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Bengal's growth key to India's progress:
PM Modi 5

FM SEEKS
SUPPORT FOR INTEGRATED RURAL PROSPERITY

8

Sreeleela to kickstart *Ustaad Bhagat Singh* shoot with Pawan Kalyan from
JUNE 10

P12

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The Pioneer

If Kavitha says the BRS is being merged with the BJP, I will believe it. If a big enough package comes, some of our men will sell out. Let's be honest. If there is a BJP–BRS merger, the BRS would tell our candidates where to contest. It has happened before. That's why we lost. Our leaders collude during every election. We all know it, but we remain silent. The reason is, if we speak up, it is suspension. That's the bitter truth



— Raja Singh, BJP MLA P4

DON'T MISS...

Ration at FP shops from June 1

Minister for Food & Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Nadendla Manohar, on Thursday announced that arrangements have been completed for the distribution of ration goods through Fair Price Shops starting June 1. Inspecting Ration Depot No. 218 in Madhuranagar, Vijayawada, along with Civil Supplies Commissioner Saurabh Gour, the Minister reviewed the newly upgraded e-POS (electronic Point of Sale) system. The updated software uses biometric verification, including fingerprint and iris scans, to authenticate...

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Cong vs Tharoor tensions deepen

Tensions between the Congress and its leader Shashi Tharoor escalated on Thursday with the party saying he was very much part of their family but had erred in claiming that surgical strikes against Pakistan were held for the first time in 2016. Tharoor, who is heading a multi-party delegation to five countries, including Panama and the US, had a ready riposte for the jibes by some of his party colleagues. For "zealots" fulminating about his supposed ignorance of Indian valour across the LoC, he was..

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US officials to visit India next week

A team of US officials is visiting India next week for discussions on the proposed interim trade agreement between the two countries, an official said on Thursday. The visit gains importance as India and the US are likely to agree on an interim trade agreement by the end of June, with New Delhi pushing for full exemption from the 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on domestic goods. "The US team is coming on June 5 or June 6," the official said. India's chief negotiator, Special Secretary in the..

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Gukesh brings his campaign back

World champion D Gukesh brought his campaign back on track on his 19th birthday, defeating world No.2 Hikaru Nakamura of the USA in the third round to open his account even as Arjun Erigaisi suffered his first defeat in the Norway Chess Tournament here on Thursday. Gukesh, who suffered back-to-back defeats to world Number 1 Norwegian Magnus Carlsen and compatriot Arjun Erigaisi in the first two rounds, put Nakamura — one of the best Rapid and Blitz players — under time...

-SPORTS

NAIDU's BOLD INITIATIVE AT MAHANADU

Operation Clean Politics

Vows to end the reign of corrupt politicians, branding them as 'economic terrorists'

PNS ■ KADAPA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu launched a scathing attack on corruption at the party's landmark Mahanadu in Kadapa, unveiling a bold new initiative titled Operation Clean Politics. Drawing parallels with the recent anti-terror operation Sindoor, Naidu branded corrupt political elements as "economic terrorists" and vowed to eliminate them in his mission to restore clean and people-centric governance.

"Just as terrorists threaten national security, economic terrorists disguised as politicians pose a grave danger to society," Naidu asserted, accusing the previous YSRCP regime of looting the State through land, sand, liquor, and mining scams. He pledged a relentless campaign to purge political life of corruption.

Highlighting the TDP's resounding electoral victory, Naidu declared the Mahanadu a "super hit," noting that this was the party's first major event since the NDA returned to power. "A year ago, I predicted political change in Kadapa. Today, that prophecy has come true," he said, citing the party's 7 out of 10 seat win in Kadapa and 45 out of 52 across Rayalaseema.

- Naidu accuses the previous YSRCP regime of widespread scams in land, sand, liquor, and mining.
- CM highlights TDP's landslide victory in Rayalaseema, calling Mahanadu a "super hit."
- With a 93% strike rate and 57% vote share, Naidu says the people had endorsed the NDA's vision.
- He says the TDP rebuilt AP despite inheriting Rs 10 lakh crore debt and unpaid bills.
- Naidu highlights welfare initiatives like enhanced pensions, Anna Canteens, and LPG cylinder schemes.
- He announces the creation of 20 lakh jobs, with MoUs worth Rs 4.95 lakh crore already signed.



With a 93% strike rate and a 57% vote share, Naidu underlined that the public had endorsed the NDA's agenda. "Our politics is not about intimidation or violence. For us, power is a sacred trust," he said, referencing the victories of key TDP leaders including Nara Lokesh and Palla Srinivas.

Recalling the State's dire financial condition under the previous regime, Naidu said the government inherited a Rs 10 lakh crore debt and Rs 1.2 lakh crore in unpaid bills. "We didn't panic. We rebuilt Andhra Pradesh brick by brick. Today, we are showing what real governance looks like," he said.

Continued on Page 2

CM to address CII summit in Delhi today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will deliver the keynote address at the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Annual Business Summit 2025 in New Delhi on May 30. Themed "Building Trust: India Moment, Global Imperative, Growth & Development," the summit gathers top policymakers, industrialists, and thought leaders to shape India's economic future.

Naidu will also speak at a special plenary session from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm titled "Driving Economic Growth and Sustainability: The Andhra Pradesh Blueprint." He will present the state's Swarna Andhra Vision 2047, outlining a roadmap for industrial growth, innovation, inclusive development, and sustainable transformation.

The Chief Minister is scheduled to travel from Kadapa to Delhi late on May 29. Upon arrival, he will proceed to his official residence at 1, Janpath, and later attend the session at the Taj Palace Hotel.



Posing four-pointed questions to the YSRCP, Lokesh demanded accountability: "Who drove away mother and sister? Who killed Babai? Who brought in J-brand liquor? Who pressed the button and looted the people?"

YSRCP pushed State into chaos: Lokesh

PNS ■ KADAPA

In a blistering address at the Kadapa Mahanadu, TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh launched a fierce attack on the previous YSRCP regime, accusing it of pushing Andhra Pradesh into chaos and debt. Addressing a sea of enthusiastic party workers, Lokesh alleged that the State had suffered a "destructive rule" under YSRCP, which he blamed for driving away industries and jeopardising public welfare.

He charged that the former government had prioritised personal gain over public interest, claiming that nearly 30,000 people had died due to rampant alcohol consumption. "Not a single company came; existing ones fled," Lokesh stated, accusing the previous leadership of greed and misgovernance.

Lokesh recalled the political persecution faced by TDP leaders and activists, including the 53-day imprisonment of party chief N. Chandrababu Naidu. "They tried to silence us with cases, arrests and attacks, but our courage only grew stronger," he said, lauding grassroots leaders like Manjula Reddy and Chennupati Gandhi as symbols of the party's resilience.

Celebrating the TDP's landslide victory in the 2024 elections—securing 164 out of 175 Assembly seats—Lokesh described it as an "record" and a decisive rejection of the YSRCP.

"They couldn't even qualify for opposition status. People didn't just vote—they delivered punishment," he remarked.

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AP LIQUOR SCAM

SIT gets custody of 4 accused

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada ACB (Anti-Corruption Bureau) Court has granted two-day custody of four accused in the Andhra Pradesh liquor scam case to the Special Investigation Team (SIT).

The accused — Dhanunjaya Reddy, Krishna Mohan Reddy, Govindappa Balaji, and Raj Kesireddy — will be interrogated by the SIT on 30 and 31 May, between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each day.

The court directed that the interrogation must take place in the presence of a legal representative. The SIT had filed petitions seeking custody to investigate the individuals' alleged involvement in the liquor scam that reportedly took place during the previous administration.

Kalki, Pushpa, Razakar grab accolades at Gaddar Awards

FIRST BEST FEATURE FILM





BEST ACTOR



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Gaddar Telangana Film Awards (GTFA) 2024 jury committee has announced its final list of winners, celebrating cinematic brilliance across Telugu cinema with a special focus on films that echoed social causes, cultural roots and entertainment value.

The awards, named after revolutionary poet and activist Gaddar, this year honoured a spectrum of talent, from commercial blockbusters to deeply rooted narratives.

Nag Ashwin's futuristic epic 'Kalki 2898 AD' emerged as the big winner, clinching the First Best Feature Film award and fetching Nag Ashwin the Best Director award.

The film also bagged awards for Best Art Direction and Best Costume Design, cementing its place as a technical and narrative triumph.

The Second-Best Feature Film was Pottel, while Lucky Bhasker took home the Third-Best Feature Film award and won additional laurels for Best Screenplay (Venky Atluri), Best Editing (Navin Nooli), and a Special Jury Award for Dulquer Salmaan's performance.

Socially conscious storytelling was also recognised. Committee Kurrollu was recognised as the Best Film on National Integration, Communal Harmony, and Development of Depressed Classes, while its Director, Yedu Vamsee, won the Best Debut Director Award.

Continued on Page 2

Ministers hail CM for AP's progress

PNS ■ KADAPA

Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha and BC Welfare Minister S Savitha lashed out at the previous YSRCP regime on the third day of the Mahanadu convention in YSR Kadapa district, while hailing Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for ushering in rapid development under the NDA alliance.

Minister Savitha said institutional systems had been weakened and job opportunities had vanished during YSRCP's five-year rule. She stated that the TDP reclaimed Kadapa—once a symbol of political suppression—through people's support. She added that Rayalaseema, long plagued by factional violence, is now progressing towards prosperity.

She highlighted the swift fulfilment of poll promises, including the immediate hike in pensions, as proof of the Chief Minister's commitment.



Security beefed up for Amaravati works

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With construction activities intensifying in the Amaravati capital region, the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) held a coordination meeting at its Vijayawada office to review law and order and enhance safety protocols.

APCRDA Additional Commissioner G Surya Sai Praveen Chand directed officials from APCRDA and Amaravati Development Corporation Limited (ADCL) to ensure strict adherence to safety norms at construction sites. Emphasising zero tolerance towards child labour and gender discrimination, he mandated regular coordination with police and fire departments.

Contractors were instructed to maintain proper documentation of workers, vehicles, and machinery, and ensure safety compliance through active involvement of Project Management Consultancy (PMC) and Program Management Consultancy (PgMC) staff. Monthly awareness and training programmes on crime prevention and fire safety will also be conducted across all sites, under the supervision of relevant departments. The CRDA reaffirmed its commitment to support law enforcement in maintaining public safety in the region.

Guntur District SP S Satish Kumar, Fire Officer Srinivas Reddy, CRDA ENC R Gopalakrishna Reddy, Additional SP ATV Ravi Kumar, senior engineers, and local police officials participated in the meeting.



HC grants bail to Vamsi on medical grounds

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Thursday granted bail to YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leader and former Gannavaram MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsi on medical grounds, and directed the state government to ensure he receives immediate treatment.

The court was hearing a petition filed by Vamsi seeking medical bail due to serious health complications. His counsel informed the court that the former legislator had been shifted between government hospitals, none of which had the necessary facilities to provide proper care.

Taking a serious view of the matter, the High Court instructed the government advocate to furnish details of the hospital where Vamsi would be treated, and underlined the need for immediate and adequate medical attention.

CS: 'YogaAndhra' steering State towards Swarnandhra vision

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand stated that the ongoing Yoga Andhra initiative, launched on 21st May, is advancing with great momentum in alignment with the Chief Minister's vision of a healthy, happy, and prosperous Swarnandhra.

He urged collective efforts to ensure the success of the state-wide campaign.

A special Police Theme Yoga programme was conducted at the BRTS Yoga Street near Sarada College in Vijayawada.

The Ayush Department, NTR District Administration, District Police Commissionerate, and Vijayawada Municipal Corporation jointly organised the event. Over 6,000 participants, including senior IAS and IPS officers, took part in various 'asanas'.

Children's artistic yoga performances drew applause from the audience, while volunteers from Om Shanti Brahmakumaris demonstrated breathing meditation techniques, highlighting their health benefits.

Addressing the gathering, CS Vijayanand said daily themed yoga sessions are being held across the state to make yoga a regular part of life.

"Our goal is to reach two crore people by June 21, International Yoga Day. With 1.25 lakh trained instructors, we are taking yoga to every village and town," he said. He added that 26 thematic yoga events are being conducted across all 26 districts.

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PM SURYA GHAR: MUFT BIJLI YOJANA

AP accelerates rooftop solar drive

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh is rapidly advancing its clean energy transition, with the State government aiming to install 2 million rooftop solar units by the end of 2025 under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana. This was emphasised during a detailed review meeting chaired by Chief Secretary and Special Chief Secretary (Energy) K Vijayanand at the CS Camp Office in Vijayawada on Thursday.

The Special Chief Secretary instructed DISCOMs and NREDCAP to collectively install 300,000 rooftop solar units by June 2025, assigning each DISCOM and NREDCAP 75,000 installations.

Highlighting the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar, Vijayanand stressed the importance of aggressive outreach and awareness campaigns, especially targeting SC, ST and Backward Class households. Under the scheme, SC/ST households will receive 2-kilowatt rooftop solar systems completely free of cost. For BC households, a subsidy of Rs80,000 – Rs60,000 from the Centre and Rs20,000 from the State – will be provided towards the Rs1.20 lakh installation cost.

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand directs DISCOMs and NREDCAP to install 300,000 rooftop solar units by next month



A key directive from the review was to develop one model solar village in each district, totalling 26, to showcase effective implementation. Vijayanand also called for coordination with banks to secure financial tie-ups in these villages.

To date, the state has registered 1.212 million applications under the scheme, with APSPDCL recording 592,000, APCPDCL 534,000, and APEPDCL 85,711 applications. Approximately 587,000 SC/ST households have been identified for rooftop solar installations, with a projected capacity of 1,174 MWp and an estimated annual generation of 1,743 million units.

Vijayanand reiterated the government's commitment to providing clean energy access for all eligible households and directed DISCOMs to ensure timely and efficient implementation of the scheme.

The meeting was attended by CMDs of APEPDCL, APCPDCL and APSPDCL – I Prudhvi Tej, K Santosha Rao, and P Pulla Reddy – among others.





Mini-Mahanadu in US a huge hit

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Mini Mahanadu-2025, organised in Fremont, California, to mark the 102nd birth anniversary of TDP founder and legendary actor-politician N.T. Rama Rao, was a grand success.

The event, hosted by NRI TDP leader Srikant Doddapaneni, commenced at 7 pm on Wednesday at the Bheemavaram Ruchulu Banquet Hall in Fremont's Bay Area. It was conducted in what organisers described as a "never-before-ever-after" manner. Rich tributes were paid to the late N.T. Rama Rao.

Several TDP MPs from the Telugu States, Ministers, MLAs, and senior party leaders participated virtually, along with leaders from the BRS in Telangana. TUDA Chairman Diwakar Reddy and TDP Politburo member Nakka Ananda Babu were among those who addressed the gathering online.

TDP leader Jayaram Kumati expressed happiness over the enthusiastic participation of party leaders, reflecting their commitment to progress. He noted that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, who followed in N.T. Rama Rao's footsteps had promoted the IT sector, resulting in many Telugus now occupying top positions across the globe.

All attendees affirmed their resolve to follow the leadership of Chandrababu Naidu and IT Minister Nara Lokesh, pledging to contribute their best efforts for the development of Navya Andhra.

Pre-GST celebrations held with key stakeholders



PNS ■ GUNTUR

In a significant event marking the evolution of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India, the Guntur GST Commissionerate recently held Pre-GST Celebrations. The event was attended by Commissioner Sujit Mallick, Additional Commissioner Lakshmi Narayana, Dr Ch Hari Babu, Vice-President of the Consumer Federation of India, and Yelcuru Venkateswarlu, President of the Indian Chambers of Commerce, along with key representatives from local Chambers of Commerce and the District Consumers Forum.

The gathering served as a platform for industry stakeholders to exchange views and feedback on GST implementation. Participants discussed the benefits and challenges of the tax regime and offered insights and suggestions for further improvement.

A key highlight of the celebrations was a series of skits depicting the pre- and post-GST eras, effectively illustrating the complexities of the earlier taxation system and the transparency and simplicity introduced by GST.

Commissioner Sujit Mallick emphasised GST's role in driving economic growth, enhancing tax compliance, and curbing tax evasion. He also acknowledged the vital contributions of industry stakeholders in the successful implementation of GST.

The Guntur GST Commissionerate reiterated its commitment to ensuring smooth and efficient GST operations through continued collaboration with industry and stakeholder groups.

Workshop on revenue mobilisation for top panchayats

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Ministry of Panchayat Raj is organising a half-day special workshop on Friday at the Gosthani Conference Hall, Radisson Blue Resort, Rushikonda Beach Road, Visakhapatnam.

The event will bring together selected elected representatives and officials from high-performing Panchayats and Mandal Parishads to discuss strategies and best practices related to Own Source of Revenue (OSR).

An official circular from Panchayat Raj & Rural Development (PR & RD) Commissioner VR Krishna Teja Mylavarapu states that around 10 Gram Panchayats, along with their Sarpanches and Secretaries, and four Mandal Parishad Presidents (MPPs) and Mandal Parishad Development Officers (MPDOs) from Krishna and NTR districts have been shortlisted for the workshop.

The PR & RD department selected 88 Gram Panchayats and 20 Mandal Parishads statewide to participate.

From Krishna district, the selected Gram Panchayats are Gannavaram, Bapulapadu, Kankipadu, Penamaluru, and Surampalli. From NTR district, the chosen Gram Panchayats include Gollapudi, Nunna, Ramavarappadu, Prasadampadu, and Guntupalli. Additionally, Gannavaram and Kankipadu from Krishna district, and Vijayawada Rural and Kanchikacherla from NTR district, have also been selected.

All 10 Gram Panchayat Sarpanches, Secretaries, and the four MPPs and MPDOs will attend the workshop in Visakhapatnam.

Selection was based on Panchayats with an OSR of Rs 50 lakh or more and Mandal Parishads with an OSR exceeding Rs 1 crore.

During the workshop, Ministry of Panchayat Raj Secretary Vivek Bharadwaj, Joint Secretary Mukta Shekhar, and other officials will engage with elected representatives and officials.

The workshop aims to provide a platform for experience sharing, peer learning, and policy feedback from grassroots leaders, focusing on improving revenue generation and sustainable local governance. The Ministry seeks to replicate successful OSR models nationwide and promote financial autonomy at the local body level through such initiatives.

'Research must address real-time needs of farmers'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Director of the Agriculture Department, Dr S Dilli Rao, has stressed that agricultural research must be closely aligned with the real-time requirements of farmers. He urged scientists to utilise their technical expertise to conduct need-based, field-oriented research that genuinely benefits the farming community.

Speaking as the chief guest at the 'Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan' held at Dr KL Rao Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Garikapadu, in Jaggayyapet Mandal of NTR District on Thursday, Dr Dilli Rao outlined the key objectives of the nationwide campaign.

He informed that from 29 May to 12 June, scientists from Agricultural Universities, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, and Central Agricultural Research Institutes would operate at the field level to interact with farmers, offering technical guidance and addressing crop-related queries.

"This programme aims to improve productivity and raise farmers' income through practical, targeted scientific support. Farmers should take active part and fully utilise this opportunity," he said.

Dr Dilli Rao added that the initiative was launched under the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with the support of Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, to bridge the gap between laboratory research and its application in the field.

He appealed to scientists to ensure that modern agricultural technologies and innovations developed in research institutions are effectively disseminated to the grassroots level. This, he said, would empower farmers to make informed decisions and enhance crop yields.

He further emphasised that the economic empowerment of farmers involves not just income generation but also knowledge-based prosperity, making them self-reliant and proud contributors to national development.

As part of the programme, Dr Dilli Rao also visited Anumanchipalli village and participated in a field demonstration showcasing drone technology in agriculture.

KVK Coordinator Achyuta Raju, scientists Sivaprasad, Venkat Reddy, Rajasekhar, Lakshmi Kala, Jaswanth Reddy, Prabhavathi, NTR District Agriculture Officer DMF Vijayakumari, local farmers and agricultural staff were present at the event.



YSRCP slams govt's move to privatise medical colleges

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Vidadala Rajani criticised Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for leasing newly built medical colleges to private firms for 66 years, calling it a betrayal of public trust.

Speaking at the YSRCP central office in Tadepalli, she alleged that assets worth Rs 8,500 crore were being handed over for just Rs 5,000 annually per college.

Rajani said each college, built on 50 acres of prime land worth over Rs 2 crore per acre, is being leased at Rs 100 per acre annually, undermining free healthcare and education for the poor.

She warned that YSRCP would reverse the decision if voted back to power.

Mahanadu betrayed NTR's legacy: Lakshmi Parvathi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP State general secretary Lakshmi Parvathi has slammed the TDP's Mahanadu held in Kadapa, calling it a "hollow spectacle" filled with sycophancy and propaganda. She alleged that the event, held on NTR's birth anniversary, failed to honour his legacy and instead turned into a platform to attack Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.



She accused TDP leaders Chandrababu Naidu and Nara Lokesh of spreading falsehoods, staging acts like burning their own flags, and making contradictory statements on their "Super Six" promises. She criticised their alleged misuse of AI to fabricate videos showing NTR praising them, calling it a grave insult.

Lakshmi Parvathi also accused the TDP of misappropriating funds through donations and the skill development scam, and questioned the silence of the Enforcement Directorate. She asserted that only members of the Nandamuri family can claim NTR's legacy, and urged the public to reject the TDP's politics of deceit.

