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'No pensioner should face problems to get dues' 5



RBI MAY REDUCE REPO RATE 8



HHVM faces yet another DELAY P12

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

The deaths of 26 cows at the Vemulawada temple in five days are a bad omen for the state. Revanth swore in the name of the gods that he would waive farm loans, but did not do it. This has turned into a curse on Telangana. If the government cannot protect the cows at the Vemulawada temple, let them hand over the responsibility to the BRS. We will take care of them. The indifference of the administration is bringing misfortune upon the state



- Harish Rao, BRS MLA

P

DON'T MISS...

Road repair works at smooth pace

Minister for Tourism Development Kandula Durgesh has made it clear that the road repairing works has been carried out in Nidadavole constituency at a cost of Rs 37.69 crore. In a statement here on Wednesday, he said that with his initiative, 139.8 km of roads were repaired in the constituency at a cost of Rs 37.69 crore.
He said that while there is a 26.5 km long Nidadavolu-Narasapuram (Morteru-Prakkilanka) R&B road in the constituency, repairs were carried out on 10 km of roads from Kapavaram-Kanur in January itself...

-PAGE: 3

'One of the best things I've ever done'

Errol Musk, father of tech billionaire Elon Musk, visited the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Wednesday afternoon and described the experience as "wonderful" and one of the "best things" he has ever done. Errol also paid obeisance at the Hanumangarhi temple nearby. He was initially scheduled to visit the Taj Mahal in Agra as well but the plan may be dropped due to extreme heat in the region. "It's wonderful, absolutely wonderful (Ayodhya visit). It's one of the best things I've ever...

-PAGE: 5

Stock markets rebound after fall

Indian benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty snapped the three-day losing streak and settled in the positive territory on Wednesday, mirroring a rally in global markets and supported by buying in blue-chips Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank. Market analysts said Indian equities closed with gains on better-than-expected US job market data and optimism over trade talks between the US and Chinese President this week also added optimism to markets recovery. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed...

-PAGE: 8

Gukesh loses Hikaru in Norway Chess

American Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura broke world champion D Gukesh's run of classical wins by comprehensively beating the Indian to earn three full points even as Arjun Erigaisi roared back to contention with victory over Fabiano Caruana in Norway Chess here. India's Erigaisi trapped his opponent Caruana in a time scramble in the eighth round of the prestigious tournament on Tuesday. World Number 2 and former Norway Chess champion Nakamura pressed home the early advantage he got...

-SPORTS

RCB VICTORY PARADE TURNS TRAGIC



11 DEAD, 33 INJURED IN STAMPEDE AT BANGALORE CRICKET STADIUM

GOVT ANNOUNCES RS 10 LAKH COMPENSATION, ORDERS MAGISTERIAL PROBE



PNS ■ BENGALURU

The celebrations for the RCB's first-ever IPL win turned tragic on Wednesday as at least 11 persons died and more than 30 were injured in a stampede outside the Chinnaswamy Stadium after thousands of RCB fans gathered to catch a glimpse of the team. "11 are dead and 33 injured due to stampede near Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru...More than 2-3 lakh people came, and no one expected this much crowd," Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah said at a press conference. He also said that the stadium could only accommodate 35 thousand spectators. The chief minister announced a magisterial inquiry into the incident and a Rs 10 lakh compensation to the kin of the deceased. The stampede took place when thousands of fans attempted to enter the stadium from various gates. Police had a tough time controlling the crowd, triggering chaos and turning a joyful event into a tragedy. Police used mild force to control the crowd and bring the situation under control ahead of a special felicitation at the stadium for the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) team organised by the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA).

Continued on Page 2



LANDMARK 25TH E-CABINET MEET

Govt nod for major initiatives

Govt promotes inclusive growth, improves governance and accelerates development

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



In a historic milestone, the Andhra Pradesh State Cabinet conducted its 25th e-Cabinet meeting in a completely paperless format under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. The Cabinet applauded the Chief Minister's vision and commitment to digital governance, completing 25 e-Cabinet meetings within a year of the government's tenure.

A series of key decisions were taken across departments aimed at promoting inclusive growth, improving governance and accelerating development across various sectors.

Safe drinking water projects in Srikakulam, Chittoor

The Cabinet approved a one-time settlement of ₹575.75 lakh under the NTR Sujala Pathakam for installing RO plants in the Uddanam and tribal areas of Srikakulam District. Additionally, ₹822.86 lakh was sanctioned for 15 water treatment plants in Kuppam constituency to benefit 533 water-scarce habitations across four mandals in Chittoor district. Together, these projects will ensure clean drinking water access to over 5.27 lakh people.

Home Dept reforms and promotions

Seventeen life-convict prisoners will be granted special remission as per Supreme Court guidelines, paving the way for their rehabilitation. Additionally, 248 constables in APSPF will be promoted to head constables.

District renaming and landallocation

The Cabinet ratified the notification to rename YSR district as YSR Kadapa district. It also approved the transfer of 94.497 acres of government land in Eluru district for establishing the Andhra Pradesh Police Academy. Another 10.88 acres of land donated by former IAS officer Kasaraneni Damayanthi to the Hyderabad Eye Institute will be exempt from stamp duty and registration fees.

Labour reforms and industrial compliance

The Cabinet approved two crucial amendments to the Factories Act, 1948 and AP Shops and Establishments Act, 1988. These reforms are aimed at reducing procedural burdens on industrial establishments and encouraging ease of doing business.

Tourism infrastructure and quantum mission

The Cabinet ratified revised administrative sanctions for modernisation of Haritha Hotel Yatrinivas in Visakhapatnam. It also gave a green signal to establish the Andhra Pradesh State Quantum Mission (SQM) under the National Quantum Mission. With a 50-acre land allocation in Amaravati, partnerships with IIT Madras, TCS, IBM and L&T are expected to accelerate research in quantum computing, AI and cybersecurity.

Continued on Page 2

'Day that created history and restored democracy'

CM marks one year in office with message of gratitude and resolve

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Marking one year in office, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu took to social media to commemorate the anniversary of what he described as a historic turning point in the State's political journey.

In a powerful message posted on X (formerly Twitter), the Chief Minister reflected June 4, 2024, as a "day that created history and restored democracy" in Andhra Pradesh. He described it as the moment when the people's revolution ended a "psycho regime," overthrew dictatorial rule, and reinstated freedom, peace, and constitutional governance in the State.

"The day when democracy was restored through a mass movement… the day when the State, wounded by government tyranny, was handed over to the alliance for a new beginning of welfare, development, and good governance," Naidu wrote.



The Chief Minister acknowledged the critical role played by workers and leaders of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Jana Sena Party (JSP), and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in securing the people's mandate. He credited the relentless efforts of "Yellow Soldiers," "Jana Sainiks," and the unwavering support of "Kamal Nath" (symbolising the BJP) for the coalition's victory.

