665 crore to provide quality rice to 2.81 crore people. "This is a historic move to ensure that no one goes hungry in Telangana," he said.

Uttam said the BRS government had distributed substandard 'Doddu Biyyam' (coarse rice), which forced people to compromise on quality. "After we came to power, we distributed fine rice, bringing relief to families," he said.

He condemned the leakages in the PDS under the BRS administration, where 10–30% of rice was being diverted, depriving many deserving families. "We have plugged these leaks and ensured that six kg of rice reaches every beneficiary," he asserted.

Shifting focus to irrigation, Uttam issued a strong directive to officials to complete land acquisition and forest clearance processes related to irrigation projects on a war footing.

He emphasised the need for coordination among irrigation officials, revenue staff, public representatives, contractors, and the media to ensure that projects are completed on time.

"If there's any issue like position papers, forest hurdles, or any other matter, contact me directly," he said. "Delays will not be tolerated," he added.

He assured farmers that he would oversee the process to guarantee fair compensation for their land.

Addressing the issue of neglected irrigation projects, Uttam said the Sriram Sagar Project (SRSP) is a prime example of mismanagement.

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City Pioneer

The Pioneer

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | MAY 31, 2025

03



CITY EVENTS

Book Release Function
By Achanga Telugu
Venue
Ravindra Bharathi
May 31, (6 pm)

Arangetram
By Sangeetha Pilla
Venue
Ravindra Bharathi
May 31, (9 am, 1:30 pm)

Cultural Programmes
By Sri Raga Ramya Cultural Oganization
Venue
Ravindra Bharathi
May 31, (6 pm)

Beyond Labels:
Book Launch
Venue
Lamakaan
May 31, (4:30 pm)

Stage set for glittering Miss World 2025 Grand Finale on May 31

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



The much-anticipated Grand Finale of the 72nd Miss World pageant is set to dazzle at the HITEX Exhibition Centre here on Saturday evening.

After about a month of vibrant events, including exploration of tourist destinations in Telangana, cultural immersion and purpose-driven activities, 108 contestants from around the world will vie for the coveted Miss World crown in a spectacular celebration of beauty, purpose, and unity.

The Grand Finale will be hosted by Stephanie del Valle (Miss World 2016) alongside acclaimed Indian presenter Sachiin Kumbhar. Adding to the glamour, Bollywood stars Jacqueline Fernandez and Ishaan Khatter are slated to deliver captivating performances.

The panel of judges includes actor and renowned humanitarian Sonu Sood, who will receive the prestigious Miss World Humanitarian Award.

He will be joined by Sudha Reddy, who recently hosted the Beauty With a Purpose Gala Dinner and Caryna Turrell, Miss England 2014, a public health physician, philanthropist, investor, and Fellow at the University of Cambridge.

Presiding over the jury and announcing the winner will be Julia Morley CBE, Chairwoman of Miss World.

Manushi Chhillar, Miss World 2017 and Bollywood actress, will also make a special appearance.

As per the Miss World Selection format, the 108 contestants will first be presented to the world, setting the stage for an exciting competition.

From there, ten semifinalists from each continental region (Americas and Caribbean, Africa, Europe, Asia and Oceania) will advance to the quarterfinals, a total of 40 delegates.

Several contestants have already advanced to the quarterfinals by winning fast-track challenges.

They include (from) Americas and Caribbean -- Anna-Lise Nanton, Trinidad & Tobago (Head to Head Challenge), Aurélie Joachim, Martinique (Top Model), Valeria Pérez, Puerto Rico (Beauty With a Purpose), Mayra Delgado, Dominican Republic (Multimedia Award).

Africa -- Faith Bwalya, Zambia (Head to Head Challenge), Selma Kamanya, Namibia (Top Model), Natasha Nyonyozi, Uganda (Beauty With a Purpose), Princesse Issie, Cameroon (Multimedia Award).

Europe -- Eliise Randmaa, Estonia (Sports Challenge), Millie-Mae Adams, Wales (Head to Head and Beauty With a Purpose), Jasmine Gerhardt, Ireland (Top Model), Andrea Nikolic, Montenegro (Multimedia Award).

Asia & Oceania -- Monica Kezia Sembiring, Indonesia (Talent and Beauty With a Purpose), Idil Bilgen, Türkiye (Head to Head Challenge), Nandini Gupta, India (Top Model), Opal Suchata, Thailand (Multimedia Award).

The remaining semifinalists were selected by a panel of judges following personal interviews and will be revealed during the final show, a statement from the organisers said on Friday.

From 10 quarterfinalists in each continent, the group will be narrowed down to a Top 5, then to Top 2, and finally to 4 continental winners, who will answer a final question before the new Miss World is elected.

The Grand Finale will conclude with the crowning of the new Miss World by the reigning titleholder, Krystyna Pyszková, the 71st Miss World, who was crowned last year in Mumbai.

The Miss World 2025 pageant kicked off with a grand ceremony in Hyderabad on May 10.

Leveraging the event, the Telangana government devised an elaborate action plan to showcase the state as a hub of tourism and investment.

As part of this vision, the contestants toured major attractions across the state, including the iconic Charminar here, UNESCO World Heritage Site of Ramappa Temple in Mulugu district, famous Narasimha temple in Yadagirigutta and a 700-year-old Banyan tree in neighbouring Mahabubnagar district and also a social welfare school of Telangana government, among others.



TGSRTC Managing Director VC Sajjanar with staff who returned lost baggage to right to passengers, in Hyderabad on Friday

TSRTC staff earn praise for returning lost valuables worth Rs 19 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a display of honesty and public service, Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) staff returned lost baggage containing valuables worth nearly Rs 19 lakh to rightful passengers across three separate incidents this month. TGSRTC Managing Director Sajjanar appreciated the staff for their integrity and felicitated them at Bus Bhavan in Hyderabad.

On May 25, a woman passenger travelling on a Suryapet-Hyderabad route left behind her bag in the bus. Upon reaching the Suryapet bus station, conductor K Anjaiah and driver Yakub Pasha found the bag, which contained gold ornaments worth Rs 6 lakh and a mobile phone. They promptly handed it over to the Suryapet depot officials, who returned it to the passenger in the presence of higher authorities.

In another case on May 15, a woman travelling in an airport Pushpak bus from Rajiv Gandhi International Airport to Lingampally forgot her bag at Alwin Crossroads. Driver Mubeen found the bag, which contained gold ornaments worth Rs 8 lakh, and handed it over to Miyapur-2 depot officials.

The third incident occurred on May 25 near Shilparamam, where a male passenger left behind a bag in another airport-bound Pushpak bus. The bag contained Rs. 3.5 lakh in cash, two gold bangles, and a laptop—altogether valued at Rs. 5 lakh. Driver Ramesh spotted the bag and ensured it was returned safely to the owner with depot supervision.

The MD praised Suryapet and Miyapur-2 depot employees Anjaiah, Yakub Pasha, Mubeen, and Ramesh for upholding the highest standards of honesty and service.

Youngster murdered over money dispute

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A youngster, identified as Sai Karthik was brutally murdered at Rajendernagar on Friday.

A dispute over money led to the incident, the police said. Sai Karthik had borrowed Rs 8 lakhs from his friend Siddharth Reddy. He kept delaying repayment.

When asked to repay, Karthik reportedly threatened Siddhartha with dire consequences.

Late at night, three friends drank together in a room. In an intoxicated state, an argument broke out between the two.

In a fit of rage, Siddharth attacked and killed Sai Karthik.

Sai Karthik was a native of Warangal. Siddharth Reddy hailed from Pulivendula.

Sai Karthik was living in Rajendranagar.

Sudha Reddy appointed as first-ever global ambassador for Miss World Organisation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



Chairperson of Miss World Organisation Julia Morley with businesswoman Sudha Reddy in Hyderabad on Friday

At the 72nd Miss World Festival Grand Finale on Friday evening, Hyderabad-based humanitarian and businesswoman Sudha Reddy will be named the first Global Ambassador for the Miss World Organisation. This marks a new chapter for the famous pageant and recognizes Sudha Reddy's long commitment to social causes, women's empowerment, and fair development.

As the Global Ambassador for Beauty With A Purpose, the charitable branch of Miss World, Sudha Reddy will lead global outreach, promote important humanitarian work, and share inspiring stories from around the world. She will also be a judge at the Miss World 2025 Grand Finale, using her experience to help choose the winner.

Sudha Reddy said, "I am honored to be the Global Ambassador for Beauty With A Purpose. I will use my resources and network to support those working for change. Together, we will empower women, educate children, and help communities grow, creating a better world for all."

Julia Morley, Chairperson and Founder of Miss World Organization, said, "Sudha Reddy's strong commitment to charity and her leadership perfectly represent the spirit of Beauty With A Purpose. Her role will strengthen our mission and inspire future leaders."

The Miss World event returns to India after nearly 30 years, with Hyderabad hosting delegates from over 100 countries to celebrate beauty, culture, and purpose.

Sudha Reddy is a well-known philanthropist and business leader. She is director of Megha Engineering & Infrastructures Limited (MEIL), focusing on community welfare. She also leads the Sudha Reddy Foundation, which works on education and empowerment with partners like UNICEF.

Crackdown on unauthorised ultrasound centres conducted

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a strong crackdown on violations of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, the multi members team including officers appointed by District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) has imposed heavy penalties on several hospitals and scanning centers for illegally conducting or facilitating gender determination tests.

District Collector Anudeep Durishetty who is the chairman of PCPNDT act team said that strict action is being taken against facilities flouting norms, following a detailed review of ongoing inspections across the district.

The teams found that nearly 28 scanning centres in few private hospitals violated the norms. One among them was seized and others were warned that if conditions remined the same in next inspection after week they would also be seized.

Viveka Hospital in Saidabad was found operating two unauthorised ultrasound machines. A fine of Rs 2 lakh had been imposed, and a case had been registered against the hospital under the PCPNDT Act.

At New Life Hospital in Secunderabad, authorities seized a scanning machine. Legal proceedings are underway against the hospital management.

A total of 26 scanning centres that violated regulatory norms were each fined Rs 50,000 during inspections conducted by senior Public Health Officers.

The Collector warned that repeat violations would result in cancellation of registration for the concerned facilities. He highlighted that scanning centres must strictly adhere to operational guidelines, including usage of approved machines, documentation by qualified doctors, and mandatory online reporting of pregnancy-related scans.

To intensify monitoring, the administration formed 15 special inspection teams to oversee scanning centers across the district.

The inspections aimed to curb the illegal practice of sex determination, which is prohibited under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act.

Seethakka stops convoy to help seizure victim on Panjagutta flyover

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



Tribal Welfare Minister Seethakka helping a seizure patient in Hyderabad on Friday

In a display of compassion, Tribal Welfare Minister Seethakka interrupted her convoy on the busy Panjagutta flyover on Thursday to assist a motorist who had suddenly collapsed due to a seizure, drawing wide praise for her humane response.

The incident, which occurred amid peak-hour traffic, saw a young man fall off his two-wheeler, visibly convulsing and disoriented. Eyewitnesses recounted the panic among motorists, many unsure of how to respond. However, Seethakka, who was passing by in her official vehicle, immediately halted her convoy, stepped out without hesitation, and rushed to the spot.

Demonstrating presence of mind, the Minister gently placed a key in the man's hand — a well-known method in seizure first-aid to help calm the patient. She remained with him, offering words of comfort and ensuring bystanders did not crowd him until medical help arrived. Only after he was shifted to hospital did Seethakka leave the scene.

GHMC Commissioner inspect stormwater drain works

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In view of the upcoming monsoon season, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Commissioner RV Karnan conducted a thorough inspection of ongoing stormwater drain works in the Charminar Zone, Santosh Nagar Circle on Friday.

The inspection was carried out in coordination with Yakutpura MLA Jaffer Hussain Meraj, MLC Mirza Riyaz Ul Hassan Effendi, and senior civic and water board officials.

During the visit, the Commissioner reviewed works at Maulana Ka Chillah Nala and Ganga Nagar Nala which are known for causing frequent waterlogging in nearby colonies during rains. MLA Jaffer Hussain briefed the Commissioner about the hardships faced by local residents in these low-lying areas.

Project Engineer BL Srinivas informed the Commissioner that 70 percent of the repair works at Ganga Nagar Nala have been completed.

The Commissioner instructed officials to expedite the remaining 30 percent work without delay.

FGG flags massive irregularities in Dalit Bandhu Scheme

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Forum for Good Governance (FGG) has written to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy demanding a comprehensive evaluation of the Dalita Bandhu scheme, alleging widespread misuse of funds and political interference in beneficiary selection. In a letter dated May 30, FGG president M Padmanabha Reddy raised serious concerns about how the flagship scheme—launched to empower SC families with direct cash assistance of Rs 10 lakh each—was implemented.

Citing field-level observations and surveys, Reddy claimed that while the intent of Dalita Bandhu was to create income-generating assets across sectors such as agriculture, transport, retail, and services, the execution has been plagued by irregularities since inception.

"From the very beginning, MLAs and their followers hijacked the selection process and reportedly collected bribes ranging from Rs 2 to 3 lakh from prospective beneficiaries," he alleged.

The FGG also criticised the absence of training and field exposure for beneficiaries. "Clear instructions mandated training and site visits before grounding units, but these were skipped, leaving recipients unequipped to manage assets," the letter said.

GULZAR HOUZ FIRE

Survivor demands judicial probe, alleges delays, lapses

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD



In the aftermath of the tragic fire that claimed 17 lives, including elderly residents and infants, at a residential building in Gulzar House, Charminar, survivors have come forward, accusing multiple departments of irregularities and negligence.

Speaking exclusively to *The Pioneer*, Santosh Gupta, who lost several family members in the fire, described the incident as a living nightmare and challenged the claims made by officials about preparedness and equipment.

"I lost my loved ones, and now I hear officials boasting about advanced machinery and trained personnel. I dismiss these claims entirely," she said.

Recounting the timeline of the tragedy, Ms Gupta stated that she first noticed smoke at 5:30 am and immediately began alerting her family. She called fire services, police, and ambulance by 6 am, but alleges that the first fire engine arrived only at 6:45 am—without water in the tank.

"The fire crew seemed more panicked than civilians. They came unprepared—no ladders, no section pipes, no oxygen masks. They weren't ready to enter the building," she claimed.

Ms Gupta further alleged that a doctor on duty refused to begin treatment without an FIR at Osmania General Hospital (OGH), saying she could recognise the individual if needed.

"I was told the fire could have been controlled in five minutes, but the department took hours.

The officers appearing on television must hear my side before making statements."

Despite a government committee being set up to review the incident, Ms Gupta stated that no one from the panel had visited or spoken to the survivors in person aside from making phone calls.

Calling for greater accountability, she demanded the formation of a judicial committee to investigate the fire, claiming her version of events was backed by evidence.

"I requested 20 ambulances, but one that did arrive had no medical equipment. Patients were falling inside because it did not even have seat belts," she added.

Citizens warned against fake WhatsApp messages threatening water disconnections

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Amid growing reports of fraudulent WhatsApp messages, the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) has issued a public caution notice alerting citizens to ignore fake messages claiming water connections will be disconnected for non-payment of bills.

According to the HMWSSB, the false alerts are being circulated from the unidentified mobile number 84271 56645, falsely stating that connections will be terminated at 9:30 pm due to pending dues.

The messages also direct recipients to call 9064953421 for assistance. Upon calling, citizens are reportedly sent an APK file via WhatsApp, claiming it is for further processing.

Strongly condemning the circulation of these messages, HMWSSB clarified that no such messages are being sent by the Board via WhatsApp, and categorically labelled the communication as unauthorised and misleading.

"Citizens of Greater Hyderabad are strongly advised not to respond to such messages or contact the number mentioned.

Do not download or install any APK file sent through WhatsApp," the notice urged.

In response, the department has requested the Cyber Crimes wing to investigate the matter.

The Board reiterated that all official communication from HMWSSB is only sent through authorised channels, and urged citizens to contact the official helpline 155313 for any queries.



Warangal Police Commissioner Sunpreet Singh flagging off RAF march in Warangal on Friday

Rapid Action Force march conducted

PNS ■ WARANGAL

The Warangal Police Commissioner Sunpreet Singh stated that the Rapid Action Force (RAF) march was conducted to instill courage among the public.

On Friday, under the leadership of Hanamkonda Division Police, the Rapid Action Force march was conducted. Warangal Police Commissioner participated as the chief guest and inaugurated the march by flagging it off. The march proceeded from Hanamkonda Bus Stand, Brahmana Wada, Alankar Junction, Hanamkonda Chowrasta, up to Ashoka Junction.

In this context, the Police Commissioner stated that this programme, undertaken under the supervision of the Central Home Ministry, would be conducted for over seven days in the jurisdiction of various police stations under Warangal Police Commissionerate. The main objective of this march is to promptly respond to any riots or communal clashes, assist local police, and provide assurance to the public about peace and security.

The program was attended by Central Zone DCP Shake Salima, RAF Deputy Commandant Saraswati, Hanamkonda ACP Narsimha Rao, Traffic ACP Satyanarayana, Inspectors Satish, Ravikumar, Satyanarayana Reddy, along with other traffic and police officials and staff.

Ministers call for effective implementation of welfare schemes

PNS ■ SURYAPET



Ministers Tummala Nageswara Rao, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and Uttam Kumar Reddy at a review meeting in Nalgonda on Friday

Agriculture Minister, who is Nalgonda District In-charge Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao has urged government officials to rededicate themselves to the effective implementation of welfare and development schemes.

Attending a high-level review meeting held at the Integrated District Office Complex in Suryapet, the Minister evaluated the progress of priority schemes such as paddy procurement, agriculture initiatives, monsoon readiness, Indiramma housing, and the Bhu Bharati in the undivided Nalgonda district. He emphasised that Nalgonda district should serve as a model for comprehensive development in the state and emerge as the "granary of India."

Calling for greater efficiency, the Minister asked officials to work in unison for the welfare of the poor. He underscored the need for active involvement of District Collectors and the entire administrative machinery. Highlighting irrigation progress, he assured that the SLBC tunnel would be completed to ensure full utilisation of Krishna River waters. He also stressed incorporating suggestions from elected representatives and ensuring welfare schemes reach only eligible beneficiaries.

The Minister said that preparatory work for all civil works should be completed before the onset of monsoon so that execution can begin immediately after the rains subside. Following an appeal by R and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, permission was granted for District Collectors to recruit Agricultural Extension Officers (AEOs) as needed.

Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies Uttam Kumar Reddy praised Nalgonda for leading the state in paddy procurement. He noted that while only 47 lakh metric tonnes were procured during the Yasangi season in 2023, the figure rose to 67 lakh metric tonnes this year, marking a 20-lakh tonne increase. Payments to farmers have also surged, from Rs 3,600 crore last year to Rs 13,250 crore this year. He highlighted that the state is now spending nearly Rs 10,000 crore to procure fine rice, which is being distributed free of cost—6 kg per person with a ration card.