Massive turnout at Kadapa Mahanadu signals strong public backing

PNS ■ KADAPA

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) drew a massive crowd to its Mahanadu conclave in Kadapa on Thursday, which State President Palla Srinivasa Rao hailed as a clear sign of the party's continued strength and relevance in Andhra Pradesh.

Addressing the enthusiastic gathering, Palla highlighted the party's enduring appeal, recalling the vision of TDP founder Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao and the party's commitment to empowering the common man. He also praised Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's four decades of leadership, calling it a pillar of the party's growth.

A key moment at the conclave was the unveiling of six resolutions by TDP General Secretary Nara Lokesh. Described by Palla as a progressive roadmap rooted in NTR's legacy, the resolutions focus on global recognition for the Telugu identity, youth empowerment through 'Yuvagalam', support for farmers, women's empowerment via 'Stri Shakti', service to marginalised communities, and the principle of "Cadre First – The Worker is the Leader."

Palla also criticised the previous YSR Congress Party government, accusing it of misleading the public and abusing power.

He said the strong response to Mahanadu reflects a renewed public trust and a clear ideological direction for the TDP.

Heavy rain forecast

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds reaching speeds of 40–50 kmph are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next three days, according to the Visakhapatnam Meteorological Centre.

In its daily bulletin, the Centre also predicted similar weather conditions for South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next 48 hours. Gusty winds ranging from 30–50 kmph are expected in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema on May 31 and June 1, and in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh on June 1.

Operation Clean...

Continued from Page 1

Naidu reaffirmed the TDP's commitment to development and welfare, highlighting initiatives such as enhanced pensions, Anna Canteens, and Deepam 2 LPG cylinders. Over Rs 33,000 crore has been allocated for pensions benefiting 64 lakh people. On education and employment, he mentioned the DSC notification for 16,347 teacher posts and pledged to create 20 lakh jobs, backed by MoUs worth Rs 4.95 lakh crore.

Reiterating the party's support for backward classes, Naidu cited a Rs 47,456 crore allocation for BC welfare and announced relief measures for traditional communities, including GST exemption for handlooms and subsidies for solar installations.

On the contentious land issues, he blamed the previous government for enabling land grabs via Section 22A and the Land Titling Act. "We have repealed that Act and enacted an Anti-Land Grabbing law," he said, promising that all land disputes would be resolved by the next Mahanadu.

To promote decentralised development, Naidu released the Rayalaseema Declaration, outlining district-wise plans for industries, irrigation, and tourism. He announced that the Rs 9,000 crore Kadapa Steel Plant would begin work by June 12, and key irrigation projects would be prioritised.

Promising to eradicate poverty by 2029, Naidu concluded, "TDP is not just about power – it's about people. Together, we will build a wealthy, healthy and happy Andhra Pradesh. The worker is the leader and the youth are our future."

The event ended with the CM honouring a party worker who cycled from Koduru to Kadapa and announcing funding to address Kadapa's drinking water issues through the Buggavanka reservoir.

With six strategic resolutions adopted, Mahanadu 2025 marked a defining moment in TDP's roadmap towards transparency, innovation, and inclusive development.

YSRCP pushed...

Continued from Page 1

Describing Kadapa as a land of spiritual legacy and political resilience, Lokesh hailed it as symbolic of the TDP's resurgence and praised the public for their overwhelming support, calling the Mahanadu a "grand success."

Posing four-pointed questions to the YSRCP, Lokesh demanded accountability: "Who drove away mother and sister? Who killed Babai? Who brought in J-brand liquor? Who pressed the button and looted the people?"

He reaffirmed the TDP's commitment to its six foundational principles—uplift of the poor, women's empowerment, youth development, and honouring farmers and workers—declaring them as central to the party's mission.

Lokesh described Chandrababu Naidu as a name synonymous with progress: "From Hi-Tech City to Amaravati, from IT to AI, from Rs 200 to Rs 4,000 pensions—our CBN sets trends." Announcing key development initiatives, Lokesh promised free bus travel for women from August 15, a mega DSC with over 16,000 posts, and investments aimed at generating six lakh jobs across sectors. He noted that Mission Rayalaseema, which he announced during his Yuvagalam Padayatra, was already under implementation. He also highlighted the strength of the alliance with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan, stressing the importance of "continuity in governance" for sustained progress.

Concluding his speech, Lokesh said the "Red Book" symbolises justice under the Constitution. "Punishment is inevitable for those who looted and harmed the people. The law will catch up with them," he declared.

As the crowd erupted in cheers, Lokesh urged party workers to remain humble, continue their service, and ensure the TDP's resurgence becomes permanent.

'YogaAndhra'...

Continued from Page 1

These themes are designed for specific groups, including farmers, daily wage workers, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and MGNREGA workers, promoting inclusivity. Yoga awareness sessions are also planned at nearly 100 tourist spots, with four to five locations identified in each district.

Special Chief Secretary for Medical, Health and Family Welfare, M.T. Krishna Babu, noted the overwhelming response, stating, "People from all walks of life are actively registering. In some districts, we've even exceeded targets."

CCLA and NTR District Special Officer G. Jayalakshmi stressed that yoga is India's cultural treasure and should be embraced as a daily routine, not a one-day event. NTR District Collector Dr G. Lakshmisha added that yoga sessions are being conducted daily across the district, targeting 15 lakh participants by the end of the campaign.

Police Commissioner S.V. Rajasekhara Babu lauded the department's active involvement and the initiative's role in enhancing physical and mental well-being.

Dignitaries present included Health Commissioner G. Veerapandian, AYUSH Director K. Dinesh Kumar, VMC Commissioner H.M. Dhyanchandra, IGs B. Rajakumari, A.K. Ravikrishna, and Ratnakumari, DCP K.G.V. Saritha, and Vijayawada RDO Kavuri Chaitanya.

Kalki, Pushpa, Razakar...

Best Leading Actor: Allu Arjun for Pushpa 2
Best Leading Actress: Nivetha Thomas for 35 Chinna Katha Kadu
Best Director: Nag Ashwin for Kalki 2898 AD
First Best Feature Film: Kalki 2898 AD
Second Best Feature Film: Pottel
Third Best Feature Film: Lucky Baskhar
Feature Film on National Integration, Communal Harmony, Social Uplift of Depressed Classes: Committee Kurrollu
Feature Film on Environment/Heritage/History: Razakar

Continued from Page 1

In the Environmental and Historical Themes section, Razakar stood out and was acknowledged in multiple categories, including Best Music Director (Bheems Ceciroleo) and Best Makeup Artist (Nalla Sreenu). The poignant 35 Chinna Katha Kadu was declared the Best Children's Film and secured the Best Actress (Nivetha Thomas) Award and the Best Child Artiste (Arundev Pothula and Baby Harika) Award. Pushpa 2 led the popular cinema pack with Allu Arjun being named the Best Leading Actor, while Shreya Ghoshal was awarded the Best Female Playback Singer for her song 'Suseti Aggi Ravva' from the same film.

The Best Male Playback Singer Award went to Sid Sriram for 'Nizame Ne Chebutunna' from Ooru Peru Bhairavakona. In the supporting categories, SJ Suryah and Saranya Pradeep won for Saripoda Sanivaram and Ambajipeta Marriage Band respectively.

Comedic brilliance was recognised with Satya and Vennela Kishore for Mattu Vadalara 2, which also won a Jury Special Mention for Faria Abdullah's rap song performance.

Gaami won accolades for Best Cinematography (Vishwanath Reddy) and Best Audiography (Aravind Menon), while Devara's Ayudha Puja number earned Ganesh Acharya the Best Choreographer award.

The awards also honoured innovation in storytelling with Aay… Mem Friends Andi being named the Best Wholesome Entertainment Film. Music Shop Murthy's Siva Paladugu won the Best Story Writer, and lyricist Chandrabose was recognised for his work in Raju Yadav, which also won a Special Jury Award.

Among literary recognitions, Mana Cinema First Reel by Rentala Jayadeva was declared the Best Book on Telugu Cinema.

With a blend of mainstream and meaningful cinema, GTFA 2024 reaffirmed its commitment to celebrating not just glitz and glamour but also the soul of Telugu storytelling.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi:	
Chaturthi:	May 29 11:18 PM to May 30 09:23 PM
Panchami:	May 30 09:23 PM to May 31 08:15 PM
Nakshatram:	
Punarvasu:	May 29 10:38 PM to May 30 09:29 PM
Pushya:	May 30 09:29 PM to May 31 09:07 PM
Rahukalam:	10:36 AM to 12:13 PM
Yamagandam:	3:28 PM to 5:05 PM
Varjyam:	05:21 AM to 06:56 AM
Gulika:	7:22 AM to 8:59 AM
Amritakalam:	07:12 PM to 08:43 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:47 AM to 12:39 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Cloudy
Temp: 32°c
Humidity: 77%
Sunrise: 5:34 AM
Sunset: 6:36 PM

Updated: May 29, 2025 5:00 PM

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The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | MAY 30, 2025

Autonomous status restored to Andhra Loyola College for 10 yrs

UGC reviews college infrastructure, academic standards, and facilities

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



The University Grants Commission (UGC) has officially restored the autonomous status of Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada—one of the most prestigious and historic educational institutions in Andhra Pradesh. The college has been granted autonomous status for a period of 10 years, valid until the academic year 2031–32. UGC Joint Secretary Dr R Manoj Kumar has sent a formal confirmation letter regarding this decision to the Registrar of Krishna University.

Although the college's previous autonomous status expired in 2022–23, the institution did not apply in time for renewal. Despite the lapse, the college continued to function as if it retained its autonomous status, leading to widespread criticism and controversy. The matter eventually drew the attention of Krishna University, which issued formal notices to the college management.

In response, Andhra Loyola College submitted a fresh application to the UGC for re-accreditation. A UGC committee recently held a meeting and conducted a detailed review of the college's infrastructure, academic standards, and student facilities. Based on this comprehensive evaluation, the UGC decided to restore the college's autonomous status, recognising its compliance with the necessary academic and institutional standards.

Krishna University has been asked to strictly adhere to UGC guidelines regarding affiliated autonomous institutions.

Andhra Loyola College must ensure it applies for renewal at least three months before the expiry of the newly granted 10-year term.

The announcement has brought a wave of relief and celebration among students, faculty, parents, and the college administration, who welcomed the restoration of the college's academic independence and credibility.

Ram Mohan Naidu hails Central nod for Rs 3,653-cr highway project

To improve connectivity to Krishnapatnam Port, boost employment and trade

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu has welcomed the Union Cabinet's approval of a Rs 3,653-crore greenfield highway project in Andhra Pradesh, terming it a "major milestone" in the State's infrastructure development. Addressing media persons in Patna on Thursday following a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Naidu said the project exemplified the Centre's commitment to modernising connectivity in the region. "This decision clearly reflects the Prime Minister's dedication to the progress of Andhra Pradesh. It is a prime example of the Centre's efforts to bring world-class infrastructure to our State," he said.

The proposed four-lane highway, to be implemented under the Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Transfer (DBFOT) model, will span 108.134 kilometres. It will connect Gopavaram village in YSR Kadapa district on National Highway 67 (NH-67) to Guruvindapudi near the Krishnapatnam Port Junction on NH-16 in SPSR Nellore district. NH-16 is part of the vital Chennai-Kolkata corridor.

Describing the highway as a "key corridor for industrial growth", Naidu said it would integrate three major industrial zones in the State and improve last-mile connectivity to Krishnapatnam Port. The corridor is expected to play a pivotal role in facilitating trade and logistics across the southern and eastern parts of India.

According to the government, the new alignment will reduce the travel distance between Badvel and Krishnapatnam Port from 142 km to 108.13 km, thereby cutting travel time by nearly an hour. This is projected to lower fuel consumption and vehicle operating costs, enhancing economic efficiency while contributing to environmental sustainability through a reduced carbon.

The project is also expected to generate substantial employment opportunities. Official estimates indicate that approximately 20 lakh man-days of direct employment and another 23 lakh man-days of indirect employment will be created during the construction phase. Officials expect the enhanced infrastructure to catalyse broader economic activity and stimulate job creation in the surrounding regions.

Lawyers to boycott courts today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Bezawada Bar Association president AK Basha has announced that the bar associations of Krishna, Guntur and Prakasam districts have decided to boycott courts on Friday, protesting the police atrocities in Tenali. Addressing a press meet here on Thursday, Basha said that the fact-finding committee of the Bezawada Bar Association and the Association for Protection of Civil Rights (APCR) went to Tenali and found violation of human rights by the police.

Basha said they found that a lawyer from the Guntur Bar Association was among the victims, and that cases were unfairly framed against them. He further stated that they expressed solidarity with the victims and stood by them, and called upon all bar associations in Krishna district to boycott court functions on Friday.

The Guntur Bar Asso ciation and the Prakasam District Bar Association will also boycott court functions.

IndiGo, AP Chambers discuss enhancing air connectivity

Stress on aviation potential of Vijayawada catchment area, which includes a significant population of NRIs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



A team from IndiGo Airlines, led by Associate Director–Sales (South India) Saurabh Sachdeva, visited the Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Federation (AP Chambers) office in Vijayawada on Thursday to explore opportunities for enhancing air connectivity from the region.

The AP Chambers delegation, headed by president Potluri Bhaskara Rao, highlighted the immense aviation potential of the Vijayawada catchment area, which includes a significant population of NRIs, a growing student base, and a thriving business community. He thanked IndiGo for launching the Vijayawada-Kurnool direct flight and urged the airline to expand international connectivity from Vijayawada, particularly to destinations such as Dubai and Singapore.

"Almost every family in the State has at least one NRI, with an estimated five lakh NRIs in the region," said Bhaskara Rao. "Before the pandemic, IndiGo operated a direct flight to Singapore with over 80 per cent occupancy. With Amaravati's capital city development and increasing industrial activity, international travel demand has surged."

He pointed out that Vijayawada Airport has witnessed an increase of 30,000-40,000 passengers in recent months, with most flights operating at an 80 per cent load factor. He also requested the deployment of larger aircraft like Airbus or Boeing to accommodate higher passenger volumes and up to two–three tonnes of belly cargo, as the airport is well-equipped to handle wide-body aircraft.

The AP Chambers team further proposed new domestic routes such as Vijayawada–Varanasi, Vijayawada–Ahmedabad or Surat, and Vijayawada–Kolkata via Visakhapatnam. They cited previous success of similar routes, including SpiceJet's Varanasi service.

Bhaskara Rao also urged IndiGo to explore code-sharing agreements for its flights from Vijayawada, to provide seamless international connectivity, efficient baggage transfers and convenient booking experiences.

IndiGo officials, including BVB Chary, Associate Director–Sales (AP & Telangana), and Sales Manager Mohit Krishna, said the suggestions will be considered to better serve the growing aviation needs of the region.

Sarvani Cheedella clinches title at State U-19 Girls Chess Championship

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Sarvani Cheedella, a student of Mustabada Sports and Educational Academy, emerged as the champion of the 39th Andhra Pradesh State Junior (Under-19) Girls Chess Championship – 2025, held at Narasapuram the other day. Sarvani scored 5.5 points out of 6 rounds, securing the top spot among the State's finest young talents.

The championship featured intense competition among promising players from across the State. However, Sarvani's composure and tactical skill stood out. Her victory not only adds another achievement to her resume but also brings recognition to the Mustabada Sports and Educational Academy for its efforts in nurturing young athletic talent.

In this connection, a felicitation programme was held at the PB Siddhartha Arts & Science College, Mogalrajapuram, on Thursday. Prof Mandava Basaveswara Rao, Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Academy of Sciences and Rector of Krishna University, attended the event as the chief guest. He felicitated the young champion along with her mentor and chief coach, VR Bobba, praising their dedication and consistent performance.

In a gesture of encouragement, Vemuri Babu Rao, Director of PB Siddhartha College, presented a cash prize of Rs.7,000 to Sarvani Cheedella. The felicitation ceremony also saw the participation of faculty members Sridhar Kavuri and Abburi Rama Rao, who congratulated the champion for her achievement and highlighted the importance of chess in developing critical thinking among youth.

750 kg ganja seized, 9 arrested

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI



Rolugunta police seized 750 kg of dry ganja valued at Rs 37.5 lakh and arrested nine persons involved in the smuggling operation on Thursday. Disclosing the details at a press meet, District Superintendent of Police Tuhin Sinha said that acting on a tip-off, Sub-Inspectors P. Ramakrishna Rao (Rolugunta) and M. Srinivasa Rao (Kothakota) led a coordinated raid on an oil palm plantation located between Konthalam and Addasaram villages.

Upon reaching the spot, the police team found suspects unloading ganja from a car. Swift action by the officers led to the arrest of nine individuals at the scene, while two others managed to flee under the cover of darkness.

In addition to the 750 kg of ganja, police also seized a four-wheeler, three motorcycles, and Rs 2,500 in cash from the accused.

During questioning, the arrested persons revealed that the contraband was procured from Papulu Venkatesh (30) of Kalimela in Odisha's Malkangiri district. The primary accused were identified as Viyyapu Govinda (30) of Rolugunta mandal and Bangaru Appala Naidu (33) of Makavarapalem mandal.

Investigations further revealed that the accused had already transported and concealed 600 kg of ganja at the site four days earlier and were in the process of storing another 150 kg when the police swooped in. Three others—Tamarana Venkata Srinivasa Raja, Kadimi Rakesh, and Boddu Nanaji, all hailing from Rolugunta mandal—played key roles in storage and logistics. Meanwhile, Marigela Lakshman Reddy and Madula Siva Kumar from the ASR district provided transportation via the Seeleru–Maredimilli–Tuni route.

Police records indicate that this was not the first time some of the accused had come into contact with the law. Viyyapu Govinda has four previous ganja cases against him, while Nallabilli Anji Babu has been booked in two earlier instances. Efforts are on to trace and apprehend the two absconding suspects.

All set for ration distribution through FP shops from June 1

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Food & Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Nadendla Manohar, on Thursday announced that arrangements have been completed for the distribution of ration goods through Fair Price Shops starting 1 June.

Inspecting Ration Depot No. 218 in Madhuranagar, Vijayawada, along with Civil Supplies Commissioner Saurabh Gour, the Minister reviewed the newly upgraded e-POS (electronic Point of Sale) system. The updated software uses biometric verification, including fingerprint and iris scans, to authenticate beneficiaries.

Manohar said cardholders will no longer need to follow mobile ration vehicles, as supplies will now be available at shops from 8 am to 12 noon and 4 pm to 8 pm, from the 1st to the 15th of each month.

Special doorstep delivery has been arranged from 1 to 5 June for senior citizens over 65, people with disabilities, and elderly couples. The portability system will also allow cardholders to collect rations from any nearby shop, even if they have migrated.

He added that a new mobile app has been launched to enhance transparency, provide dealer information, track stock updates, and monitor queues.



No interruption in 'wealth-from-waste' activities: VMC Commissioner

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner HM Dhyanachandra talking to the staff at the Garbage Transfer Station in Ajith Singh Nagar on Thursday

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanachandra has emphasised that there should be no interruption in activities aimed at generating wealth from waste. He conducted an inspection in Ajit Singh Nagar on Thursday, where he reviewed the functioning of the Garbage Transfer Station and the Anna Canteen.

The Commissioner inspected five big tipper vehicles procured recently under the National Safai Karmachari Scheme.

He directed the officials to immediately allocate these vehicles to the intended beneficiaries and ensure their swift deployment to strengthen waste management operations.

At the Garbage Transfer Station, Dhyanachandra underscored the importance of sustaining wealth-from-waste initiatives without disruption. He instructed staff to maintain the station in a clean and hygienic condition at all times to promote a pleasant and efficient working environment.

Later, at the Anna Canteen in Ajit Singh Nagar, the Commissioner personally spoke to the diners about time management, food quality, and hygiene standards.

He reviewed operations at the ground level and encouraged visitors to provide feedback and suggestions via the displayed QR code, enabling transparent public engagement and service improvement.

He was accompanied by Chief Engineer R Srinath Reddy, in-charge Chief Medical Health Officer Dr Gopalakrishna Nayak, Executive Engineer Srinivas, and Vehicle Depot In-charge Executive Engineer Yesu Padam, among others.

CM congratulates Jyothi Yarraji for winning Gold

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has congratulated Jyothi Yarraji for winning Gold medal in 100 meters hurdles at the 26 th Asian Athletics Cham pionship in Gumi, South Korea.

In a message here on Thursday, the Chief Minister said: "Congratulations to Jyothi Yarraji, India's fastest woman hurdler and a shining Telugu daughter, on winning Gold in the Women's 100 th Hurdles at the 26 th Asian athletics Championship in Gumi, South Korea. "

Mr.Naidu said: "Jyothi Yarraji has made the nation and Andhra Pradesh proud. I wish her continued success in the future."

EPDCL expedites smart meter installation in Visakhapatnam

After government departments, focus shifting to commercial consumers and high-usage domestic connections

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh Eastern Power Distribution Company Limited (AP-EPDCL) has accelerated its smart electricity meter rollout across Visakhapatnam to modernise its billing system and reduce payment delays.

Originally aimed at agricultural consumers, the initiative now includes all user categories, with priority given to government departments. Of the nearly 3,000 government offices in the district, the first smart meter was installed in August 2023 at the Public Health Department office in Seethammadhara. With installations in government institutions nearing completion, focus is now shifting to commercial consumers and high-usage domestic connections, particularly those exceeding 200 units per month.