The CM said that the responsibility bestowed upon the government is being treated with utmost seriousness, and that the administration has been strengthened to live up to public expectations. "We are committed to delivering on welfare and accelerating development," he assured. Promising to unveil many more development and welfare programmes over the remaining four years of the term, Naidu concluded his message with a rousing call: "Jai Andhra Pradesh… Jai Jai Andhra Pradesh!"

Nara Lokesh presents 'Yuvagalam Padayatra' to ministers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan has lauded the book Yuvagalam Padayatra, which chronicles the impactful padayatra (foot march) undertaken by TDP general secretary Nara Lokesh that played a pivotal role in reshaping Andhra Pradesh's political landscape.

During the State Cabinet meeting held at the Secretariat on Wednesday, Lokesh presented copies of the book to Pawan Kalyan and other ministers. The book captures the experiences and challenges faced during the Yuvagalam Padayatra, which served as a mass awakening against the "oppressive and autocratic rule" of the previous YSRCP government led by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan said the Yuvagalam Padayatra was instrumental in enlightening people about the tyrannical governance of the previous regime. He commended Lokesh for bringing those experiences to life through the book and stressed that the struggles endured during that era remain fresh in public memory, even a year after the fall of the previous government.

Lokesh also shared key moments and reflections from the padayatra with Pawan Kalyan.



Botcha Satyanarayana collapses during YSRCP protest

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) MLC and former minister Botcha Satyanarayana collapsed while addressing a public gathering during a party-led protest in Cheepurupalli on Wednesday.

The incident occurred during the 'Vennupotu Dinam' rally, a Statewide protest campaign launched by the YSRCP to mark one year of the NDA government.

Continued on Page 2

Gender-inclusive climate policies needed

TDP MP Dr Shabri Byreddy at session on 'Empowering Women to Face Climate Crisis'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



TDP MP Dr Shabri Byreddy represented India at the 11th BRICS Parliamentary Forum held in Brazil from June 3–5.

Speaking at the session on 'Empowering Women to Face the Climate Crisis', Dr Shabri highlighted how India has always been active in protecting the environment, even before global discussions on climate change began. She referred to the Chipko Movement of the 1970s, where rural women played a key role in saving forests. She also spoke about India's progress on climate goals, including a 24 per cent reduction in emission intensity over 2005 levels, and achieving 159 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity, already meeting its 40 per cent target. She mentioned that India now has the largest number of Ramsar sites in entire South Asia.

Dr Shabri also spoke about the need for gender-inclusive climate policies, and the important role women can play in environmental protection. She said Indian women, seen as "Shakti", have the power to bring change and heal the world.

In another part of her address, she focused on the role of women in the age of Artificial Intelligence, calling for digital literacy, equal access, and inclusion in new technologies.

"It was truly enriching to engage and exchange ideas with fellow parliamentarians from across the globe, especially from BRICS nations. These interactions reinforced the importance of dialogue, solidarity, and shared commitment to progress and equality," she said.

She further thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh N Chandrababu Naidu for the opportunity to be part of this important international event.

Betrayal Day, a grand success: YSRCP

Public ire reflected in the protest: Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Terming the 'Betrayal Day' observance as a grand success, which reflects the ire of the people who felt cheated as none of the poll promises were implemented by the coalition government, the YSRCP said anti-incumbency has set in much earlier YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has been with the people throughout.

Speaking to media here on Wednesday, party State coordinator Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said despite the police restrictions the 'Betrayal Day' was a grand success with people voicing their dissent in unison as the election promises were not fulfilled by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and drew a contrast with YS Jagan Mohan Reddy term where 99 per cent of the promises were delivered on the dot.



"People felt cheated as the existing schemes were stopped and the promised ones were not rolled out, and this has a clear reflection in success of Betrayal Day," he said, adding that YS Jagan, even in Opposition, was always with the people while Chandrababu was away from the people and the State between 2019-24. "The contrast is tangible and this protest is only a mild reminder and in the coming days the groundswell of support to the YSRCP in highlighting people's issues will spell doom to the TDP.

2

JUSTICE VARMA'S REMOVAL

Govt reaches out to political parties; wants all on board

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday underlined the government's resolve to take all political parties on board in moving an impeachment motion against Justice Yashwant Varma, saying corruption in the judiciary cannot be approached through a "political prism".

He said the government wants the exercise aimed at axing Justice Varma, embroiled in a case of alleged corruption and indicted by a Supreme Court-appointed committee, a "collaborative effort".

Rijiju told reporters here that he has already initiated discussions with all political parties to bring the motion in Parliament's Monsoon session, starting from July 21, against the Allahabad High Court judge.

He said the government wants all parties to "jointly" move the motion to remove Justice Varma.

Rijiju said he will reach out to smaller parties, while all major parties have already been informed about the plan to bring a motion of impeachment against Justice Varma.

"The government feels that the matter related to corruption is not one political party's agenda. It is a stand of all parties to fight against the menace of corruption, whether it is the judiciary or any other space," he said. The minister underlined that the government would like to take all political parties on board on the issue as corruption in the judiciary cannot be approached through a "political prism".



"The government feels that the matter related to corruption is not one political party's agenda. It is a stand of all parties to fight against the menace of corruption, whether it is the judiciary or any other space."

He said most parties will revert after discussing the issue internally.

To a query, Rijiju said the decision on whether the motion will be brought in the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha will be taken based on the business of each House.

According to the Judges (Inquiry) Act of 1968, once a motion to remove a judge is admitted in any of the Houses, the speaker or the chairman, as the case may be, will constitute a three-member committee to investigate the grounds on which the removal (or, in popular term, impeachment) has been sought. The committee consists of the chief justice of India (CJI) or a Supreme Court judge, the chief justice of one of the 25 high courts and a " distinguished jurist".

Rijiju said the present case is "slightly different" as an in-house committee formed by then CJI Sanjiv Khanna has already submitted its report. "So what is to be done in this matter, we will take a call," he said. The minister said the process has to be followed, but how to "integrate the inquiry already conducted" needs to be decided.

"As per the rule, a committee has to be constituted and then the committee has to submit a report and the report will be tabled in the House and discussions will start to impeach. Here, a committee has already been constituted, not by Parliament."

The Pioneer
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'Milestone in AP's democratic and developmental journey'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister Kinjarapu Atchannaidu has said that as the NDA government completes its first year in office, it marks not just an anniversary but a 'symbolic milestone in Andhra Pradesh's democratic and developmental journey'. "The day that gave democracy a new direction, June 4 commemorates the return of governance with commitment, transparency, and people-centric values," he added.

"Taking charge at a time when the State was reeling under debt and administrative dysfunction, the NDA government, under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, transformed challenges into opportunities through experienced leadership and tireless efforts. In just one year, the government has launched over 700 welfare and development schemes, setting a record in administrative turnaround," he said.