Uttam Kumar Reddy said Telangana's fine rice program has brought national recognition, and efforts are underway to improve further efficiency, including setting up cleaning and drying equipment at all procurement centres.

Minister Venkat Reddy stated that agricultural production in Nalgonda has significantly increased, with over two lakh metric tonnes of paddy produced more than last year. He urged officials to continue the proactive implementation of government schemes and pushed for the sanction of additional godowns, clusters, and AEO posts. He revealed that Rs 1,700 crore has been allocated to the undivided Nalgonda district through his department.

Lok Sabha member Ch Kiran Kumar Reddy raised concerns about the continued harassment of farmers by some rice millers and stressed the need to keep ineligible names out of Indiramma housing lists.

MLAs from Alair, Miryalaguda, and Nagarjuna Sagar constituencies emphasised timely procurement, irrigation progress, and seed and fertiliser readiness for the monsoon crop season. They also demanded better monitoring to prevent fake seed sales and ensure transparency in the housing scheme.



Kothagudem becomes Municipal Corporation

People in Kothagudem and Palwancha expressed hope that the measure will help improve infrastructure and contribute to the development of the two towns

PNS ■ BHADRADRI KOTHAGUDEM

As part of strengthening civil administration in Telangana, a significant development has taken place with Kothagudem Municipality being upgraded to a Municipal Corporation. In this expansion process, the state government has issued a Government Order (GO) forming the Kothagudem Municipal Corporation by merging Kothagudem and Palwancha municipalities along with seven village panchayats underSujathanagar mandal. The official gazette notification regarding the corporation's formation has already been released.

As a temporary arrangement, Sujatha, the current Municipal Commissioner of Palwancha, has been appointed as the in-charge Commissioner of the newly formed corporation. She will oversee the responsibilities until a new Commissioner is officially appointed.

From now on, all administrative activities of the Palwancha municipality and the seven village panchayats from Sujathanagar mandal — Mangapeta, Sujathanagar, Narasimhasagar, Komitipalli, Lakshmidevipalli, Nimmalagudem, and Nayakulagudem — will fall under the jurisdiction of the Kothagudem Municipal Corporation. Senior officials have instructed that the merger process be expedited.

Adding all these regions, the total population under the new corporation is expected to cross 4 lakh.

For administrative convenience, all corporation functions will initially operate from the existing Kothagudem Municipal office. Palwancha Municipality will be designated as a sub-zone, and officials are considering setting up another sub-zonal office for the merged villages under Sujathanagar mandal.

There has long been a demand to designate Kothagudem, the district headquarters, as a municipal corporation. Local MLA Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao brought this demand to the attention of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy multiple times. Responding positively, the Chief Minister had given an informal green signal earlier, and now the state government has officially fulfilled the long-standing aspiration by issuing the GO.

People expressed the hope that the creation of the corporation will lead to improved infrastructure, urban development, and better civic services in the region. It is seen as a milestone in the development of Kothagudem.

Collector warns traders against selling fake seeds, ferlitilisers

PNS ■ NIRMAL



Nirmal Collector Abhilash Abhinav inspecting a shop selling seeds, fertiliser and pesticides in Nirmal on Friday

District Collector Abhilash Abhinav has warned that strict action will be taken against those involved in the sale of counterfeit seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides in the district. On Friday, the Collector conducted a surprise inspection of the Arun Agency Fertiliser Shop located near the bus stand in the town.

During the inspection, the Collector examined the seeds, pesticide packaging, labels, sales registers, and stock details in the shop.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that farmers would face severe losses due to fake seeds.

He instructed Agriculture Department officials to ensure that farmers are not taken for a ride.

He emphasised that action would be taken without fail if banned pesticides were sold and that legal steps would be taken against those who violate regulations.

The Collector directed officials to conduct regular inspections of shops. He stated that stringent action must be taken against the supply and sale of counterfeit seeds to protect the interests of farmers.

Agriculture Officer Rajashekar, Tahsildar Raju, other officials, and staff accompanied the Collector.

Drug peddler held, narcotics worth Rs 3 cr seized

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY



Seized narcotics

In a major crackdown on drug trafficking, the Special Operations Team (SOT) of Shamshabad, in collaboration with the Shadnagar Police, apprehended a drug peddler near Sanju Bhai Marwadi Dhaba, close to the Raikal Toll Gate on NH-44 under Shadnagar Police Station limits.

Acting on credible intelligence, the police seized a massive quantity of narcotic substances, including heroin, opium, poppy straw, and marijuana, along with cash, mobile phones, and packing material. The total value of the seized property is estimated at Rs 3.05 crore in the international market.

The arrested individual has been identified as Vikas Sohu, a 26-year-old native of Moulasar village in Nagaur district, Rajasthan. Vikas had been working at the dhaba since 2019. Initially employed as a watchman, he later became a cooking master.

However, during this period, he got involved in illegal drug trafficking under the influence of his employer, Sanju Bhai. Sanju Bhai was reportedly addicted to ganja and would sell it to customers at inflated rates. He sourced the contraband from a supplier named Salim, a resident of Dhulpet, and sold it to lorry drivers, travelers, and others who frequented the dhaba. Vikas assisted him in the sale of these substances.

In 2022, both Vikas Sohu and Sanju Bhai were arrested by Jadcherla Police near the bus stand for selling ganja.

They were booked under Cr. No. 486/2022 under Section 20(b)(ii)(A) of the NDPS Act. After being released, the duo resumed their illegal activities. According to police, over the past three years, Raju, a resident of Jalpally in Maheshwaram, supplied them with ganja. They purchased it at Rs 300 for 25 grams and sold it for Rs 500. Another individual, Ganpath from Madhya Pradesh, supplied heroin, opium, and poppy straw. They bought 10 grams of opium for Rs 1,300 and sold it for Rs 2,000, 250 grams of poppy straw for Rs 500 and sold it for Rs 1,500, and 1 gram of heroin for Rs 12,000 and sold it for Rs 15,000, making significant profits.

The operation was successfully executed under the supervision of Shamshabad DCP B. Rajesh, Madhapur SOT DCP P. Shoban Kumar, and ADCP P. Srinivasa Reddy. The authorities appreciated the dedicated efforts of the SOT Shamshabad team and Shadnagar Police.

DWO suspended for lapses in security at Bala Sadan

PNS ■ MULUGU

The Bala Sadan (Children's Home) operating in a rented building at Mulugu district headquarters is facing serious security issues.

This became evident when a girl ran away from the home on Monday. Welfare Department officials launched a search and located her in Warangal the next morning, though the reasons behind her escape remain unclear.

At the time of the incident, the District Women and Child Welfare Officer (DWO), Sirisha, was on leave.



Bala Sadan

The Collector expressed strong dissatisfaction over the lapse and removed her from the post.

Additionally, departmental action has been initiated against the Anganwadi Supervisor from Tadvai Mandal, who has been serving as the superintendent of the Balasadanam.

It was earlier reported that the girl had been staying at the Sadar Home in Hanamkonda. Following the escape incident, two district officials have been suspended.

The suspension of the DWO during her leave and the subsequent assignment of her responsibilities to Tula Ravi — who is already handling multiple roles as the Executive Director of the SC Corporation, District Sports and Youth Services Officer, and District Employment Generation Officer — has sparked debate among officials.

Previously, the Balasadanam operated from a government building, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, that building was vacated and repurposed to house various offices, including the DWO's. Now, with the children's home running out of a rented facility with limited amenities and inadequate supervision, it appears that oversight of the Balasadanam has been seriously neglected.

'Denied house under Indiramma housing scheme, man ends life'

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

In a tragic incident that has sparked local outrage, a 47-year-old man from Chintapatla village of Yacharam mandal in Ibrahimpatnam reportedly ended his life after being denied a house under the Indiramma housing scheme. The deceased, identified as Doddi Ashok, was found hanging at his residence, with family members stating that he had been deeply distressed over not being allotted a house under the scheme.

According to relatives, Ashok, who had no permanent shelter for his family, had applied for a house through the Indiramma scheme, which aims to provide housing for the economically disadvantaged. He allegedly took the extreme step after learning that his request had not been approved. Ashok is survived by his wife and three daughters.

Following the incident, tensions escalated in the village as locals and relatives of the deceased staged a protest in front of the Chintapatla Gram Panchayat office. The protestors blamed the government's negligence for the tragic death and demanded accountability. They insisted that the government take full responsibility for Ashok's suicide and extend immediate support to his grieving family.

In a show of solidarity, CPI-M district unit secretary Pagadala Yadayya and mandal unit secretary Alampalli Narasimhulu visited the bereaved family. The leaders demanded that the government not only provide a house and land to Ashok's family but also pay a compensation of Rs 15 lakh.



Private bus catches fire on national highway

PNS ■ SURYAPET

A private travel bus was completely gutted in a fire on the Suryapet-Khammam national highway near Mothey village on Friday morning.

The incident took place when the bus, heading towards Khammam, suffered a tyre burst that triggered sparks, leading to a fire.

The flames spread rapidly, engulfing the entire vehicle and reducing it to ashes. Fortunately, no passengers were on board at the time. The driver, who was alone, acted swiftly and managed to escape by jumping out of the bus, preventing any casualties.

Firefighters from the local fire station responded promptly and brought the blaze under control.

Ayushman Aarogya Mandir funds diverted in Siddipet?

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Funds allocated for public hygiene awareness are reportedly being misappropriated in Siddipet. Allegations have emerged that money intended for promoting the Ayushman Aarogya Mandir scheme is being diverted with the help of middlemen.

Fake bills are allegedly being generated in the name of mere formal advertisements, while the allocated funds are being siphoned off.

There are serious accusations against a senior official who is said to be harassing medical officers if money is not transferred to the accounts of these intermediaries.

The behaviour of the senior health officer in Siddipet seems to echo the old saying — "Who will guard the guards?" Instead of punishing lower-level officers for wrongdoing, he is allegedly committing the misdeeds.

It appears he operates under the assumption that no one dares to question his actions.

Critics claim that while officials show great enthusiasm for misusing public funds, they show little concern for actual public health.

One such misused programme is the Ayushman Aarogya Mandir, designed to raise awareness among rural populations about personal hygiene.

Under this scheme, posters, pamphlets, and patient registration materials were to be distributed at primary health centres across villages. For this purpose, the government allocated Rs 30 lakhs to 108 sub-centers in Siddipet district.

However, instead of reaching the intended centres, these funds reportedly ended up in the bank accounts of middlemen in Hyderabad, allegedly facilitated by the interference of senior officials.

Fake bills were created to show full-scale advertisement campaigns, while in reality, only token efforts were made.

When local medical officers were questioned, they distanced themselves from the issue, saying, "We're only following orders from the district-level authority.

Fake cotton seed racket busted, 9 arrested

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

A fake seed racket has come to light in Khammam district. Khammam Police became alert and conducted raids on fake cotton seed manufacturing centres, which are flourishing as cottage industries. In raids conducted at three different properties, police seized 560 kilograms of fake seeds worth Rs 14 lakhs and arrested nine people. Another two accused are absconding. Police found that 11 people from three gangs were involved in the fake seed racket.

Khammam Police Commissioner Sunil Dutt said that as per government orders, strict measures were being taken to ensure farmers receive quality seeds. He warned that anyone trying to cheat farmers by selling fake seeds or inferior seeds under the name of popular branded companies would not be spared. He said on May 28, during a joint inspection by Enkuru police and Agricultural officers, information was received that Gajula Narasimha Rao (49) from Enkuru village was selling unauthorised cotton seeds to farmers. Upon conducting the inspection, 450-gram packets of cotton seeds labelled "Advance 555" were found in his possession and seized.



Khammam Police Commissioner Sunil Dutt inspecting seized fake cotton seeds in Khamamm on Friday

During the investigation, it was revealed that these cotton seeds were purchased from a person named Salivahana from Chandrgudem village under Myalavaram mandal in Andhra Pradesh. Salivahana was selling 450-gram packets at Rs 400, which Narasimha Rao was selling locally at Rs 1,200 per packet.

Salivahana was found to be running a cottage industry at his home, manufacturing fake cotton seeds.

He was bringing cotton seeds from Karnataka along with printed "Advance Triple Phi Number" cover packets used for tagging. He mixed his cotton seeds with a pesticide mixture called "Rizobel," dried them, packed them into these packets, sealed them, and sold them.

Similarly, in another incident on May 27, based on information that counterfeit cotton seeds were being sold on the outskirts of Repallewada village in Enkuru mandal, the raid was conducted and seized counterfeit cotton seeds packed in about 210 one-kilogram packets.

Later, acting on the information given by Venigandla Srihari Rao, a search was conducted at the house of his associate, Immineni Kishore, where approximately 120 kilograms of cotton seeds were found.

It was revealed during police investigation that Venigandla Srihari Rao, through his relative Lakshminarayana in Bapatla district, had been smuggling counterfeit and unauthorised cotton seeds, which he purchased at Rs 800 per kg and sold to farmers in Enkuru Mandal at Rs 2,600 per kg by convincing them that these seeds yield higher crops, thereby making profits.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
IRRIGATION & CAD (P.W.) DEPARTMENT

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, IC MALL, through Tender Notice No. 03SE/IC MALL/DEE1/AEE3/2025-26, Dt.30.05.2025 for below works in Nalgonda:
1. Restoration of Feeder Channel to Oora Cheruvu in Udatalapally(V), Chandur(M): (8.42 Lakhs). 2. Restoration of Feeder Channel to Pulaiah Cheruvu in Chandur (V&M): (21.27 Lakhs). 3. Repairs & Restoration of Chinna Cheruvu in Yerragandlapally (V), Marriguda (M): (26.84 Lakhs). 4. Repairs and Restoration of Feeder Channel to Neela kunta & Koppula Kunta in Kottala(V), Marriguda (M): (22.69 Lakhs). 5. Repairs & Restoration of the feeder channel & bund of Nagula Kunta in Melichandapur(V), Marriguda (M): (30.04 Lakhs). Tenders for above five (5) will be available from **Dt: 31.05.2025 @ 03:00 PM to Dt: 06.06.2025 @ 03.00 PM.** 6. O&M of Narasaiah kunta, Velmakanne(V), Ghattuppal (M): (21.32 Lakhs), 2nd Call, tender available from Dt: **31.05.2025 @ 03:00 PM** to Dt: **03.06.2025 @ 03.00 PM** in E-Procurement Platform **www.telanganatenders.gov.in.**

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Irrigation Circle, Mall, Chintapally (M), Nalgonda.

DIPR R.O.No: 2839-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt. 30-05-2025

The Pioneer
HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | MAY 31, 2025

ACROSS THE STATES



Activist booked for burning posters of Kamal Haasan

An FIR has been registered against a Kannada activist for allegedly burning posters of actor Kamal Haasan as a mark of protest against his recent controversial statement about the Kannada language, police said on Friday. The incident occurred near Pavitra Paradise Circle, KHB Road, Basaveshwaranagar here, they said. According to the police, on May 28 at around 11.45 pm, Ravikumar, president of Namma Karunada Yuva Sene, gathered near Pavitra Paradise Circle and started burning posters of Haasan. His act not only disturbed public peace but also caused hindrance to vehicular movement on road at midnight, a senior police officer said. "Based on the complaint of a policeman on duty, we have registered a case against the president of the pro-Kannada outfit yesterday (Thursday) at Basaveshwaranagar police station under sections 270 (public nuisance) and 283 (deliberately mislead navigators using false signals such as lights, marks, or buoys) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.



One killed as wall collapses in Mizoram

A 37-year-old man was killed and another injured after a wall collapsed on a labourers' camp in the wake of heavy rain in Mizoram's Aizawl district, police said. The incident occurred around 7 am in Thuampui area in the northeastern part of Aizawl when the wall fell on the makeshift establishment where the two were staying, a senior officer said. "The two persons were buried under the debris after the wall collapsed. One person died on the spot, while the injured has been taken to nearby Greenwood hospital," he said. A bulletin, issued by the state disaster management and rehabilitation department, said that landslides and rockfall occurred at several places due to heavy rain, blocking inter-district and national highways. At least two houses were severely damaged due to land subsidence and collapse of a retaining wall in Mauchar village in Aizawl district near the state border with Assam and Manipur, and at Rangvamual on the western outskirts of Aizawl due to rain, it said.



CR renames Usmanabad station as Dharashiv

The Usmanabad railway station in central Maharashtra has been renamed as `Dharashiv', officials said on Friday. The station previously known as Usmanabad, with the station code UMD, has now been officially renamed Dharashiv, with the new station code DRSV, the Central Railway said in a release. The Maharashtra government has already changed the name of Osmanabad city and district (locally pronounced as `Usmanabad') as Dharashiv and the proposal to change the name of the station was pending with the railways. "The new station name and code have been approved by the Indian Railways Conference Association," the release stated. To implement the name change, the Mumbai Passenger Reservation System (PRS) will be temporarily shut down from 11:45 pm to 01:30 am on June 1, 2025. Osmanabad/Usmanabad was named for a 20th century ruler of the princely state of Hyderabad. Dharashiv is the name of an 8th century cave complex in the area.

118 Pak forward posts fully destroyed by BSF: Amit Shah

PNS ■ POONCH (J-K)



More than 118 Pakistani forward posts and their surveillance system were completely destroyed by the BSF during Operation Sindoor, dealing a major blow to the neighbouring country, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday.

Concluding his two-day tour of the Jammu region to review the security situation, preparation for the Amarnath Yatra and to interact with victims of shelling, Shah commended the Border Security Force (BSF) for its resolute response to Pakistani aggression during the four days of conflict earlier this month.

Damaging and destroying so many posts in such a short period is a remarkable achievement, he said, adding that dismantling the enemy's surveillance network is a significant blow and it would take Pakistan years to rebuild the system.

"During Operation Sindoor, the BSF destroyed more than 118 Pakistani posts," he said during his first visit to Jammu and Kashmir after Operation Sindoor.

"When Pakistan responded to our anti-terror operations by attacking our borders and civilian areas, it was the BSF jawans of the Jammu Frontier who retaliated by destroying and damaging over 118 posts."

"They dismantled the enemy's entire surveillance system piece by piece -- a system that will take them four to five years to rebuild."

Shah said that according to information he received from the BSF director general, Pakistan had suffered the biggest blow to its communication systems and surveillance equipment, rendering them "incapable of waging a full-fledged information-based war for quite some time".

Praising the BSF's readiness even during times of relative peace, Shah said their intelligence enabled precise pre-emptive action.

"This proves that even during peacetime, you kept a vigilant eye... Based on your accurate intelligence, a precise counter-strategy was prepared well in advance. When the opportunity arose, you implemented it with success."