EPDCL estimates that around 1.19 lakh smart meters will be needed to cover the undivided Visakhapatnam district, which has approximately 17.45 lakh power connections. Each smart meter, along with its supporting infrastructure, costs about Rs 6,000. However, officials have clarified that consumers will not be charged for installation, as the meters remain EPDCL's property.



A pilot project in Akkayyapalem is currently testing smart meters in households. These devices enable real-time monitoring of power consumption and support prepaid billing, helping enhance consumer awareness and operational efficiency.

Superintending Engineer of the Visakha Circle, Shyambabu, stated that smart meters will be installed only for consumers using more than 200 units monthly. Households with lower consumption, those in group housing, or receiving subsidies will retain existing meters.

Consumers using smart meters will be required to make advance payments based on average usage. The project is a key part of EPDCL's broader effort to establish a transparent, accountable, and technology-driven power distribution network across the region.

Vijayawada BIS conducts 'Manak Manthan'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, has successfully organised a 'Manak Manthan' on the Indian Standard IS 18166:2025 in Vijayawada. The event focused on the newly published specification for Unplasticised Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC-U) Threaded Column Pipes for Borewells/Tubewells.

Prem Sajani P, Director and Head of the BIS Vijayawada Branch, delivered the inaugural address and welcomed participants. Dr Chinta Shekar, Director and Head of CIPET Vijayawada, emphasised the vital role of standards in daily life and appreciated BIS's efforts in hosting the event.

K Sai Kaushik, Scientist D & Joint Director, BIS Vijayawada, led the technical discussions, providing insights into the implementation and compliance aspects of IS 18166:2025. The session saw active participation from around 40 stakeholders, including representatives from government labs, manufacturers, and interns from CIPET.

The programme offered a platform for constructive dialogue, with stakeholders sharing valuable feedback to enhance the effectiveness and implementation of the new standard. BIS also showcased recent updates to Indian Standards and conducted a hands-on demonstration of the BIS Care App, highlighting features like ISI Mark verification, complaint registration, and the 'Know Your Standards' section.

'Yogandhra' campaign taken up across WG: Collector

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM



West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has announced that Yoga programmes are being organised across the district as part of the Yogandhra 2025 initiative.

The Collector took part in a Yoga training session held at Alluri Sitarama Raju Smritivanam on Thursday, where she practised Yoga alongside over 200 participants, including children and adults, during the hour-long programme.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Nagarani said committees had been constituted at the village, mandal and district levels to conduct extensive awareness activities. "People from all walks of life, including public representatives, officials, students, youth and voluntary organisations, are actively participating in the programme," she stated.

She added that a 'Yoga Street' has been set up at Alluri Sitarama Raju Smritivanam in the district headquarters, where daily sessions are being held. "Rallies and awareness drives are taking place in every mandal. As part of the Yoga Month, 100 master trainers have been selected to train 50 individuals each over a three-day period," she informed.

These trained individuals will further guide others in Yoga practice at the mandal and village levels. "Yoga demonstrations with at least 5,000 participants will be held at selected tourist locations. A large-scale Yoga demonstration was already conducted on boats at Valandara dock along the Vashishtha Godavari on May 27," she said.

The Collector announced that a mass Yoga session will be organised on June 3 at the Penugonda Vasavi Kanyaka Parameswari temple, a prominent pilgrimage centre.

She further noted that grand Yoga Andhra events are scheduled to be held on June 9 at Perupalem Beach in Mogalthur mandal, on June 16 at Alluri Sitarama Raju Smritivanam in Bhimavaram, and on June 19 at DNR College in Bhimavaram and YNM College in Narasapuram, with the participation of 5,000 people at each venue.

Collector Nagarani urged the public to actively take part in the Yoga events in their respective localities. DEO E Narayana, District Tourism Officer AV Appa Rao, Arogyasri Coordinator Dr Keerthi Srevan, and AYUSH representative Dr Hari Srinivas were among those present.

2 red sanders smugglers get 5 yrs' jail

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Two red sanders smugglers have been sentenced to five years' imprisonment and fined Rs 9 lakh each by the Red Sander Special Court.

According to Task Force sources, Judge Narasimha Murthy of the Red Sander Special Court delivered the verdict on Thursday, convicting the accused—Gouse Basha and Shiva—for illegally transporting red sanders.

The duo was apprehended at Nagapatla village in the Tirupati forest division while smuggling red sander logs. A case was registered against them under Crime No. 01/2017. With the prosecution successfully proving the charges, the court pronounced the sentence.

Following the conviction, the smugglers were shifted to the Nellore Central Prison. Task Force SP P. Srinivas lauded the efforts of the officials involved for securing the conviction.

JNTUK inks pact for census data research centre

PNS ■ KAKINADA



The agreement was formalised on Thursday by Bharathi Hollikeri, Director of Census Operations for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and Prof V. Ravindranath, In-charge Registrar of JNTUK, in the presence of Vice-Chancellor Prof CSRK Prasad and other dignitaries.

Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Kakinada (JNTUK) and the Directorate of Census Operations, Government of India, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a Centre for Census Micro-Data Research at the university's Innovation Research Centre (IRC).

The agreement was formalised on Thursday by Bharathi Hollikeri, Director of Census Operations for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and Prof V. Ravindranath, In-charge Registrar of JNTUK, in the presence of Vice-Chancellor Prof CSRK Prasad and other dignitaries.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Prasad expressed his delight and said the collaboration would provide an excellent opportunity to utilise Census data for studying the socio-economic conditions of the population. He noted that the new research centre would support faculty from the Computer Science & Engineering (CSE) and Mathematics departments in conducting advanced research, data analysis, and algorithm design.

Hollikeri said that the Census Directorate has been establishing such research centres across India since 2012, with 51 centres already operational. The JNTUK centre becomes the third of its kind in Andhra Pradesh.

She highlighted that India's first Census was conducted in 1872, with a complete Census following in 1881. Post-Independence, the first Census was held in 1951, and a total of 15 have been conducted, the latest in 2011. The 16th Census, scheduled for 2021, was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will be conducted soon using modern technology, she added.

Deputy Registrar General Sasikumar and Assistant Director K. Suprej represented the Census Directorate. From JNTUK, Rector Prof Ramana, OSD Prof Koteswara Rao, and senior faculty members including Profs G. Yesurathnam, Vipparty Ravindra, B. Balakrishna, M.H.M. Krishnaprasad, G. Padmajarani, A. Swarnakumari, and N. Balaji were present, along with College of Engineering Principal Prof N. Mohan Rao, Vice-Principal (Academics) Prof G.V.S.R. Deekshitulu, and former Vice-Chancellors Prof S. Srinivasa Kumar and Prof K. Padmaraju.

Job given to slain driver's brother

PNS ■ KAKINADA



Joint Collector Rahul Meena on Thursday handed over an appointment letter to Veedhi Naveen Kumar, the brother of the late Veedhi Subrahmanyam, who was the driver of YSRCP MLC Anantha Babu. Naveen Kumar has been appointed to a post in the Social Welfare Department.

The murder of Subrahmanyam had sparked statewide outrage, particularly among Dalit organisations, after MLC Anantha Babu, accused of the crime, left the body at the doorstep of the victim's family in Kakinada. He was arrested two days later following widespread protests. Though suspended from the party, the MLC has frequently been seen in close association with party leaders at various events. He was later released on bail.

The newly formed coalition government has now ordered a fresh inquiry into the murder and also sanctioned employment to the victim's brother as part of relief measures.

Social Welfare Department Deputy Director G. Srinivasa Rao and State President of the Republican Party of India, Pitta Varaprasad, were present at the Collectorate when the appointment letter was handed over.

AP govt, 3F Oil Palm launch farmers' awareness drive

PNS ■ ELURU



In a joint effort to promote sustainable oil palm cultivation, 3F Oil Palm Pvt. Ltd., in collaboration with the Department of Horticulture, Government of Andhra Pradesh, has launched a comprehensive farmer awareness campaign across 50 villages in Eluru, West Godavari and East Godavari districts.

The campaign is designed to educate farmers on best practices in oil palm cultivation, with a focus on agronomy techniques, input management, disease control, and sustainable harvesting methods. It features interactive training sessions, live demonstrations, and expert consultations aimed at enhancing farmer knowledge and boosting productivity and profitability.

India currently imports more than 60 per cent of its edible oil requirements, with annual imports exceeding 13 million tonnes. In response, the Government of India has launched the National Mission on Edible Oils–Oil Palm (NMEO-OP), which targets the cultivation of an additional 6.5 lakh hectares of oil palm by 2025–26.

Andhra Pradesh is playing a pivotal role in this mission, accounting for over 60 per cent of the country's oil palm area, with more than 1.5 lakh hectares under cultivation. The state's contribution is seen as vital in reducing the country's dependence on imports and in boosting domestic production.

"This joint effort highlights our commitment to strengthening the oil palm sector and supporting farmers in achieving higher yields and incomes," said Srinivas Rao Kilari, Head – Agri, 3F Oil Palm Pvt. Ltd.

The awareness drive is expected to directly benefit hundreds of farmers and significantly improve oil palm cultivation standards across the region.



Kavitha's comments on BRS's merger with BJP true: Raja Singh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP MLA T. Raja Singh said that he thinks that BRS MLC Kavitha's comments on the BRS merging with the BJP are true.

He said that if a sufficiently big package is offered, his people (BJP) would have merged the BJP with the BRS at some point.

He said that if the BJP and the BRS merge, and if a BJP candidate wants to contest, the BRS will decide from where he should contest. "This has happened in the past too, and that is why the BJP lost," he added.

He accused BJP leaders of colluding in every election and that the BJP lost due to this. He said that every single BJP worker knows about this, but no one will come out openly.

Raja Singh said that BJP workers are silent as they fear that they will be suspended if they bring this matter to the notice of the leadership.

730 kg ganga seized, 1 peddler arrested

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY



A major drug bust was reported at Yernagudem village in Devarapalli mandal, where police seized 730 kg cannabis being illegally transported in a lorry.

In a shocking revelation, the same lorry was involved in a fatal accident on 24 May at Diamond Junction in Devarapalli, where it knocked down a motorcycle, killing a young couple on the spot. The driver, who was also the smuggler, abandoned the vehicle in an agricultural field and fled.

Circle Inspector B. Nageswar Naik informed the media on Thursday that acting on a tip-off, a police team located the parked lorry behind a brick kiln along the Kovvur–Nallajerla stretch of National Highway 16. Upon inspection, they discovered 730 kgs of ganja concealed in a secret chamber within the vehicle. The contraband was packed in 18 bags and is estimated to be worth around Rs 22 lakh.

The accused, Karre Srisailam, was arrested. He had procured the cannabis from Odisha and was transporting it to Malkangiri, near Hyderabad in Telangana, where he was to deliver it to his associates, Narsireddy and Yadayya.

Following the road accident, local farmers had alerted the police about the suspiciously abandoned lorry, leading to a breakthrough in the smuggling case. CI Naik stated that Srisailam is a repeat offender in drug trafficking and had previously been jailed but was released on bail.

Efforts are underway to apprehend the remaining accused in the case.

Arrangements for CM's visit inspected

PNS ■ AMALAPURAM



Konaseema District Collector Mahesh Kumar and Superintendent of Police Krishna Rao on Thursday inspected the arrangements being made for Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's visit to Cheyyuru village in Mummidivaram constituency, scheduled for May 31.

The Chief Minister is set to participate in various programmes in the village, including the Pedala Seva Bangaru Kutumbam initiative. He is also expected to interact with NREGA workers and later disburse social security pensions to eligible beneficiaries.

Collector Mahesh Kumar, SP Krishna Rao, local MLA and Government Whip Datla Subba Raju, along with other officials, reviewed the preparations at the helipad and the venue for the public meeting. The officials made several suggestions to improve the arrangements.

Following the official engagements, the Chief Minister will address a public meeting and also interact with TDP party activists.

HRF asks VSP to reinstate terminated contract workers

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh State Committee of the Human Rights Forum (HRF) on Thursday demanded the reinstatement of 3,000 contract workers of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), who were allegedly terminated recently.

Calling this move a retrograde privatisation policy by the government, HRF said it stands in solidarity with the ongoing agitation of the steel plant's contract workers.

"Contract workers at VSP have been on an indefinite strike for the past 10 days for realisation of their legitimate rights in the face of sustained threats by the management. HRF demands that the 3,000 contract workers who have been recently terminated be reinstated immediately," said a release from HRF.

Advising VSP, which is also known as Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL), to abandon alleged attempts to terminate another 1,800 contract workers, HRF condemned the industry management's alleged use of police to intimidate the workers.

Resorting to fear tactics instead of negotiation, particularly when production at the plant is being affected, is unacceptable, it said.

Though contract workers are the backbone of daily operations at the plant, HRF noted that "they continue to be denied basic rights, job security and dignity at the workplace".

"Their persistent demands for regularisation and fair wages are not met with dialogue, but intimidation and removal," said HRF, calling for engagement in dialogue and democratic resolution of issues raised by them.

According to HRF, the Central government is orchestrating a "systematic conspiracy to privatise the steel plant by sanitising its financials", issuing a Rs 11,440-crore package, waiving GST and other dues to make the plant attractive for private players.

"We condemn this attempt to hand over a precious industrial asset built on the sacrifice of 32 lives and the voluntary land donation by people of 69 villages to corporate interests on a platter," said HRF.

In the 40-year history of VSP, we have not witnessed such intimidation tactics and police deployment, said the rights body, adding that the suspension of protesting workers and the issuance of show-cause notices could be in direct violation of Industrial Disputes Act, 1948.

These actions are nothing but implementation of regressive new labour codes that the government is actively pushing, it noted.

Calling for the immediate stoppage of punitive actions by the management, HRF advocated democratic and peaceful resolution of employees and contract workers grievances at the steel plant.

Further, it demanded the immediate halting of all attempts to privatise the steel plant.

Recently, Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president YS Sharmila had launched an indefinite hunger strike in support of the laid off workers but it was broken up by the police.

Meanwhile, a source told PTI that the steel plant is executing employee rationalisation as per government guidelines and expert advice and it is an ongoing process.



Cleansing ritual held at temple

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The traditional temple cleansing ceremony, Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam, was performed at Sri Govindaraja Swamy temple on Thursday in preparation for the annual Brahmotsavams, scheduled to take place from June 2 to 10.

The ritual commenced at 6.45 am, with the entire temple premises being cleansed and sanctified using the aromatic Parimalam mixture. Following the purification, devotees were permitted to have Darshan.

Temple Assistant Executive Officer Munikrishna Reddy oversaw the arrangements for the religious event.

Gandikota to be developed as major tourist hub: Pemmasani

PNS ■ KADAPA



Union Minister of State for Rural Development, Pemmasani Chandrasekhar, has announced that Gandikota will be developed into a prime tourist destination. The Minister, accompanied by MLA C. Adinarayana Reddy, visited the historic Gandikota Fort on Thursday.

Speaking to the media, the Union Minister said the Central Government has sanctioned Rs 78 crore for the development of Gandikota Fort into a major tourist attraction. He stated that the site would be transformed on the lines of the Grand Canyon.

Describing the fort as an architectural marvel, Pemmasani highlighted its historical significance and recalled how even the Bahmani emperors had failed to breach it.

He revealed that the tender process for the development works was in its final stages. He also mentioned that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had promised to erect a 100-feet tall statue of Emperor Sri Krishnadevaraya on the fort premises. The Minister assured that the interests of the people of Rayalaseema would be addressed.

Taking a swipe at the previous YSRCP government, Pemmasani expressed regret that the tourism sector had been grossly neglected during its tenure.

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ACROSS THE STATES



Arunachal's agri push targets innovation, inclusion

Arunachal Pradesh Agriculture minister Gabriel D Wangsu on Thursday underscored agriculture and allied sectors as the cornerstone of the state's development strategy, citing significant progress achieved over the past five years. Launching the Vikshit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan 2025 here, the minister announced that the state has allocated Rs 2,000 crore under the Atma Nirbhar Scheme, with 50 per cent contributed by the state government, benefiting over 52,000 individuals and self-help groups (SHGs). This investment, he said, is driving widespread prosperity across rural Arunachal. Wangsu also flagged off the Krishi Raths, mobile outreach vehicles that will traverse villages to directly engage with farmers and deliver agricultural knowledge, technology, and information on government schemes at their doorstep. Terming the occasion 'proud and historic', the minister said Arunachal Pradesh was actively joining the national agricultural transformation campaign under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visionary leadership.



Bihar teen killed in celebratory firing at wedding

A teenager from Bihar was killed allegedly in celebratory firing at a wedding in Jharkhand's Chatra district, police said on Thursday. Two persons were arrested, and the pistol used in the firing was seized, they said. The incident happened late on Wednesday during a wedding procession in Barwa Kochwa village in Pratappur police station area, they said. The victim, identified as Abhisekh Kumar (19), received bullet wounds on the neck and left hand. He was a resident of Bardih village in Imamganj police station area of Bihar's Gaya district, the same as the men who opened fire. The accused were identified as Vikram Kumar (20) and Sumit Kumar (21), police said. They were all part of the 'baraat' that arrived in Barwa Kochwa from Gaya. A pall of gloom descended over the village following the incident. A case was registered and an investigation started, police said.



Nine illegal Bangladeshi nationals detained in Delhi

Delhi Police has in two separate operations apprehended nine Bangladeshi nationals, including three minors, residing illegally in different locations of the national capital, officials on Thursday said. Earlier on May 25, a crime branch team detained four Bangladeshi nationals from the Narela area as part of a crackdown on illegal migrants in vulnerable localities and roadside settlements. Based on sustained ground-level intelligence, the team apprehended Hafijul (19), Mominul (21), Shamim (22) and Inamul (38) -- all residents of Khudigram and Nakeshwari districts in Bangladesh -- who failed to produce valid documents, a police officer said. They revealed during questioning that they they had entered India illegally during childhood along with their parents, who later returned to Bangladesh, police said. he four men, who were found staying on roadsides without any identity documents from either country, remained in India without legal authorisation and moved across cities like Bahadurgarh, Sonipat, Khurja, Mahendragarh, Ghaziabad, Behraor and Delhi in search of work, avoiding detection, they said.

Bengal's growth key to India's progress: PM Modi

LAUNCHES RS 1,010-CR CITY GAS PROJECT IN ALIPURDUAR

PNS ■ ALIPURDUAR (WB)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday laid the foundation stone for a Rs 1,010-crore City Gas Distribution (CGD) project in West Bengal's Alipurduar district, asserting that the state's development is integral to India's journey towards becoming a developed nation.

Addressing a public gathering in the northern Bengal district, Modi said the CGD initiative, which will cover both Alipurduar and neighbouring Cooch Behar, is not merely about laying pipelines, but represents a significant stride in delivering clean, safe and affordable energy directly to people's homes.

"Today, when India is moving towards becoming a 'Viksit Rashtra' (developed nation), Bengal's participation is both expected and essential. The central government is continuously giving new impetus to infrastructure, innovation and investment here… Bengal's development is a foundational pillar of India's future," he said.

Calling the CGD project a "lifeline of progress", the prime minister said the initiative will provide piped natural gas (PNG) to more than 2.5 lakh households, as well as commercial and industrial units in the region. Around 19 compressed natural gas (CNG) stations will also be set up under the minimum work programme targets.

Modi congratulated the people of Alipurduar and Cooch Behar, stating that the project will bring relief from the hassle of purchasing LPG cylinders, ensure uninterrupted gas supply, and promote the use of green fuel, resulting in cost savings and environmental benefits.

"This is not just a pipeline project. It is an example of doorstep delivery of essential services. From clean fuel to job creation, this project will bring multiple benefits to the region," the PM asserted.



Op Sindoor a decisive response: PM

GANGTOK: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the Pahalgam terror strike last month was an attack on the soul and unity of India, and the subsequent Operation Sindoor was a "decisive response" to terrorists. He asserted that the country was united in its fight against terrorism, adding that India gave a befitting reply and destroyed terror infrastructure and several airbases in Pakistan. Describing the Pahalgam attack as a "deliberate attempt" to create a rift in India on religious lines, Modi said, "We sent out a clear message that the country is united despite the terror strike which erased the sindoor of some of our sisters".

Pulse of Indianness felt in diversity of literary traditions: Prez

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday said the pulse of Indianness is felt in the diversity of literary traditions.

Addressing a two-day literary conference, she said there are many languages, innumerable dialects and an infinite diversity of literary traditions in our large family of nearly 140 crore countrymen.

"But the pulse of Indianness is felt in this diversity. This feeling of Indianness is also deeply ingrained in the collective subconscious of our country. I consider all languages and dialects of the country as my own language and dialect," Murmu said.

The president said she considers all languages and dialects of the country as her language and dialect and the literature of all languages as her own.

She was speaking after inaugurating the conference -- How Much Has Literature Changed? -- at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre here.

Speaking on the occasion, the president said that since her student days, she has had a feeling of respect and gratitude towards literature and litterateurs.

"With time, this feeling of special respect for literature has become even deeper. It was her wish that many litterateurs should come to Rashtrapati Bhavan," Murmu said. She appreciated the Ministry of Culture and Sahitya Akademi for organising this conference.

The president said the establishment of enduring human values amidst changing contexts is the identity of timeless literature.



Cong vs Tharoor tensions deepen

Party says he's part of family, MP hits out at critics

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tensions between the Congress and its leader Shashi Tharoor escalated on Thursday with the party saying he was very much part of their family but had erred in claiming that surgical strikes against Pakistan were held for the first time in 2016.