The Minister said key achievements include the hike in pensions from ?3,000 to ?4,000, revival of 204 Anna Canteens, announcement of DSC to fill 16,347 teacher posts, procurement of a record 54 lakh tonnes of paddy with prompt payment, and restoration of 20,000 km of roads to pothole-free condition. The Land Titling Act was repealed, and the capital city development was revived.

Farmers have received renewed support through schemes like Matsyakara Bharosa, free electricity for agriculture, 90 per cent subsidies on drip irrigation, and 80 per cent subsidies on seeds. The State attracted investments worth ?9.4 lakh crore, creating six lakh job opportunities.

The Minister said innovative initiatives such as WhatsApp Governance and the use of drone technology in administration highlight the government's focus on modern, responsive governance. Villages now reflect a celebratory atmosphere with improved safety, quality education, healthcare access, and visible progress in agriculture.

This one-year milestone is being celebrated not just as a government achievement but as a people's movement that restored hope, stability, and growth.

The NDA government reaffirmed its commitment to rebuilding the State and thanked the people for their trust and continued support, Atchannaidu added.

In just one year, govt has launched over 700 welfare and development schemes



NDA govt will deliver 'good governance' for 30 years: MP Chinni

Accuses previous YSRCP regime of fostering drug abuse, financial corruption, and betraying public trust

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Marking one year of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP)-led NDA coalition government's rule in the State, Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivnath alias Chinni confidently asserted that under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government is committed to delivering "good governance" for the next 30 years.

The State government's first anniversary under NDA rule was celebrated with grandeur at ISKCON Temple Grounds near the Screw Bridge in Vijayawada on Wednesday. The event, organised by the Jana Sena Party (JSP), was attended by key leaders, including Minister for Civil Supplies, Food and Consumer Affairs Nadendla Manohar, MP Kesineni Sivnath, Vijayawada East MLA Gadde Rama Mohana Rao, and others.

The celebrations featured a rangoli competition for women themed on NDA unity and national development, classical dance performances by children, and a ceremonial cake cutting to commemorate a year of "good governance".

Speaking on the occasion, MP Kesineni praised the NDA government's achievements, saying, "From Anantapur to Srikakulam, the alliance is dedicated to people's welfare and inclusive growth." He sharply criticised the previous YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) regime, accusing it of fostering drug abuse, financial corruption, and betraying public trust. He emphasised that voters decisively rejected the misgovernance through the ballot.

Kesineni also directed strong allegations against former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, accusing him of familial betrayal and involvement in the murder of his uncle, Vivekananda Reddy. He further accused Jagan of encouraging criminal elements and drug trafficking during his tenure and predicted that Jagan will soon face imprisonment related to the ongoing liquor scam case.

Minister Nadendla Manohar remarked that the people had delivered a "historic verdict" in favour of the NDA despite many obstacles. He highlighted Jana Sena's role in the government as a reflection of the public's aspirations and expressed satisfaction at fielding three women leaders in key constituencies, demonstrating the alliance's commitment to inclusivity.

Prominent NDA and Jana Sena leaders, including Jana Sena East coordinator Ammisetti Vasu, Agnikula Kshatriya Welfare Chairman Chilakalapudi Paparao, Shalivahana Kumari Welfare Chairman Perepi Eeshwar, VMC Corporators Ummadisetti Radhika and Mummaneni Prasad, TDP State leader Ganne Prasad (Anna), APIIC Director Mandal Rajesh, and Jana Sena leader Hariprasad were present.

Next phase of filling Home Guard posts announced

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Crime Investigation Department (CID) of Andhra Pradesh has announced the next phase of the recruitment process for 28 Category-B Home Guard (Technical & Other Trades) posts. These are voluntary service positions and the recruitment notification was initially issued on April 28.

The department received a total of 12,569 applications, out of which 7,684 candidates have been shortlisted for the Physical Measurement Tests (PMT) and certificate verification. These procedures will begin on June 9 from 6 a.m. onwards at the Parade Grounds of the Sixth Battalion, Andhra Pradesh Special Police (APSP), Mangalagiri, Guntur district.

The CID has uploaded individual schedules for shortlisted candidates on its official website https://cid.appolice.gov.in. Candidates must report strictly at

15 L 'Bangaru Kutumbalu' will be adopted by August 15, says CM

'Margadarsi' registration process to be expedited

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



As part of the Zero Poverty P4 mission, Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to ensure that 15 lakh families in the State are adopted by Margadarsis (mentors) by August 15 this year. He emphasised the need to accelerate the registration of Margadarsis and the adoption process.

Stating that the P4 model is a continuation of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) policy introduced after the economic reforms, the Chief Minister conducted a review on the Zero Poverty P4 initiative at his Undavalli camp office on Wednesday. He directed that the Smart Andhra Pradesh Foundation be restructured as the Swarna Andhra P4 Foundation.

The CM highlighted Amaravati's land pooling model as a case study for the P4 approach, noting that wealth creation was enabled for 29,000 farmers by making them partners in capital development.

In the same spirit, he urged each Margadarsi to adopt a 'Bangaru Kutumbam' (Golden Family) and work towards their uplift.

The Chief Minister said he will personally review the progress of the P4 initiative once every 10 days. He also reviewed the P4 logo designs prepared by officials.

Partnerships for P4 implementation

Officials informed the CM that several organisations such as Milaap, Project DEEP, Rang De, and Bhargo have come forward to collaborate as partners in implementing the P4 initiative effectively.

Out of the 19,15,771 families registered as Bangaru Kutumbalu in the State, Margadarsis have so far adopted 70,272 families. Among these, the largest numbers are from the BC community (26,340 families), followed by SCs (14,024 families) and STs (13,115 families).

₹9.5L cr investments, 8.5 L jobs in just 11 months: Lokesh

Asks officials to speed up allocation of land and infrastructure for renewable energy projects

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Minister for Education, IT and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, announced that the government has secured industrial investment proposals worth ?9.5 lakh crore and commitments for 8.5 lakh jobs in just 11 months, an achievement the previous government failed to realise in five years. Lokesh chaired a high-level meeting on employment generation and investment monitoring at his Undavalli residence, attended by senior ministers and officials.

The Minister stated that 78 major industries have come forward with proposals worth ?9.2 lakh crore, while 1,19,580 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have proposed investments worth ?13,895 crore. He stressed continuous monitoring through dedicated Project Monitoring Units (PMUs) within the Economic Development Board (EDB) for companies like NTCP, BPCL, Reliance and Tata Power until these projects are operational.

Lokesh directed officials to fast-track the allocation of land and infrastructure for renewable energy projects. Highlighting Andhra Pradesh's vast coastline, he called for a focused push on beach tourism and emphasised extending support to star hotel projects like Oberoi and Varun Beach Sands in Visakhapatnam, including provision of power and water.