Terming the feat a reflection of immense patriotism and sacrifice, Shah added, "Such bravery only emerges when there is pride in the nation, a sense of patriotism in the heart, and a passion for supreme sacrifice. That is when such outcomes are possible."

Time up for Pak's 'dangerous game' of terrorism: Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Pakistan should hand over UN designated terrorists Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar to India if it is serious about talks between the two countries, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Friday.

In an interaction with the naval warriors onboard aircraft carrier INS Vikrant off Goa, Singh said if Pakistan resorts to anything "evil or unethical" against India, it will face the firepower and ire of the Indian Navy this time.

If Pakistan tries to cast an evil eye, the opening of New Delhi's response will be at the hands of the Indian Navy, he said in a clear message to Islamabad.

Pakistan needs to understand that the time is up for the "dangerous game" of terrorism it has been playing since Independence and India will use every method to root out the menace, Singh said.

Anti-India activities are being carried out openly from Pakistani soil and India is "completely free" to carry out every kind of operation against terrorists on both sides of the border and the sea, he said.

The defence minister, highlighting the Indian Navy's role during Operation Sindoor, said it succeeded in keeping the Pakistani military tied down.

When the Indian Air Force destroyed terror bases on Pakistani soil, the Indian Navy's aggressive deployment in Arabian Sea confined Pakistani Navy to its own shores, he said.

Singh used his brief speech to the naval personnel to send a stern warning to Pakistan as he asserted that Operation Sindoor is not just a military action but India's frontal assault against terrorism.

PM inaugurates Kanpur Metro, built by Afcons

PNS ■ MUMBAI, INDIA



Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on Friday inaugurated a 5-kilometre stretch of the underground Kanpur Metro. Of this, one completed station—Kanpur Central Metro Station—and 2.4 kilometre of tunnelling have been executed by infrastructure major M/s Afcons Infrastructure Ltd.

Afcons-led consortium is executing the KNPCC-06 package, which was awarded on March 14, 2022. The project includes design and construction of a 3.826 kilometre underground stretch comprising three metro stations: Kanpur Central, Jhakarkatti, and Transport Nagar, two twin tunnels bored using two shield Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs), with others.

Tunnelling along this stretch posed significant challenges due to the presence of dilapidated buildings. However, Afcons successfully navigated these complexities and completed the tunnelling work safely and efficiently.

Construction of Kanpur Central Station, which began in December 2022, and the tunnelling works between Kanpur Central and Nawabganj, initiated in August 2023, have both been completed. Afcons, which has been associated with Kanpur Metro since its early phases, was previously responsible for the Priority Section under package KNPCC-02.

Man gets 20 years RI for raping minor daughter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A court here has sentenced a man to rigorous imprisonment of 20 years for repeatedly raping and having unnatural sex with his 13-year-old daughter, saying that the victim was going through a never ending ordeal, where years after the crime, she feared that if her father were sentenced, she would be blamed by society.

Expressing abject disappointment, Additional Sessions Judge Anu Aggarwal, in an order dated May 28, said the girl was subjected to the most heinous crime within the four walls of her home by her father, to whom she had bestowed her utmost trust.

30 Bangladeshi nationals held in Delhi's northwest

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Delhi Police has detained 30 Bangladeshi nationals residing illegally in the city's Bharat Nagar area, an official said on Friday.

Based on a tip-off about illegal migrants involved in suspicious activities including begging at traffic signals, a special team conducted a surveillance operation throughout May and carried out surprise raids.

"Teams rounded-up suspects from various localities. All 30 people were found to be Bangladeshi nationals who had entered India illegally through porous borders with the help of agents," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northwest) Bhisham Singh said.

The officer said that during interrogation, the accused including -- 12 women, 15 men, and three children -- admitted to sneaking into India without valid documents. Many of them have been staying in Delhi for several years.

They were attempting to merge with the local population by taking up odd jobs and begging at traffic intersections, he added.

Officials recovered five smartphones installed with the banned IMO application, which the accused were allegedly using to stay in touch with their relatives back in Bangladesh. The app is reportedly restricted due to its use for covert communication across borders, he said.

Additionally, police recovered ten Bangladeshi National ID cards from their possession.

"The arrested persons include multiple family units, with some of them accompanied by minor children.

K'taka recorded highest rainfall in May: CM

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said, for the first time in the last 125 years, the state has recorded the highest rainfall in the month of May, and 28 districts have received more than usual rainfall.

Addressing the review meeting with Deputy Commissioners of all districts and CEOs of all Zilla Panchayats, he asked them to visit the rain-damaged areas immediately and provide necessary compensation to those affected.

"There is no shortage of funds to provide compensation for rain damage.

More than Rs 1,000 crore is available under SDRF (State Disaster Response Fund) in the districts," the CM was quoted as telling officers, by his office in a release.

Guidelines have already been issued for providing compensation if houses are damaged due to heavy rain.

"Immediate compensation should be provided," he said.

In places where landslides are likely, precautionary measures, including evacuation of people should be taken to avoid the possibility of death, Siddaramaiah said.

In case the house is completely damaged by rains, immediate compensation of Rs 1.20 lakh is being provided, he said, as he asked the Deputy Commissioners to take action like last year by providing new houses to such people.

Assistance should be provided for the construction of houses under various schemes, he added.

Houses flooded, power disrupted; rains affect normal life in Kerala

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Houses in low lying areas of Kerala were flooded in the heavy rains, while the accompanying strong winds uprooted trees, damaged homes and caused power disruptions, throwing normal way of life into disarray across the state.

In Thrissur, Kannur and Kasaragod districts, there were reports of several homes getting flooded due to the heavy rains, forcing people to move to relief camps.

Not just homes, but many roads in these districts and other parts of the state were inundated due to the heavy rains.

In Pathanamthitta, Kottayam and Idukki districts, the heavy rains and strong winds uprooted trees and damaged electricity poles and transformers, leading to partial and complete destruction of hundreds of homes and power disruptions for hours, according to the authorities.

It will be a holiday for educational institutions in Kottayam district on Saturday, district authorities said.

In Kollam, uprooted trees and falling branches, due to the rains and strong winds, caused damage to several homes and private vehicles in the district and a few persons were reportedly injured.

An 85-year-old woman, who worked as an MGNREGA worker in Ernakulam district, died when an uprooted tree fell on top of her while returning home on Thursday evening.

The Ernakulam district authorities also reported a rise in the water level of the Muvattupuzha River above the flood warning markers, leading to the opening of three shutters of the Malankara Dam by 20 centimetres (cm).

Train services were also affected with some, including the Mangaluru-Thiruvananthapuram Vande Bharat Expres, being diverted due to fallen trees on the tracks, while others were rescheduled or delayed due to the heavy rains, authorities said.

Deforestation for coal block mining: NGT says can't proceed with issue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has said it cannot proceed with the issue of alleged deforestation for mining in the Hasdeo forest in Chhattisgarh as it had previously dealt with the matter and that cases regarding it were also pending in the Supreme Court and a high court.

The green body was hearing the matter in which it had taken suo motu (on its own) cognisance of some media reports regarding the cutting of trees by the state forest department to clear the land for mining in Parsa East-Kente Basan (PEKB) Phase-II, a coal block allotted to Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam (RRVUN), the power generation company of the Rajasthan government.

In an order dated May 28, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said two writ petitions pending in the apex court and the Chhattisgarh High Court "substantially" covered the issue.

"Hence, in such circumstances, the tribunal would not be justified in taking up the parallel proceedings by examining these original applications or OAs (before it) on merit," said the bench also comprising judicial member Justice Sudhir Agarwal and expert member A Senthil Vel.

The tribunal said the central zonal bench of the NGT in Bhopal had earlier disposed of the matter regarding the illegal felling of more than 15,000 trees in Hasdeo forest in the districts of Korba and Sarguja for carrying out the proposed PEKB coal mining project.

All-party panel concludes 'productive' visit to Saudi Arabia

PNS ■ RIYADH

The all-party Indian delegation, led by BJP MP Baijayant Jay Panda, on Friday concluded a "productive" visit to Saudi Arabia, reasserting India's zero-tolerance and 'New Normal' approach to terrorism during its interaction with a range of political and diplomatic leadership.

"The visit reaffirmed the shared commitment of India-Saudi Arabia in the fight against terrorism," said a post on X by the Indian Embassy here.

On departure, Maj Gen Abdulrahman Alharbi, Chair of the Saudi-India Friendship Committee of the Shura Council, bid farewell to the delegation, it added.

"Concluded a highly productive visit in Saudi Arabia, reaffirming the deep India-Saudi Arabia strategic partnership — from defence and security to trade and counter-terrorism," Panda said in a post on X.

The Indian delegation met with and appreciated the contributions of the Indian diaspora to the development of India and highlighted that "Saudi Arabia has always stood with India in condemning acts of terrorism," said a statement from the Indian Embassy on Thursday.

After meeting the Indian diaspora, Panda said: "We have had very fruitful discussions in Saudi Arabia and other countries we have visited. Here in Riyadh, we have met senior officials, leaders, media, and of course, the Indian diaspora. "We have very clearly conveyed India's position and the threat that we have faced from cross-border terrorism. India has a deep relationship with Saudi Arabia... Stands taken on terrorism are the same," he said. Delegation member, Ambassador Harsh Shringla, said in a post on X that he was "privileged to address representatives of a 2.7 million strong Indian community in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on the cold, calculated act of cross-border terrorism in Pahalgam and the consequences of such actions under India's New Normal."

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Editor's TAKE

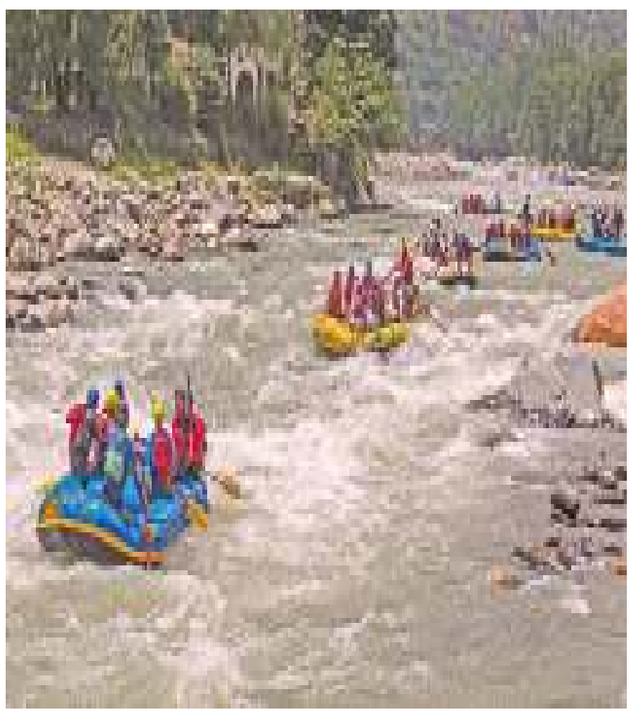
A Brewing Crisis in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is fast plunging into a deeper chaos as key players dig in and brace for a showdown

A political powder keg is simmering in Bangladesh, threatening not only the stability of the country but also casting long shadows across India and the South Asian region. What began as a transitional phase following the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has evolved into a full-blown standoff between unelected caretaker leader Muhammad Yunus and the country's military, led by Army Chief General Waker-uz-Zaman. At the heart of the crisis lies a breakdown of democratic processes, a rapidly deteriorating security environment, and an unfolding geostrategic reshuffle with implications far beyond Bangladesh's borders. Muhammad Yunus, initially positioned as a temporary caretaker, has entrenched himself in power without a popular mandate. His reluctance to hold elections and the increasingly radical and foreign-aligned nature of his governance — has drawn fierce opposition from both domestic political players and the armed forces. General Waker-uz-Zaman, frustrated with Yunus' indefinite delay in elections, has demanded a return to constitutional order, declaring that the military's role is not to police the state but to defend it. Tensions have reached a boiling point over Yunus' controversial proposal for a US backed "Rakhine Corridor" from Cox's Bazar to Myanmar's Rakhine state. While presented under the pretext of humanitarian aid, the corridor is viewed by the military as a potential geopolitical trap — one that could invite proxy warfare, compromise sovereignty, and entangle Bangladesh in regional conflicts.

What makes this internal crisis dangerously international is Yunus' foreign policy pivot — one that seems less about Bangladesh's interests and more about consolidating his own power. His efforts to court China and Pakistan, alleged offer of the strategic Lalmonirhat airbase to Beijing, and warmth toward US interests all signal a radical departure from Bangladesh's traditional alignment with India and its own founding principles. Perhaps most troubling is his overt attempt to bypass democratic accountability by engaging global powers to validate his unelected regime. Yunus has undertaken whirlwind tours across continents, from the US to the Vatican, seeking legitimacy on the global stage while refusing it at home. The rise of Islamist forces like Jamaat, now backing Yunus, and his move to ban the Awami League — the dominant secular party — underline the danger of a creeping theocratic realignment. For India, the situation presents a multi-layered challenge. The erosion of democratic processes in Bangladesh, combined with Yunus' anti-India rhetoric and warming up to China and Pakistan, has triggered serious alarm bells in New Delhi. What happens in Dhaka will not stay in Dhaka. Bangladesh's internal struggle is a reflection of broader geopolitical contests and ideological battles playing out across South Asia. It is a moment of reckoning — for democracy, for sovereignty, and for regional stability. India, and the world, must tread carefully but firmly. The people of Bangladesh deserve the right to determine their future — free of manipulation, militarism, or foreign meddling. The only way forward is through the ballot box.

PIC TALK



Tourists are enjoying an exhilarating river rafting experience on the Beas River, in Manali. PTI

The evolution of state-controlled humanity

Today, as predictive policing, biometric surveillance, and algorithmic profiling silently erode human dignity, we must confront a stark truth: the architecture of inhumanity has evolved, not ended



Last week, Japan released the service records of officers and soldiers before its defeat in 1945, made public on May 15 by the country's National Archives. The documents revealed that some personnel were assigned to clandestine units in China: one in Nanjing, identified as Unit 1,644, and another in Guangzhou, numbered 8,604. The military personnel in these units reportedly conducted bacteriological experiments on human subjects. Until now, only Unit 731, located near Harbin — now in China's Heilongjiang province — was known for carrying out such activities from 1938 until the end of the Second World War." The service records confirm the existence in China of a network of units conducting these experiments and coordinating their activities," explained Katsuo Nishiyama, emeritus professor at Shiga University of Medical Science and a specialist in Japan's imperial-era biological weapons programmes. Units 1,644 and 8,604 — with the one in Nanjing being the largest — were overseen, like Unit 731, by the Tokyo-based Epidemic Prevention and Water Purification Department.

Their primary activity reportedly involved experimenting on humans to enable Japan to develop biological weapons, in flagrant violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting chemical and biological warfare. Yet the significance of this week's release gains graver depth when juxtaposed with the declassified "Top Secret" CIA correspondence from 1947, in which Shiro Ishii — the commanding figure of Unit 731 — is directly implicated in aerial dispersion of plague-infested fleas and cholera bacteria over Chinese cities.

In one instance, 70 kilograms of typhoid and five kilograms of cholera bacilli were manufactured and released by Ishii and 100 subordinates in Hangzhou. In another, experiments using anthrax and plague bacilli on condemned Manchurian prisoners were personally supervised by Ishii and his staff. The American legal section in Tokyo, reporting these atrocities, concluded that Ishii's group had likely violated rules of land warfare but crucially, advised no prosecutions, citing the need for corroboration.

That corroboration never came. What did come was immunity, offered quietly by US occupation authorities in exchange for data. There is an unsettling quality to the revelation, not because it surprises us, but because it reminds us of how efficiently modern states have learned to obscure their darkest pursuits behind the sterile veneer of bureaucratic documentation. We are no longer startled by the grotesque — we are merely resigned to its recurrence. What Unit 731, and now Units 1,644 and 8,604, represent is not merely historical horror but the forebear of a continuously evolving paradigm of institutionalised cruelty — an apparatus where the individual ceases to be human and is instead transmuted into a datum, a utility, a variable in a clandestine calculus of power.



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

The atrocities committed by these units were not anomalies of madness; they were clinically executed projects of rationalised inhumanity. Vivisections without anaesthesia, frostbite studies on bare limbs, forced plague infections, weaponisation of cholera through aerial dispersal — these were not the sadistic whims of deranged soldiers but calculated scientific undertakings, sanctioned at the highest echelons of military command. When former assistants recall slicing open conscious prisoners as a matter of scientific routine, when the nomenclature of "maruta" — wooden logs — is used to refer to living human beings, we are not witnessing a collapse of civilisation but its macabre reconfiguration. The human subject was rendered not just disposable, but conceptually void. There was no crime, for there was no victim — merely an object, a component, a specimen. It would be a profound error to treat this as a pathology unique to Imperial Japan. State-sponsored erasure of personhood is not a historical relic. It is a modality — mutable, adaptive, and increasingly sophisticated. Where once scalpels and serums sufficed, today's instruments of control are algorithms, neural interfaces, predictive policing matrices and biometric surveillance. The sinews of tyranny have grown digital. The terror of Unit 731 was visceral, it bled, it screamed. The terror of the modern surveillance state is silent and seamless. It categorises rather than dissects, but the telos remains the same: to redefine the human not as a sovereign moral entity, but as an input to a system. The apotheosis of the state is not its capacity to kill, but its ability to render lives irrelevant except as data points. Drones do not deliberate the value of human life; they execute based on geofenced logic. Predictive policing does not inquire about innocence; it infers guilt from behaviour correlations.

Social credit systems do not discern the soul of a citizen; they tabulate conformity and punish deviation. These are not speculative dystopias. They are extant practices, legitimised under the aegis of security, efficiency, and progress. The biologically programmed disregard for ethical limits seen in Unit 731 found its outrageous apogee in a scalpel carving through living flesh. Today, that disregard finds new form in facial recognition systems that can trigger detainment for dissent, in AI models that silently filter refugees from digital asylum queues, and in neural marketing that subtly hijacks cognition to monetise impulse. What distinguishes today's iteration of state violence is its ideological hygiene.

The horror is antiseptic and anonymised. Whereas Ishii's atrocities left charred remnants and eyewitnesses, our age's ethical transgressions are encoded in machine learning protocols, buried in terms and conditions, and obfuscated by the language of optimisation. We no longer need euphemisms like "maruta" — the human subject disappears not through crude renaming but through the algorithmic excision of identity itself. Japan's post-war evasion of justice for Unit 731 exemplifies how historical crimes are not merely covered up, but strategically repurposed.