Tharoor, who is heading a multi-party delegation to five countries, including Panama and the US, had a ready riposte for the jibes by some of his party colleagues.

For "zealots" fulminating about his supposed ignorance of Indian valour across the LoC, he was "clearly and explicitly" speaking only about reprisals for terrorist attacks and not about previous wars, the Thiruvananthapuram MP said in a post on X from Panama City on Thursday morning. Critics and trolls were welcome to distort his views and words as they see fit but he genuinely has "better things to do", he said.

Trying to pacify frayed tempers, Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala said there is no acrimony among leaders of the party. "Shashi Tharoor is a senior Congress leader and very much part of the Congress family However, what he said about the surgical strike was factually incorrect," Surjewala told reporters.

"The Congress party only corrected the record by pointing out that the surgical strike on Pakistan and also at other places on the den of terrorists were regularly executed during Congress-led UPA government to give a befitting reply to terrorists by our armed forces and the then Congress Government," he added when questioned on the war of words between some Congress leaders and Tharoor.

For "zealots" fulminating about his supposed ignorance of Indian valour across the LoC, he was "clearly and explicitly" speaking only about reprisals for terrorist attacks and not about previous wars, the Thiruvananthapuram MP said in a post on X from Panama City on Thursday morning.

Instances of surgical strikes during the Congress-led UPA government have been detailed in the past by the AICC Communication department and by Tharoor himself in his 2018 book "The Paradoxical Prime Minister", the Congress leader said.

"Even former prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh in the past spoke about these surgical strikes. Mr Jairam Ramesh and Pawan Khera have set the record straight. It should not be matter of any acrimony or doubt," Surjewala said. Tharoor has come under stringent criticism by several Congress leaders, including media and publicity department head Pawan Khera and party leader Udit Raj.

Envoys of six nations present credentials to Prez

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Envoys of six countries, including Turkiye and Bangladesh, on Thursday presented credentials to President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

Those who presented their credentials were Ali Murat Ersoy, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkiye, M Riaz Hamidullah, High Commissioner of Bangladesh and Azamat Yeskaraev, Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the President's office said. Chavanart Thangsum-phant, Ambassador of Thailand, Nestor Gabriel Baltodano Vargas, Ambassador of the Republic of Costa Rica and Gurdip Bath, High Commissioner of Saint Kitts and Nevis also presented their credentials to the President, it said.

'Industry can play role in bringing innovation to preventive healthcare'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Health Minister J P Nadda on Thursday called upon the industry to play a role in bringing innovation in the field of health screening, as he listed the efforts made by the Modi government in the sector over the last decade.

Speaking at the CII Annual Business Summit 2025, Nadda said the BJP government in 2017 came out with a comprehensive health policy and preventive healthcare was emphasized on for the first time, along with curative, rehabilitative and geriatric care.

"So far, we used to think in silos. There was no holistic approach. In 2017, we came with a policy which was comprehensive. For the preventive part, we now have 1,77,000 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. This is the first contact point of citizens with healthcare facilities," he said.

Nadda emphasized the theme 'Building Trust- India First' and called for a unified national effort to strengthen healthcare systems aligned with India's 2047 development roadmap. "Now we have got a very ambitious plan that is going to reduce the health burden. In 1,75,000 healthcare centres, we have community health officers.

"We have a tele-medicine system attached with the specialist... So a villager would not have to go to a health institution if not required," he said.

Land-for-jobs 'scam': Lalu moves Delhi to quash CBI FIR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Former rail minister Lalu Prasad on Thursday sought in the Delhi High Court the quashing of the FIR filed by the CBI in the land-for-jobs "scam".

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal appeared in the court on behalf of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) supremo and argued that the enquiry and the FIR as well as the investigation and the subsequent chargesheets in the matter could not be legally sustained as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had failed to obtain prior sanction under section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The sanction under section 17A is a mandatory requirement of law to launch any enquiry or investigation against a public servant, he said.

Submitting that the trial court is slated to hear arguments on charge on June 2, Sibal urged the court to pass directions to defer the same.

He said even after an initial closure report, the FIR was registered by the CBI in 2022 for offences allegedly committed from 2004 to 2009 and the trial court took cognisance and "merged" three chargesheets on February 25.

Gauhati HC receives bomb threat; turns out hoax

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

A bomb threat was received by Gauhati High Court on Thursday, which turned out to be a hoax, police said.

An officer of Guwahati Police told PTI that a mail landed at Gauhati High Court's official email id in the morning threatening to carry out a blast in the building.

"We carried out a thorough search of the premises and found nothing. It was a hoax," he added.

Not aware of any surgical strike under UPA govt, says Athawale

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Union minister Ramdas Athawale on Thursday asserted that he was not aware of any surgical strike carried out during the UPA government led by Manmohan Singh, and that there was no information available about it.

He said Operation Sindoor was necessary to teach Pakistan a lesson, adding that the neighbouring country should stop supporting terrorists and hand over the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) back to India.

Before being part of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Athawale's Republic Party of India (Athawale) was a constituent of the Congress-helmed United Progressive Alliance (UPA).

Referring to Operation Sindoor, Athawale said, "Before this, another surgical strike had been carried out during the Narendra Modi government only. Congress leaders might say that a surgical strike had been conducted during Manmohan Singh's tenure. But there is no such information. I was with the Congress and part of the UPA at that time. I do not have any information about any such surgical strike."

The Minister of State for Social Justice said, "The entire world knows that action like Operation Sindoor was necessary. Terrorists came from Pakistan and killed our people at Pahalgam in Kashmir..."

He dismissed allegations that PM Modi was politicising the issue.

"Operation Sindoor was necessary to teach Pakistan a lesson. There is no need to politicise the issue."

DEFENCE ACQUISITION PROJECTS

IAF Chief flags concerns over inordinate delays

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal A P Singh on Thursday flagged serious concerns over inordinate delays in implementation of various defence acquisition projects and pitched for addressing the issue even as he hailed Operation Sindoor as a "national victory".

In his first public comments following the four-day military clashes between India and Pakistan, the Air Chief Marshal said that "not a single project" has been completed on time.

In his remarks at the CII Business Summit, he, however, did not provide specific details of the projects or made a reference of the period since when delays have been impacting the Indian Air Force (IAF).

The Chief of Air Staff said the Operation Sindoor has given the Indian armed forces a "clear idea" of where "we are headed and what we need in the future".

Lauding the armed forces as well as all agencies concerned for the success of Operation Sindoor, Air Chief Marshal Singh said: "We were taking the path of truth, I think, God was with us also in this."

Under Operation Sindoor, the IAF played the leading role in destroying nine terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir early on May 7 under Operation Sindoor, in response to the dastardly Pahalgam terror attack.

All subsequent retaliations to Pakistani offensives were carried out under this operation.

In his address, the IAF chief lamented the delays in implementation of defence projects. The IAF has been upset over huge delays by the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd in the delivery of Tejas light combat jets.

"Timelines is a big issue; that is where the 'vachan' (commitment) part comes in. Once a timeline is given.. not a single project that I can think of, has been completed on time," he said.



"So, this is something where we have to look in, why should we promise something which cannot be achieved."

"While signing the contract itself, sometimes, we are sure that it is not going to come up. But, we just sign the contract and see what can be done after that.. obviously then the process gets vitiated," he said.

On Operation Sindoor, Air Chief Marshal Singh said "this war was won by a whole-of-nation approach", and the same approach needs to continue while talking about empowering the defence forces.

"Actually, it is not just a whole-of-nation approach, we have to be in a whole-of-nation mission mode, if I can call it, to make sure that we accelerate and produce results," he said, in an apparent reference to military modernisation.

Air Chief Marshal Singh began his address by terming the Operation Sindoor a "national victory".

"We were taking the path of truth, I think, God was with us also in this," he said.

"I am sure, every Indian contributed towards this victory. Like it has been said again and again that this was an operation which was executed in a very professional manner by everybody -- all the agencies, all the forces, we all came together...and when truth is with you, then everything happens on its own," he said.

Modi politicising Operation Sindoor, criticises Mamata

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of attempting to gain political mileage out of Operation Sindoor – the Centre's military response to the April 22 Pahalgam attack.

Banerjee also asserted that her party, the Trinamool Congress, was ready to go to polls as early as tomorrow, referring to Bengal BJP chief and Union minister Sukanta Majumdar's 'Operation Bengal' remark about "throwing the TMC in the Bay of Bengal in next year's assembly elections".

"What PM Modi said today is not only shocking but unfortunate... He and his party leaders have suggested 'Operation Bengal' like Operation Sindoor at a time when the entire opposition is representing the country on the world stage (to support the Centre's anti-terror stand)," she told reporters at the state secretariat. Earlier in the day, in the presence of Modi, Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari and Majumdar gave a call for 'Operation Bengal' in the manner of Operation Sindoor, to press for a political change in the 2026 assembly elections.

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Editor's TAKE

Int'l student's American dream on the hold

The Trump administration abruptly freezes new visa interviews for international students, disrupting their academic plans

In a move sending ripples through global academic circles, the Trump administration has ordered a temporary suspension on new visa interview appointments for international students and exchange visitors. The decision — spearheaded by Secretary of State Marco Rubio — comes as part of a broader plan to expand social media vetting of all F, M, and J visa applicants. While US officials describe the measure as "temporary," its ramifications may be far-reaching, affecting students, US universities, and America's position as a global education hub. The State Department has directed US embassies worldwide to halt scheduling new visa interviews for student and exchange visitor visas, including the commonly used F-1 (degree programs), J-1 (exchange programs), and M-1 (vocational training). No timeline has been given for when new interviews will resume. The department cites a planned overhaul of screening and vetting processes, with expanded scrutiny of applicants' social media as a central feature.

The immediate impact is on students hoping to begin their studies in the US in Fall 2025. With the visa process already requiring weeks to months, this halt could mean delayed or cancelled plans for thousands of students who have already secured admission but not yet completed their visa interviews.

In the 2023–2024 academic year, over 1.13 million international students enrolled in US institutions, a record high. A staggering 71.5 per cent came from Asia, with India and China being the top contributors. For many of these students, this sudden freeze introduces uncertainty and potential derailment of life-changing academic and career plans. US universities stand to suffer significant consequences.

Institutions like New York University, Northeastern and Columbia rely heavily on international tuition revenue and research contributions. At Harvard, Yale and Northwestern, international students make up over one-fifth of the student body. Harvard, embroiled in recent tensions with the administration, had its approval to enrol new international students revoked just last week. Losing international students would impact not only financial bottom lines but also the diversity, innovation, and global reputation of these institutions.

Research labs, graduate programs, and cultural exchange efforts could all take a hit. While the official reason for the pause is national security and vetting improvements, but it may well be politically charged. The move comes amid escalating tensions between the administration and university campuses over pro-Palestinian protests and free speech issues. Though the administration maintains its focus is on safety and screening, incidents like this suggest a blurred line between legitimate security concerns and political repression.

The feasibility of this suspension rests on a complex balance. On one hand, enhancing vetting processes may be viewed as a legitimate national interest. However, the broad and undefined nature of this pause risks undermining the US's standing as a destination of choice for global talent. For now, students, universities, and global academic partners are left in limbo.

PIC TALK



Dean Faculty of Veterinary Sciences at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST) Riaz Ahmad Shah with India's first gene-edited sheep, in Srinagar. PTI

China's modern warfare without war

Despite boasting formidable military capabilities and engaging in loud sabre-rattling, China consistently avoids direct military entanglements, choosing instead a path of deception, diplomacy and economic entrapment



Chinese philosopher, Sun Tzu (author of Art of War) has influenced the thinking and policies of the Chinese leadership, for eons. Amongst his most potent and famous treatise is on the military doctrine of asymmetrical warfare, which is increasingly relevant in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world of constant churn and dissonance.

One key feature of expansionist China's strategy has been to follow Sun Tzu's very cost-efficient dictum of "subduing the enemy without fighting". Much has been made of China's militaristic prowess, aggressive postures, 6th Generation technology and weaponry, "Wolf Warrior" diplomacy et al, but a quick scan of all recent global conflicts and wars will show the stark absence of Chinese boots-on-ground, despite much noise of China's positions on the conflict.

As seen, when the US-NATO abandoned Afghanistan, in the Israel-Gaza war, Russia-Ukraine war, or even very recently in the four-day Indo-Pak conflict, the much-bandied intervention by Pakistan's 'iron-clad brother' i.e, China, was limited to adopting a pro-Pakistan position, diplomatically only.

In India, specifically, imagined scenarios like the "two-front war" led to much discussion and strategising to ensure deterrence and dissuasion of a simultaneous conflict along the China-Pakistan border. The sense of acute vulnerability was heightened by the reality of the already-stretched, resource-constrained, and over-deployed Indian wherewithal, which would test its ability to take on two powers simultaneously (one of which would be China).

Yet again, those fears came to nought as the Chinese reaction to Indian retaliation against China's ally, Pakistan, led to support in terms of words and not boots-on-ground, as feared. Has the Chinese appetite for an all-out conflict waned or does it prefer to bide its time (with some sabre-rattling thrown in) and use other levers to push its agenda?

Despite siding with Putin on the Russia-Ukraine war, it has remained steadfastly out of militaristic presence (unlike other countries like North Korea or NATO countries who have supplied weapons and personnel). Similarly, it hasn't exactly swooped down on the anti-West sensibilities of the Afghan Taliban or attempted to co-opt the same despite the vacuum left by the abandonment of US-NATO troops.

In the violent Middle East theatre too, China seems to please all sides, without attempting to irate any, leaving no clear picture if it is pro-Israel, pro-Iran, or even pro-Palestine — mealymouthed platitudes and generous Chinese doles (economic) to whichever party looks like controlling the ground, are offered. All this has ensured that China is the favourite fallback option for all illiberal, autocratic, option-less or even paralysed nations when all other doors close.



BHOPINDER SINGH

But, as the United States of America remains busy piling up the body bags and burning precious amounts of dollars to pursue prohibitively expensive wars in the Middle East, and Afghanistan, or even supporting the Russia-Ukraine war, the Chinese sit out and instead plough their resources to win over territories through economic, diplomatic and technological influence.

However the Chinese do not shy away from arm-twisting their commercial imperatives (eg, taking over Hambantota port in Sri Lanka for a 99-year lease), economic and cyber coercion (eg, "Volt Typhoon" attack on critical infrastructure in Australia) and even cartographical expansionism (eg, making artificial islands in South China seas) — but do so, without provoking full-on conventional warfare.

Right throughout Sun Tzu's pearls of wisdom seem apparent in Chinese tactics, "All warfare is based on deception. Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity. When near, make it appear that you are far away; when far away, that you are to lure him; feign disorder and strike him. When he concentrates, prepare against him; where he is strong, avoid him. Anger his general and confuse him. Pretend inferiority and encourage his arrogance."

Chinese have become masters at playing geopolitical mind games which may suggest a lot, but lead to rather muted material action, ultimately. Therefore, while China shows intent (typically to adopt an anti-US position to attract traction towards itself) to take a daring position, it stays away from militaristic intervention and indulges in sabre-rattling, at best.

The four-day Indo-Pak conflict may have resulted in China (along with Turkey and Azerbaijan) adopting a decidedly pro-China stance — but the support of the 'iron clad brother' did not extend to it intervening militarily or even adopting an aggressive posture along its border with India, which would have led to discomforting dynamics for Delhi.

The Chinese seem to choose their militaristic target rather selectively as they shadow-box with the Filipinos on the high seas, invoke 'Salami tactics' to creep onto Bhutanese territory, or even conduct reckless exercises in proximity to Taiwan — but remain cautious in not overstepping their belligerence.

China understands that intervening militarily could disrupt its trade, commercial and economic stability which is already under stress with the ensuing US-China trade war, domestic weakening of demand, unemployment, and demographic decline. Therefore ensnaring vulnerable countries with 'debt traps' will remain its most potent weapon to fructify its expansionist and hegemonic dreams.

Another aggressive and alternative means is via technological-cybersecurity wherewithal using companies like Huawei that have raised many suspicions, globally. China is expected to pursue its calculated "shoot-and-scoot" approach at best but perhaps not beyond that. As Sun Tzu also said, "The greatest victory is that which requires no battle".

(The writer is Lt Gen (Retd) and former Lt Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands & Puducherry. Views are personal)

A commo- ma- 's jour- ey to God a- d self-mastery

SECOND Opinion

This is a normal feeling for a common man. One starts with great hopes: "I am different; I am very intelligent," which has nothing to do with intelligence as such. "I will show the world that I am superior." The 'ahankar' (ego) starts to become prominent very early in one's life. Nothing much happens as life meanders. Middle age arrives, and the realisation that what was hoped for has not materialised sets in.

This affects physical health and one starts to age, with wrinkles and lines becoming more pronounced, and, yes, hair starting to grey. Mental health suffers too, with some requiring medical help. Old age starts to show its harmful effects with loss of memory, unless one is mentally active, not glued mindlessly to television. If changes are not made, the realisation comes that one has lost. The precious human life has been squandered. But we don't have to lose; I am one of those determined characters who refuses to quit. Nor will I let my close ones live an ordinary life. What did I do? I gradually underwent a complete transformation. I got used to very simple, bland foods, which had high nutritional values. It doesn't take long.



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

In my case, it was three months or so. Simultaneously, I started a regimen of walking and yoga exercises. Physical health started to get better. I began to cut out entertainment, which had lots of excitement and, yes, harmful content. Slowly, I got used to healthy entertainment. And I began to do spiritual practices like chanting, 'darshana', 'naman', praying and thanking God for favours done. The realisation came that God was getting involved in my life. I began to get lots of intuitions by which God was giving me subtle hints. I was receptive and caught on. Solutions to inevitable challenges of life became apparent and life started to become smooth. I was now ready to help my near and dear ones. They were already learning from my behaviour. Don't people learn from what we do, not from what we say? If whatever we say is so good, why don't we practise them ourselves?

This fact misses almost everybody. I can lie all day and tell my children to be truthful. Surely, we get disappointed when children become dishonest. We complain, but who is listening? The question is: why don't more people do what I did? There are many excuses. "I am not sure it works" is one. It won't work unless we implement what God has instructed. It is a matter of personal experience. Nothing else will motivate me. Knowledge is great but it has to be applied. Another problem is faulty nature, which all of us suffer from. Our natures are made up of the three 'gunas' (modes), which are goodness, passion and darkness. They are present in various proportions in all of us. (The Bhagavad-Gita 18.40) The more passion we have, it will be more difficult to persuade ourselves to take shelter in God. And if we have lots of darkness, we are well and truly doomed. Lust, greed, hate, etc. will keep on raising their ugly heads, and we will succumb helplessly. God could have helped because His help is crucial in improving one's nature. But for God to help, one must take His shelter. What I have realised is that not only is my nature becoming better but my impious 'karmas' of past lives are not able to cripple me; God bails me out every time. (18.58) I feel bad for people who are busy earning for their near and dear ones even in advanced age. What happens when bad 'karmaphalas' manifest? Children put their parents in ICUs with little sympathy.

This is the way the world is; we don't learn from the example of Valmikiji, who changed when Naradaji made him realise the reality. He was asked to go and check with his family members if they would share his punishments on account of the bad deeds he was doing. Valmikiji should be a role model for all of us.Then, everything will change. The balance of life will start to get better because God is everything. (7.19) He can help in all aspects of our lives. God begins to reform us, as only He can. God knows what our faults are, and how they are hurting.

In my case, it was done on alternate days with one fault taken up. God made me realise that if I want a superior life, I must get rid of it. And God made the next day blissful to prove it. Then, God guides us so that we don't keep on committing the same mistakes out of habit. God alerts as only He can, through intuitions. Thus we begin to make our present better and future still better. But as we are limited in what we can achieve on our own, God actively helps.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Empowering the farmers with science

Kamini Singh, a former scientist, traded her lab coat for the fields of Uttar Pradesh, empowering over 1,000 farmers with organic moringa farming. What began with a ₹9 lakh loan transformed into a thriving business worth ₹1.75 crore, demonstrating how science and sustainability can uplift lives. Kamini Singh's journey is one that began in the halls of some of India's top research institutions — the Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture (CISH) and the CSIR-Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP). Promotion of Moringa cultivation and developed value-added by products like Moringa powder, oil, handmade soap, Moringa tea, Moringa tablets etc.

CIMAP is steering multidisciplinary, high-quality research in biological and chemical sciences and extending technologies and services to the farmers and entrepreneurs of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) with its research headquarters at Lucknow and Research Centres at Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pantnagar and Purara. CIMAP Research Centres are aptly situated in different agro-climatic zones of the country to facilitate multi-location field trials and research. A little more than 50 years since its inception, today, CIMAP has extended its wings overseas with scientific collaboration agreements in Malaysia.

JAYANTHY ANANDAMBAL | MUMBAI

SEBI new chief's pitch for transparency

The new SEBI chairman, Tuhin Kanta Pandey, has acknowledged the gaping holes at the helm given the allegations levelled by Hindenburg Research against former SEBI chairman, Madhabi Puri Buch, for indulging in corrupt practices.

Moreover, when MLAs, MPs, and even Judges of High Court and Supreme Court do not shy away from disclosing their assets and liabilities publicly, SEBI also should come out clean. In this respect, the constitution of a high-level committee for managing conflict of interests and disclosure for the regulator's board members is a step in the right direction.