The Minister urged exploration of investments and employment opportunities in beach sand mining and coal gasification sectors. To ensure industries have access to a skilled workforce, he stressed the need for robust training programmes and the development of a skill ecosystem.

He also proposed rapid action on building a world-class international cricket stadium in Amaravati with BCCI's support, citing its potential for large-scale employment generation. To improve ease of doing business, Lokesh recommended integrating WhatsApp governance to expedite industrial approvals.

Noting that MSMEs offer maximum employment potential, he advised aligning them with the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) for better financial support.

As the State approached one year under the leadership of CM Chandrababu Naidu, Lokesh called for parallel progress in investment attraction and project execution. He reaffirmed AP's commitment to investor-friendly and fast-track governance policies, encouraging direct engagement with interested companies.

Ministers and top officials, including Ponguru Narayana, Kandula Durgesh, TG Bharat and senior bureaucrats from Industry, Tourism and IT departments attended the meeting.

Health department finalises guidelines for staff transfers

Spouses working at the same location can continue if one of them has less than five years of service there

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Health Department has finalised the action plan for the upcoming general transfer process of medical personnel, including guidelines for counselling. With the deadline for submitting location preferences ending on Wednesday, Special Chief Secretary MT Krishna Babu held a meeting with department heads to streamline the process. The action plan received approval from Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav. The newly issued guidelines emphasise transparency and consistency across all levels, from district officials to senior administrators.

A key highlight is the provision allowing married couples to continue working in the same location if either spouse has not completed five years at the current post. Besides, transfers will prioritise staff who have completed five years at their current location. Those with two to five years of service will be considered for transfer based on their preferred choices. If candidates completing five years do not get a preferred posting, counselling will be conducted. Staff with two to five years of service who are not transferred as per their choices will remain in their current positions.

Contract staff working in regular posts will continue in their roles for now, and those posts will not be treated as vacancies. On the issue of unannounced vacancies, Krishna Babu clarified that some posts in medical colleges were not listed due to regulatory requirements by the National Medical Commission (NMC) and the need to redeploy staff in PPP-run colleges. He also assured that most staff completing five years will be transferred and exceptions will be handled with valid justification.

Uprising against Jagan's autocratic mindset: Min

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav has described June 4, 2024, as a historic day that marked the people's unified stand against five years of lawlessness, corruption and authoritarian rule under former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Calling it "Democracy Protection Day," the Minister said the people of Andhra Pradesh had delivered a decisive verdict on this day last year, restoring democratic values and protecting their constitutional rights. He likened it to the historic 1977 national movement when citizens stood up against the Emergency to safeguard democracy in India.

"The mandate was not just a political change; it was a collective uprising against Jagan Mohan Reddy's autocratic mindset," said the Minister. He strongly criticised Jagan for declaring June 4 as "Backstabbers' Day," stating that such an announcement is a direct insult to the people's verdict and reflects Jagan's distorted mentality.

He urged the public to remain vigilant and ensure there is no return to the "dark era" of misgovernance. "Let us not allow even the slightest space for chaos and autocracy to return," he said.

The Minister extended congratulations to the people for their historic decision last year and expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan for leading the State towards restored democracy and people-centric governance.

Ganta calls YSRCP's 'Vennupotu Dinam' political theatre

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a scathing rebuttal to the YSR Congress Party's (YSRCP) decision to observe 'Vennupotu Dinam' on the NDA government's first anniversary, Bheemunipatnam MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao slammed the move as a "meaningless political gimmick" and accused YSRCP chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy of refusing to accept the people's verdict in the 2024 Assembly polls.

Addressing the media at his residence on Wednesday, Srinivasa Rao said Reddy seemed to have learned "nothing" from his party's electoral defeat. "Any seasoned leader introspects, engages with the cadre, and rebuilds public trust after a loss. But Reddy still believes the people erred in voting him out," he said.

Describing 'Vennupotu Dinam' as "political theatre", the senior TDP leader questioned the rationale behind such an observance. "Is it a cover-up for halting Amaravati's development in the name of three capitals? Is it an attempt to distract from the YSRCP's failure to secure funds for the Polavaram project or to push for the PM's visit to Andhra for mega infrastructure launches," he asked.

He went on to list key projects ignored by the previous government — the long-pending Metro Rail project, the promised Railway Zone for Visakhapatnam, and the Rs 12,000 crore rescue package for the struggling Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. "Reddy made no meaningful effort to safeguard VSP from privatisation," he alleged.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi:	
Dashami:	Jun 04 11:54 PM to Jun 06 02:16 AM
Ekadashi:	Jun 06 02:16 AM to Jun 07 04:48 AM
Nakshatram:	
Hasta:	Jun 05 03:35 AM to Jun 06 06:33 AM
Rahukalam:	1:52 PM to 3:29 PM
Yamagandam:	5:44 AM to 7:22 AM
Varjyam:	01:02 PM to 02:49 PM
Gulika:	8:59 AM to 10:37 AM
Amritakalam:	11:49 PM to 01:37 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:48 AM to 12:40 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 37°c
Humidity: 58%
Sunrise: 5:34 AM
Sunset: 6:38 PM

Updated: June 4, 2025 5:00 PM

Govt nod for...

Continued from Page 1

A Quantum Summit is scheduled in June to finalise strategic plans.

Yoga world record initiative

As part of YogAndhra -2025 and International Yoga Day on June 21, AP will attempt to set a new Guinness World Record. PM Narendra Modi will attend the main event in Visakhapatnam. Nearly two crore people are expected to participate across the State, with plans to accommodate up to five lakh people along the coastline from Bheemili to Srikakulam.

Industrial development and MSME expansion

The Cabinet cleared proposals for the completion of the Flatted Factory Complex at JetCity in NTR district, with APEDCO handling initial works and APIIC taking over the final phase. Land will be transferred with stamp duty exemptions. Besides, the Cabinet approved the establishment of 175 MSME parks, one in each Assembly constituency, under the "One Family-One Entrepreneur" initiative, aimed at promoting grassroots entrepreneurship and self-employment.

RCB victory parade...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, the felicitation of the players went ahead nonetheless as the stadium was packed to the rafters despite the chaos outside the stadium.

People were seen collapsing, visuals showed police shifting the injured persons and those who fell unconscious in ambulances to nearby hospitals. Visuals also showed some of those who were in an unconscious state being administered cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) by those nearby. The injured were hospitalised at Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital in Shivajinagar and other hospitals. According to hospital sources, deaths could have been caused due to suffocation. There were also heart-wrenching scenes at the hospitals, where people were crying over the death of their loved ones.

"The stampede incident shouldn't have happened, and the government expresses grief over it," Siddaramaiah said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the stampede as "absolutely heartrending".

"In this tragic hour, my thoughts are with all those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that those who are injured have a speedy recovery," Modi said on X.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also expressed deep anguish over the loss of lives.