The US, in its Cold War paranoia, traded immunity for Ishii's "research". Here, too, lies a universal pattern: when power converges with information, morality is sidelined. And yet, a culture that never reckons with its past cannot apprehend the shape of its future. The denial of Unit 731's legacy, the institutional amnesia surrounding the biological experimentation programmes, and the deliberate reintegration of war criminals into academic and industrial life — all these signal a deeper malaise. It is not just that crimes were committed, but that the moral infrastructure of accountability was never built.

The machinery of forgetting was as meticulous as the machinery of death. Today, this machinery has been automated. Today, individuals face a state that no longer relies on physical force but on predictive data and emotion recognition. Borders are controlled by neural networks, and social order is shaped by engagement metrics.

Our right to privacy fades daily through devices we willingly carry. We live in an age where code, not just Governments, defines us — deciding mortgages, profiling travellers, and monitoring communities. These informational eugenics focus on behaviour, not biology, with efficiency replacing cruelty. Sovereignty now lies in modelling and controlling life, where humans are measured by machines beyond our understanding.

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

India's strategic surge in a changing world order

SECOND Opinion

There has been a paradigm shift in our internal and external policy in the last six years which has changed the balance of power not only in our part of the world but in the whole world. All this started with the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. It was a major decision that was executed brilliantly without any hullabaloo. The world, too, accepted it silently and a small group of people in the country who are masters in creating a storm in a cup of tea on trivial matters were caught completely off guard, and they could not react the way they are known to.

The second incident was the outbreak of Covid-19, which dealt a heavy blow to India and the rest of the world. Everybody thought that the economy of countries like India would be devastated and mortality would be unimaginable. There is no denying the fact that it was indeed a big blow to our economy, life, and property, but it is equally true that we came out of it rather brilliantly, defying all predictions of doomsday.

The icing on the cake was the making of its vaccine and India's largeheartedness in helping those countries that badly needed them. It greatly helped in shaping our image as an upcoming global power because India helped them free of cost and without any expectation of gain, and that too in an environment when the acknowledged global leaders were behaving like vultures to have their pound of flesh in that hour of tragedy and trauma. The Chinese policy of salami slicing and their misadventure in Galwan Valley was met with extraordinary resolution, and we had a long standoff with China on the Ladakh border.



BANSHIDHAR RUKHAIYAR

Finally, both countries agreed to de-escalate and demobilise, and peace was restored. This was a big success for India, and the world was delighted to know that someone can take on China successfully. It was a big dent in Chinese hegemony.

The fourth incident was our strong refusal to abide by the US sanctions against Russia in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict. We bought Russian crude oil at a specially discounted rate in a huge amount, shielding our internal market from international volatility in crude prices. We also made a huge amount of money by refining them and selling them to Europe, earning a lot of money. It was not as easy as it appears to be. India showed a tough spine which spoke volumes about its newfound strength and status.

Operation Sindoor in the aftermath of the Pahalgam massacre of tourists on April 22nd, is the latest incident that has established the power of India in the realm of global politics. India hit hard the Pak-protected terrorist training camps and hideouts to send the message to Pakistan and the whole world that it won't tolerate any terrorist attack. Pakistan retaliated by attempting to target several cities and other strategic locations which India effectively neutralised. In retaliation, it destroyed the airborne warning system of Pakistan and bombarded its airbases with such precision that Pakistan was taken aback.

A ceasefire without the proper declaration of war was made after the DGMO of Pakistan contacted the DGMO of India and requested an immediate ceasefire. Operation Sindoor showed that India could penetrate any defence shield and attack targets with extraordinary precision and with zero collateral damage to civilians and non-military assets. It displayed the superiority of the Indian arms and the men handling them. It also manifested that the Indian armed forces can make a coordinated attack on the best of the defence system.The emergence of India as an upcoming economic and military power has upset the existing balance of power.

The US is no longer an undisputed superpower. China is yet to be acknowledged as a superpower. Russia is flexing its muscles and trying to regain the old glory of the USSR. Trump has said more than once that the European countries should fend for themselves.

This is the beginning of the weakening of NATO. Any power structure that will unfold in the coming years will woo India to join the bandwagon because it has the capacity to tilt the balance of power given its demographic strength, technological skill and military prowess. India is on the threshold of an all-round success.

(The writer is a noted academician and political commentator. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Concern over identy-based violence

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the disturbing rise in incidents of violence and coercion targeting individuals based purely on their identity. Reports of mob attacks, forced chanting of slogans, and public humiliation have surfaced with alarming frequency.

These actions not only threaten the physical safety of our citizens but also undermine the very principles of dignity, freedom, and secularism enshrined in our Constitution. It is particularly troubling to observe that such incidents often occur in public spaces, sometimes even in broad daylight, while bystanders remain silent, either out of fear or indifference.

This growing normalisation of hatred is deeply corrosive to the fabric of our democracy. No citizen should be made to prove their patriotism or loyalty by uttering specific slogans or conforming to a majoritarian idea of identity. We risk losing the very essence of our diverse and inclusive society if this trend continues unchecked.

The authorities must act swiftly and impartially to bring the perpetrators to justice, and society at large must reject such behaviour in no uncertain terms. The silence of responsible voices only emboldens those who seek to divide us. It is time for all of us — regardless of faith, background, or belief — to stand united against hate and violence.

MD SABIR HUSSAIN | ARA

Tharoor caught in the crossfire

It's unfortunate that internal discord has emerged within the Congress party, sparked by BJP-turned-Congress leader Dr Udit Raj's criticism of Shashi Tharoor. Tharoor faced backlash for his praise of India's counter-terror operations during an international delegation tour, though he clearly stated he was referring only to retaliatory strikes following terrorist attacks — not past wars.

Tharoor emphasised India's historically restrained responses in respect of international borders. Following Udit Raj's remarks, BJP leaders like Kiren Rijiju and Shehzad Poonawalla seized the opportunity to support Tharoor and question Congress's stance on national interest. Many believe the BJP is attempting to woo Tharoor, especially given his past appearance with PM Modi during the inauguration of an Adani port in Kochi, and Modi's jibe at the INDIA bloc.

Ironically, Modi had previously mocked Tharoor's late wife during a 2019 rally, revealing the shifting sands of political strategy. Tharoor, a staunch Nehruvian and secular voice, is being used by the BJP to soften its communal image globally.

Despite this, national interest must take precedence over politics. It's sad to see Tharoor, leading an all-party delegation on Operation Sindoor, caught in crossfire from both allies and rivals alike.

BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE | FARIDABAD

Keep Turkey at an arm's length

As the relations between India and Turkey have nosedived following the latter's unabashed and explicit support to Pakistan during the recent conflict, India's civil society has done well to keep the Middle East country at arm's length.

It must be recalled that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in a television interview ahead of his India visit in 2017, had called for a "multilateral dialogue" on Kashmir and had expressed his "desire" to mediate between India and Pakistan to solve the Kashmir imbroglio.

The outright ridiculous suggestion was aptly ignored by New Delhi. Erdogan's remarks highlighted his poor understanding of the history of countries other than Turkey. Erdogan, even now, has to do loads of homework before he talks about India. It is known that Pakistan considers Turkey a "friend", and the ideologies of Turkey and Pakistan are almost similar.

One must not forget Turkey's consistent opposition to India's NSG membership bid. New Delhi has to tread with caution while dealing with snobbish leaders inimical to India's known stand on Kashmir, and keep all diplomatic channels on hold till they mend their ways. Prioritising national interests over the allure of superficial partnerships is crucial for regional stability.

GANAPATHI BHAT| AKOLA

GLOBAL VOICES DECRY INDIA'S ARMS EXPORTS TO ISRAEL

Signatories to a statement from around the world have expressed their concern over the fact that India, which had always supported the Palestinian cause, is under its present Government supporting Israel by supplying it weaponry. "India, from its inception, supported the just cause of the Palestinians. However, the present regime is assisting the genocide by exporting rockets, explosives and killer drones to Israel," said a list of 372 signatories from India and other countries in a statement.

According to official records, the death toll has crossed 54,000. Studies done by The Lancet and others put the death toll several times more than the official numbers. An estimate by Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor is that Israel kills a Palestinian woman every hour in the Gaza Strip, including 7,920 mothers so far. Israel kills a child in Gaza every 45 minutes. The statement said that despite all these horrors, the world just stands by and watches the genocide, which is perhaps the first live-streamed genocide. Even though the world gets real-time updates on this genocide, the world powers don't raise a finger to stop Israel; rather, this genocide is aided by Western powers, especially the United States. Israel has dropped approximately 90,000 tons of bombs on Gaza, every one of them provided or assisted by the United States. It is almost 4.5 times the tonnage of nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It added that UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher has recently warned that 14,000 babies in Gaza could die soon if aid does not reach communities in Gaza.

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, 60,000 pregnant women are currently enduring severe conditions due to malnutrition, hunger, and inadequate healthcare. Palestine is not a Muslim versus Jews issue. It is the last great anti-colonial struggle against Western colonialism.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

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

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HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | MAY 31, 2025

Bangladesh on edge: Election deadlock sparks tensions

Key power centers are issuing conflicting ultimatums, while suspicions of delay, conspiracy, and unrest simmer just beneath the surface. With Yunus' interim Government under increasing pressure and opposition factions threatening agitation, Bangladesh appears poised for a showdown

FIRST Column



Is turmoil brewing in Bangladesh? According to a report in *The Daily Star* of May 28, 2025, Muhammad Yunus, on a four-day visit to Japan at the time of writing, told former Japanese prime minister and Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship League President, Taro Aso, that elections to Bangladesh's National Parliament will be held by June 2026, under any circumstance. Yunus, who, as chief adviser, is the head of Bangladesh's interim Government, had further said that the interim administration was focusing on three priorities — reforms, the trials of the perpetrators of political violence and the forthcoming national elections.

According to a report in the Dhaka Tribune of the same date, echoing Yunus, his press secretary, Shafiqul Alam, said after his meeting with Taro Aso, that Yunus was moving forward with three specific agendas — reform, trial (of fascist elements), and election. "He will announce a specific date for the elections once everything is ready."On the other hand, addressing virtually from London, a rally organised by three front organisations of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) — the Chhatra Dal, the Jubo Dal and the Swechhasebak Dal — the party's acting chairman, Tarique Rahman, said on May 28, "We call on the interim Government: national elections must be held by this December." Emphasising that elections must take place "within this timeframe," he asked his "dear countrymen" to prepare to ensure that national elections were held by December. Alleging that certain factions within the Government were conspiring to delay the elections, he added, "It appears that efforts to stall the upcoming election have already begun. The future of the election seems entangled in endless debates over so-called minor and major reforms. People are beginning to believe that these reform discussions are merely tactics to buy time, and that some within and outside the interim Government may have ulterior motives."



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Earlier, addressing virtually a discussion marking the 18th anniversary of the founding of the National People's Party in Dhaka, on May 25, 2025, he had called for constructive criticism of the Government, irrespective of whether it was an elected Government, an interim Government or a caretaker Government.

The country's people were not at the mercy of the Government, which must fulfil their legitimate demands.According to a report published in Prothom Alo English, the English language edition of Bangladesh's leading Bengali daily, Prothom Alo, General Waker-Uz-Zaman, the country's Chief of Army Staff, had said during an address to Bangladesh Army officers of different ranks stationed in Dhaka, on May 21, 2025, that the next national election should be held by December 2025. Noting that his stance on the issue remained unchanged, he added that it was the right of an elected Government to determine the country's future course.

General Waker-Uz-Zaman also stated that a decision regarding the transfer of the control of the New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) at Chattogram port to foreign entities, should be taken by a political Government, which should also decide on facilitating the establishment of a humanitarian corridor for the passage of aid to Myanmar's Rakhine state. Regarding the much-vaunted reforms, he said he had no idea of what they were as he was not consulted about them. The National Citizen Party, established on February 28, 2025, by the students who were at the forefront of the movement that ousted Sheikh Hasina, is apparently in no hurry to hold the elections. According to a report in The Daily Star of April 17, 2025, Nahid Islam, the party's convenor, told the press in Dhaka on April 16, that the administration was helping the BNP and free and fair elections were not possible under it. He also said that his party sought fundamental reforms leading to qualitative changes in the state. Moving towards elections without structural changes would be dangerous for the country and his party would have to consider whether to participate in such an election or not. According to another report in The Daily Star of April 21, 2025, Nasiruddin Patwari, the NCP's Chief Coordinator, who met Bangladesh's Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) at the head of a delegation of his party, had urged him to hold the election only after the full implementation of electoral reforms, which should be possible under the timeframe suggested by Yunus. Other NCP leaders have said that elections should be held only after the trial and punishment of Sheikh Hasina and other Awami League leaders (whom they have proclaimed mass murderers).

> THE JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI BANGLADESH, EXTREMELY CLOSE AT ONE TIME TO THE BNP WHEN IT HAD TWO IMPORTANT MINISTERS IN THE COALITION GOVERNMENT HEADED BY ITS LEADER, BEGUM KHALEDA ZIA, IS LEANING TOWARDS YUNUS, STATING THE LATTER'S CHOICE OF THE TIME FOR THE NEXT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WAS ACCEPTABLE TO IT.

Clearly, there are two divergent positions — one by Yunus and the student leaders, and the other by the BNP and the Bangladesh Army — on the timing of the elections. The Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, extremely close at one time to the BNP when it had two important ministers in the coalition Government headed by its leader, Begum Khaleda Zia, is leaning towards Yunus, stating the latter's choice of the time for the next parliamentary elections was acceptable to it.

The party, which is in close touch with other fundamentalist Islamic political organisations and parties like the Hefazat-e-Islam and Islami Andolan Bangladesh, is clearly keeping its options open. On the other hand, relations between Yunus, the BNP and the army are not of the friendliest kind. Aligned with Yunus is the Council of Advisers running the interim Government and the National Citizen Party. Things are turning increasingly nasty. According to a report in Dhaka Tribune, Zainul Abedin Farroque, a member of the BNP Chairperson's Advisory Council, told a rally on March 12, 2025, that the new party (NCP) was now trying "to create chaos to delay the election... people have started saying this."

Addressing a rally in Dhaka on April 18, 2022, BNP's vice-president, Shamsuzzaman Dudu, claimed that the interim Government was delaying the election to prevent the BNP from coming to power. What would the BNP and the army do if the interim Government refuses to hold the parliamentary elections by December 2025? Will the BNP hit the streets? Will the army try to force Yunus' hand? The chief adviser seems to be getting ready for a showdown.

He reportedly indicated on the evening of May 21, 2025, his desire to resign because he would not be able to continue in the present situation in Bangladesh with the political parties failing to reach a common ground to bring a change in the country. Remonstrances followed and he stayed on. The demand for elections and tensions with the army continued. Then came the next move. An unscheduled meeting of the Council of Advisers in Dhaka on May 24 expressed concern over the growing attempts to obstruct its duties through unreasonable demands, unauthorised and politically motivated statements and disruptive programmes.

It warned that if these obstacles — fuelled by defeated forces or foreign conspiracies — rendered the Government's work impossible, it will take all facts to the public and make decisions in partnership with the people.

The council reiterated that the interim Government reflects the spirit and expectations of the July uprising. But if its independence, reform efforts, judicial process, and preparations for fair elections are continuously undermined, the Government will not hesitate to move forward with the people's support and take whatever steps are necessary. What message does the statement convey? A plan for mass mobilisation — in the same way as was done in the case of Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League in July 2024 — support of the interim Government's supporters and the NCP against those agitating for an election before December? Will it turn violent, leading to countrywide clashes? What will the army do in such a situation to restore order? Bangladesh's future would depend on the answers.

(The writer is a consulting editor of The Pioneer. Views are personal)

Turn intent into action for a child marriage free India by 2030

Last year on Akshaya Tritiya, something remarkable happened in Rajasthan. A day that had long been associated with a surge in child marriages passed without a single reported case in the state. That wasn't a coincidence. It was the result of strong judicial intervention, clear Government directives, and the grit of a network of NGOs that responded with urgency. The Rajasthan High Court, in response to a petition by the Just Rights for Children (JRC) network, ruled that village heads would be held accountable for any child marriage in their jurisdiction. The state administration acted swiftly, activating enforcement mechanisms at every level.

It was a moment that proved the power of coordinated action. That breakthrough was more than just a one-day victory it signalled what's possible when law, governance, and community align. But the challenge goes beyond Akshaya Tritiya, and the question is no longer whether this change is possible, but whether this change can be seen across all religions, faiths, and all auspicious occasions when child marriage sees a surge. The question is how to make it consistent, how to scale it nationally, and how to sustain the momentum so that India can truly become child marriage-free by 2030 — a goal the Government has already committed to achieving. India is not lacking in laws or intent.

> THE QUESTION IS HOW TO MAKE IT CONSISTENT, HOW TO SCALE IT NATIONALLY, AND HOW TO SUSTAIN THE MOMENTUM SO THAT INDIA CAN TRULY BECOME CHILD MARRIAGE-FREE BY 2030 — A GOAL THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY COMMITTED TO ACHIEVING.

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act is clear. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act is well drafted. The Government of India's recent nationwide campaign for a 'Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat' shows a new level of resolve. Networks like Just Rights for Children, who have long been working to end child marriage, have actively been supporting the cause, and the judiciary is taking firm steps. The over 250 NGOs of the network have been following a strategic roadmap outlined in Bhuwan Ribhu's bestseller, 'When Children Have Children: Tipping Point to End Child Marriage'. Notably, hearing the petition by Just Rights for Children's partner, SEVA, the Supreme Court passed a judgement last year on Child Marriage, which is a roadmap for action to end Child Marriage.



RAVI KANT

The judgement emphasised a prevention-protection-prosecution strategy and community-driven approach; guidelines issued to various ministries for the complete elimination of child marriage; a multi-sectoral coordination, training and capacity building of the law enforcement officers needed to be there.

What we need now is to turn this intent into action at every level of society, especially at the last mile — in our panchayats, schools, and households. One of the most commendable recent steps has come once again from Rajasthan. In March 2025, the state Government issued an order that makes it mandatory to print the date of birth of both the bride and groom on every wedding invitation card. It may appear like a small bureaucratic detail, but it's a transformative move. With this step, age becomes public information — subject to scrutiny by relatives, neighbours, vendors, and authorities. It empowers communities to intervene early and gives law enforcement a tangible way to identify and prevent illegal child marriages. This is a smart, low-cost, high-impact innovation that should be replicated across all states. There's an irony we must acknowledge: poverty is often cited as the main reason families marry off their children early. But India also runs some of the largest social welfare programmes in the world — from free education for girls to scholarships, health insurance, and livelihood support schemes. The disconnect isn't in the intention or the policy. It's in awareness and last-mile delivery. Far too often, families simply do not know about the schemes they are eligible for.

This is where panchayats and grassroots networks must play a stronger role. Panchayats are not just local governance bodies — they are the bridge between citizens and the state. When empowered and informed, they can help families access schemes, encourage education, and intervene when early marriages are being planned.