At a time when millions are entering the stock market, the number of demat accounts now exceeds 170 million with account holders all over the country; their faith in the market regulator and the efficient functioning of the market must be fortified. When we consider the market regulator's wide ambit of influence, any line between the market regulator and the regulated entity must be fully disclosed.

The sooner this ambiguity is removed, the better it would be for the financial and economic health of the country. Transparency and clear separation between regulator and regulated are essential to uphold market integrity and protect India's growing base of retail investors.

VIJAY SINGH ADHIKARI | NAINITAL

Monsoon drowns Mumbai

Around 250 mm torrential rains lashed India's "financial capital" and "vibrant city" Mumbai on Monday. The deluge brought sordid memories of 2005, 2017, and 2020 back. Mumbai is known to reel under heavy rains around July–August.

This time around, the monsoon arrived in advance but there was a clear IMD warning about the same. Visible misery caused to thousands of people due to heavy downpour, overflowing drains and waterlogging was there to see. The important message that emanates from the massive yearly rains is clear: like many major cities of the country, Mumbai is paying the price for massive urbanisation and poor planning.

Due to its geography, rainwater absorption and emptying is extremely vital for the city to secure itself from waterlogging and flooding. Unfortunately, the necessary water accumulation prevention mechanism is still to be effectively put in place. Old drainage systems require an urgent look-in. More often, the old drains are clogged by waste materials. Ineffective drainage systems put a high load on the final outlets that empty into the sea. The basic groundwater absorption system has taken a hit by the concretisation of lands. Removal of encroachments, a move that can address most of the rain problems, is not forthcoming for obvious reasons.

GANPATHI BHAT| AKOLA

INDIA'S HISTORIC PUSH FOR INDIGENOUS 5TH-GEN FIGHTER

Today, India stands witness to a revolutionary shift in its strategic policy. The Defence Minister's decision to manufacture indigenous fifth-generation advanced fighter jets with active private sector participation is not merely a policy, but a historic leap toward India's pride, security, and emergence as a global superpower. This step breaks the shackles of foreign dependency in the defence sector, ushering India into a new era of self-reliance.

For decades, India's reliance on foreign defence equipment led to delays in supply, technical constraints, and political pressures, challenging our military strength. However, with modern technology and indigenous capability playing a decisive role in warfare, this decision is the need of the hour.

Examples like the BrahMos missile, Tejas fighter jet, and indigenous air defence systems prove India's scientific and technical prowess is second to none globally. This decision transcends the defence sector, attracting investment, creating millions of jobs for the youth, and propelling technological innovation. The surge in related companies' shares post-announcement reflects the unwavering confidence of the nation and investors. This is not just a policy but a resolve to establish India as an invincible force on the global stage.

The path of self-reliant defence will not only make India secure but also prosperous and empowered. India's decision to build indigenous fifth-generation fighter jets marks a transformative leap in defence and self-reliance. It ends foreign dependency, boosts national security, drives technological innovation, creates jobs, and inspires global confidence. This visionary step positions India as a rising superpower, determined to shape its own destiny with pride and strength.

RK JAIN ARJEET | BARWANI

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

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | MAY 30, 2025

Climate resilience must be at the core of growth

Without embedding climate and disaster resilience into its core development strategy, the nation could face escalating disruptions that threaten not only its economy but also the livelihoods, infrastructure, and future of its people

FIRST Column



India has recently achieved a remarkable milestone by becoming the world's fourth-largest economy, surpassing both Japan and Germany. This achievement highlights the country's strong economic growth, expanding international influence, and increasing economic resilience. As India aspires to become a fully developed nation by 2047, marking the hundredth anniversary of its independence, there is a strong sense of optimism that prevails. Nevertheless, this aspiration is overshadowed by significant challenges, especially those arising from climate change and natural disasters. If India does not incorporate climate and disaster resilience into its fundamental development goals, it may jeopardise the numerous economic gains it has worked so hard to achieve.

The effects of climate change and associated disasters pose serious limitations on development, disrupting business activities, damaging infrastructure, and jeopardising supply chains — concerns that are particularly relevant for developing countries like India. With the rising frequency and severity of climate-related disasters, their impacts are being felt across multiple sustainable development goals, especially those associated with economic growth, trade, transportation, energy, environmental sustainability, and public health. These escalating risks not only slow progress but also reveal how specific development priorities can increase vulnerability to disasters and climate change through emissions, land-use modifications, and exposure to hazards. Consequently, a comprehensive and proactive strategy for climate and disaster resilience is essential.

India's distinct geography — characterised by tropical monsoon systems, a 7,500-kilometer-long coastline, and the seismically active Himalayan region — along with its socio-economic realities, makes it one of the most disaster-prone nations in the world. On average, the country encounters five to six cyclones each year, with two or three usually classified as severe. Unpredictable monsoon patterns lead to recurring floods in major river basins. Over the past two decades, India has faced significant economic losses due to extreme weather events, which have severely undermined development progress. A 2022 report from the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) stated that India experienced economic damage of around $80 billion between 1999 and 2020 due to floods, cyclones, droughts, and earthquakes — events whose frequency and severity have been worsened in the recent past.



SATENDRA SINGH

Numerous high-profile disasters highlight the connection between climate — induced events and setbacks in development. The Chennai floods of 2015 impacted over three million individuals, disrupted more than 20,000 small and medium enterprises and resulted in damages estimated at $2.25 billion. Likewise, the Kerala floods of 2018 — considered the worst in a century — affected 5.4 million people, damaged over 10,000 km of roads, and caused losses exceeding $4.3 billion. The tourism sector, contributing 12 per cent to the state's GDP, halted operations, and recovery needs were estimated at $3.8 billion. In 2020, Cyclone Amphan struck West Bengal and Odisha, resulting in damages estimated at $13 billion, disrupting infrastructure, agriculture, and livelihoods across both states.

The agriculture industry, which employs almost half of India's workforce, has proven to be particularly susceptible to severe weather. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)'s 2023 report, The Impact of Disasters on Agriculture and Food Security 2023 — Avoiding and Reducing Losses Through Investment in Resilience, approximately 23 per cent of the overall economic losses resulting from disasters are incurred by the agriculture sector. This highlights the sector's considerable susceptibility to natural hazards such as droughts, floods, and storms. The report emphasises the urgent need for investment in resilience to mitigate these impacts. In India, repeated droughts in states like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Karnataka have resulted in consistent crop failures, worsening rural hardship and leading to significant migration. According to the World Bank's Climate Risk Profile for India (2021), climate-related catastrophes could potentially decrease India's GDP by up to 2.8 per cent each year. Information from CRED's EM-DAT database (2023) shows that flooding constitutes nearly 50 per cent of all disaster-related financial losses in the country. The disruption of livelihoods, mass displacements, collapse of infrastructure, and halts in economic activities further strain public finances and obstruct developmental progress, particularly in regions most vulnerable to climate impacts.

Major urban centres in India, which are essential to the nation's economic development, are becoming increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather phenomena. Cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Kolkata frequently experience flooding, heat waves, storms, and unusually heavy rainfalls. These occurrences damage infrastructure, disrupt transportation systems and interfere with essential services. Megacities like Delhi and Mumbai, which have high population densities and depend heavily on climate-sensitive infrastructures, are particularly at risk.

Recently, Mumbai experienced its wettest May in over a century, with a month's worth of rainfall falling in just 24 hours. This record-breaking rainfall flooded roads, disrupted flights and local trains, and caused parts of the newly constructed Worli underground station on Metro Line-3 to become non-operational. Meanwhile, the National Capital Region (NCR) and Delhi faced severe, off-season rainfall and dust storms that damaged infrastructure, caused power outages, uprooted trees, and halted traffic. In May 2025, unexpected storms followed by heavy rains compromised public infrastructure, leaving typically dry areas inundated. These events indicate a significant, climate-led transformation in urban weather patterns and highlight the pressing need for resilient infrastructure and urban planning.

The financial burden of disasters is primarily shouldered by state Governments. Relief efforts, emergency medical assistance, and evacuation costs exert pressure on public finances, particularly as revenues from sectors like tourism and agriculture decline. While states that experience fewer disasters can often manage these expenses internally, more vulnerable states typically depend on central assistance or borrow from financial markets, which increases public debt and diverts resources from long-term development goals. Procedural challenges in accessing the State Disaster Response Fund, including spending limits and bureaucratic red tape, further hinder recovery processes.

Beyond the economic impacts, disasters worsen social inequalities and obstruct inclusive development. In Chennai, major companies relocated their operations while informal workers and small exporters suffered heavy losses. In Kerala, the cancellation of tourist reservations drove small business owners and homestay operators into debt. These trends recur with each disaster, displacing vulnerable communities, often into urban areas that are similarly at risk.

There is no doubt that India has made significant progress in disaster preparedness. The nation has developed advanced cyclone warning systems and an expanding array of disaster shelters. Nevertheless, substantial policy and institutional deficits persist. Disaster risk financing in India remains largely reactive, relying on budget reallocations after disasters occur. Financial instruments like catastrophe bonds, parametric insurance, and resilience bonds — widely used in regions like the Caribbean and Mexico — are still in the experimental phase within India. Barriers such as high premiums, inadequate actuarial data, and ambiguous regulatory frameworks impede their broader adoption.

India possesses a significant opportunity to take the lead in this domain. The nation's effort to establish the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), now supported by the G20, offers a robust basis for integrating disaster resilience into infrastructure planning and development. The effectiveness of this initiative will rely on aligning it with major national programs like the PM Gati Shakti master plan, as well as state-level climate adaptation strategies.

What India requires is a development paradigm focused on climate resilience. All future infrastructure developments — such as high-speed trains, solar parks, smart cities, and coastal highways — should be assessed for their exposure to various hazards and designed to withstand the climate challenges expected by 2050 and beyond. Early warning systems need to expand beyond just cyclone notifications to include alerts for flash floods, lightning-prone areas, and cloudbursts in hilly regions. Fiscal resilience must be enhanced through a structured approach to disaster risk financing that merges strong disaster response resources with innovative financial strategies and contingent credit options. Environmental protections — including stricter land-use regulations, nature-based solutions, and ecosystem restoration — should be integral to national development frameworks.

Global research indicates that investing a single dollar in disaster preparedness can save up to seven dollars during recovery and response. However, disaster prevention and preparedness still garner only a small share of climate finance. If India harnesses its demographic advantages and advancements in technology to enhance robust infrastructure, promote community-oriented adaptation, and implement efficient risk financing, it can transform disaster risks into opportunities. This would lead to inclusive and sustainable development. The next two decades are critical. Whether natural disasters continue to drag down development or become a driving force for better planning and innovation will depend on the policy decisions made today. As India looks forward to celebrating a century of independence in 2047, embedding climate and disaster resilience at the core of its development strategy is not merely wise — it is a national necessity.

(The writer is a former Executive Director, National Institute of Disaster Management, GOI and former Director, SAARC Disaster Management Centre. Views are personal)

Lokmata Ahilyabai Holkar: The embodime- t of dharma a- d good gover- a- ce



The development of any country depends on the welfare policies of the Government and its good governance system. The history of India is full of stories of such rulers who did a lot for the development and upliftment of the country. One such name is Punyashlok Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar.

Her welfare policies inspire Governments even today. This year is her 300th birth anniversary and the entire country is celebrating her legacy. She was born on May 31, 1725, in Chaundi village of Ahmednagar (Ahilya Nagar) district. The Bharatiya Janata Party, under the leadership of its National President Shri Jagat Prakash Nadda ji, has dedicated a 10-day campaign from 21 May to 31 May in the memory of Lokmata Ahilyabai.

Inspired by the multi-faceted personality of Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar and her life's deeds, BJP workers are working to spread the poor welfare schemes of Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and his resolution of "Vishwaas se Virasat" to the people. This work is being accomplished through intellectual dialogues, exhibitions, competitions among students, cleanliness of temples and ghats, aartis and processions. State Governments and local administrations have also named many schemes and institutions after Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar.



SHIV PRAKASH

Western scholars spread propaganda about India and said that "Hindu governance was chaotic." James Mill wrote that "India was a morally hollow and selfish society which was not governable" whereas in Western countries, terrible atrocities were being committed in the name of religion.

In India, Ahilyabai Holkar established a welfare Dharmarajya. In India, Dharma is a broad concept which paves the way for economic and moral progress. Dharma teaches the path from earning money and development of human qualities in personal life to salvation.

For the rulers, it teaches policies and plans to increase economic prosperity and in personal life, it teaches one's relationship with mutual cordial behaviour, society, nature etc.

This has been conveyed by sage Kanada in Vaisheshik Sutra: "Yato abhyudaya ni:shreyas siddhi: sa dharma" which translates to "That which leads to both Abhyudaya (material well-being) and Ni:shreyas (spiritual well-being), is Dharma."

In India, the rule based on religion is considered to be the ideal rule, in which everyone is happy and healthy. That is, economic prosperity from the material point of view, policies that provide a healthy life to all, mutual love, fear-free environment, an environment in which everyone can follow their religious duties, such an environment became an example of an ideal state. Such a capable rule was given by Lord Shri Ram, so Ramrajya became an ideal and exemplary state for all. Many kings like Emperor Vikramaditya, Raja Bhoj, Emperor Harshvardhan tried to follow this ideal of Ramrajya. Rulers like Maharana Pratap, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj sacrificed their lives to protect these values during foreign invasions. Ahilyabai was also a queen who followed these eternal values.

Ahilyabai took over the rule of Malwa state in 1767 after the death of her father-in-law. Due to her devotion towards Narmada, commercial and strategic skills, she made Maheshwar on the banks of Narmada her capital. She ruled this state for 28 years till her death. Schemes for the development of farmers, providing land to landless farmers, tribal development, making her rule crime-free, employment-oriented economy, women empowerment, production of Maheshwari sarees for her and soldier welfare were the specialties of her rule. She also created a women army by forming a military contingent of 500 women. Maheshwar sarees even today reflect her women-centric industrial policy. Due to her affection towards the people, the public gave her the title of Lokmata.

Along with the economic development of her state, she also played an important role in the cultural upliftment of India. Even after being the queen of Malwa state, she did the work of cultural upliftment through Aasetu Himachal, which reveals her pan-India vision. Construction of innumerable temples including all the Dhams, all the Jyotirlingas, all the Shakti Peethas, construction of river ghats, arrangement of Dharamshalas for the stay of the travelers, this is a series of incomparable works done by her.

She also had a role in the reconstruction of Badrinath, Kedarnath located in the Himalayas, Lord Shri Vishwanath located in Kashi, Somnath, Dwarika, Puri Jagannath, Rameswaram. The number of these works done by her across the country is over 12,500. Its specialty is that she got this work done from her own wealth, not from the treasury. Starting a Sanskrit school and honoring scholars reveals her deep interest in education.

Shivakamini Ahilyabai considered her rule as the rule of Shiva. For this reason, his name was not inscribed on his Government seal but "Shri Shankar: Aagye Varunah" was inscribed. She used to run her rule with full sacrifice considering service to the people as service to God. While describing a good king, Vidur Niti says: "Chakshusha Manasa Vacha Karmana Cha Chaturvidham.
Prasadhayati yo lokam tam loko nu prasidati" ll

It means "the king who pleases his subjects with his eyes, mind, speech and deeds, his subjects are pleased with him. Due to these qualities, Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar was honoured with the title of Punyashlok".

On the 300th birth anniversary of Maharani Ahilyabai, let us commit ourselves to the welfare of the world by becoming the centre of good governance and cultural renaissance. This will be a true tribute to Lokmata Ahilyabai.

(The author is the National Joint General Secretary of BJP. Views expressed are personal)

India's Soaring Cooling Demand: A call for energy-efficient choices

India's rapid economic expansion and urban transformation have fueled an unprecedented rise in energy demand. One of the most visible outcomes of this growth is the surge in electricity consumption, which has climbed from 136 gigawatts (GW) in 2013-14 to 243 GW in 2023-24. On May 30, 2024, the country recorded an all-time high of 250 GW in peak power demand. This trend shows no sign of slowing, with a major contributor being the increasing need for cooling solutions amid rising temperatures and expanding urban populations.

In 2024 alone, sales of air conditioners (ACs) jumped by 40-50 per cent, underscoring the growing demand for indoor climate control. Looking ahead, summer 2025 is expected to see a further 9-10 per cent rise in peak electricity demand, driven heavily by cooling needs. Already, fans and ACs contribute to nearly half of household electricity usage in urban India. Yet, despite this, only about 3 per cent of households use super energy-efficient ceiling fans. The primary barrier is affordability, as these fans typically carry a higher upfront cost. Addressing this affordability gap is not just an economic concern but also a strategic imperative. Encouraging the widespread adoption of energy-efficient cooling appliances offers India a unique opportunity to ease grid stress, reduce energy consumption, and enhance long-term energy security.



ANIMESH MISHRA

Peak Demand

Every year, India adds between 10 and 15 million new AC units. By 2035, the country could see as many as 150 million more installed. Alongside ubiquitous ceiling fan usage, this surge creates a sharp seasonal increase in electricity demand — particularly during the hottest months. This seasonal peak puts immense strain on power infrastructure, often leading to blackouts, increased procurement costs for electricity providers, and unreliable supply for consumers. In this context, improving the efficiency of cooling appliances becomes not just a household issue but a national priority. By reducing the load on the power grid, energy-efficient appliances can help stabilise the electricity supply.

Total Cost of Ownership

Many consumers hesitate to purchase energy-efficient appliances due to their slightly higher price tags. However, these appliances often save significant money over time. The concept of Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) includes not just the initial purchase price, but also the operating costs over the product's lifespan. High-efficiency appliances like 5-star ACs and BLDC (Brushless Direct Current) fans consume up to 50 per cent less power annually compared to their less efficient counterparts. Over 8 to 10 years of use, these savings can far exceed the initial price difference. Studies indicate that the overall cost of ownership can be reduced by up to 17 per cent, making high-efficiency models not only environmentally sound but financially wise.

The 'Mileage' Rating for ACs

To help consumers make informed decisions, India introduced the Indian Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (ISEER) system for air conditioners. ISEER is akin to a "mileage" label for ACs, measuring cooling output per unit of energy consumed across seasonal variations. A higher ISEER rating signifies better energy performance. For instance, a 5-star AC with an ISEER value of 5.0 or more is comparable to a car giving 30 kilometers per litre, whereas a 3-star AC with a 3.5 rating might be closer to 20 km/l. Over time, this difference translates into substantial electricity bill savings — making 5-star ACs a smart investment, particularly in climates like India's, where summer cooling needs are intensive.

Why BLDC Fans Makes Sense?

Ceiling fans are the most widely used cooling appliances in Indian homes and often operate for 15 to 18 hours a day, especially in warmer regions. Traditional induction-based fans typically consume 70-80 watts, while energy-efficient BLDC fans require only 28-35 watts. At the household level, this translates into savings of up to 15 per cent on electricity bills. While a BLDC fan costs around INR 2,700 compared to INR 1,300 for a conventional fan, the difference can be recouped in under 18 months through energy savings. After that, the fan operates almost cost-free for the remainder of its 7-8 year lifespan. Widespread adoption of BLDC fans could have a transformative effect. If every Indian household installed just two such fans and operated them for 15 hours daily, national savings could exceed INR 78,000 crore annually.

Debunking the Wattage Myth

One common misconception is that higher wattage means better performance. This misunderstanding is especially prevalent in the lighting space, where consumers often believe that a 9-watt bulb is brighter than a 6-watt one. Wattage indicates energy consumed — not brightness. Efficiency-focused technologies like LEDs produce more lumens per watt, meaning a well-designed 6-watt LED can actually outperform a 9-watt bulb. The benefits of energy-efficient cooling extend far beyond individual savings. Environmentally, these contribute to reduced greenhouse gas emissions, supporting India's commitment under the Paris Agreement.

(The writer is Chief General Manager (CGM) at Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL). Views are personal)

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | MAY 30, 2025

IN BRIEF



Suzlon Energy net profit jumps to Rs 1,181 cr

Suzlon Energy on Thursday reported a nearly five-fold jump in its consolidated net profit to Rs 1,181 crore for the March quarter, mainly on the back of higher revenues.
The company reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 254 crore in the quarter ended March 2024, a BSE filing showed.
Its total income rose to Rs 3,825.19 crore in the quarter from Rs 2,207.43 crore a year ago. During 2024-25, the consolidated net profit also rose to Rs 2,072 crore from Rs 660 crore in the previous financial year. The total income in the fiscal increased to Rs 10,993.13 crore from Rs 6,567.51 crore in the year-ago period. "FY25 performance sets the stage for Suzlon's next phase of strategic evolution and market leadership. Achieving our highest profitability in a decade, strong cash reserves, and a record order book are the direct outcomes of our disciplined business transformation and sharp operational focus," Girish Tanti, Vice Chairman, Suzlon Group, said.



Gold declines Rs 500 to Rs 98,500/10 g

Gold prices declined by Rs 500 to Rs 98,500 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid weak global cues, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The yellow metal of 99.5 per cent purity fell Rs 500 to Rs 98,000 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). "Gold prices continued to correct as easing tariff risks, and a more cautious Federal Reserve dampened safe-haven demand," Abans Financial Services' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta said. Mehta further said that the US Federal Reserve's May meeting minutes revealed that policymakers are adopting a wait-and-see approach on the timing of interest rate cuts, as they assess the economic impact of recent policy moves, including the now-blocked reciprocal tariffs by the US Court of International Trade.