"The crowd was uncontrollable, police were finding it difficult, so we had to stop the procession," Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said while speaking about the tragedy because of which a planned victory parade could not take place.

The BCCI said the turn of events was shocking and the organisers should have been better-prepared.

Botcha collapses...

Continued from Page 1

The protest was called by party chief and former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. Satyanarayana, who oversees the Cheepurupalli Assembly segment, was speaking from atop a vehicle when he reportedly lost consciousness and slumped. Former MP Bellana Chandrasekhar and other party leaders present at the event immediately moved him to the YSRCP camp office in Garividi. A medical team was dispatched to attend to him.

Local party leaders opined that the incident may have been caused by heatstroke. For the past few days, day temperatures have been hovering around 35 to 40 degrees Celsius across many places in Uttarandhra districts.

Betrayal Day, a...

Continued from Page 1

Health, medical and agriculture sectors are being neglected by the coalition and during electioneering, the TDP had given assurance in writing about the welfare schemes it would implement.

"As is his wont, Chandrababu Naidu has downsized the number of beneficiaries drastically but has been boasting that he has increased the pension amount. A glimpse at the ration shops will show the poor quality of governance as physically challenged and aged people are standing in queue to get ration after doing away with the door delivery system implemented by Jagan.

"The loan component has been over Rs 1.51 lakh crore and there is no accountability while Jagan transferred amount through DBT. The ire of the beneficiaries who were left in the lurch have raised their voice to make the Betrayal Day a success," Sajjala said.

The police tried to restrict and even went to the extent of telling how to conduct the protest, but the people and their ire was vented during the protest, he said.

The YSRCP, as a responsible Opposition party, will always be with the people and the anti-incumbency is fast spiralling. In the days to come the TDP will feel the brunt. The protest is to show how people were cheated by the government, Sajjala added.

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'Betrayal Day': Malladi Vishnu leads massive rally

Says Andhra Pradesh is now under "police rule"



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) observed 'Betrayal Day' in Gandhi Nagar, Vijayawada Central constituency, under the leadership of former MLA Malladi Vishnu. The protest began at Dharna Chowk, where YSRCP leaders strongly condemned the policies of the ruling alliance government. A large rally followed, concluding at the Gandhi Nagar Mandal Revenue Office (MRO), where a memorandum was submitted to the Deputy Tahsildar.

The protest witnessed participation from hundreds of affected groups including sacked village volunteers, auto workers, Mobile Dispensing Unit (MDU) staff and others. Addressing the gathering, Malladi Vishnu accused Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu of ignoring pre-election promises. He criticised the failure of the "Super Six" promises and said the alliance government had dismantled key welfare schemes initiated by the previous YSRCP government.

Vishnu alleged that Andhra Pradesh is now under "police rule" and condemned police atrocities on SC, ST, BC and minority communities in Tenali. He also blamed the alliance for burdening the public with ?15,000 crore in electricity dues within the first year, while failing to implement any development or welfare programmes despite borrowing ?1.6 lakh crore.

The former MLA highlighted that during the YSRCP rule, several schemes benefited people in Vijayawada Central, including Amma Vodi (?43.91 crore to 29,278 mothers), Jagananna Vidya Deevena (?7.22 crore to 3,340 students), Kapu Nestham, zero-interest loans and Vahana Mitra. These benefits, he said, have now vanished under the current administration.

Deputy Mayor Shailaja Reddy also slammed the alliance, saying the "Super Six" coalition had deceived the public and contributed equally to the people's hardships.

Several local corporators, YSRCP leaders, and community leaders participated in the protest.



Krishna sets target of 2.92 L saplings for Environment Day

Collector launches cloth bags to promote environmental sustainability

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a step toward environmental conservation, Krishna District Collector DK Balaji has instructed officials to plant 2.92 lakh saplings across the district as part of World Environment Day celebrations on June 5. He urged officials from various departments to coordinate efforts to ensure the mass plantation drive's success.

Collector DK Balaji held a meeting with municipal commissioners and officials from the Welfare Department at the collectorate meeting hall in Machilipatnam on Wednesday. During the meeting, he launched cloth bags to promote environmental sustainability in the district. He also emphasised the importance of planting saplings in government schools, colleges, and welfare department hostels.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Balaji said that to implement the programme with a grand success in the district, the Collector directed DWAMA PD NV Siva Prasad Yadav and District Panchayat Officer J Aruna to supervise and coordinate the plantation campaign. He informed the gathering that various nurseries across mandals were ready to supply saplings.

He added that 2.92 saplings are ready for distribution from nurseries in the district. There are 7,000 saplings at Puligadda Nursery of Avanigadda mandal and 40,000 at Nandamuru Nursery of Pedana mandal, he said. Besides, 50,000 saplings are available at Veerapanenigudem of Gannavaram mandal and 10,000 plants at Guduru Nursery. Around 1.50 lakh sarugudi sarudugu are ready for distribution, he explained.

During the session, Pollution Control Board Officer Srinivasa Rao briefed the Collector about plans to raise public awareness about single-use plastic bans during the Masula Beach Festival on June 5. To support the cause, the Collector also launched cloth bags as a sustainable alternative.

Several senior officials attended the meeting, including ZP CEO Kannamanayudu, District Forest Officer Sunitha, BC Welfare Officer Ramesh, Social Welfare DD Shahid Babu, DTWO Phani Dhurjati, Animal Husbandry Officer China Narasimhulu, and the municipal commissioners of Machilipatnam, Gudivada, Pedana, Uyyuru, and Tadigadapa.

A day honouring people's verdict: Pawan Kalyan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister and Jana Sena Party president Pawan Kalyan marked the completion of one year since the historic mandate that brought the NDA coalition to power in the State, calling it a landmark day in Indian political history.

In a post on social media platform X, Pawan Kalyan recalled June 4, 2024, as the day when the people of Andhra Pradesh dismantled a five-year-long autocratic regime through their democratic power. "It was the day the citizens broke down the feudal strongholds with their votes and laid the foundation for the restoration of democracy," he stated.

Celebrating the Jana Sena Party's 100 per cent strike rate in the 2024 Assembly elections, Pawan Kalyan lauded the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's four-decade-long political experience, and the unyielding spirit of Jana Sainiks and Veera Mahilas. He said their determination and relentless struggles had made this historic victory possible.



"We have taken the people's verdict as a responsibility. We are correcting past mistakes and working towards securing a golden future for the next generations," he affirmed.

He stressed that the NDA coalition – comprising Jana Sena, Telugu Desam Party and Bharatiya Janata Party – is committed to providing governance beyond politics, aiming to shape a prosperous 'Swarn Andhra 2047' and contribute significantly to 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

Marking the occasion, Civil Supplies Minister Nadendla Manohar and Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh met Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan at the Secretariat on Wednesday morning, and extended their greetings, sharing in the celebration of the coalition's first anniversary in office.