And as Rajasthan has shown, when panchayats are held accountable, they become effective watchdogs as well. Education is another key pillar. Without ensuring that every girl stays in school till the age of 18, we will not be able to end child marriage. The dropout rates after Class 8 remain high in many parts of the country, and this is precisely the age when girls become vulnerable. Investing in education — not just by building schools but also by ensuring safe transport, toilets, books, and digital tools — is an investment in a child marriage-free future. Several states, including Bihar, West Bengal, and Odisha, have introduced conditional cash transfers to encourage families to keep their daughters in school. These schemes have had measurable success. The central Government's Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign has also done important work in shifting public perception around the value of girls. These are efforts that must be strengthened and expanded.

At the same time, enforcement must remain strong. Child marriage is not a tradition — it is a punishable crime. And everyone who facilitates it, knowingly or unknowingly, must be made aware of the consequences. This includes priests, band players, transporters, and tent owners. Several state Governments have rightly asked all such vendors to take pledges to refrain from supporting child marriages.

These are necessary steps — part of the broader cultural shift that's already underway. The positive shift in Rajasthan has also been supported by civil society groups such as the Just Rights for Children (JRC), which works across 416 districts with over 250 NGO partners. Their model combines legal intervention, awareness building, school outreach, and community mobilisation.

Posters in temples and mosques, awareness drives in schools, and legal aid in high-risk districts — these are the kinds of actions that make a real difference. And the Government has welcomed this support, recognising that the fight against child marriage needs every hand on deck. India has reached a turning point. The laws are in place. The Government's commitment is visible and sincere. Civil society is energised. And there are already success stories to learn from. What we need now is scale.

Every village should have a working group on child marriage prevention. Every panchayat should have data on at-risk children. Every district should have a rapid response mechanism for suspected cases. This is not about doing more, it's about doing smart and doing together.

Let's stop thinking of child marriage as an issue we'll tackle eventually. Let's treat it as a national emergency — one that deserves the same focus we give to infrastructure, health, or digital access. Because at its core, child marriage is not just a violation of a child's rights — it is a threat to India's future.

We already have what we need: committed leadership, strong laws, innovative state initiatives, and an active civil society. If we now add stronger local governance, better delivery of welfare schemes, and consistent public awareness, we will reach the tipping point. India can become child marriage-free by 2030. That's not a dream — that's a deadline. And with the right push, we're closer than ever.

(The writer is National Convenor, Just Rights for Children. Views are personal)

Ahilyabai Holkar: The queen who wove a legacy of governance

This week marks the 300th birth anniversary of Rani Ahilyabai Holkar, one of India's most revered rulers — a sovereign whose leadership, foresight, and compassion transformed the Malwa region and left an indelible imprint on the country's cultural and economic fabric. Born in 1725 in the village of Chondi (in present-day Maharashtra), Ahilyabai hailed from a modest background. Her father was the village headman, and there was little to suggest that she would one day rule a kingdom.

But her remarkable journey — from an ordinary girl to a deified queen — was defined by resilience, intelligence, and deep devotion to her people. After the untimely death of her husband in 1754, Ahilyabai came under the tutelage of her father-in-law, Malhar Rao Holkar, a prominent Maratha general and the founder of the Holkar dynasty in Malwa. She learned the intricacies of administration and warfare, skills that would become crucial when she ascended the throne in 1767 following the deaths of both her father-in-law and her son, Male Rao Holkar. At a time when female leadership was rare and often contested, Ahilyabai defied patriarchal conventions to rule decisively for nearly three decades. She not only safeguarded her kingdom against external threats — often personally leading her armies — but also ushered in an era of stability, prosperity, and ethical governance.



PRIYAL BHARDWAJ

Her court was known for its accessibility and fairness, and she famously conducted daily public audiences where she heard and resolved her subjects' grievances. Ahilyabai's rule over Malwa (in present-day Madhya Pradesh) from 1767 to 1795 is remembered for its visionary administrative reforms, humane justice system, and fair taxation policies.

But two particular legacies continue to resonate powerfully even today: her patronage of religious architecture and her promotion of handloom weaving in Maheshwar. Ahilyabai Holkar's architectural patronage extended far beyond her kingdom. She undertook the restoration of key Hindu pilgrimage sites across the subcontinent — demonstrating not only religious devotion but also strategic statecraft that reinforced cultural unity and pride.

Most notably, she rebuilt the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi in 1780, more than a century after it had been destroyed under the orders of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. She also sponsored the reconstruction of the Somnath Temple in Gujarat, which had suffered repeated desecration, and supported projects in Kedarnath, Rameswaram, Dwarka, Ujjain, Gaya, and Udupi. These temples were not merely religious sites — they acted as nuclei of regional economies, spurring trade, craftsmanship, and pilgrimage tourism. Through this vast network of dharamshalas, ghats, and temples, Ahilyabai knitted together a spiritual map of India and provided a lasting infrastructural legacy. Ahilyabai moved her capital to Maheshwar, a town steeped in mythology and nestled on the banks of the Narmada River. Under her patronage, Maheshwar blossomed into a hub of art, literature, and especially textiles. She is credited with founding the Maheshwari weaving tradition, commissioning skilled craftsmen from across India to train local artisans and establish what would become a robust and sustainable industry.

The result was the creation of the now-iconic Maheshwari saree, characterised by its lightweight texture, subtle colours, and signature reversible borders. Woven from silk, cotton, or a blend of both, Maheshwari textiles are distinguished by their geometric motifs — checks, stripes, floral vines and borders inspired by temple architecture. These sarees are still handwoven on pit looms and no two are identical, making each piece a work of wearable art. Ahilyabai's involvement is said to have gone beyond mere sponsorship; according to local legend, she designed the first Maheshwari saree herself, setting the tone for what would become a storied tradition.

These sarees, which earned a Geographical Indication (GI) tag, remain popular across India and among the global Indian diaspora for their grace, elegance, and cultural authenticity. Maheshwar's textile industry is a prime example of effective policy action and patronage. Ahilyabai ensured that skilled craftsmen were brought in from different parts of the country. The skilling of the local populace added to their employability. With wider availability of expertise, new entrepreneurs emerged leading to a well-entrenched industry.

One rare and exquisite variety, the Garbh Reshmi saree — literally "silk from the womb" — used high-quality silk derived from select silkworm breeds and symbolised luxury during the Holkar era. Ahilyabai Holkar's reign stands as a paragon of ethical governance combined with cultural stewardship. She governed not just with authority, but with empathy and vision. Her policies empowered women, artisans, farmers, and common citizens. Her devotion to dharma was not limited to religious piety — it extended to an unwavering commitment to public welfare. In the 21st century, her life and legacy continue to inspire political leaders, social reformers, and entrepreneurs alike. Institutions, roads, and awards bear her name. Statues of the Queen grace city squares not just in Indore or Maheshwar, but across the country.

Few rulers in Indian history have commanded such enduring reverence. As India commemorates her tercentenary, Rani Ahilyabai Holkar reminds us that leadership grounded in justice, humility, and cultural pride can echo through centuries — woven into the very fabric of a nation.

(The writer runs Sangini Saheli, a non-profit. She is also the General Secretary of the BJP Women's Wing in Delhi. Views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Hitesh Mandot joins Raadhi Advisors as Managing Director

Capital markets advisory firm Raadhi Advisors has appointed investment banker Hitesh Mandot as managing director and member of its leadership team with effect from May 29. Mandot brings over 25 years of experience in capital markets and corporate advisory, having led more than 150 transactions, including over 100 IPOs as a left lead banker, the company said in a statement. Prior to joining Raadhi, he served as MD – Corporate Finance at InCred Capital. Hitesh has been instrumental in executing several landmark IPOs such as Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, Tejas Networks, Equitas, and IEX, and has worked with marquee clients including Reliance, Adani, Larsen & Toubro and Bharti Airtel. Founded in 2021, Raadhi Advisors is a specialised capital markets advisory firm that assists companies in their strategic pursuits, including Initial Public Offerings (IPOs).



Shardeum launches PayFi for internet payments

Autoscaling Layer 1 blockchain Shardeum on Friday announced the launch of its payment solution PayFi to support peer-to-peer, micro and macro payments.
The PayFi will target macro payments like remittances, global payroll, crowdfunding, e-commerce, and institutional settlements, Sharedeum said in a statement, adding that the autoscaling blockchain aims to become the Internet's default payments layer.
Micro Payments like AI-to-AI transactions, tipping, IoT payments, pay-per-use apps, and real-time bill splitting can be done at a significantly lower fee through the platform, Shardeum said.
"While blockchains like Bitcoin laid the foundation for decentralized payments, real-world adoption has been limited by high fees and technical constraints," it added. Shardeum's autoscaling architecture allows the network to expand based on real-time demand while transaction fees stay as low as $0.01 or less than Re 1. Shardeum launched its mainnet on May 5.



Govt achieves fiscal deficit target of 4.8 pc for FY25

The government has met its fiscal deficit target of 4.8 per cent of the GDP for 2024-25, according to the data released by the Controller General of Accounts on Friday.
The fiscal deficit for the previous financial year works out to be Rs 15,77,270 crore, nearly the same as revised estimates (Rs 15,69,527 crore) presented to Parliament in February.
The economic growth in nominal terms for the fiscal 2024-25 is estimated at Rs 3,30,68,145 crore, according to the GDP data released earlier in the day. As per the CGA data, the government managed to collect Rs 30.36 lakh crore revenue or 98.3 per cent of the revised Budget Estimates (RE).
The central government's expenditure during 2024-25 was Rs 46.55 lakh crore or 98.7 per cent of the RE.
The central government's fiscal deficit for 2023-24 was 5.63 per cent of the GDP.

SVP India champions engaged philanthropy for social impact

PNS ■ MUMBAI



As India's philanthropic landscape matures, a quiet revolution is underway-one that goes far beyond chequebooks and charity events. Social Venture Partners India (SVP India), a network of over 750 compassionate individuals across eight major cities, is reshaping how we give. SVP India's model of 'engaged philanthropy' reflects a deeper, more strategic way of giving: combining financial support with time, expertise and networks to transform grassroots NGOs into high-impact organisations.

According to Bain & Company's India Philanthropy Report 2024, India's ultra-high-net-worth individuals (UHNWIs) are becoming more strategic in their giving. But beyond the top tier, even working professionals and mid-level donors are seeking deeper engagement. SVP India reflects this shift. Its members-49% of whom are senior working professionals and 34% business owners-don't just contribute financially. They actively work alongside NGOs to build capacity, improve governance, and enhance operational efficiency.

Over the past decade, SVP India's partners have volunteered more than 25,000 hours with over 100 NGOs. The organization's structured process begins with rigorous NGO shortlisting, followed by the careful pairing of a Lead Partner whose professional experience aligns with the NGO's needs. These partnerships typically last for at least three years, allowing for deep collaboration and measurable progress.

The result is not just stronger NGOs, but a cadre of philanthropists with firsthand insight into the challenges of the social sector. More than 90% of SVP India partners have stayed on for over five years-a testament to the community's impact and relevance.

For NGOs, SVP India offers far more than financial support. Consider a Pune-based organisation working with hearing-impaired children. Despite a strong educational model, they faced scaling challenges. After partnering with SVP India, they were connected with a senior CSR consultant and a social sector strategist. This collaboration helped the NGO expand to a larger facility, secure job placements for students through corporate partnerships, build a robust fundraising network, and amplify awareness of their unique school model.

This is not an isolated success. The strength of SVP India lies in its ability to mobilize sector-specific knowledge and networks. Partners have helped NGOs redesign governance frameworks, pitch to institutional funders, establish strategic collaborations, and even join policy advisory boards.

The SVP staff-backed by over 180 years of collective social sector experience-curate tailored engagement programs based on partners' interests. Whether in healthcare, women's empowerment, waste management, disability rights, or employment generation, SVP ensures that partner involvement is both strategic and sustainable.

Adani Energy Solutions bags Rs 1,600-cr project

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (AESL) on Friday said it has secured an inter state transmission project in Maharashtra worth Rs 1,600 crore. With this, its transmission order book now stands at Rs 61,600 crore, the company said in a statement. The scope of the latest secured project includes establishment of 3,000 Mega Volt-Amperes (MVA) of substations capacity, besides other related transmission infrastructure, taking AESL's overall transmission network to 26,696 ckm and 93,236 MVA of transformation capacity.
AESL is scheduled to commission the project by January 2028. The company said it has won this Inter State Transmission System (ISTS) project under the Tariff Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) mechanism, while REC Power Development and Consultancy Ltd (RECPDCL) was the bid process coordinator.
AESL, part of the Adani portfolio, is a multi-dimensional organisation with a presence in various facets of the energy domain, like power transmission, distribution, smart metering, and cooling solutions.



Mallika Sherawat shares her beauty journey with RediClinic

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Renowned Bollywood actress Mallika Sherawat has finally unveiled the secret behind her radiant skin and luscious hair, crediting RediClinic's premium Biotin and Glutathione supplements as her go-to wellness duo.

In a recent Instagram video that has been trending among beauty enthusiasts, Mallika opens up about her journey toward achieving natural glow and health from within, moving beyond superficial skincare routines.

In her recent announcement she says "Beauty isn't just about what you apply on the outside—it's about how you nourish yourself from within," Mallika shared in her candid video. She recalls trying multiple skincare products and diets with limited results, until she discovered the power of RediClinic's supplements. "With pollution, makeup, and bright lights taking a toll on my skin and hair, I wanted something real and effective. That's when I found RediClinic Glutathione and Biotin—both trending and doctor recommended."

Mallika's Instagram post showcases her taking the supplements daily, emphasizing the unique blend of 100% Japanese Glutathione and high-quality Biotin, formulated to detoxify, brighten skin, and strengthen hair and nails. "After just 30 days, I noticed a real difference," she says, smiling confidently. "My skin looked healthier, my hair felt stronger, and I trusted RediClinic because they use pure ingredients with no hidden fillers—just real results."

Glutathione, a powerful antioxidant, detoxifies the body, supports immunity, and promotes skin repair from inside out. Paired with Biotin, known for enhancing hair and nail strength, RediClinic offers a comprehensive approach to beauty and wellness. These supplements have been featured across various leading media networks, further bolstering consumer trust.

Crompton celebrates World Interiors Day with its Sculpted Marvel

PNS ■ MUMBAI



On the occasion of World Interiors Day, Crompton Greaves Consumer Electricals Ltd., India's No. 1 fan brand, unveiled the SilentPro Fluido Wave—its latest innovation that blends high performance with design-forward thinking. With this launch, Crompton marks a new era of ceiling fans where form meets function, and design blends with performance. Crompton is redefining home design essentials by turning a functional product into a design masterpiece made with craftmanship.

Today's consumers invest deeply in designing homes that reflect their personal style, often favouring minimalistic and contemporary aesthetics. They curate every element of décor to maintain a cohesive and visually pleasing space. However, most ceiling fans continue to serve as mere functional add-ons, failing to complement modern interiors. Consumers increasingly seek fans that deliver strong performance while blending seamlessly with their décor—enhancing the space rather than interrupting it. This shift in expectations has created a demand for thoughtfully designed fans that align with evolving tastes and reflect the growing importance of aesthetics in every aspect of the home.

Crompton recognizes that innovation is no longer optional—it's essential. As homes evolve into curated expressions of individuality, Crompton leads the transformation of the category through SilentPro Fluido Wave. Inspired by nature's fluidity, every detail of the SilentPro Fluido Wave is sculpted to perfection, embodying the ethos of the campaign, 'Sculpted, Not Made.' Drawing from fluid motion and sculptural forms, the fan blends aerodynamic performance with Neo-Futuristic elegance. Designed to stir both air and emotion, the product introduces a new design language that flows into the future—reshaping expectations of what a ceiling fan can be.

Ola Electric shares fall over 4 pc lower post-Q4 earnings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Ola Electric on Friday ended over 4 per cent lower after the firm reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 870 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2025.

The stock dropped 4.26 per cent to settle at Rs 50.97 on the BSE. During the day, it tanked 9.71 per cent to Rs 48.07.

At the NSE, shares of the firm ended at Rs 50.85, down 4.48 per cent. During the day, it tumbled 9.72 per cent to Rs 48.06.

Ola Electric on Thursday reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 870 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 2025, while noting that it is targeting profitability in the current fiscal.

The company had reported a net loss of Rs 416 crore in the January-March quarter of 2023-24.

The revenue from operations declined to Rs 611 crore compared to Rs 1,598 crore in the year-ago period, Ola Electric said in a regulatory filing.

For FY25, the company reported a net loss of Rs 2,276 crore against Rs 1,584 crore in 2023-24. Its revenue from operations declined to Rs 4,514 crore against Rs 5,010 crore in FY24.

Ola Electric said it is targeting profitability in FY26.

"FY26 will be focused on scaling revenue and operating leverage as the company marches towards sustainable profitability," the company said.

Ola Electric said that its gross margins improved by 38 per cent in FY25 while the first quarter of FY26 saw an improvement of 10 percentage points in gross margins over Q4 FY25.

Forex reserves jump USD 6.992 bln to USD 692.721 bln

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India's forex reserves jumped by USD 6.992 billion to USD 692.721 billion during the week ended May 23, the RBI said on Friday.

In the previous reporting week ended May 16, the overall reserves had dropped by USD 4.888 billion to USD 685.729 billion. The forex reserves had touched an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion in end-September 2024.

For the week ended May 23, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 4.516 million to USD 586.167 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Ashok Leyland bags order for 250 trucks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hinduja Group flagship firm Ashok Leyland on Friday said it has bagged an order for the supply of 250 trucks from logistics player Patanjali Parivahan. The first batch of 25 units of haulage trucks were delivered to the company on Friday. "This partnership reflects their trust in our brand and products, reinforcing our commitment to meeting the evolving needs of customers in the dynamic commercial vehicle sector," Ashok Leyland President – MHCV Sanjeev Kumar said in a statement. Patanjali Parivahan Pvt Ltd has a fleet of around 1,000 trucks.

AMNS India eyes 25% share in domestic market with new product line

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



To tap the growing demand for colour-coated steel in India, AMNS India on Friday announced the launch of a new product line to cater to segments like airports, railways and metro projects.

The demand for colour-coated steel is growing in the range of 10-12 per cent in India and AMNS India also plans to increase its capacity in this segment soon, the company's Director & Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Ranjan Dhar told reporters here.

"We have launched Optigal Prime and Optigal Pinnacle, a totally new product range in the domestic steel industry, to cater to this demand. We are targeting sectors like highways, railways, metros, airports with our innovative and sustainable product," he said.

The colour-coated steel segment in India is estimated to be 3.4 million tonnes market at present. The addition of two new specialised Optigal offerings will bring AMNS India closer towards its goal of securing 25 per cent within the next two to three years, he said.