Diu meets entire power demand with solar energy

Diu has become the first district in India to meet its entire power demand with solar energy, achieving 11.88 MW capacity, an official statement said on Thursday.
Minister for New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) Pralhad Joshi said Diu is a national example in renewable energy adoption, with its entire daytime electricity demand being met through solar energy. Joshi visited Diu on Thursday to review its remarkable progress in solar energy adoption and assess the implementation of the PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana.
The minister chaired a high-level meeting at Diu, with senior officials of the UT administration to review the status of solar energy generation, its current supply framework, and future expansion prospects. The minister remarked that the capital investments made over the past decade in renewable energy infrastructure in Diu have already been recovered through the supply and sale of solar power. He called for even faster and more effective implementation of the PM-Surya Ghar Yojana to maximise its benefits for the residents of the Union Territory and achieve total household saturation.

India's job market to grow 2.8 pc amid cost-conscious hiring: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India's job market is expected to grow 2.8 per cent in the first half of 2025-26 amid economic complexity and cost-conscious hiring, a report said on Thursday.

This marks a measured decline from 7.1 per cent in October-March FY25, signalling a deliberate pivot toward demand-sensitive and cost-conscious hiring, according to TeamLease Services's 'Employment Outlook Report'.

The TeamLease Services' report forecasts a 2.8 per cent Net Employment Change (NEC), down from 71 per cent in H2 FY25, as 47 per cent of employers interviewed indicated plans for workforce expansion, 28 per cent opting for stability, while 25 per cent expect to reduce.



The 'Employment Outlook Report' is based on extensive primary and secondary research, drawing insights from over 1,263 employers across 23 industries and 20 cities across the country.

It further revealed that there is a growing trend of flexi-staffing, with 69 per cent of employers embracing flexible workforce models to manage cyclical demand and seasonal peaks.

By allowing organisations to scale quickly without the burden of long-term costs, flexi-staffing is proving crucial, especially during the leaner H1 period, said the report.

Similarly, the gig economy (short-term contracts or freelance work) remains vital for hiring strategies, with 64 per cent of employers expanding sales and customer service roles through gig models, it added.

The report further said that 58 per cent of employers cite factors, including global inflation, export slowdowns, and moderating GDP growth as making them prioritise cost discipline.

This trend indicates a shift towards skills-based growth, where companies seek talent that aligns directly with specific business needs and long-term objectives, rather than simply expanding headcount, it stated.

Employers are now prioritising core competencies like digital literacy (76 per cent), customer experience management (68 per cent), and communication (63 per cent), indicating a clear focus on tech-readiness, service orientation, and effective collaboration.

Wipro opens innovation lab in Bengaluru campus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Wipro on Thursday announced the launch of an innovation lab at its Bengaluru campus for clients to collaborate with experts, explore new technologies, and rapidly prototype solutions.

The 60,000-square-foot Innovation Lab at Wipro's Kodathi campus will have frontier technologies ranging from Artificial Intelligence (AI) to Quantum Computing to solve some of the most challenging problems for our clients across industries, a company statement said.

"The Wipro Innovation Network is a catalyst for AI-powered co-innovation. By bringing together our global clients, partners, academia, and tech communities, we aim to accelerate innovation that solves real-world challenges, unlocks bold new possibilities, and drives competitive edge for our clients," Wipro CEO and MD Srini Pallia said.

The Wipro Innovation Network will focus on five key advanced technology areas: Agentic AI, robotics integrated with embodied AI, quantum computing, digital ledger technology, and cybersecurity that is resistant to quantum threats. The initiative will unite Wipro's extensive innovation ecosystem, including its Innovation Labs, Partner Labs, Wipro Ventures, the Topcoder crowdsourcing platform, partnerships with top academic and research organisations, and its technology workforce to foster ideation, research, and innovation.



FM seeks support for integrated rural prosperity

Meets ADB President Masato

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday met Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Masato Kanda and sought enhanced support for integrated rural prosperity initiatives, including job creation.

The discussions focused on shaping the partnership in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for Viksit Bharat by 2047.

The Indian delegation emphasised the 'Budget Plus' and 'Finance Plus' approach for driving systemic change and fostering innovation to align with India's 'reform, perform and transform' approach, while urging for agility in responding to emerging national priorities, the finance ministry said in a post on X.

Stressing that the 'Antyodaya' principle — which aims at ensuring development reaches the last person in society — she asked ADB to support integrated rural prosperity measures.

"She urged deeper ADB support for integrated rural prosperity measures, including creation of jobs and local entrepreneurship, and fostering innovation in agriculture, to transform villages into resilient communities," it said. In alignment with the vision of Visit Bharat 2047, she emphasised moving beyond basic infrastructure to achieve systemic urban governance reforms, transit-oriented development and municipal finance strengthening.

Sitharaman also underscored the critical role of private sector development in meeting India's infrastructure financing needs and encouraged ADB to play a catalytic role in enabling private investment.

Kanda assured continued ADB support for India's development agenda, including building on the bank's international experience and bringing in best practices.

The ADB president committed support for India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

INTERIM TRADE PACT

US officials to visit India next week for talks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A team of US officials is visiting India next week for discussions on the proposed interim trade agreement between the two countries, an official said on Thursday.

The visit gains importance as India and the US are likely to agree on an interim trade agreement by the end of June, with New Delhi pushing for full exemption from the 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on domestic goods.

"The US team is coming on June 5 or June 6," the official said.

India's chief negotiator, Special Secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal, concluded his four-day visit to Washington last week. He held talks with his US counterpart on the proposed agreement.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal was also in Washington last week to give an impetus to trade talks. He met with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick twice during his visit.



The US on April 2 imposed an additional 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on Indian goods, but later suspended it for 90 days till July 9. However, Indian goods still attract the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed by America.

Both countries have fixed a deadline to conclude the first phase of the proposed bilateral trade agreement pact by fall (September-October) of this year. According to sources, there is a possibility that both sides agree on an interim trade deal before the first tranche.

The US remained India's largest trading partner for the fourth consecutive year in 2024-25, with bilateral trade valued at USD 131.84 billion. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in the country's total merchandise trade.

With America, India had a trade surplus (the difference between imports and exports) of USD 41.18 billion in goods in 2024-25. It was USD 35.32 billion in 2023-24, USD 27.7 billion in 2022-23, USD 32.85 billion in 2021-22 and USD 22.73 billion in 2020-21. The US has raised concerns over this widening trade deficit.

The two trading partners look to more than double bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030.

Stock markets rebound as US court blocks reciprocal tariffs

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Sensex up 320 pts



Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded on Thursday after two days of decline, mirroring a rally in global markets as a US court blocked President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 320.70 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 81,633.02 in a volatile session amid monthly expiry in derivative contracts. During the day, it jumped 504.57 points or 0.62 per cent to 81,816.89.

The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 81.15 points or 0.33 per cent to 24,833.60. The index swung sharply in both directions on the monthly expiry day before ending with gains. Metal, realty, pharma and IT sector indices were major gainers.

Among Sensex firms, IndusInd Bank climbed 2.41 per cent a day after markets regulator Sebi barred its former CEO, Sumant Kathpalia, and four other senior officials from accessing the securities markets in connection with an alleged insider trading in the bank's shares.

Sun Pharma, Adani Ports, Eternal, Tata Steel, Tech Mahindra and Axis Bank were also among the gainers.

Bajaj Finance, ITC, Bajaj Finserv and Asian Paints were among the laggards.

Investors rejoiced a US federal court's decision to block President Donald Trump's sweeping reciprocal tariffs on imports. "Global sentiment improved after a US court struck down Trump's reciprocal tax policy. However, the domestic market remained mostly rangebound during the day due to rising oil prices and higher US 10-year bond yields.

RBI to use shredded banknotes in making particle boards

PNS ■ MUMBAI

To make banknote disposal more environment-friendly, the Reserve Bank will use shredded banknotes for making particle boards and has started a process to empanel board manufacturers, according to its annual report released on Thursday.

In its report, the RBI said the quantum of banknote briquettes or compressed blocks of paper produced annually in India has hovered around 15,000 tonnes, and it has been on the lookout for greener alternatives for disposal.

Conventionally, a majority of central banks and other authorities in charge of currency management dispose of shredded banknotes in landfills or through incineration, which is not environmentally friendly.

The RBI commissioned a study by the Institute of Wood Science and Technology, an autonomous body under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, to look for some alternative solutions, the report said.

"The study established that particle boards created with currency briquette particles would conform to the technical requirements of particle board," the annual report said.

It has initiated a process for empanelment of particle board manufacturers who will procure briquettes for end use as partial replacement of wood particles in their boards, the annual report said.

The Department of Currency Management will "actively pursue" its initiatives towards finding more environment-friendly ways for disposal of banknote shred/briquettes, it added.

Most Indian startups lack genuine innovation: Suhel Seth

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Most Indian startups are merely imitating Western business models and lack genuine innovation, Counselage India Managing Partner Suhel Seth said on Thursday.

Seth argued that the Indian startup ecosystem is dominated by businesses that replicate ideas already proven abroad, rather than developing original solutions tailored for India.



"When I look around on the start-up ecosystem in India, I find almost all of that replica. And all of that is a copy of what has already been done in the West. A guy wants to start a vada-paw shop, he calls himself a startup," Seth said at the CII Annual Business Summit 2025.

He also suggested criteria to define a true startup like it must represent a technological leap, be genuinely unique and non-replicable, and inspire pride among its creators.

Seth said that very few Indian startups meet these criteria, with most focusing on copying existing models rather than pioneering new ones.

He pointed out that the start-up conversation in India is overly fixated on valuations, unicorn status, and founder wealth.

"The start-up universe is discussed only monetarily. It is not discussed in terms of how you've changed lives. Currently, any discussion around startups is only in three areas. Have they become a unicorn? How much has the founder made? When will I (the investor) exit?

"This is the only business domain I have seen where people enter with a view to exit. So, people don't treat those businesses seriously," Seth noted.

He questioned why India, despite its vast talent pool and growing digital infrastructure, has not produced global tech giants comparable to Facebook or Google. Seth attributed this gap to social pressures, risk aversion, and a lack of supportive ecosystems that encourage innovation and long-term commitment.

'India has enough skilled talent to compete with China'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is the only country with enough skilled manpower to compete with China in the semiconductor industry, boasting 20 per cent of the world's semiconductor design talent concentrated in Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Pune, according to fabless chipmaker 3rdiTech's CEO Vrinda Kapoor.

This unique advantage, built over decades as global tech giants established large R&D centres in India, positions the country to challenge China's dominance in global semiconductor capacity, especially in defence electronics, where China is expected to hold 65 per cent share by 2030, she said.

"India is the only country with enough skilled manpower to be able to compete with China. Why? Because since the 70s, American companies have come to India. European companies have come to India and set up huge tech centres. So, our GCCs are finally paying off," Kapoor said at the CII Annual Business Summit 2025.

Kapoor highlighted that despite China's rapid expansion in defence electronics supply chains -- growing by 600 per cent since 2004 -- India's vast pool of skilled engineers and designers offers a critical competitive edge.



20 per cent of the world's semiconductor design talent is concentrated in Bangalore, Hyderabad and Pune

However, she stressed that for India to fully leverage this talent, Indian product companies must emerge and receive strong backing from domestic capital. "20 per cent of the world's entire semiconductor design talent sits out of three Indian cities, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Pune. Qualcomm's 5G chip was 100 per cent designed in India. So, what needs to change? Indian product companies need to emerge, and Indian capital needs to back them,"

3rdiTech is part of a strategic partnership with the US Space Force and Bharat Semi (3rdiTech's holding company) to establish a semiconductor fabrication plant that will produce chips for use in military hardware and next-generation telecommunications.

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | MAY 30, 2025

Janhvi Kapoor and Sidharth Malhotra set hearts racing in romantic saga *Param Sundari*



The first official look at *Param Sundari*, starring Janhvi Kapoor and Sidharth Malhotra, has taken fans by storm. Initially teased in cinemas alongside the theatrical release of *Bhool Chuk Maaf*, starring Rajkummar Rao and Wamiqa Gabbi, the teaser quickly found its way online through audience-captured videos. Now, Maddock Films and director Tushar Jalota have unveiled the high-quality version, amplifying the buzz around the film.

Marking the first on-screen pairing of Janhvi and Sidharth, *Param Sundari* is a sweeping romance that blends raw attraction with emotional depth. The teaser opens with Sidharth Malhotra in a striking avatar, bare-bodied and radiating intensity, before Janhvi Kapoor captivates the screen in a traditional saree, exuding poise and charm.

Set against breathtaking landscapes, the film promises a compelling North-meets-South love story that balances cultural richness with modern storytelling. The chemistry between the lead pair is palpable, sparking anticipation for what is poised to be a visually and emotionally immersive cinematic journey. Adding to the allure is the film's enchanting musical backdrop. Featuring the soulful voice of Sonu Nigam, the background score in the teaser hints at a stirring soundtrack that's expected to become a chart-topper.

Backed by Dinesh Vijan's Maddock Films, *Param Sundari* is slated for release on July 25, 2025. With its captivating visuals, fresh pairing, and musical charm, this romantic drama is already shaping up to be one of the most awaited films of the year.

I've walked away from projects

ASHA NEGI ON UNNECESSARY BOLD SCENES



Popular television actress Asha Negi opened up about her decision to step away from several projects where she felt intimate and bold scenes were added unnecessarily.

Speaking candidly, she highlighted the importance of comfort and consent in portraying such moments on screen, shedding light on the challenges actors face in navigating creative choices within the industry. When asked if she has ever walked away from a project due to the script or conflicts with her values, Asha confirmed that she has indeed made such decisions. She emphasized the importance of staying true to herself and only taking on roles that align with her personal beliefs and comfort level.

The *Pavitra Rishta* actress said, "Yes, I've left projects many times. Sometimes, when I feel the story lacks substance or bold scenes are added unnecessarily, I just don't enjoy being part of it. When that happens, I prefer to let it go."

When quizzed about whether actors perform bold scenes purely for fame or content value, Asha Negi expressed her belief that actors don't choose such scenes simply to gain popularity. She stated, "I don't believe actors do bold scenes for fame. And honestly, does bold content really bring fame? I don't know. As far as I understand, you gain recognition through good stories, strong characters and solid performances. Fame was something I thought about when I was new in the industry. Now, I focus solely on my work."

Speaking about her career, the *Baarish* actress revealed that she never really felt typecast on television. After her success in iconic shows, she took a step back from TV, appearing only in a few reality and fictional shows that didn't quite take off.

She then shifted her focus to the OTT space, where she has been exploring a variety of roles. Asha emphasised that she consciously chooses different characters to avoid being pigeonholed, allowing her to grow and diversify as an actor.

Asha Negi latestly featured in the gripping legal drama *Criminal Justice 4*, which saw Pankaj Tripathi once again stepping into the role of the sharp and insightful advocate Madhav Mishra.

Directed by Rohan Sippy, the new season premiered on JioHotstar on May 22.

BORDER 2 ROLLS ON

Diljit Dosanjh begins filming in June, release set for R-Day 2026



In what promises to be one of the most ambitious cinematic ventures in Indian film history, *Border 2* is currently being shot at a brisk pace. Directed by Anurag Singh, the sequel to the iconic 1997 war film brings together an ensemble cast featuring Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh and Ahan Shetty. The film went on floors in November 2024 and the momentum has only grown stronger since.

Now, as per the latest buzz, Diljit Dosanjh is set to begin filming his portions for *Border 2* from June 10. A source close to the production shared, "Diljit plays a deeply moving character who adds emotional weight to the story. His track is intricately woven into the narrative of the 1971 war between India and Pakistan."

The initial schedule will see Diljit sharing screen space with Sunny Deol, marking a high-impact collaboration. "He will begin with Sunny and move on to shoot with Varun Dhawan in the next leg, starting in July," the source added.

Diljit's role reportedly includes crucial scenes with not just Sunny Deol and Varun Dhawan, but also Ahan Shetty. "His character carries a compelling backstory and shares powerful moments with each of the leads," the source revealed.

While Sunny Deol is targeting the end of June to wrap up the bulk of his shoot, Diljit and Varun are expected to finish filming their parts by August 2025. Anurag Singh, known for his gripping storytelling and blockbuster sensibilities, aims to complete the entire shoot by August 10.

One of the film's most nostalgic highlights is the revival of the beloved anthem *Sandese Aate Hai*. This time, the soul-stirring track will be reimagined and performed by Sonu Nigam and Arijit Singh, blending the classic with contemporary emotion.

Produced by Bhushan Kumar, JP Dutta and Nidhi Dutta, *Border 2* is touted as the biggest war film ever made in Indian cinema. Much like its predecessor, the story draws from the valour and sacrifice of soldiers during the 1971 India-Pakistan war. With a star-studded cast, a visionary director, and an emotionally charged storyline, the film is expected to be a grand Republic Day 2026 release.

SHALINI PANDEY INTRODUCES MEENU FROM *RAHU KETU* AS SECOND SCHEDULE BEGINS



Shalini Pandey has officially kickstarted the second schedule of her upcoming film *Rahu Ketu* in the scenic town of Kasol, Himachal Pradesh. The actress, known for her versatile performances, gave fans a sneak peek from the sets by sharing behind-the-scenes pictures on her social media.

In the newly shared pictures, Shalini reveals her character name as Meenu — The pictures are effortlessly blending into the rustic charm of the mountain backdrop. Her caption read: "Meet Meenu from the sets of my upcoming film:)Can't wait for you to meet her properly soon! *RahuKetu*."

After wrapping up the Mumbai leg of the shoot, Shalini has now joined her co-stars Pulkit Samrat and Varun Sharma for the next phase of filming. The second schedule promises a fresh wave of storytelling in the heart of the hills, adding depth to the narrative and visual texture of *Rahu Ketu*.

With *Rahu Ketu* in motion, Shalini Pandey's 2025 lineup continues to create buzz. She is also set to star opposite Dhanush in *Idli Kadai* and will headline Amazon quirky comedy *Bandwaale* with Zahaan Kapoor.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



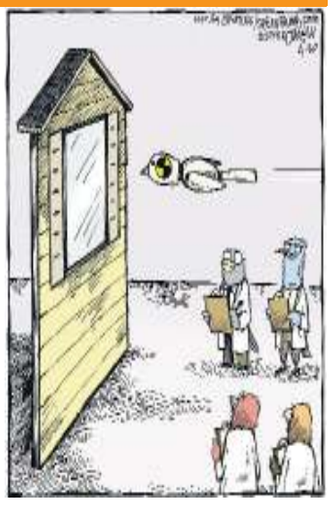
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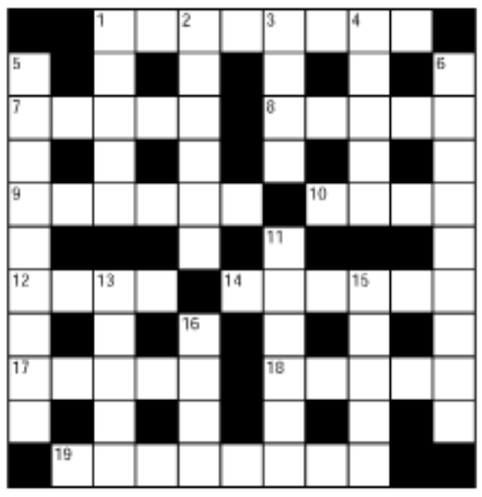
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Strong hairs sticking out from a cat's face
7 A sour citrus fruit
8 A room on a ship
9 People who get coal or metal ore from underground
10 A joint between two ropes
12 Midday
14 Cardboard box
17 The brother of your father or mother
18 A soldier's bravery award
19 Things that belong to someone

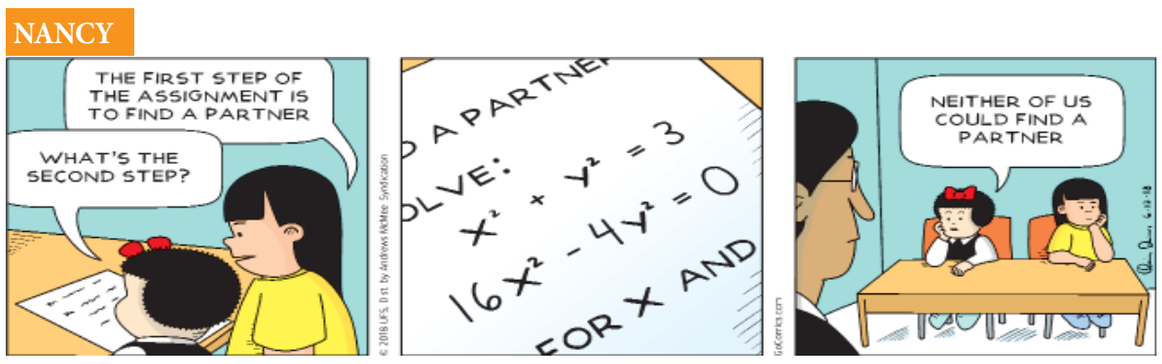
DOWN

1 Adult females
2 Take no notice of
3 Strike with the foot
4 A red-breasted bird
5 A light metal
6 Immediately
11 Someone who grows crops or raises animals
13 Happen
15 A soft toy bear
16 Jump over

SOLUTION

■	D	I	N	O	S	A	U	R	■	H
I	A	■	■	C	■	D	■	O	■	E
S	A	M	E	■	E	S	C	A	P	E
G	■	E	■	S	■	K	■	■	■	V
U	N	D	E	R	■	L	E	A	V	E
I	■	N	■	■	■	T	■	■	■	R
S	H	O	E	S	■	U	S	I	N	G
E	■	■	M	■	■	■	G	■	■	R
D	I	V	I	D	E	■	C	L	U	E
■	N	■	E	■	N	■	O	■	E	■
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NANCY



SUDOKU

8					1	7		
		7			8			1
2							5	
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

GINGER MEGGS



The Pioneer
Vijayawada

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FRIDAY MAY 30, 2025

'I MAY HAVE HAD BAD EXPERIENCES, BUT NOT THE EXTENT OF ABUSE AMY GOES THROUGH'

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Trinetra Haldar Gummarju is breaking barriers and redefining representation with her powerful portrayal of Amy in the critically acclaimed psychological crime thriller *Kankhajura*. As a trans woman playing a character layered with toughness, vulnerability and raw emotion, Trinetra delivers a performance that is as groundbreaking as it is deeply human. Balancing her unique background as a medical graduate and an actor, she shares insights into the complexities of her role, the challenges of telling untold stories and her hopes for a more inclusive future in Indian cinema.