People tasted fruits of Modi governance: Srinivasa Varma

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Minister Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Varma has said that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the country has witnessed significant progress, and the people have truly experienced the benefits of good governance and welfare. Speaking at a State-level workshop on "Seva, Suparipalana" (Service and Good Governance) in Vijayawada, the Minister highlighted the key milestones achieved during Modi's 11 years as Prime Minister.

Reflecting on India's transformation since 2014, Varma said, "When Modi took charge, India was the world's 11th largest economy. Today, under his leadership, we have become the fourth largest economy, and soon, we are poised to reach the third position." He attributed this rise to strong and resilient leadership, even during global crises like the COVID pandemic, which severely impacted many nations' economies.

VMC Commissioner reports status of road works to DC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha received an update regarding the ongoing BRTS road construction and the expansion of Errakatta road from Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner HM Dhyanachandra on Wednesday. The Collector and the Commissioner conducted an inspection of the relevant areas at the field level in the city on Wednesday.

On the occasion, the Commissioner held a review with officials regarding the necessary steps to extend the BRTS road from Gunadala to Satyanarayanapuram, which leads to the railway station. He instructed the preparation of a detailed report concerning the road within the jurisdiction of the municipal corporation and the collaborative actions to be taken with railway officials. He stressed that the completion of this road, in conjunction with the railway, would improve connectivity to the railway station.

Following this, the Commissioner instructed the officials to prepare a comprehensive report on the actions needed for the construction of the upcoming railway overbridge at Errakatta, which includes details of the road development plan and the residences affected by the extension work. Chief Engineer R Srinath Reddy, Chief City Planner Sanjay Ratnakumar, in-charge Chief Medical & Health Officer Dr Gopalakrishna Naik, Assistant Medical Officers Dr Babu Srinivas and Dr Annapurna, Deputy City Planner Subhash Chandra Bose, Assistant City Planner Mohan Babu, and Executive Engineers Surekha and Srinivas Reddy were present.

Vizag filmmaker selected for prestigious Italy film programme

Sagi Sree Hari Varma to join global talent at Cinemadamare 2025

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



City-based filmmaker Sagi Sree Hari Varma has been selected to participate in Cinemadamare, a renowned international summer filmmaking programme in Italy. Scheduled from June 29 to July 27, the month-long initiative is a travelling film campus that unfolds across scenic regions of Italy, offering a collaborative platform for emerging global filmmakers.

An alumnus of the Oscars' Gold Rising Program, organised by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Varma is among the few Indian filmmakers chosen for the coveted programme. He hails from Visakhapatnam and has steadily built a name in the international film circuit through his distinctive cinematic work.

Varma's portfolio includes acclaimed short films and high-profile commercial campaigns, notably for the FIFA World Cup and the United Nations. His short film The Fool, shot at Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank, California, garnered critical acclaim for its narrative depth and visual finesse.

Cinemadamare is supported by the Government of Italy and celebrated by Italian filmmakers. It combines workshops, cultural exchanges, and hands-on short film production across different Italian locales, promoting cross-cultural dialogue and creative collaboration.

All set for grand Masula Beach Festival

Water sports, beach volleyball and National Beach Kabaddi Championship from today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The coastal town of Machilipatnam is all geared up to host the Masula Beach Festival – 2025 from June 6 to 8 at the picturesque Manginapudi Beach, under the vibrant theme "This is our village - Our festival". The Andhra Pradesh Tourism Department, Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP), and the Krishna district administration are jointly organising the festival. The festival promises to be one of the largest beach celebrations in South India.

The festivities will unofficially begin a day early on June 5, featuring national-level water sports, beach volleyball competitions, and the 12th National Beach Kabaddi Championship. The tournament will use a league-cum-knockout format and will include participation from 600 players and officials representing 24 men's teams and 21 women's teams from various States.

A major highlight on Day 1 will be the unveiling of the 60-foot 'Gateway of Amaravati', modelled after the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly, and a 100-foot national flag to mark the commencement of the water sports. The beach will offer a thrilling experience with heli rides, paragliding, speed boating, jet skiing, bungee jumping, and sea kayaking.

From June 6 evening onwards, cultural programmes featuring Tollywood artistes, folk performances, and Telugu



cuisine — including the famous Bandaru sweets — will entertain visitors.

Over 100 exhibition stalls will showcase regional crafts and culture.

The festival will include food courts serving a wide variety of regional and pan-Indian delicacies.

District Collector DK Balaji has ensured that extensive preparations are in place, including one-way traffic management under the direction of District Superintendent of Police (SP) R Gangadhara Rao. The district administration has taken all steps for the live broadcast of all major events. Under the supervision of the district police, Marine safety teams are ready to provide seabathing assistance for the pilgrims.

The festival is being organised under the auspices of Minister Kollu Ravindra, with a focus on promoting local culture, tourism, and sports on a national platform.

SRM Foundation launches vocational training centres for women

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a major initiative aimed at rural empowerment, the SRM Foundation inaugurated multiple free vocational training centres in Kuragallu village on Wednesday. The centres were launched in the presence of Tenali Sub-Collector Sanjana Sinha and SRM University-AP's Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Satish Kumar.

The centres offer free training in computer skills, tailoring and academic support through tuition classes. The initiative is designed to foster digital literacy, self-employment and academic advancement for women and students in the region.

On the occasion, Sub-Collector Sinha commended the SRM Foundation, noting, "SRM-AP, as the largest educational institution in Amaravati, is lighting the lamp of knowledge for thousands. This free-of-cost service to rural communities is highly commendable." She stressed the importance of computer literacy in today's world and urged residents to utilise the local, expert-led training programmes.





Prof Satish Kumar highlighted the Foundation's mission to build economic independence among rural women. "These training programmes will help women develop skills leading to self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods," he said.

SRM Foundation Secretary Dr DV Venkatagiri stated that similar free centres are operational in Chennai, Amaravati, and Delhi, with three already launched in the Amaravati region and plans for further expansion.

As part of the event, books, bags, and stationery were distributed to tuition students. In a show of appreciation, villagers felicitated Prof Satish Kumar and Dr Venkatagiri. Sub-Collector Sinha also honoured local educators for their contributions with ceremonial shawls.

Primary sector crucial for AP's GDP growth: Budithi Rajasekhar

Horticulture has high Gross Value Addition compared to traditional agriculture

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Agriculture and allied sectors will play a crucial role in driving Andhra Pradesh's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) over the next 10 years, said Budithi Rajasekhar, Special Chief Secretary, Agriculture and Cooperation. He was addressing trainee Assistant Collectors undergoing field-level training.

Highlighting that the primary sector contributes 35 per cent to the State's GSDP, Rajasekhar urged the officers to focus on horticulture, which has high Gross Value Addition (GVA) compared to traditional



agriculture. He stressed the need to gradually shift farmers from conventional crops to horticulture through targeted action plans.