Dhar said that the high-end corrosion-resistant steel has been produced for the first time in India, he said. Until now this product was being produced only in Europe.

The director further said the high-performance steel solutions address diverse climatic and industrial demands. It has been prepared to meet India's evolving needs in infrastructure and construction as it moves ahead with journey of becoming 'Viksit Bharat'.

Prestige Estates Q4 profit down 82 pc to Rs 25 cr

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Realty firm Prestige Estates Projects Ltd has posted an 82 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to Rs 25 crore in the quarter ended March.

Its net profit stood at Rs 140 crore in the year-ago period.

Total income fell to Rs 1,589.3 crore in the fourth quarter of the last financial year from Rs 2,232.5 crore in the corresponding period of the preceding year, according to a regulatory filing on late Thursday.

During the 2024-25 fiscal, Prestige Estates' net profit fell sharply to Rs 467.5 crore from Rs 1,374.1 crore in the preceding year.

Total income too declined to Rs 7,735.5 crore in the last fiscal from Rs 9,425.3 crore in the 2023-24 fiscal.

Prestige Estates has also partnered with Valor Group to develop an office complex worth Rs 4,500 crore in Mumbai.

Prestige Estates informed that it has entered into a framework agreement with Valor Estate Ltd and its wholly owned subsidiaries for jointly developing a project on lands admeasuring in the aggregate 21,978.22 square meters at Andheri West, Mumbai.

Manufacturing pulls down Q4 GDP to 7.4 pc; FY25 growth to 6.5%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's economic growth slowed to 7.4 per cent in the January-March period, and pulled down the annual growth rate for 2024-25 to a four-year low of 6.5 per cent, mainly due to the manufacturing sector, official data showed on Friday.

The size of the Indian economy rose to Rs 330.68 lakh crore or about USD 3.9 trillion and set the stage for achieving the USD 5 trillion target in the next few years.

In the previous 2023-24 fiscal year, the economy grew 9.2 per cent.

China has registered an economic growth of 5.4 per cent in the first three months of 2025.

The economic expansion was recorded at 7.4 per cent during January-March 2025, while it was 6.4 per cent in October-December 2024, 5.6 per cent in July-September 2024, and 6.5 per cent in the April-June quarter of the last financial year, according to economic estimates released by the National Statistics Office (NSO).

The GDP had expanded by 8.4 per cent in the January-March quarter of 2023-24.



The NSO, in its second advance estimate released in February, had projected the GDP growth for 2024-25 at 6.5 per cent.

"Real GDP or GDP at Constant Prices is estimated to attain a level of Rs 187.97 lakh crore in FY2024-25, against the First Revised Estimates (FRE) of GDP for the FY 2023-24 of Rs 176.51 lakh crore, registering a growth rate of 6.5 per cent. "Nominal GDP or GDP at Current Prices is estimated to attain a level of Rs 330.68 lakh crore in the FY 2024-25 against Rs 301.23 lakh crore in FY 2023-24, showing a growth rate of 9.8 per cent," NSO said in a release.

NSO further said that real GDP or GDP at Constant Prices in the fourth quarter of 2024-25 is estimated at Rs 51.35 lakh crore against Rs 47.82 lakh crore in the year-ago quarter, registering a growth rate of 7.4 per cent.

Nominal GDP in Q4 of FY2024-25 is estimated at Rs 88.18 lakh crore against Rs 79.61 lakh crore in Q4 of 2023-24, showing a growth rate of 10.8 per cent.

Real gross value added (GVA) is estimated at Rs 171.87 lakh crore in the FY 2024-25, against the FRE for the FY 2023-24 of Rs 161.51 lakh crore, registering a growth rate of 6.4 per cent.

Nominal GVA is estimated to attain a level of Rs 300.22 lakh crore during FY 2024-25 against Rs 274.13 lakh crore in FY 2023-24, showing a growth rate of 9.5 per cent.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
CORRIGENDUM-1
NIT No. 11/EE-30 /SDZ/GHMC/2025-26, Dt: 29-05-2025 for Item 1 and Item 2
The Following Corrigendum to above short tender notice is issued on administrative grounds as follows.

	Actual Dates	Revised dates
Bid Submission start Date & Time	30-05-2025 & 03.00 PM	30-05-2025 & 03.00 PM
Bid Submission Closing End Date & Time	06-06-2025 & 03.00 PM	09-06-2025 & 03.00 PM
Bid Opening Date & Time	06-06-2025 & 03.35 PM	09-06-2025 & 03.05 PM

The above notice remains unchanged
Sd/- Executive Engineer, Circle-30, Begumpet.
DIPR R.O.No: 2832-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt. 30-05-2025

GREATER WARANGAL MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
TENDER NOTICE
No.SF/GWMC/CTN 03/e-procurement/2025-26 Dated: 29-05-2025
I. Fresh Works: 03 No. of Developmental works costing Rs.291.80 Lakhs.
II. Recall work: 06 No. of Developmental works costing Rs.673.00 Lakhs. Start & Last Date of receipt of bids: 30-05-2025 from 5.00 PM Onwards & 07-06-2025 upto 4.00 PM. NOTE: Further details can be seen "e" procurement market place @ www.tender.telangana.gov.in.
Sd/- Commissioner, Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation
DIPR R.O.No: 2798-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt. 30-05-2025

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Hyderabad

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SATURDAY MAY 31, 2025

KANKHAJURA BLENDS CRIME AND EMOTION IN A SOLID ADAPTATION OF *MAGPIE*

REVIEW

DIRECTED BY: Chandan Arora

PRODUCED BY: Ajay Rai

STARRING: Roshan Mathew, Mohit Raina, Sarah Jane Dias and Trinetra Haldar Gummaraju

STREAMING ON: Sony LIV

Rating: 3.5/5









Plot

Kankhajura follows the turbulent journey of Ashu (Roshan Mathew), a man newly released after spending 14 years in prison for a murder charge. Struggling with a speech impediment and haunted by his past, Ashu seeks to rebuild a relationship with his older brother Max (Mohit Raina), a successful real estate developer in Goa. Max's seemingly idyllic life with his wife Nisha (Sarah Jane Dias) and daughter Ira is disrupted by Ashu's arrival.

Desperate to prove himself, Ashu takes extreme actions to protect Max's business, but an unfortunate incident shakes Max's faith in him. Feeling betrayed and emotionally cornered, Ashu turns into an informant, aligning with the police to expose Max's shady dealings. As secrets unravel, a painful history between the brothers is revealed — a history that may have shaped Ashu's mental instability. The narrative crescendos into a gripping confrontation: who will come out on top — the once-sidelined Ashu or the now-threatened Max?

HIGHLIGHTS

Kankhajura excels as a tightly spun thriller that fuses emotional complexity with crime drama. At its core, it's a story about family, betrayal, and the long shadows of childhood trauma. The series maintains a high level of intrigue through sharp storytelling, nuanced character arcs, and well-executed plot twists that keep viewers guessing.

Visually, the show benefits from its rich setting — Goa's beauty is juxtaposed with its darker, grittier underbelly, giving the story both style and substance. The music and background score are particularly effective, enhancing tension without overpowering the scenes. The climax wraps things up on a strong note, offering both closure and a few surprises. What sets *Kankhajura* apart is its ability to merge emotional storytelling with the pacing of a fast-moving thriller.

DRAWBACKS

Despite its strengths, *Kankhajura* has a few bumps along the way. As an adaptation of the Israeli series *Magpie*, it occasionally leans too heavily on the original template, which might feel familiar to seasoned thriller audiences. The middle episodes slightly lose momentum, with a few scenes feeling repetitive and unnecessarily stretched.

Certain side plots — particularly involving Max's aides and the political angle — could have used more depth to better support the main narrative. Still, these are relatively minor issues in an otherwise absorbing and well-structured series.

PERFORMANCES

Roshan Mathew delivers a standout performance as Ashu, walking a fine line between frailty and quiet menace. He brings emotional weight to a character whose mind is both a prison and a weapon. Mohit Raina is equally effective as Max, portraying a man whose power and poise slowly unravel as his past resurfaces. His scenes in the latter episodes pack a real emotional punch. Sarah Jane Dias adds gravitas to Nisha, portraying the anguish of a woman caught in a storm of secrets. Trinetra Haldar leaves a strong impression as Amy, a transwoman grappling with trauma, bringing subtlety and strength to the role. Usha Nadkarni is formidable as the local matriarch Deshmukh Bai, commanding the screen every time she appears. Mahesh Shetty and Ninad Kamat provide solid support as Max's trusted but morally grey companions.

VERDICT

Kankhajura is a compelling watch that combines emotional drama with psychological suspense. While it borrows from its source material and could be a touch leaner in places, the series delivers where it matters most — gripping performances, strong writing, and a layered exploration of human relationships. It's a must-watch for fans of intense thrillers with emotional stakes.



Techpreneur connecting media, money and meaning!

PNS | HYDERABAD

This techpreneur and media marketing maverick has been shaking up digital payments and fintech for over two decades. With a reputation for innovative solutions and strategic partnerships, Rohit Mahajan, co-founder of plutosONE, has transformed the game—partnering with top banks and brands to drive growth and revolutionise the industry. He doesn't play it safe—he pushes boundaries and sets new standards.

You've created connections between the media, finance, and technology industries—three fields that frequently work independently. Which fundamental idea has helped you bring these worlds together in a meaningful way?

The magic happens when media, finance and tech unite instead of clash. While fintech is revolutionising access, most implementation is still city-centric. The next big leap is bringing fintech to India's heartland. Here, media becomes a bridge—driving awareness and influencing behaviour. Take UPI—it recorded 16.11 billion transactions worth Rs 24.77 trillion in March 2025. Yet, over 67% of India still struggles with digital payment literacy. FASTag simplified tolls, but acceptance remains uneven in rural and semi-urban areas. In 2024, BBPS (now Bharat Connect) processed 2.2 billion transactions worth Rs 7.7 lakh crore—double the previous year. Yet, less than 30% of bills are paid online. Bharat Connect TSP isn't just building infrastructure—it's solving a critical need: enabling Bharat to pay digitally, in their language, on their terms. We see silos as spaces where impact waits to be made. Our idea is simple: media makes it human, finance makes it strong and tech makes it possible.

How do you keep coming up with new and unique solutions for banks and brands in a time when digital payments are becoming more and more common?

As digital payments become commoditised, differentiation lies in ecosystems offering contextual, scalable value. We're reimagining financial access, not just enabling payments. Bharat Connect is building new-age infrastructure—because fintech is now the engine of financial inclusion. Our AI-powered systems are redefining speed, compliance and precision across BBPS. Our proprietary biller onboarding platform, the most advanced in the industry, cuts integration from weeks to days, ensuring error-free setups. We aim to onboard 50,000 merchants next year through automation and intelligent workflows. With AI integrated into BBPS's core, we're improving settlements, reliability and customer experience. BBPS is now a strategic customer engagement tool, not just backend compliance. Plug-and-play APIs, vernacular interfaces and real-time analytics give banks control over biller relationships—not just transactions.

What are some of the most difficult private discussions you've had as a result of working with industry titans like NPCI, IDFC and HDFC?

Working with NPCI is rewarding, fast-paced and unpredictable—like a roller coaster. We've worked with them since 2018. Their growth with UPI, RuPay, BBPS and FASTag is spectacular. But keeping pace isn't for the faint-hearted. Their culture is rooted in a deep love for Bharat. Our toughest discussions revolved around timing, scalability and aligning with the mission of serving 1.4 billion people. Leaders at NPCI, IDFC, HDFC, BOI and PNB never settle—they push for bolder ideas, faster delivery and deeper Bharat-first thinking. I've learned that leadership isn't about ease—it's about staying uncomfortable with the status quo. You can't expect a smooth ride with giants, but that's where purpose, agility and resilience emerge. Innovation is no longer a buzzword in banking—it's the baseline. To earn a seat at the table, you need velocity, vision and a Bharat-centric mindset.

In your opinion, how should the upcoming generation of digital payment solutions change to overcome consumer skepticism?

India isn't just growing—it's setting global benchmarks. In March 2025 alone, BBPS enabled Rs 1.23 lakh crore in bill payments across 260 million transactions. UPI handled over 16.11 billion transactions worth Rs 24.77 trillion. But scale invites scrutiny. The next currency is digital trust. We must acknowledge the digital divide. Tech fatigue, limited financial literacy and language gaps are real. The next-gen fintech must be safer, simpler and more relatable. NPCI's move to show only verified bank names on UPI screens is a powerful step—it prevents fraud by eliminating fake display names. That's how digital trust evolves: front-end transparency + back-end security. Our approach mirrors this. We're building multilingual, intuitive tech that educates and empowers users. Trust isn't about patching cracks—it's about rebuilding the foundation with empathy, accountability and clarity.

When you knew the venture had really transitioned from survival to scale, was there a turning point?

Becoming India's biggest BBPS TSP isn't a milestone—it's a movement. We've always believed true innovation means building for all, not just the top 2%. Enough fintechs chase the urban elite. We're bringing Bharat into the digital mainstream—a tougher but more rewarding mission. From the start, we focused on underserved markets—education, government services, donations and offline ecosystems like CSCs. We're helping cooperative banks, PSUs and small finance institutions digitise. Yes, we've scaled—we onboard big clients, use AI-powered tools and integrate multilingual tech. But building for Bharat means new challenges daily. Every milestone is both a win and a reminder of how far we have to go. We're not chasing vanity metrics—we're laying infrastructure. The defining moment isn't behind us—it's the one we're creating next. When your goal is bold, survival becomes your fuel.

How has your experience in the media influenced the way you approach fostering confidence in financial technology?

Working in the media taught me to pace with purpose. At Zee News and UTV Bloomberg, the environment was chaotic, fast and always on. You learn to adapt without losing truth or trust. That mindset deeply informs my work in fintech. Fintech moves fast too—but the stakes are higher. Compliance is the fine print, innovation the headline—and they must coexist. Whether working with banks or customers, the expectation is the same: move fast, but move right. Media taught me to value substance over speed. Systems need stories. Vision needs verification. In fintech, where trust is everything, my media lens reminds me that reputation is built on character—not just code.

Could you describe a collaboration you made that, looking back, changed the course of your business or career?

Strategic partnerships can seem small at first—like chess moves—but they change the game. For us, it was partnering with NPCI to launch the Instant Gratification Program for banks. That collaboration didn't just create one product—it reshaped our entire strategy. We evolved from a service company into a full-stack finance provider with enterprise-grade tech and fast scalability. We built India's largest Brand Offers Platform for banks, helping HDFC, BOB, PNB, IDFC and others drive digital adoption with curated UPI and RuPay promotions. This gave us two big wins: expertise in consumer behaviour and a blueprint for scale. Our merchant onboarding engine today runs on our experience managing brand relationships. From scaling transactions to expanding India's digital bill payment network, we operate with precision—backed by 14+ years of strategic collaboration. That one partnership expanded our vision and scaled our impact.

What, in your opinion, constitutes responsible disruption in a highly regulated industry such as fintech?

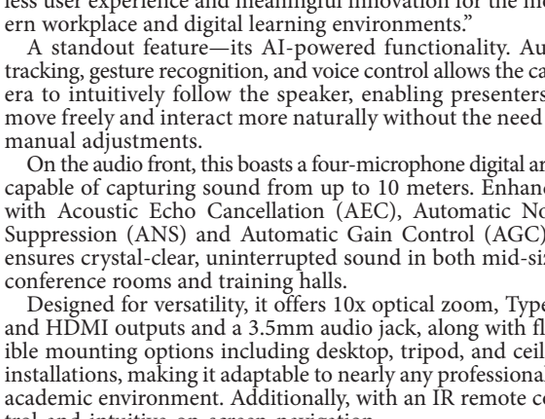
Uncontrolled disruption causes chaos, but in India's fintech space, responsible disruption is vital. It means unlocking opportunity without sacrificing trust, security or inclusion. From Jan Dhan to UPI, India has shown that innovation under guidance can transform finance. Responsible disruption requires hard questions: Are we serving the unbanked? Are we prioritising literacy alongside growth? Are we pushing for speed or for trust? With nearly 70% of Indians still hesitant about complex digital payments, the answer must be inclusive growth. India's Bharat economy must feel as empowered as its urban counterpart. That's what true, responsible fintech progress looks like—not disruption for a few, but transformation for all.

How do you personally maintain your focus on long-term strategic objectives while keeping up with the swift changes in consumer behavior and technology?

Staying ahead in tech isn't optional—it's critical. But innovation must align with long-term vision. We've built systems that ensure both agility and stability. Our tech teams work closely with partners—banks, billers, NPCI—to co-create solutions aligned with BBPS. With global players like Google and Uber, we've developed advanced cloud infrastructure, ensuring best practices in resilience, security and scale. The formula is simple: stay compliant, solve real problems, and build tech that moves faster than user expectations. That's how we stay ahead—with clarity and precision.

What would your ideal ecosystem look like if you could reimagine the future of digital payments without any of the current limitations, whether they be technological, legal, or cultural?

I'd build a borderless, radically inclusive system. One where security, speed and compliance are integrated—not traded off. Regulations would evolve alongside innovation. Financial literacy and access would be democratised—especially for underserved groups like women entrepreneurs in rural Bharat. Every transaction would teach—making payments a moment of empowerment. Complete interoperability—across currencies, banks, apps and borders—would be the norm. Users would control their own data. AI would enhance and protect every experience. And trust wouldn't just be a slogan—it'd be built into the system. Because this isn't just about better payments. It's about making finance more human. India isn't just building for itself—we're setting the global standard for fintech.



Revolutionising remote meetings!

Solitaire has unveiled its latest PTK 208, a next-generation 4K PTZ camera that is set to transform video conferencing in meeting rooms, conference training rooms, classrooms and huddle spaces. With features such as AI-driven smart tracking, gesture and voice control and advanced audio-visual intelligence, this camera redefines the way modern organizations communicate and collaborate.

Engineered for excellence, it delivers exceptional image quality powered by an 8.3MP 1/2.8" CMOS sensor, supporting 4K Ultra HD resolution. Every frame is rendered with stunning clarity and true-to-life color, making it ideal for high-stakes executive meetings, engaging virtual classrooms, or global conferences.

Dr. Ramya Chatterjee, Chief of Solitaire Brand Business and CEO & Director of Prointek Global Innovations, said, "With the PTK 208, we are not just launching a camera, we are delivering a powerful enabler for the future of communication. This product exemplifies our commitment to intelligent design, seamless user experience and meaningful innovation for the modern workplace and digital learning environments."

A standout feature—its AI-powered functionality. Auto-tracking, gesture recognition, and voice control allows the camera to intuitively follow the speaker, enabling presenters to move freely and interact more naturally without the need for manual adjustments.