When asked about her first reaction to the project and what drew her to the story and her character, Trinetra shared with ***The Pioneer***, "I just felt like a crime thriller is not something that I ever saw myself being part of because. We often don't associate those worlds with having trans characters in them." She was drawn to the uniqueness of the story — a beautiful crime thriller set in Goa — and the depth of its characters. "Whether it's Ashu, or Amy — Amy is the character that I play — I just felt like this is not something I've ever seen before. It's not something I've done before. And it would really challenge me as an actor to do something so different to what I've done before. And, yeah, that's pretty much why I said yes to it." The psychological thriller centers on themes of guilt and silence, creating a gripping emotional landscape. Trinetra described the emotional layers of her character Amy in detail: "What I really love about Amy is that she is nothing like me in real life. Right now, I'm someone that is fairly composed, that carries itself with a certain level of poise because I had to teach myself those things in order to function in the worlds that I inhabit — to be articulate in a certain way, in English and to speak a certain way." In contrast, Amy is unapologetically raw and bold. "She's someone that's very on your face about what she feels. She doesn't need makeup on her face to feel like a woman. She's very tough for the whole world, but she's also got this layer of vulnerability and softness when it comes to her partner, who is unfortunately very abusive with her. And she's also got a very soft spot for the protagonist Ashu, which becomes her downfall kind of, or her weakness in a way."

For Trinetra, the chance to portray such a multifaceted character was thrilling. Playing opposite a celebrated actor like Roshan Mathew, who plays Ashu, was "a privilege because he's an actor that I've admired for many years now in Malayalam cinema. I'm a huge fan of Malayalam cinema. I first watched him in *Moothon*, which is one of my favorite movies of all time, which interestingly also had my maiden co-actors Shobhita and Shashank." Knowing she would share screen space with him made the role even more special. "It felt like a dream team coming together."

Discussing a particularly challenging scene in the series, Trinetra recalled the moment Amy has been abused by her boyfriend and is found in a vulnerable, drunken state by Ashu. "She suddenly kind of wakes up to this man in front of her and even though it's Roshan, even though it's Ashu and it's Amy's friend, in that moment, she is so traumatized by what she's just gone through that she kind of reacts in a very negative way and she asks him to leave and pushes him away." The complexity of portraying this trauma while also appearing intoxicated made the scene very demanding. Trinetra reflected, "I may have had bad experiences, but I don't know what it's like to be abused to that extent and to have that level of hostility against someone that I love in that moment. So, yeah, that felt really difficult." However, working with talented and supportive co-actors made it a safe and rewarding experience to explore these deep emotions.



When it came to the source material, *KanKhajura* is adapted from the Israeli series Magpies. Trinetra revealed that she approached the project with fresh eyes. "I read the script first, the whole thing from start to finish, so it felt very fresh to me. I didn't know it was an adaptation until I finished reading it. Then I found out, 'Oh, okay, it's actually an interpretation.' So I already had an image of Amy and Ashu in my head." She watched only the first few episodes of the original to understand the dynamics and intimacy between the characters, particularly to capture the physicality of the trans woman character. "Because trans people are very diverse. We're not one kind of person, especially in the Indian context because it's adapted to India. Here we have so many different kinds of trans people — from the Kinnar community and other communities — so I watched it purely to understand how I would like to bring Amy to life, what I would like to do differently, and how I would relate to Ashu as Amy. And it helped. It really did help to see that." Known for her depth and sensitivity in acting, Trinetra shared the preparation that went into embodying Amy: "The first thing I did was reach out to my acting coach, Puja Swaroop, who's from the Batch Work Ensemble theater company. She's extremely talented. I reached out to her personally to do a workshop for *KanKhajura* because I wanted to do that prep work." Beyond emotional preparation, Trinetra learned to ride a scooter — a key part of Amy's character. "It was really funny for everyone to see me figure it out in Goa, in this swampy, marshy area which wasn't even a road. I was like, 'Oh my God, I actually don't know how to figure this out.' But I did." Amy's bold, visual style — red hair, piercings and distinctive fashion — also excited Trinetra as she enjoyed bringing a whole new persona to life.

On handling the emotional intensity of the role, Trinetra drew upon her unique background as a doctor. "That's just the job, you know? I think something that really helped me learn that skill is being a doctor. I completed my MBBS in 2023, and was a medical student for many years before that. That environment shows you some of the lowest points of humanity — disease, death, dying and at a very young age." This experience gave her "a great amount of empathy towards people" while also teaching her "the very important skill of detachment. Doctors have a word for it: attached detachment. You have just the right amount of care and empathy, but then you also know when to not make it a personal thing." This balance helped her immensely on set. "You perform and when they say cut, you cut. I walked away from traumatising scenes feeling very okay because I had done the work to prepare and I had co-actors I could trust."

Reflecting on representation, Trinetra emphasised the importance of nuanced, meaningful roles for trans actors. "Change is a very slow process, especially when we're talking about major social change like inclusion of trans people. As an industry, we are very resistant to change." She highlighted that even basic gender equality is only now becoming normalised, with conversations about pay parity and recognition of directors without gender qualifiers. "So for trans acceptance and representation to really blossom is going to take a long time. Just because we've had a few shows or movies does not mean the world has changed, but it means we're taking small steps in the right direction." Trinetra expressed her pride in being part of "a small but significant step towards that change."

She shared the lack of positive representation growing up, saying, "We never saw ourselves represented on screens in a positive light — whether it was ads or movies. It was always something to laugh at or look down upon." Creating a character like Amy — one who "has layers, who is a whole human being" — is deeply meaningful to her. Trinetra looks forward to continuing to bring such complexity and empathy to future roles.

Trans people are very diverse. We're not one kind of person, especially in the Indian context because it's adapted to India. Here we have so many different kinds of trans people — from the Kinnar community and other communities — so I watched it purely to understand how I would like to bring Amy to life. It really did help to see that

BORN IN THE HILLS, BUILT WITH HEART OF FOREVER LIVING

From the serene hills of Himachal Pradesh, where opportunity often takes a backseat to tradition and hardship, emerges the powerful and inspiring story of Anjana Thakur, an emblem of resilience, courage, and transformation. As featured in Forever Living Products India's "Ordinary to Extraordinary" series, Anjana's journey is a compelling Forever Living success story that reflects what's possible when determination meets the right opportunity.



Born in a remote village, Anjana faced daily obstacles just to access basic education. With her school located 8 kilometers away and no available transportation, every step was a testament to her early resolve. Her greatest inspiration came from her father, a soldier in the Indian Army, who, despite a tragic on-duty accident that cost him a leg, continued to serve with unmatched grit. His refusal to be defined by his limitations instilled in Anjana a lifelong drive to create something meaningful, not just for herself but for her entire family.

In a society where young girls are often expected to marry early and limit their ambitions, Anjana chose a different path. She moved outside her state to pursue higher education and began preparing for the civil services. Although she couldn't clear the competitive exams, she didn't let that stop her. Instead, she began searching for new avenues and that's when she discovered Forever Living Products.

Skeptical but curious, she first experienced the products. The visible improvement in her health and well-being over just a few days surprised her. Inspired by the results, she took a leap of faith and decided to explore the business opportunity. With no prior experience and armed with only her determination, she immersed herself in learning the skills she needed: communication, networking and business fundamentals. She started from the ground up, working tirelessly offline, sometimes traveling alone for long hours despite the fear and discomfort.

Her journey met another major obstacle when the COVID-19 lockdown hit. She was stuck in a different state, away from home and her offline team fell apart. But instead of giving up, Anjana embraced change. She turned to digital platforms, rebuilt her business online, and began connecting with people from across India. Slowly, she started to rise again.

Today, Anjana lives a life she once only imagined traveling to beautiful places, following her passion for fitness, and most importantly, empowering rural women in India to build their own paths to independence. When she returns to her village, she's not just a success story he's a symbol of what's possible. She shares her experience with local girls, many of whom never thought life could be different. Her story from village to entrepreneur has become a source of hope and motivation for others. Even her own sister now works alongside her at Forever, making it a true family journey.

Anjana strongly believes that no woman should ever have to depend on anyone, not her parents, husband, or even children for her financial or personal identity. Women entrepreneurship in India, she says, is not just about earning; it's about reclaiming dignity and discovering self-worth. She is deeply committed to helping other women discover that truth for themselves.

Recognising her remarkable transformation, Harish Singla, CSM of Forever Living Products India, shares, "Anjana's journey embodies the true spirit of the Forever Opportunity. At Forever, we believe in unlocking the potential of individuals, especially women, to become financially independent and lead with confidence. Her transformation from rural limitations to national recognition is exactly the kind of impact we strive to create every day." His words echo the mission of Forever Living Products, a global wellness brand known for empowering individuals through high-quality Aloe Vera-based products and inclusive business opportunities. With a strong commitment to ethics, innovation, and personal development, Forever continues to build a community where stories like Anjana's are not exceptions but the future.

Anjana Thakur's story is not just a tale of success, it's a blueprint for what's possible when someone refuses to accept limits. It is a movement for courage, independence, and change. A reminder that your roots do not define your wings and those extraordinary lives are often born from the most ordinary beginnings.

Building beyond inheritance



Residential is easier to enter—lower capital, easier to manage, and benefits from government incentives

Inheriting a business often comes with a roadmap. For Sahil Verma, that roadmap was abruptly rewritten. Just months after returning to India with a degree in finance from Aston Business School in the UK, Sahil lost his father, Sandeep Verma—the founder of Shray Projects and a known figure in Delhi NCR's real estate sector. With little time to adjust, Sahil and his brother found themselves navigating the complexities of an industry in transition, driven not just by legacy, but by the urgency of responsibility.

That pivotal moment defined Sahil's journey in real estate. Together with his elder brother, he assumed responsibility for the company, carrying forward the values instilled by their father—Accountability, Integrity, and Honesty.

"These weren't just values on paper. They became our compass in navigating the challenges of India's fragmented real estate sector. Today, those same principles continue to guide our every decision."

Under Sahil and his brother's leadership, Shray Projects has not only maintained its stature but expanded its influence in one of India's most competitive real estate markets: Delhi NCR.

"We differentiate ourselves by sticking to our principles even when it's tough. Transparency with stakeholders, delivering on timelines and maintaining high-quality standards have earned us deep trust."

The company also continues to invest in technology and system-driven efficiency. Proprietary systems for project shortlisting, quality control, and customer relationship management have allowed Shray Projects to thrive despite the volatile nature of the Indian real estate sector.

"We've also taken a global perspective and localized it carefully. We don't blindly copy international models—we study them and implement only what aligns with India's unique challenges and opportunities."

Shray Projects' legacy is especially visible in Gurugram's dramatic transformation over the last few decades. From early developments like Palam Vihar to landmark projects such as Sushant Lok, DLF Phases 1–5, and commercial icons like MGF Metropolitan Mall and Sahara Mall, the company played a central role.

"We were involved when only three big developers—DLF, Ansals and Unitech—dominated the market. Our participation in nearly every major project gave us unmatched insights and community trust. We've seen how thoughtful planning can create long-term value for both the economy and society."

With the rise and fall of many real estate developers—particularly between 2010 and the COVID-19 pandemic—Shray Projects recognized the need to protect client interests more aggressively.

"We developed a proprietary evaluation system to assess a developer's financial strength, delivery history, and credibility. We look at everything—land acquisition practices, construction timelines, approval statuses. Our due diligence goes beyond the surface."

This process has allowed the firm to form successful partnerships with top-tier developers like DLF, Krisumi, and M3M. "Our role isn't just about selling. We act as an advocate and ensure clients are aligned with developers that match their risk profile."

When asked about the pros and cons of residential versus commercial real estate, Sahil presents a balanced analysis.

"Residential is easier to enter—lower capital, easier to manage, and benefits from government incentives. But it typically yields just 2–3%, and comes with tenant turnover and maintenance issues."

On the other hand, commercial real estate offers higher returns—rental yields of 6–8%, longer leases, and often fewer headaches if structured well. "But it demands larger capital, and there are higher compliance complexities," he cautions.

Ultimately, the choice depends on the investor's risk appetite and long-term goals.

For corporate clients looking to lease office spaces, Sahil suggests aligning space usage with post-pandemic realities.

"Many companies need 20–30% less space today. Prioritise buildings with digital infrastructure, energy certifications, and wellness features. Negotiate for flexibility—exit clauses, expansion options, even rent-free periods."

When it comes to retail leasing, Sahil emphasises one golden rule: location is king. "Visibility, high footfall and complementary brand presence are essential. Try for revenue-linked rents where feasible—these align tenant and landlord interests."

Shray Projects has facilitated leases for several prominent retail brands across India. "We make sure our clients' capital expenditure, rent-free periods and other needs are negotiated upfront—not left as pain points later," Sahil explains.

Sahil's advice to individual investors is rooted in caution, discipline, and long-term vision.

"Don't chase short-term hype. Look at infrastructure development, employment growth, and connectivity. The best bets are in emerging areas adjacent to established neighborhoods."

He stresses the importance of diversification—residential, commercial, and even REITs. "And never skip due diligence. We do it thoroughly for every client. Avoiding a bad investment is often more valuable than picking the perfect one."

He also advises using financing judiciously and maintaining liquidity. "And don't forget asset management. Maintenance and renovations can significantly improve long-term returns."

Geographically, they are now expanding into Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities undergoing infrastructure transformation. "But we'll ensure our signature quality and client-centric approach remains constant," Sahil affirms.

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | MAY 30, 2025

Performance of uncapped players instrumental to our success: Ponting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mullanpur

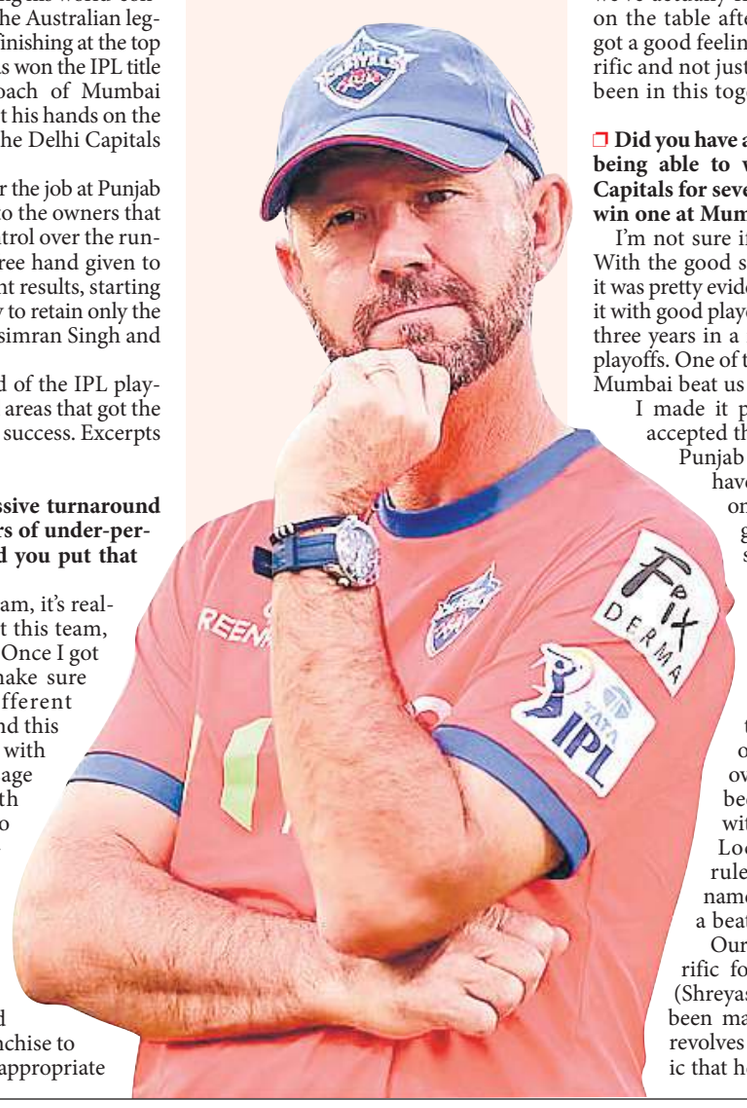
Ricky Ponting, who is getting major credits for Punjab Kings' massive turnaround in the IPL after years of disappointment, feels their radical auction strategy and the performance of uncapped players allowed him to execute his coaching philosophy of playing "differently" this season.

Punjab Kings are in their first play-offs since 2014 but considering his world-conquering achievements, the Australian legend is not satisfied with finishing at the top of the league stage. He has won the IPL title as player and head coach of Mumbai Indians but could not get his hands on the trophy while coaching the Delhi Capitals for seven season.

Before he signed up for the job at Punjab Kings, he made it clear to the owners that he wanted complete control over the running of the team. The free hand given to him has produced instant results, starting from his auction strategy to retain only the uncapped duo of Prabhsimran Singh and Shashank Singh.

In an interview ahead of the IPL play-offs, Ponting covered all areas that got the franchise much-needed success. Excerpts from the interaction.

Before Ponting signed up for the job at Punjab Kings, he made it clear to the owners that he wanted complete control over the running of the team



❒ This has been a massive turnaround for this team after years of under-performance. What would you put that down to?

When you say this team, it's really this franchise, it's not this team, this team is brand new. Once I got the job, I wanted to make sure that things were different around this team, around this franchise and, we went with a slightly different passage into the auction with just retaining the two younger uncapped players and we copped a bit of criticism for that at the time.

People thought we got that strategy wrong, but I was very clear on the vision that I had where I wanted this franchise to go and we picked the appropriate players to give me the best chance of attaining the vision that I set out with. So far it's been a good season...The fact that I think (in the) last game against Mumbai Indians, we had six uncapped players on our side, all of which are playing exceptionally good cricketers.

This whole season so far hasn't been about qualification. We've talked a bit about giving ourselves the best chance to finish 1-2, and we know now that we've actually finished in first position on the table after the league stage. I've got a good feeling. This group's been terrific and not just the 25 players, we've all been in this together.

❒ Did you have a point to prove after not being able to win a trophy at Delhi Capitals for seven years though you did win one at Mumbai Indians?

I'm not sure if I had a point to prove. With the good squads that I had in DC, it was pretty evident to see where we made it with good players in that squad. We had three years in a row where we made the playoffs. One of those was into a final that Mumbai beat us in.

I made it pretty clear that when I accepted the head coach's job (with Punjab Kings) that I wanted to have pretty much full autonomy over the way that we go about the coaching staff and the way that we go about putting the strategy together with the auction, our scouts did a terrific job.

We got the players that we wanted, whether they'd be younger players or more experienced overseas players. And that's been shown so far that, with (Glenn) Maxwell and Lockie Ferguson getting ruled out early in the tournament, we've hardly skipped a beat.

Our Indian core has been terrific for us. And, our captain (Shreyas Iyer), as a leader he has been magnificent. So a lot of it revolves around that, the dynamic that he and I have together.

❒ You spoke highly about your uncapped players (Priyansh Arya, Prabhsimran, Nehal Wadhera, Shashank, Harpreet Brar, Vijaykumar Vyshak). Can any of them go on to play for India in the near future?

There is four of them who can. You look at Priyansh Arya. He has been a revelation for us at the top of the order. I must have watched, I don't know how many hours of video I watched on him going into the auction, but he was the one that I wanted to make sure that we got.

Prabh is probably the obvious one when you talk about playing for India. Still only 24 years of age. I read somewhere the other day that he's now got the most runs for an uncapped player in IPL history.

Wadhera is someone that I think could play for India as well in the middle order. And Shashank, you've only got to look at the cold, hard numbers with him. His strike rate and boundary percentage at the end of innings is as good as anyone going around.

So again, this year, he struck at 185 or something like that (in the league stage). All four of those guys could play. As I said, Brar's been outstanding for us, Vyshak is also on the radar (for the national selectors).

❒ Following your chats with the owners and the management, were there any lessons learned from the failures of the past?

I did speak to the management. My big mantra this year was to be different, to make this place feel different, look different from the outside, you know, be really daring with the way that we play our cricket, be really dynamic and not sit back and wait for opportunities to arise to go and create opportunity and create momentum in games for ourselves.