Pointing out the challenges of low shelf-life and lack of storage facilities for raw agricultural produce, he stressed the importance of adopting advanced post-harvest processing methods to ensure better returns and higher value addition. Rajasekhar also called for greater focus on natural farming, which is more resilient to diverse climatic conditions and ensures consistent yields.

He advised that farmers must be guided away from over-cultivating high-priced crops in subsequent seasons based solely on current market prices. "Such practices," he said, "can distort markets and hurt farmer incomes in the long run."

The session was part of a special training programme for 2024-batch Assistant Collectors from seven districts, organised at the State Directorate of Agriculture. The training aims to build awareness among officers about future needs and policy directions for the agriculture and allied sectors.

Agriculture Director Dilli Rao stated that the Andhra Pradesh Human Resource Development Institute is conducting this training from May 12 to June 8. It includes field visits and exposure to various government schemes, agricultural extension services, input regulation and welfare programmes.

Road repair works at smooth pace, says Minister Durgesh

PNS ■ NIDADAVOLU



Minister for Tourism Development Kandula Durgesh has made it clear that the road repairing works has been carried out in Nidadavole constituency at a cost of Rs 37.69 crore. In a statement here on Wednesday, he said that with his initiative, 139.8 km of roads were repaired in the constituency at a cost of Rs 37.69 crore.

He said that while there is a 26.5 km long Nidadavolu-Narasapuram (Morteru-Prakkilanka) R&B road in the constituency, repairs were carried out on 10 km of roads from Kapavaram-Kanur in January itself.

He stated that tenders were being called for the repair of another 2.2 km of roads that are heavily damaged at a cost of Rs 3 crore, adding that the repair work on Peravali-Kanpur (Morteru-Prakkilanka) is underway and the pothole filling program is still ongoing here and there.

"Proposals worth Rs 105 crore have been sent to the government. The construction will be completed one by one by the end of the month. The potholes on the road from Peravali to Usulumarru have already been filled. The road work is underway between Kanur-Usulumarru and Kanur-Kalaparru. The repair work on 5 roads is mainly at the proposal stage and the work on 4 roads is progressing at a rapid pace," he asserted.

In this regard, Minister Durgesh noted that repairs and construction of the R&B roads had already been undertaken in the constituency at an estimated cost of Rs. 52.09 crore, and 139.8 km of work had been completed at a cost of Rs. 37.69 crore.

"The potholes have been filled on 88.7 km of roads across the constituency at a cost of Rs 2.89 crore. As part of this, Rs 7.20 crore has been sanctioned for 14.9 km of state highway works and work is underway.

The Minister highlighted that Rs. 5.1 crores have been sanctioned for 12.5 km under NABARD and that the work has almost been completed. To beautify the most damaged roads, work has been undertaken for 23 km at a cost of Rs 6.40 crores, out of which Rs. 3.90 crores worth of roads have been completed and the construction work of CC roads worth Rs 1.80 crores is going on at a fast pace.

"Apart from these, a total of 34.93 km of Panchayat Raj roads have been completed at a cost of Rs 24.27 crore, out of which 20.19 km have been completed through the 'Palle Panduda programme with the MGNREGS funds of Rs 10.82 crore, 8.12 km with a cost of Rs. 9.28 crore through the Andhra Pradesh Rural Road Project (APRRP), and 6.62 km of roads at a cost of Rs. 4.17 crore through the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)," the Minister explained.

The Minister made it clear that Rs 95 crore has been sanctioned for ROB in Nidadavolu town, out of which Rs.50 crore has been spent. The construction of approach roads and other works, more than 50 percent of which has been completed, and steps are being taken to complete the remaining works quickly, he acknowledged.



Anantapur-Bangalore MEMU rail flagged off by MP, MLA

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Anantapur MP Ambika Lakshminarayana, flanked by MP Paritala Sunita and Collector Vinod Kumar, flagged off the Anantapur-KSR Bangalore(66560) MEMO rail at the railway state here on Wednesday.

On the occasion, MP Lakshminarayana, MLA Paritala Sunita and railway officials travelled in the train from Anantapur Railway Station to Prasad Nayanapalli Railway Station after the train was flagged off.

Speaking on the occasion, MP Ambika Lakshminarayana said that they got a golden opportunity to establish a train from Anantapur to KSR Bangalore. Employees, traders, patients and students can travel from Anantapur to Bangalore for just Rs 50, the MP said

With the support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, State Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Union Railway Ministers Ashwini Vaishnav and V. Somanna, the KSR Bengaluru train service was sanctioned. He said that they are very happy about the successful launch of the train service from Anantapur to Bangalore.

Disease-free life achievable through yoga: Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha has emphasised the importance of yoga as a vital practice for maintaining physical and mental well-being in today's fast-paced world. Collector Dr Lakshmisha performed yoga asanas alongside ex-servicemen and pensioners, underscoring the universal appeal and relevance of yoga in modern life.

The 15th day of the 'YogAndhra' initiative at BRTS Yoga Street in the city was organised by the Ayush Department in collaboration with the NTR district administration and Vijayawada Municipal Corporation on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, he said that a disease-free life is possible through regular practice of yoga asanas. He said, "Yoga is part of India's rich cultural and spiritual heritage, and is now being embraced by countries across the globe."

He added that yoga should become an integral part of daily life for all. In the context of increasing lifestyle-related diseases and stress.

Notorious burglar arrested, booty worth Rs 31 L. recovered



PNS ■ ELURU

The police cracked a major burglary by arresting a notorious burglar and recovered booty worth over Rs 31 lakh.

Eluru SP K Pratap Shiva Kishore told the media here on Wednesday that a major heist took place at Jagannadhapet village of Polavaram mandal. Victim Padmanabuni Srinivasa Gupta went to Rajamahendravaram along with his family for medical treatment on May 13, 2025.

When he was not at home, burglar Usurumarti Gangajalam committed burglary in the house and made away with gold jewellery and silver ornaments worth over Rs 29,43,588 and also cash. The victim lodged a complaint with the police who registered the case as crime number 42/2025, u/s 331 (3), 305 (A) BNS.

The police formed a special team led by CI P Suresh Babu. The police team arrested the burglar Gangajalam and on June 3 at Tadipudi Lift Irrigation project. During the interrogation he confessed to the crime. He concealed the booty in an iron box in his house. The police covered the booty worth Rs 31,83,588 including cash of Rs 7 lakh. However, he spent some of the stolen cash on poker gambling.

The accused, Usurumarthi Ganga Jalam, has a criminal history and was previously involved in multiple house burglary cases. He is currently listed as a History Sheeter in the Polavaram Police Station records.

The District SP commended the Polavaram police team for their swift investigation, arrest of the accused, and recovery of a significant portion of the stolen property.