On the audio front, this boasts a four-microphone digital array capable of capturing sound from up to 10 meters. Enhanced with Acoustic Echo Cancellation (AEC), Automatic Noise Suppression (ANS) and Automatic Gain Control (AGC), it ensures crystal-clear, uninterrupted sound in both mid-sized conference rooms and training halls.

Designed for versatility, it offers 10x optical zoom, Type-C and HDMI outputs and a 3.5mm audio jack, along with flexible mounting options including desktop, tripod, and ceiling installations, making it adaptable to nearly any professional or academic environment. Additionally, with an IR remote control and intuitive on-screen navigation, even users with minimal technical expertise can operate it effortlessly. Its sleek, modern design reflects Solitaire's commitment to combining functionality with aesthetics.

Each unit comes pre-packaged for instant setup, ensuring a seamless unboxing experience. It is ready to use straight out of the box and this makes it an ideal solution for businesses and institutions looking to upgrade their communication infrastructure quickly and effectively. Whether empowering executive meetings, enabling dynamic teaching, or streamlining international collaboration, the Solitaire PTK 208 stands out as a smart, reliable and stylish ally in today's digital workspace.





The Giggle Fest announced Sid's Farm as the Title Sponsor for Season 2 of the city's premier family carnival. Following the success of Season 1, the festival returns on June 7 and 8, 2025 at HITEX Exhibition Centre. Featuring 150+ curated stalls, live performances, kids' activities, music, adventure zones, stand-up comedy, and the Sid's Farm Experience Centre, it promises the ultimate weekend of fun, shopping, and family entertainment.


Ananya


Monica


Akhila


Nazaya


Shambhavi


ShivaPrasanna


Sneha


Pujetha


Shraya

PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary

Sidharth Malhotra Leads Real Activ's Wellness Drive

Réal, India's number 1packaged fruit juice & beverage brand from India's leading Natural Health & Ayurveda Company Dabur India Ltd, today announced the launch of its new campaign, "Keep It Real with Real Activ Coconut Water." This new campaign for Real Activ Coconut water, fronted by Bollywood heartthrob Sidharth Malhotra urges consumers to switch from their cold drink with 5 cubes of added sugar to Real Activ Coconut Water with no added sugar for refreshing & healthy hydration. The campaign features Sidharth Malhotra, known for his healthy lifestyle believing in the life philosophy of "Keeping it Real Always" makes him the perfect choice for this campaign The "Keep It Real with Real Activ Coconut water" campaign will be rolled out across digital platforms, TV, and other media channels, emphasizing the message that real change starts with real choices.

LISTINGS

Ramraj Cotton collaborates with scholar Dushyanth Sridhar

In a timely convergence of tradition and vision, Ramraj Cotton launches a significant initiative in association with venerated scholar and cultural exponent Dushyanth Sridhar to popularize the Acharya Panchakacham Veshti—a symbol of spiritual heritage and Indian identity. This tie-up is not an endorsement of the conventional kind. It is a union of two powers united by a mutual admiration for Sanatana Dharma, cultural tradition, and the timelessness of classical dress. Ramraj Cotton, synonymous with the dignity of the veshtis for so long, finds in Dushyanth Sridhar not a spokesperson but a kindred spirit—a man who breathes and lives the values the company hopes to nurture and honour. The Acharya Panchakacham Veshti is a garment made with a single-minded intention—to pay tribute to spiritual lineages and become a ceremonial garment for the wearer who follows the path of wisdom and dharma. Made with detail and purity, the veshti is no mere article of wearing apparel, but a declaration of purpose—a sign of one's affiliation with ageless tradition.

Players from Ekagra Chess Academy emerged victorious in chess tournaments organized by Telangana Chess Academy and IQ Chess Academy, announced Chief Coach Chaitanya Suresh at a press meet in Jubilee Hills. Aanya Rangineni won the under-9 girls' title, Svana was the youngest participant, and Charath Ashwin claimed the under-13 boys' title. The winners credited their training under CEO Sandeep Naidu and Coach Chaitanya, expressing their goal to become grandmasters.





Dr. Nawab Mir Nasir Ali Khan, Consul of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Hyderabad for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, India, participated in the Astana International Forum 2025 in Astana, Kazakhstan, as an invited delegate of H.E. Serik Zhumangarin, Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan. Inaugurated by H.E. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, President of Kazakhstan, the forum brought together over 5,000 participants from 50 countries—including more than 80 Heads of State, Ministers, and CEOs—under the theme "Connecting Minds, Shaping the Future."

On the occasion of World No Tobacco Day, Apollo Cancer Centres (ACC) has launched #OraLife, a proactive screening initiative aimed at the early detection of oral cancer. The program focuses on raising public awareness, promoting routine screenings, and providing targeted interventions for high-risk groups such as tobacco users, alcohol consumers, individuals with HPV-16 infection, and those with a history of oral lesions. In collaboration with the Isha Foundation, ACC is also offering holistic support to help individuals overcome tobacco addiction by combining medical care with mental and emotional wellness services.



FUN

ARCHIE



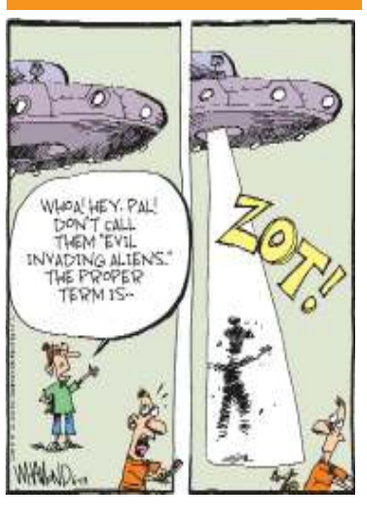
CALVIN AND HOBBES



GARFIELD



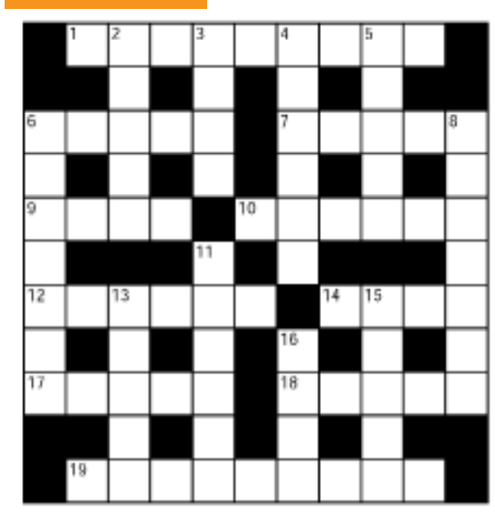
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Yesterday's solution

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

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.

ACROSS

1 This type of word describes something
6 Circular
7 A boat you paddle along
9 A throbbing pain
10 The USA's coldest state
12 Assistant
14 A round mark
17 Move in time to music
18 A pale purple colour
19 Smashed into small pieces

DOWN

2 Uncooked bread
3 Comes to a finish
4 Use a feather to make someone laugh
5 A planet
6 Got to
8 Stretchy stuff in clothes
11 The one most recently bought
13 A meal
15 The throbbing of your heart felt at your wrist
16 Stick things together with this

SOLUTION

		W	H	I	S	K	E	R	S					
A		O		G		I		O		I				
L	E	M	O	N		C	A	B	I	N				
U		E		O		K		I		S				
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I				E		F				A				
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The Pioneer
HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | MAY 31, 2025

Mahesh Babu's *Khaleja* roars back to life, dominates re-release box office

It is Superstar Mahesh Babu who started the re-release trend with his film *Pokiri* and he continues to be the only actor whose re-released films have consistently turned into super hits. *Pokiri, Okkadu, Murari* and *Seethamma Vakitlo Sirimalle Chettu* all performed impressively at the box office during their re-releases, drawing collections like regular theatrical releases. Now, another Mahesh Babu classic, *Khaleja*, re-released this Friday and has taken the box office by storm.

The film even surpassed new releases like *Bhairavam*, with many cities witnessing early morning shows starting as early as 7:30 AM. Most screenings are running houseful and the film has been receiving an overwhelmingly positive response across locations. It's nothing short of *Khaleja* mania, and anyone witnessing the euphoria in theatres would feel as though the film is releasing for the very first time.

Interestingly, *Khaleja* didn't perform well at the box office when it first released in October 2010. Now, 15 years later, the film is being celebrated as a cult classic, with many viewers wondering how such a well-crafted film could have underperformed during its initial run.

In *Khaleja*, Mahesh Babu played a role unlike any he had taken on before—filled with layers and showcasing his impeccable comic timing. Directed by Trivikram Srinivas, the film stands out for its sharp dialogues and engaging screenplay. Rao Ramesh's performance as the village elder is another highlight, drawing praise for his commanding screen presence. Anushka Shetty played the female lead and brought charm and cuteness to the screen. The scenes featuring Mahesh Babu and Brahmanandam remain iconic, delivering laugh-out-loud moments. Mani Sharma's music was and continues to be a major asset, with the song *Om Namah Shivaya* becoming a timeless devotional hit, still played in many Shiva temples. Supporting actors including Shafi, Prakash Raj, Raghu Babu, Ali and Subbaraju also played key roles in the film.

The re-release of *Khaleja* was timed to commemorate the birthday of Mahesh Babu's father and yesteryear Superstar Krishna on May 31.



AM Rathnam's brother dismisses health rumours, says producer is 'perfectly healthy'

Social media recently buzzed with alarming reports about veteran producer AM Rathnam, claiming that he had fallen unconscious at an event. The news spread rapidly across platforms, especially since Rathnam is currently producing *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* with Pawan Kalyan. Given the scale and expectations surrounding the film, any rumours about the producer's health immediately sparked concern.

However, Dayakar Rao, AM Rathnam's brother and one of the producers of *Hari Hara Veera Mallu*, has clarified that there is no truth to the reports. Taking to social media, he posted:

"Don't believe the rumors about Annayya @AMRathnamOfl falling unconscious. He is perfectly healthy and doing well. Please avoid spreading misinformation," (sic) he wrote.

AM Rathnam has been actively working and travelling since announcing the release date of his film. He has been moving between Vijayawada, Hyderabad and Chennai, promoting *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* with full energy and commitment.





Mahesh Babu, Sukumar, VD celebrate Gaddar win

The Gaddar Telangana Film Awards 2025 has emerged as a powerful testament to the rich legacy and ever-evolving brilliance of Telugu cinema. This year's honours celebrate a dynamic mix of seasoned legends and contemporary trailblazers, including actor Mahesh Babu, director Sukumar, actor Vijay Deverakonda, and the epic film Rudhramadevi, each of whom has made a lasting impact on Indian cinema.

MAHESH BABU GRATEFUL AS HIS FILMS RECEIVE RECOGNITION

Superstar Mahesh Babu expressed deep gratitude as three of his acclaimed films — *Srimanthudu, Maharshi* and *Major*— were honored at the awards. In a heartfelt message, he thanked the Telangana Government and extended his love to his directors and collaborators: "Humbled and grateful to see *Srimanthudu, Maharshi* and *Major* receive their place at Gaddar Telangana Film Awards... Big love to my directors and every hand behind it…" These films, known for their compelling narratives and social consciousness, further cement Mahesh Babu's standing as a powerhouse of both commercial and meaningful cinema.

RUDHRAMADEVI WINS BEST FEATURE FILM

Rudhramadevi, directed by Gunasekhar and produced by Gunaa Teamworks, was recognized with the Best Feature Filmaward for 2015, honoring its cultural and cinematic impact. The film, a pioneering historical 3D epic, starred Anushka Shetty alongside Allu Arjun, Rana Daggubati and others, with music by Ilaiyaraaja.

Gunaa Teamworks expressed their joy:

"We're deeply honoured to receive the Best Feature Film award… Thank you for recognising our passion, dedication and vision."





SUKUMAR AWARDED THE B.N. REDDY FILM AWARD

Visionary filmmaker Sukumar was presented with the B.N. Reddy Film Award for his outstanding contributions to Telugu cinema. From *Arya* to the sensational *Pushpa: The Rise*, Sukumar has continually pushed boundaries, blending emotional intensity with cinematic innovation.

"Receiving an award in the name of a legend like B.N. Reddy... is deeply meaningful to me," Sukumar said, acknowledging the Telangana State Government and his collaborators. With *Pushpa: The Rule* highly anticipated, the award reaffirms Sukumar's towering influence across regional and pan-Indian storytelling.

VIJAY DEVERAKONDA RECEIVES KANTHA RAO MEMORIAL AWARD

One of the standout moments at this year's event was actor Vijay Deverakonda being honored with the Kantha Rao Memorial Award, a tribute to his rising impact in Indian cinema. The award, named after legendary actor Nata Prapoorna Kantha Rao, acknowledges Deverakonda's versatility and journey.

In a deeply personal message shared on social media, he wrote: "This recognition… is deeply humbling. My heartfelt thanks to the Government of Telangana, the jury, and everyone who believed in me."

He also celebrated the recognition of *Pelli Choopulu* as the 2nd Best Film of 2016, calling it "a project that will always hold a special place in my heart." "To my fans, this is yours. Your love continues to drive me," he added.

Bhairavam: Glossy remake that forgets the heart

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com



Cast: Bellamkonda Sai Srinivas, Manchu Manoj, Nara Rohit, Aditi Shankar, Divya Pillai, Anandi, Sarat Lohitaswa, Jayasudha, Ajay, Sandeep Raj, and others
Music Director: Sricharan Pakala
Cinematographer: Hari K Vedantam
Producer: KK Radhamohan
Screenplay and Director: Vijay Kanakamedala
Rating: 2.5/5

Three actors—Bellamkonda Sai Srinivas, Manchu Manoj and Nara Rohit—have come together for the film *Bhairavam*, which released on Friday. Directed by Vijay Kanakamedala, this is a remake of the Tamil film *Garudan*. The promotional videos were engaging, and the actors aggressively promoted the film. Here's the story and how it unfolds.

STORY

The story takes place in a village in the Godavari district. The Varahi Amma temple in the village owns a thousand acres of land, and the documents for these lands are with Gajapathi (Manchu Manoj) and his friend Varada (Nara Rohit), who manage the property. Gajapathi and Varada share a deep friendship, continuing a bond that goes back to their forefathers. Sreenu (Bellamkonda Sai Srinivas) is an orphan who becomes close to Gajapathi and Varada after a key incident. He becomes an integral part of their lives and especially close to Gajapathi. A minister (Sarat Lohitaswa) sets his sights on these lands and schemes to break the bond between the friends. He approaches one of them in a plot to illegally acquire the land. Can he succeed in breaking the friendship? How does the approached friend react? What does Sreenu do when he discovers the truth? To find the answers, you'll have to watch *Bhairavam*.

ANALYSIS

Bhairavam is a remake of the Tamil film *Garudan*, which is already available on an OTT platform. Director Vijay Kanakamedala largely sticks to the original, making very few changes for the Telugu version. However, the main issue with the Telugu adaptation is its inability to connect emotionally with the audience. While the Tamil version felt more realistic and authentic, the Telugu remake leans toward a typical commercial film, focusing more on the actors than on the story.

In the Tamil version, comedian Soori played the role of the orphan, while Bellamkonda attempted to replicate it in Telugu. However, he doesn't quite fit the role. His character is also reduced in screen time, and while the second half of the Tamil version is packed with emotion—especially the climax—the Telugu version handles it in a more routine manner.

The story has the potential to explore deep friendships and family bonds, offering emotional resonance, but this film fails to deliver that impact. The director takes a long time to introduce characters, and while parts of the story are engaging, the overall focus shifts to highlighting individual actors' commercial appeal.

The female lead cast is also a major drawback. The pre-climax scenes are somewhat better narrated, but overall, the film ends up being average and lacks the emotional depth of the original. Forced comedy scenes by Vennela Kishore add little and seem out of place. Some action sequences are well-executed, but there's little entertainment otherwise. The songs involving Bellamkonda Srinivas and Aditi Shankar appear inserted solely for commercial reasons and feel unnecessary.

PERFORMANCES

Bellamkonda Sai Srinivas performs sincerely, but his character lacks depth and has limited screen presence compared to the other two leads. Manchu Manoj gets a meaty role and stands out among the three. Though he appears over-the-top in a few scenes, his voice and screen presence are strong, marking a good comeback. Nara Rohit plays a role that fits him well, delivering a grounded and neat performance.

Among the female leads, Aditi Shankar is well-cast as a village girl and brings energy to her role. Anandi doesn't get much scope to perform. Divya Pillai was supposed to deliver an emotional performance in the final half-hour, but the writing didn't support her character well. Ajay plays his typical villain role, and Vennela Kishore's comedy is ineffective and boring. Sampath Raj is adequate as a police officer. Sarat Lohitaswa, Raja Ravindra and other supporting actors have little impact.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Technically, the film is strong with high production values. The temple set looks authentic and convincing. Cinematographer Hari K Vedantam captures the rural backdrop beautifully. The songs are just average, but the background score is effective. The dialogues fail to leave an impression. Action choreography is a plus.

VERDICT

Bhairavam works in parts but fails overall—especially when compared to the Tamil film Garudan. It misses the emotional core and instead focuses on building up individual actors. Although the story is inherently emotional and rooted in themes of friendship and loyalty, the direction falls short of conveying it effectively. In the end, *Bhairavam* is an average film with missed opportunities.

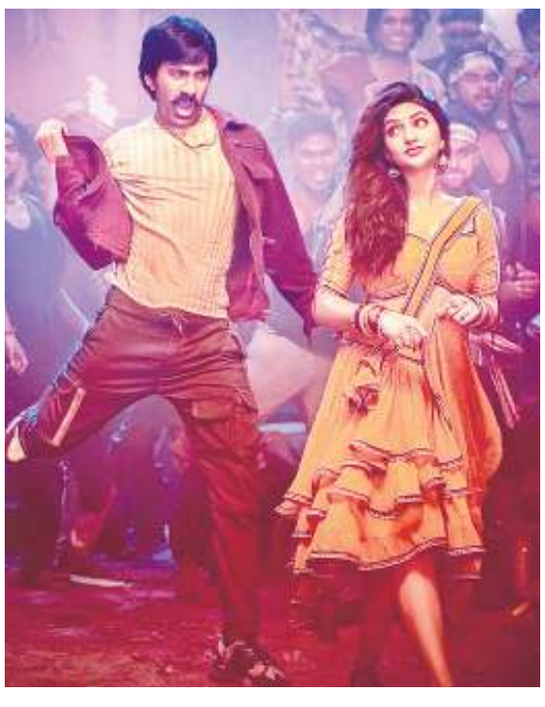
Ravi Teja's *Mass Jathara* locks August 27 release

Ravi Teja continues his streak of back-to-back films, and he is now gearing up for another release titled *Mass Jathara*. The makers officially announced that the film will hit theatres on August 27. Interestingly, Ganesh Chaturthi also falls on the same date, setting the stage for an extended holiday weekend—a strategic window for a potential box office bonanza.