I'm not a big media reader. I don't look at social media a lot. But what I've been hearing and the vibe I've been getting is that what we've been able to create around this team has been pretty cool.

The best teams and the best players that I've ever been involved in have never been satisfied and never been happy with what they've done. They always try and find a way to wake up tomorrow and get bigger and better and stronger.



Gukesh beats Nakamura to get campaign back on track

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Stavanger (Norway)

World champion D Gukesh brought his campaign back on track on his 19th birthday, defeating world No.2 Hikaru Nakamura of the USA in the third round to open his account even as Arjun Erigaisi suffered his first defeat in the Norway Chess Tournament here on Thursday.

Gukesh, who suffered back-to-back defeats to world Number 1 Norwegian Magnus Carlsen and compatriot Arjun Erigaisi in the first two rounds, put Nakamura — one of the best Rapid and Blitz players — under time pressure to win the game in 42 moves and collect three points.

Playing with white pieces, Gukesh, who was constantly under time pressure in the last two games, was the one who got Nakamura staring at the clock in round three of the six-player double round-robin tournament. "I feel quite good (about the win). I think my time management was much better today than before. He (Nakamura) had some drawing chances, but I guess, overall, it was good," said Gukesh as he moved to fifth spot on the points table ahead of Chinese Number 1 Wei Yi.

Nakamura realised soon after the start of the game that something had gone wrong early on in a Giuoco Piano opening. He decided to reverse the situation by switching to a kingside attack that could exploit Gukesh's vulnerability after a difficult start. However, the Indian wasn't vulnerable. Though Nakamura came agonisingly close to a draw, he admitted to relaxing too soon. When the American offered a draw on move 30, he was instead met by a move, which sent him on a downward spiral.

It was a remarkable fightback for Gukesh after two successive defeats and he acknowledged that the previous two days had been tough for him.

"Yeah, obviously the last two games were kind of tough. But today, I just tried to play it as a fresh tournament. Glad I played (like that)," said Gukesh. Asked if the win on Thursday was a direct consequence of managing the clock better than previous days, he conceded it was "clearly horrible" time management by him in the last two games.

"Glad my time management and my game were pretty good (today)," he added. Gukesh, whose core strength lies in Classical chess, was also asked if he would be comfortable in the Armageddon tie-break as the tournament progresses. "Yeah, I mean at some point it will come for sure. But right now, I'm just happy with this (win)."

Arjun Erigaisi loses

After a superb start, Erigaisi suffered a setback as he went down to Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana, while defending champion Carlsen lost the Armageddon tie-break to China's Wei Yi.

Caruana jumped into sole lead after logging in three more points to take his tally to six, while Carlsen was second on five points and Erigaisi and Nakamura tied for the third position with 4.5 points each. Caruana began the game with a very rare 7.H4 in the French Defence and Erigaisi, playing with black pieces, said later he was optimistic he could pull off a win as "white is a bit underdeveloped" move in French Defence.

However, Caruana said after the match that his Indian opponent's optimism was the reason behind his loss.

"I was kind of mentally preparing for a draw at some point when he knew the opening very well and we reached an equal endgame, but he thought he was slightly better, and maybe that optimism led him a little bit wrong," said Caruana.

Konery Humpy in joint lead

In the women's competition, two-time World Rapid champion Koneru Humpy, playing with white pieces, emerged joint leader with Ukraine's Anna Muzychuk on six points following a win over Iranian-Spanish Woman Grand Master Sara Khadem in the third round. China's Ju Wenjun got the better of R Vaishali in the Armageddon tie-break.

Ridi- g o- Ra- veer's back-to-back 69, I- dia jumps to T-2

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hong Kong

Delhi teenager Ranveer Mitroo registered a second consecutive card of two-under 69 to help India jump to tied second place in boys' team competition along with compatriot Krish Chawla in the Asia-Pacific Golf Confederation (APGC) Junior Championship here. With an overall total of one-under 283 after the second round, the Indian duo is six strokes behind the leaders Parin Sarasmut and Warut Boonrod of Thailand.

The Indian Golf Union had sent a four-member team to compete in the tournament organised by APGC. Individually, Ranveer maintained his fourth position in the individual boys competition. Krish improved his overnight tied 16th place after posting a two-over 73 to end the second round in sole 15th position with an overall total of three-over 145.

Thailand's Parin Sarasmut fired a five-under 66 to share the lead with Tuan Anh Nguyen of Vietnam with matching totals of eight-under 134.

After five straight pars, Ranveer birdied the sixth hole from five feet after his approach landed 15 yards short of the flag on the right rough.

However, the 16-year-old stumbled upon a bogey on the next hole only to make amends with back-to-back birdies on the eighth and ninth holes. On the back nine, he birdied hole numbers 14, 17 and 18 against a double bogey on the 10th and bogey on the 12th hole.

In the individual girls event, Saanvi Somu carded a three-under 69 to jump to the joint ninth spot as compatriot Kashika Mishra had a disappointing round of 10-over 82. The Indian pair of Kashika and Saanvi was ranked sole seventh with a combined score of 11-over 299 after round two. In the mixed team event, the Indian pair of Krish and Saanvi was lying in tied 10th position at five-over 289.

Satwik-Chirag in quarters; Prannoy, Sindhu bow out in Singapore Open

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Singapore

The Indian men's doubles team of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty entered the quarterfinals, while former world champion PV Sindhu suffered an early exit in the Singapore Open badminton tournament here on Thursday. Satwiksairaj and Chirag rallied to beat seventh-seeded Indonesian pair of Sabar Karyaman Gutama and Moh Reza Pahlevi Isfahani 19-21 21-16 21-19 in a gruelling contest that lasted one hour and 14 minutes.

They will face the second seeded Malaysian team of Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin in the next round. It was a commendable performance by the Indian duo, which is making a comeback after battling fitness issues for the past few weeks. Double Olympic medalist Sindhu went down to world No. 5 Chen Yufei of China 9-21, 21-18, 16-21 in 65 minutes in a hard-fought second-round match.

Sindhu, who recently slipped to world No. 17, showed glimpses of her old form, especially in the second game where she led 19-12 before closing it out 21-18.

However, the decider saw her struggle to match Chen's sharp smashes and court control. It was Sindhu's seventh loss to Chen in 13 meetings, highlighting her ongoing inconsistency this season.

Despite a dominant 21-14, 21-9 win over Canada's Wen Yu Zhang in the opening round, the 2022 Singapore Open champion failed to build momentum. While Sindhu sparkled in patches, her sluggish reflexes and lack of control in rallies allowed the Chinese star to dictate terms in the final set.

There was disappointment for India in the men's singles competition as H S Prannoy bowed out following a 16-21 14-21 loss to Frenchman Christo Popov in the pre-quarterfinals.

India to host Australia Womens team for three ODIs in September

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India Women will play their counterparts from Australia in a three-match ODI series at home in September as part of the preparations for the ICC World Cup which the country is hosting later this year, the BCCI said on Thursday.

The board also said the men's 'A' teams from Australia and South Africa will be touring the country from September-November during which they will play multi-day and limited overs cricket matches. "The Australian Women's team will tour India for a three-match One Day International series, serving as crucial preparation ahead of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025," the BCCI said in a statement.



The three matches of the women's series will be played at the M. A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai. The games are scheduled on September 14, 17 and 20. The 50-over Women's World Cup is scheduled to be held across multiple venues in India from September 29 to October 26. Around the same time, the Australian men's A team will also be touring India for a series featuring two four-day matches and three One-day games. The tour will begin with a four-day match in Lucknow from September 16-19 with the second game also being scheduled at the same venue from September 23-26.

The three one-day matches will be held from in Kanpur on September 30, October 3 and 5. The contests against the Aussies will be followed by matches against the visiting South Africans in October-November. "The South African Men's A team will also tour India for an extensive series featuring both multi-day and limited-overs formats in Bengaluru. The two multi-day matches will take place at the BCCI Centre of Excellence, while the three one-day games will be held at M. Chinnaswamy Stadium," the BCCI said in the statement.

The two four-day matches against the Proteas will be played at CoE, Bengaluru, from October 30-November 2 and November 6-9 respectively.

The one-dayers will be organised on November 13, 16 and 19. The A tour is normally organised before a series involving the senior team.

Shubma- Gill's fumbli- g Tita- s up agai- st might of MI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mullanpur

Among the title favourites but battling a loss of momentum, Shubman Gill's Gujarat Titans will be up against the mighty Mumbai Indians, who also have issues to be addressed, in the winner-takes-all IPL Eliminator here on Friday. It is a knock-out game but both sides are used to the stage with Mumbai Indians being the five-time champions. Titans have made the play-offs thrice in the last four seasons, including the trophy-winning run on their debut in 2022.

However, both Shubman Gill and Hardik Pandya, have a point to prove. Gill, the newly appointed India Test captain, would build up his leadership credentials immensely if Titans go all the way.

Hardik has got the love of the fans back after being booed on his return to the team last year and an IPL trophy will cement his place in the list of the fabled greats of the franchise. But in their pursuit of glory, both leaders must find a way to address the issues at hand. Titans have more to be worried about as they have lost momentum going into the play-offs. Having conceded 465 runs in their last two defeats, they need to up their game with the ball. Mohammed Siraj, the de facto leader of the pace battery, will need to provide breakthroughs in the powerplay.



The struggles of left-arm pacer Arshad Khan with the new ball has added pressure on the likes of Prasidh Krishna who has been the Titans' trump card this season with 23 wickets. In addition to the shortcomings in the pace department, the ineffectiveness of spin all-rounder Rashid Khan has aggravated their bowling woes.

On the batting front, the top three, including Sai Sudharsan, Gill and Jos Buttler contributed massively to their play-off journey. Considering that, the absence of Buttler, who left for national duty after the league stage, is bound to be felt. Kusal Mendis has been roped in as Buttler's place but it remains to be seen if he can inspire the same level of confidence.

The middle-order comprising Shahrukh Khan and Sherfane Rutherford is not the most reliable, making Titans vulnerable against Mumbai Indians who would have that at the back of their mind.

Like Titans, Mumbai Indians too have been impacted by the loss of foreign players. Ryan Rickelton had done a fine job for them at the top of the order alongside Rohit Sharma but the South African has now reported for national duty. The same goes for English batter Will Jacks.

Out of favour England batter Jonny Bairstow is one of the replacement players for Mumbai Indians alongside Richard Gleeson and Charith Asalanka. Bairstow could open alongside Rohit Sharma at the top of the order.

The Englishman would surely be expecting to start the game, having agreed to join the franchise in the middle of the domestic season back home.

The quiet run of Titak Varma is another concern facing the team. Suryakumar Yadav has been doing the heavy lifting in the batting department with a record 640 runs in a season. In case he fails, Mumbai Indians will have a real task at hand.

Indian men's hockey team leaves for European Leg of FIH Pro League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

Eyeing fruitful outings against some of the top hockey nations, the Indian men's team departed for the European leg of the FIH Pro League 2024-25 on Thursday.

The European segment of the competition will take place at Amstelveen, the Netherlands, and Antwerp, Belgium between June 7 and June 22.

"This European leg is crucial for us as we face some of the world's best teams. We had a few mixed results in the Bhubaneswar Leg, but we are in a good position in the standings and we will build on this," captain Harmanpreet Singh said ahead of the team's departure here.

India are currently third in the standings with 15 points in the Pro League behind England and Belgium (16 points each). "Our focus is on securing maximum points and qualifying for the next year's World Cup through this tournament," Harmanpreet added.

India will kick off their European leg with back-to-back matches against the Netherlands on June 7 and 9, followed by a double-header against Argentina on June 11 and 12 at the Wagener Stadium in Amstelveen.

The team will then head to Antwerp to lock horns with Australia on June 14 and 15 before ending their campaign with two crucial matches against hosts Belgium on June 21 and 22.

Vice-captain Hardik Singh termed the European leg of the competition as a golden chance for the team to play against the "best in the world."

"We have had a very productive training camp over the last few weeks (in Bengaluru). I am confident that the boys will deliver in Europe.

The atmosphere in the squad is very positive, and everyone is pushing each other to perform at their best.

"These matches will be a great opportunity to test ourselves against some of the best in the world," he added.






Best of Telangana cinema recognised at the inaugural Gaddar Film Awards 2025

On Thursday, the first edition of the Gaddar Telangana Film Awards took place, celebrating excellence in the state's cinema industry. The event recognized a wide array of performances, technical achievements and creative contributions across several categories. Among the evening's biggest winners were *Kalki 2898 AD*, which not only took home the Best Feature Film award but also bagged several technical awards. Directed by Nag Ashwin, the film was a major highlight of the night, earning praise for its cinematic brilliance. Nag Ashwin himself was honoured with the Best Director award, further cementing his position as one of the leading filmmakers in the industry.

In the acting categories, Nivetha Thomas won the Best Leading Actress award for her performance in *35 Chinna Katha Kadu*, while Allu Arjun was named Best Leading Actor for his role in *Pushpa 2*. Allu Arjun's portrayal of his character in *Pushpa 2* has continued to capture the hearts of audiences across India, making him one of the most celebrated actors in the current landscape of Indian cinema.

The Best Supporting Actor award went to SJ Suryah for his role in *Saripodhaa Sanivaaram*, while Saranya Pradeep bagged the Best Supporting Actress award for her performance in *Ambajipeta Marriage Band*. The Best Comedian award was shared by Satya and Vennela Kishore for their hilarious performances in *Mathu Vadalara 2*. The Best Child Artist award was presented to Arundev Pothula and Baby Harika for their roles in *35 Chinna Katha Kadu*.

Apart from these key awards, *Kalki 2898 AD* also made a significant impact in the technical categories. The film won the Best Art Director and Best Makeup awards, showcasing its attention to detail and high production value. The recognition of *Kalki 2898 AD* in these categories speaks to its overall craftsmanship and visionary direction by Nag Ashwin. The film also took home the Best Costume Design award for Archana Rao and Ajay Kumar's stunning work, as well as the Best Lyricist award, which went to Chandra Bose for his work in Raju Yadav.

Several other films received accolades for their outstanding contributions to Telangana cinema. *Committee Kurrollu* was named the Best Debut Feature Film and also received recognition for its impactful storytelling. *Razakar*, a film that explores themes of heritage and history, was awarded the Best Feature Film on Environment/Heritage/History and its music composer, Bheems Ceciroleo, won the Best Music Director award.

The Best Cinematographer award went to Vishwanath Reddy for his work in *Gaami*, while the Best Editor award was presented to Navin Nooli for his work on *Lucky Baskhar*. Aravind Menon was honored with the Best Audiographer award for *Gaami*, further highlighting the technical excellence of this film.

In the music categories, Sid Sriram won Best Male Playback Singer for his rendition of *Ooru Peru Bhairavakona's Nijame Ne Chebuthunna in Ooru Peru Bhairavakona* and Shreya Ghoshal was awarded Best Female Playback Singer for her performance in *Pushpa 2 – The Rule's Sooseki Song*.

The evening also featured Special Jury Awards, with Dulquer Salmaan receiving recognition for his performance in *Lucky Baskhar* and Ananya Nagalla being honored for her work in *Pottel*. Additionally, Faria Abdullah received a Jury Special Mention for her rap song in *Mathu Vadalara 2* and the directing duo Sujith and Sandeep were awarded a Special Jury Award for their work on *KA*.

The event marked a milestone for the Telangana film industry, recognising both established stars and emerging talents for their outstanding contributions to cinema. With a diverse range of awards, the Gaddar Telangana Film Awards 2025 showcased the breadth of talent in the region, from performances to technical artistry. The ceremony was a testament to the growing influence of Telangana's cinema and its ability to compete on a national stage.


Nag Aswin


Nivetha Thomas


Ananya Nagalla


Chandrabose

Ileana D'Cruz flaunts baby bump in new photo, confirms she's expecting second child

Actress Ileana D'Cruz, who has charmed audiences with her performances in both Tamil and Hindi cinema, is all set to embrace motherhood for the second time. The actress shared an adorable glimpse of her growing baby bump on Instagram, revealing that she and her husband Michael Dolan are expecting their second child together.

In her latest Instagram story, Ileana posted a black-and-white photo showing herself standing with a friend, both of them showcasing their visible baby bumps. The two friends posed warmly, each placing their hands on their hips, radiating a sense of joy and friendship. Ileana, dressed in a sleek black outfit and her friend in a light-colored fitted dress, looked happy and glowing.

For the caption, Ileana simply wrote: "Bump buddies," sharing the intimate moment with her fans.

The actress first hinted at her second pregnancy earlier this year in January, when she shared a heartfelt video wishing her fans a Happy New Year. A few weeks later, in February, Ileana confirmed the news, giving her followers a glimpse into her midnight cravings. Sharing a picture of her late-night snack, including an antacid, she captioned it humorously: "Tell me you're pregnant without telling me you're pregnant."



Yash joins forces with *Mad Max* stunt legend Guy Norris for epic *Ramayana* action sequences

Yash, the powerhouse actor-producer best known for his iconic role in the *K.G.F.* franchise, has embarked on a thrilling new journey with the much-anticipated film *Ramayana*. The upcoming mythological epic has already created a buzz with its massive scale, but it is the collaboration with Guy Norris, the stunt director behind films like *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*, that promises to take the action sequences to unparalleled heights.

In a bold move, Yash has roped in Norris to choreograph action set pieces that are expected to redefine Indian cinema's approach to large-scale spectacles. Known for his work on adrenaline-pumping action in *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *The Suicide Squad*, Norris is now in India, working closely with Yash to bring the action sequences of *Ramayana* to life. With its grand narrative centered around the exile of Prince Rama and his battle to rescue his wife, Sita, from the demon king Ravana, the film demands action sequences of epic proportions. Yash, whose intense performances and physicality in the *K.G.F.* films set new standards for action in Indian cinema, is committed to bringing this larger-than-life story to the screen with a level of realism and energy that will captivate global audiences.



Directed by Nitesh Tiwari, the highest-grossing Indian film of all time—the film promises to be a visual and emotional tour de force. *Ramayana* is a two-part epic, with the first part slated for release during Diwali 2026, and the second installment expected in Diwali 2027. This expansive timeline indicates the grand ambition behind the project, aiming to deliver a story that stretches across generations, blending mythology with cutting-edge technology.

Naveen Chandra unveils *Yamudu* teaser

Audiences are increasingly drawn to concept-driven films over traditional commercial, romantic, or action genres. Following this trend, a new mythological, suspense, crime and thriller film titled *Yamudu* is set to hit the screens. Produced under the Jagannadha Pictures banner, the film features Jagadish Amanchi in the lead role, who also directs the movie. Its tagline is 'Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah'. Sravani Shetty plays the female lead. The film's title and first-look poster had already generated considerable curiosity among the public. Freshly, the teaser for *Yamudu* was officially released. Prominent actor Naveen Chandra unveiled the teaser on Thursday and congratulated the film's team after watching it. The teaser clearly indicates that *Yamudu* is a gripping mythological, suspense, crime and thriller film. It hints at girls going missing in the city, with a possible connection to a character who plays Yamudu (the god of death) in stage plays. The teaser creates an impression that Yamudu has descended to Earth to dispense the same punishments usually reserved for hell.

A dialogue, 'Dharmamthu Sakshat Bhagavath Praneetham', creates a sense of curiosity that the film is going to present a new perspective based on Hindu Dharma. It feels like the movie has been shaped interestingly around a fresh point drawn from Hindu philosophy. In the teaser, Vishnu Reddy Vanga's cinematography and Bhavani Rakesh's background score are particularly impactful. The makers are expected to announce more updates about the film soon.



Sreeleela to kickstart *Ustaad Bhagat Singh* shoot with Pawan Kalyan from June 10

The highly anticipated film *Ustaad Bhagat Singh* starring Pawan Kalyan is all set to resume production, and the latest update reveals that actress Sreeleela will be joining the cast soon. According to latest information, Sreeleela is scheduled to begin filming for the movie on June 10, 2025, with a month-long shooting schedule.

A source close to the development of the project has revealed that the actress will start filming alongside Pawan Kalyan for the action-packed film directed by Harish Shankar. The shoot will run for a month, and with the film already generating massive excitement, the makers are aiming for a grand release in 2026. The source added, "Sreeleela is gearing up to begin shooting for her much-anticipated film *Ustaad Bhagat Singh* alongside power star Pawan Kalyan. The shoot is scheduled to commence on June 10 and will continue for a month-long schedule."

Ustaad Bhagat Singh is expected to be the Telugu-language adaptation of the hit Tamil film *Theri*, which starred Thalapathy Vijay and was directed by Atlee. The movie will see Pawan Kalyan playing the role of a former IPS officer who leads a quiet life with his young daughter, only to be forced to confront his past when enemies resurface. The film promises high-octane action and emotional depth as the protagonist battles to protect his family. Directed by Harish Shankar, *Ustaad Bhagat Singh* is already creating waves in the industry due to its compelling storyline and Pawan Kalyan's star power. Fans are eagerly awaiting to see how the remake of Theri will be adapted to Telugu cinema, especially with the addition of Sreeleela as the female lead.

Sreeleela, who has already garnered attention for her performances in previous films, will be playing the female co-lead in *Ustaad Bhagat Singh*. With her inclusion in the project, expectations are high for her role, as the actress will share the screen with one of Telugu cinema's biggest stars. Her addition further enhances the film's appeal and fans are excited to see the dynamic between her and Pawan Kalyan.