Packed with vintage vibes and a solid commercial setup, *Mass Jathara* promises to be a mass festival experience in theatres. Every piece of content released so far has struck the right chord with the audience, setting expectations high for an entertaining theatrical ride.

The first song from the film was unveiled and has received unanimous praise for its high-energy beats and infectious vibe. Sreeleela plays the female lead and the Ravi Teja–Sreeleela combination has consistently delivered fireworks at the box office. Music is composed by Bheems Ceciroleo, adding to the film's commercial appeal.

Directed by Bhanu Bhogavarapu, the film is jointly produced by Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya. The team hopes that Ravi Teja once again unleashes his trademark energy and box office power with *Mass Jathara*.



The Pioneer
HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | MAY 31, 2025

India's gold rush continues at Asian Athletics Championships in S Korea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Gumi (South Korea)



Long-distance runner Gulveer Singh shattered a decade-old meet record, high-jumper Pooja Singh delivered a personal best show, while heptathlete Nandini Agasara rose to the occasion after a setback as the trio added three more gold medals to India's kitty on the penultimate day of the 26th Asian Athletics Championships here on Friday.

The country's overall tally swelled to 18, including eight gold, seven silver and three bronze medals. India look well on course to match or better the 27 medals won in the 2023 edition, having already surpassed the gold haul of six medals in that year.

Gulveer etched his name among the greats of Indian long-distance running by winning a tightly-contested men's 5000m final to add to his 10,000m gold won on the opening day of the competition.

The national-record-holding runner clocked 13:24.77sec to edge past Thailand's Kieran Tuntivate, who finished close behind at 13:24.97sec, while Japan's Nagiya Mori took bronze in 13:25.06sec.

The previous championship record belonged to Qatar's Mohamed Al-Garni, who had clocked 13:34.47sec in the 2015 edition. Later, 18-year-old Pooja jumped to a personal best of 1.89m in her penultimate attempt to finish ahead of Uzbekistan's Safina Sadullaeva (1.86m).

The Haryana teen, whose father is a construction worker, has been doing well at the continental level, having earlier collected a gold at the Asian Under-23 Championships in 2023.

Nandini then became only the third Indian heptathlete to win an Asian gold after Swapna Barman (2017) and Soma Biswas (2005). Agasara collected 5941 points to bag the top honours, making a strong comeback to win the 800m race after a poor javelin throw performance of 34.18m. China's Liu Jingyi, who led Agasara after winning javelin throw, claimed the silver with 5869 points.

The win completed a remarkable double for Gulveer, who had earlier bagged gold in the 10,000m competition on the opening day with a timing of 28:38.63sec.

With this performance, Gulveer joined an elite group of Indian athletes to have won gold in the men's 5000m event of the continental meet — the other three being Gopal Saini (1981), Bahadur Prasad (1993) and G Lakshmanan (2017). He matched Lakshmanan in winning gold in both the 10,000m and 5000m events in the same edition.

The 26-year-old from Atrauli in Uttar Pradesh had also won a bronze in the 2023 edition.

However, there was mild disappointment in the women's 3000m steeplechase, where defending champion Parul Chaudhary had to settle for silver.

She clocked 9:12.46sec and was bested by Kazakhstan's Norah Jeruto Tanui (9:10.46sec). The bronze also went to a Kazakh, Daisy Jepkemei (9:27.51sec).

Earlier, India's 4x100m men's relay team was disqualified during the preliminary round after a faulty baton exchange but Sachin Yadav and Yashvir Singh made the men's javelin throw finals alongside reigning Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan.

The quartet of Pranav Pramod Gaurav, Ragul Kumar Ganesh, Manikanta Hoblidhar and Amlan Borgohain was knocked out of the competition after being found guilty of baton exchange outside the takeover zone, violating World Athletics' Technical Rule 24.7.

The Malaysian team was also disqualified for a similar violation.

However, there was good news for the Indian contingent elsewhere as Sachin and Yashvir entered the 12-man javelin throw final.

Gukesh wins thriller against Caruana in Norway Chess

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Stavanger (Norway)

Reigning world champion D Gukesh emerged the winner in a thrilling Armageddon tie-break against American Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana but Arjun Erigaisi succumbed to Magnus Carlsen's intuitive skills on a mixed day for the Indians in the 'Open' category of Norway Chess here.

World No. 3 Caruana enjoyed a pawn advantage for most part of the Round 4 game against his Indian opponent, who turned 19 on Thursday, but the American could not convert it into a significant advantage in over four hours of engrossing chess thanks to Gukesh's superb defensive skills.

The Armageddon tie-break was applied to break the stalemate. Both Gukesh and Erigaisi are now tied fourth in the six-payer field with 4.5 points apiece, while Carlsen is the sole leader with 8 points, followed by Caruana on 7 and American GM Hikaru Nakamura on 5.5. With Gukesh, playing with white pieces and having a huge three-minute advantage in Armageddon - white gets 10 minutes and black seven - after coming out of a tricky situation during the Classical slugfest less than 15 minutes earlier, the Indian overpowered Caruana on the clock to take 1.5 points from the game. A win in the Classical format earns the players in this double-round robin format tournament three points, while a draw fetches them one point each. However, the players have to immediately play the Armageddon tie-break to break the deadlock. Gukesh, following his magnificent Classical win in the third round against world No.2 Nakamura and a thrilling come-from behind victory against Caruana, is on 4.5 points in a six-player field led by five-time world champion Carlsen, who is in sloe lead with eight points. Gukesh later said that he doesn't really enjoy playing on his birthday but would gladly take this crucial morale-boosting win.

"Most of my birthdays I end up losing the game, so glad it did not repeat in the classical. When I was playing, I felt fine, but when I was losing, I was like, 'ok, not again'," said Gukesh.

The youngest world champion found himself down a pawn in a very tricky position early in the contest.

With the unforgiving time control in place, where only a 10-second increment per move is given instead of 30 seconds after the 40th move, the situation can quickly get out of control, but Gukesh kept his balance to emerge from the tough situation and take the match in the Armageddon tie-break — something which is not his forte. "The Classical game could have easily gone bad, but luckily, I managed to save it in the time scramble, and then Armageddon was very good," he said later.

Delhi HC seeks BFI, Centre's HP boxing association's plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Friday sought the stand of the Centre and the Boxing Federation of India on a petition by the Himachal Pradesh Boxing Association and former sports minister Anurag Thakur over a dispute concerning the elections of the federation.

Issuing notice on the petition, Justice Mini Pushkarna also sought response from the Indian Olympic Association and Ajay Singh, who headed BFI when the elections were initially scheduled. The judge directed that the matter be listed on August 18 when a similar petition by the Delhi Amateur Boxing Association is scheduled to be taken up.

The present petition came up for hearing after the Supreme Court on May 19 referred all the pleas on the BFI elections to the Delhi High Court.

In its petition, Himachal Pradesh Boxing Association (HPBA) and Thakur challenged a March 7 order by then BFI president Ajay Singh, which restricted nominations for the electoral college to only elected members of state associations. They also assailed the consequent "arbitrary"exclusion of Thakur, from the electoral roll on the basis of the order "without any hearing or explanation".

Thakur, an executive member of HPBA, was nominated to contest the elections on March 28.

The petitioners therefore sought directions for the conduct of BFI elections under independent supervision of a returning officer to be appointed by the high court as well as inclusion of their nominees in the electoral college.The petitioners were represented by advocate Chaitanya Mahajan.

"The petition challenges the arbitrary and mala fide conduct of respondent No. 3, Mr. Ajay Singh, former president of the Boxing Federation of India (BFI), who, despite his term having expired on 02.02.2025, continued to unlawfully interfere with the electoral process of BFI, manipulate the electoral college, and deny legitimate representation to the petitioners," said the petition.

PBKS bowling coach wants players to avoid second-guessing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mullanpur

Having topped the league stage with their thoroughly professional and ultra-aggressive approach, PBKS were subjected to an eight-wicket mauling by Royal Challengers Bengaluru

Punjab Kings bowling coach James Hopes remains optimistic of making their first IPL final in 11 years despite a calamitous outing in qualifier one and just wants his players to avoid "second-guessing themselves" ahead of their next shot at the title clash.

Having topped the league stage with their thoroughly professional and ultra-aggressive approach, PBKS were subjected to an eight-wicket mauling by Royal Challengers Bengaluru here on Thursday.

However, they will get a chance to redeem themselves and secure a place in the final by winning the second qualifier on Sunday.

"The worst thing our batters can do now is blink and start jumping at shadows and second-guessing themselves," said Hopes following the heavy loss.

"We played the first over okay with the bat and then it sort of just snowballed from there. It's necessary that we digest it and move on from it by the end of tonight because we have to travel tomorrow (Friday) and we've got to get up to play another game on Sunday and we're going to do it the hard way now.

"But I hope we meet RCB again on Tuesday night (final)."

On a pitch that was aiding the fast bowlers, Punjab Kings went on an all-out attack resulting in a dramatic collapse.

RCB leg-spinner Suyash Sharma had the middle order in a spin with his sharp googlies after the returning Josh Hazlewood's exploits.

"To be honest we didn't have a great night with the bat but we have a two-day turnaround now to play another final, to earn the right.

It is tough to keep playing all formats, need to be smart and selective: Bumrah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi



Jasprit Bumrah is eagerly eyeing the challenge of featuring in Test matches in England, but the star India pacer admitted the difficulty of playing all three formats for a long time and said he will have to be more "selective" at some point.

While announcing the India squad for the tour of England, chief selector Ajit Agarkar had said that Bumrah might not be available for all five Test matches.

"Obviously, it is tough for any individual to keep playing everything for so long. I've been doing it for a while, but then eventually you have to understand where your body's going, what is the important tournament," Bumrah told former Australian skipper Michael Clarke in the Beyond 23 podcast. The 31-year-old has played 45 Tests, 89 ODIs and 70 T20Is so far for the country besides appearing in 143 IPL matches for Mumbai Indians.

"You have to be a little selective and you have to be a little smart about how you use your body. As a cricketer, I would never want to leave anything and always keep on going. "At this moment I'm okay, but I don't set goals or I don't look at myself that this is the number that I should be at and this is the time," he added.

However, Bumrah termed the desire to represent India in the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028 as a motivating factor for him. Cricket will be a part of LA 2028, a first for the sport since 1900.

"The journey's going good so far. The day I realise that the drive is gone or the effort is not there and my body's not holding up, that is a decision when you take that time.

No better place than out in the middle: Hazlewood

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mullanpur (Chandigarh)



Josh Hazlewood's return to Royal Challengers Bengaluru after an injury break is a blessing for the franchise and good preparation for the Australian pacer, who says the intensity he is building up here will come in handy during the World Test Championship final against South Africa next month.

Having recovered from a shoulder injury, Hazlewood played in the IPL after a month but showed no signs of rust, helping Royal Challengers Bengaluru reach their first final since 2016 with an eight-wicket win over Punjab Kings.

The performance was also a tick mark for his preparations ahead of the World Test Championship final against South Africa beginning at Lord's on June 11.

"...I've got to be bowling, you know wherever I am in the world, I've got to be bowling getting ready for that game (WTC final) anyway," said Hazlewood after featuring in his first IPL game since April 27.

"There's no better place than I think out in the middle, obviously you've got to bowl more, more hours of training from time to time to build up for a Test, but to get that intensity right up, there's no better place than the IPL," he asserted after a brilliant haul of 3/21.

Hazlewood, who predominantly gets movement off the pitch, is known for his relentless spells in Test cricket but over time has also taken his T20 game to the next level.

His hard lengths are difficult to put away and when the pitch is an absolute belter, he resorts to bowling wide yorkers.

On Thursday night, the pitch here allowed him to bowl Test match lengths and he ended up with match-turning figures in his 3.1 overs.

His victims included the in-form Shreyas Iyer and Josh Inglis, breaking the back of a self-destructing Punjab Kings.

"I don't bowl too much differently in Test match cricket than tonight," said the seasoned Australian pacer.

His value at RCB can't be overstated as despite playing only 11 games due to injury, he remains the leading wicket-taker for his franchise with 21 scalps at an average of 15.80. Take him out of the attack and RCB attack looks vulnerable.

Talking more about his recovery from the shoulder injury, Hazlewood said, "(I have) worked really hard the last few weeks on the shoulders to get back and got some good overs into it the last sort of 10 days, and yeah it is feeling good to be back...

"...So, I was happy with tonight, the wicket helped obviously didn't it? Not having to bowl fast yorkers or anything like that. So yeah it is feeling good to be back."

Leg-spinner Suyash Sharma too was on the money while Hazlewood was well supported by Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Yash Dayal.

"We've just got all bases covered, it feels like. I think any one of the five or six bowlers can bowl at any moment of the game, whether it's the start, middle or end," said Hazlewood.

"It obviously helps having Bhuvi, who has so much experience, quite a calm customer, so that sort of rubs off on the rest of their attack. I'm probably pretty similar to Bhuvi as well in that regard, everything's quite relaxed, quite calm, focus on your skill and try and execute that.

Kohli will play a big hand in final: AB de Villiers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mullanpur

South African batting great AB de Villiers is backing "ultimate team man" Virat Kohli to play a big hand in the IPL final and lead a multi-dimensional Royal Challengers Bengaluru outfit to its maiden title in the world's biggest T20 league.

Chasing a paltry 102, RCB crushed Punjab Kings by eight wickets in the first qualifier here on Thursday to storm into the final of the 2025 edition of the league. One of their biggest performers this season, Kohli (12) missed out with the bat in the one-sided game, but his former RCB teammate De Villiers is confident the Indian superstar would fire in the title clash in Ahmedabad on June 3. "The first time I saw him on the screen for PBKS vs RCB game, was when he got out of the bus, and I just saw a lot of focus in that guy. That's the typical kind of body language we're so used to seeing.

"And what I love most about this is — he didn't score runs today, but we still saw him right till the end, celebrating with the batters," De Villiers told JioHotstar.

"The ultimate team man, and he looks very, very focused. Obviously, the job's not done yet, but I'm very excited to watch him play. I have no doubt in my mind he's going to play a big hand in the final," the South African added.

RCB, who was one of the participating teams when the IPL began way back in 2008 with eight franchises, have never won the IPL title despite reaching the finals on three occasions in the past. De Villiers shared his thoughts about RCB's journey and their potential to win the title this time.

"I think 2011 was a really good chance to win the title. Everyone talks about the 2016 season, but let's forget about the past. Where are RCB now? In another final — 2025. It's closer than you think and smaller than you think.

"So hopefully those little moments will go in RCB's favour, come the 3rd of June. It was around the auction time when I felt like RCB really got the balance right this year. It's not a one-dimensional batting line-up, not a one-dimensional bowling line-up — there are options. "I just loved the look of that squad when I saw it come out. They found a way to gel together as a unit.

Satwik-Chirag sail into Singapore Open semifinals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Singapore

India's top men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty stayed on course for their maiden title of the season, storming into the Singapore Open semifinals with a straight-game win over world No. 1 Malaysian duo of Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin here on Friday.

Making a comeback after battling fitness issues for the last few weeks, the Indian pair displayed rock-solid defence and controlled the front court with precision to register a 21-17, 21-15 win in a 39-minute quarterfinal clash at the Super 750 badminton tournament.

This is their third semifinal appearance of the season, having reached the last-four stage at both the Malaysia and India Open earlier this year.

The former world No.1 Indians held a 6-2 head-to-head record against the Malaysians going into the match, although they had lost their most recent meeting at the India Open.

The match began with two service faults in the first four points and featured short rallies as both pairs looked to execute angled returns and attack at the earliest opportunity.

As a result, the score moved evenly from 1-1 to 7-7 before the Indians gained a three-point cushion at the interval, with Satwik dictating the serve and third shot.

This is their third semifinal appearance of the season, having reached the last-four stage at both the Malaysia and India Open earlier this year

The Indian pair maintained the pressure to go up 15-11 before Satwik committed a service error and Izzuddin unleashed a jump smash to narrow the gap to 13-15.

A brutal forehand smash from Satwik pushed India ahead at 18-15. Izzuddin then hit one wide, and Chirag, who had earlier sent a shot long, redeemed himself with a straight smash to earn three game points.

Goh buried a service return into the net, handing the Indians the opening game and the early advantage.

Chirag made a few errors early in the second game, but the Indians did well to keep pace in the high-speed exchanges, with the score level at 6-6.

Goa Challengers eye hat-trick of UTT titles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ahmedabad



Defending champions Goa Challengers will look to extend their dominance and complete a hat-trick of titles when the sixth season of Ultimate Table Tennis, a franchise-based league, begins here on Saturday.

Goa Challengers is the most successful team in the eight-team league, winning the title twice in 2023 and 2024.

They defeated Chennai Lions in the 2023 final and then prevailed over Dabang Delhi TTC in last edition's title clash.

Goa Challengers boast of a strong side comprising India international Harmeet Desai, the only Gujarat player who have won back-to-back UTT titles in season 4 and 5.

Besides Desai, the Goan side also has Zeng Jian (Singapore), Tiago Apolonia (Portugal), Ronit Bhanja, Krittwika Sinha Roy and Sayali Wani. The other teams in the league are Ahmedabad SG Pipers, Chennai Lions, Dabang Delhi TTC, Kolkata Thunderblades, Pune Jaguars, Jaipur Patriots and U Mumba TT.

The tournament will conclude with the grand final on June 15 at the EKA Arena here. For the first time in UTT history, the teams have been allowed to choose coaches and a player auction was held, making the competition more strategic and balanced.

The tournament organisers have also introduced UTT juniors, the matches of which will be held in the morning session.

Other big names from India who will be part of the event are Ahyika Mukherjee (Ahmedabad SG Pipers), Diya Chitale, Sathiyan Gnanasekaran (Dabang Delhi TTC) and Sreeja Akula (Jaipr Patriots) among others.

The international line-up will feature world No. 13 Bernadette Szocs (Romania), world No. 16 Adriana Diaz (Puerto Rico), world No. 20 Aruna Quadri (Nigeria), world No. 27 Kanak Jha (USA), world No. 35 Alvaro Robles (Spain), and Chinese paddler Fan Siqi. On the opening day, Jaipur Patriots will take on Dabang Delhi TTC, while Ahmedabad SG Pipers will be up against reigning champions Goa Challengers. According to the format of the tournament, the league stage will see all eight teams split into two groups of four for fixture-assigning purposes.

Each team will play the three others in their group once and two random opponents from the adjacent quartet. The top four sides from the league stage will qualify for the knock-out round.

Goa Challengers' Desai hoped his team would register a hat-trick of titles.