78 lakh unreserved tickets booked through ATVM in FY 2024-25

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Vijayawada Railway Division in South Central Railway continues to enhance passenger convenience and promote digital initiatives with the successful operation of Automatic Ticket Vending Machines (ATVMs) across its network.

These user-friendly machines have significantly streamlined unreserved ticketing, enabling faster, contactless, and hassle-free travel for lakhs of daily commuters.

In a significant achievement, the Vijayawada Division has emerged as a frontrunner in ATVM utilisation. Presently,72 ATVMs are operational across 29 major railway stations, supported by 94 facilitators to assist passengers . As a result of continued awareness campaigns and improved accessibility, 33% (78,19,581) of the total (2,41,51,165) unreserved tickets in the Division were now booked through ATVMs .

Narendra A Patil, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada Division congratulated passengers and staff alike on this achievement, stating. "The rise in ATVM ticketing is a clear sign of passengers embracing technology for a smoother travel experience. This initiative supports our broader vision of making Indian Railways smarter, faster, and more passenger-friendly. We will continue to innovate and improve digital access across all our stations," he asserted.

Rambabu Vavilapalli, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Vijayawada Division, SCR appeals to the public to join the mission by becoming facilitators: "We are inviting applications from enthusiastic individuals to serve as ATVM facilitators at 29 key railway stations in the Division. This is a unique opportunity to be part of the digital transformation of Indian Railways while contributing meaningfully to public service," he noted.

Sand mining should not be carried out at semi-mechanised sand reaches: DC

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY



East Godavari district Collector P Prasanthi directed the officials not to give permission for sand mining at semi-mechanized sand reaches.

Collector Prashanthi held a DLSA meeting with the officials here on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion she ordered the officials that there should be a monitoring system to ensure that no activities are carried out in prohibited areas and during prohibited periods during sand mining as per the orders of the National Green Tribunal and the Supreme Court.

The Collector said that clear orders had been issued that sand mining should not be carried out at semi-mechanized sand reaches from June 1 st and asked the officials to take action accordingly.

"If sand mining is carried out during the ban, cases should be registered against the persons involved and a fine should be collected from them and vehicles should be seized. The sand should be dumped at the stock point and used for the government construction works and housing works. The post-action report should be submitted to that effect," Collector instructed the officials.

In the wake of the surprise inspections and raids, the vigilance team members under the leadership of the district SP, should conduct raids and inspections on illegal sand mining, Collector P Prashanthi said, adding that strict action should be taken with the coordination department officials in the areas where the rules are found to be violated.

She observed that steps should be taken without any hesitation in implementing the NGT guidelines strictly. The collector asked for details of where the seized sand was dumped. She asserted that 19 cases of illegal excavations were registered, of which FIRs were filed only in 10 cases, and directed the officials concerned to give explanation for the lack of registration of cases in the remaining cases.

The sand recovered from the vehicles seized by the Motor Vehicle Inspector should be dumped at the stock points within the respective divisional limits, she said. The officials explained to the Collector that a fine of Rs 48 lakh had been collected from 123 vehicle drivers who were used for illegal sand transportation.

"As many as six vehicles have been seized during last week. The Revenue, Police departments and also the Irrigation, Mines and Transport departments will have to conduct inspections within their respective jurisdictions and register cases," the officials apprised the Collector, adding that 9 lakh metric tonnes of sand had been dumped at the stock point to be used during the rainy season.

Joint Collector S Chinna Ramudu, RDOs R Krishna Naik, Rani Sushmita and district mines officer D Phani Bhushan Reddy were among those who were present.

Deaths of 26 cows at Vemulawada temple bad omen: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



Senior BRS MLA Harish Rao came down heavily on the TG Congress Government on Tuesday, accusing it of gross negligence towards both farmers and in ensuring the sanctity of temples.

Speaking during his visit to Narsapur, Harish expressed deep anguish over the deaths of 26 cows at the Vemulawada Temple in just five days and described it as a bad omen for the state.

"If the government cannot protect cows at the Vemulawada Temple, let them hand over the responsibility to the BRS. We will take care of them," he said.

Criticising Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's approach, Harish said the administration's indifference is bringing 'misfortune' upon the state.

Turning to issues facing farmers, Harish lashed out at the delay in disbursing Rythu Bandhu dues. He demanded the release of Rs 18,000 per acre for the three crop seasons of the previous Vanakalam, Yasangi, and the upcoming Vanakalam.

He said the government had failed to honour its promises and that it was instead prioritising paying contractors over farmers.

Harish said that paddy procurement payments had been delayed by over 48 days, despite promises of payment within 48 hours. He said not even a single rupee had been paid for jowar purchases made over two months ago in Medak, Kamareddy, and Nizamabad districts. He demanded the release of the Rs 1,100 crore pending towards fine rice procurement.

He questioned why, despite securing Rs 3,000 crore from HUDCO for compensating the owners of lands acquired for the Regional Ring Road, the government had not paid the affected farmers. "Farmers who lost land are committing suicide. Notifications have tied up their lands. They can't even sell their lands to conduct their children's marriages or pay for their education," he said, citing two recent cases of attempted suicide by farmers in Narsapur and Siddipet districts. Harish accused the government of making false promises about free crop insurance and not delivering a single ration card or Indiramma house.

He said while farmers are collapsing near their paddy heaps, the administration is more interested in beauty pageants.

He also flayed the government for its failure to provide quality food to psychiatric patients at the Erragadda Hospital, where a patient died and over 70 fell ill after consuming spoiled food.

Harish reiterated the demand for releasing funds for fee reimbursement, saying that SC, ST, BC, and minority students are being forced to drop out due to unpaid fees. He accused the government of diverting money meant for social welfare schemes to big contractors and focusing only on vendetta politics against BRS leaders, including himself, KTR, and KCR.

Musical, cultural programmes held at Govindaraja Swamy temple



PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The religious, musical and cultural programmes organized on the occasion of the annual Brahmotsavams of Sri Govindaraja Swamy temple in Tirupati on Wednesday entertained the devotees. Mangaladhvani was organized by the SV College of Music and Dance from 5.30 am to 6.30 am at the Sri Govindaraja Swamy temple. The peacock dance, Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam, Kolatam, Chakkabhajana stood as a special attraction during Vahana Sevas. The ongoing annual brahmotsavams in Sri Govindaraja Swamy temple in Tirupati witnessed the Utsava deity seated majestically atop the ferocious Simha Vahanam. The devotional cultural troupes displayed colourful dances in front of Vahanam on the bright sunny Wednesday. While a few artistes portrayed Narasimha Avatara, attracting the devotees. Both the senior and junior pontiffs of Tirumala, Dy.EO Shanti, AEO Munikrishna Reddy and others, devotees were also present.

Officials told to make arrangements to conduct Mega DSC exams efficiently

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM



West Godavari district Collector Chadalava Nagarani directed the officials concerned to complete all the arrangements to conduct mega DSC examination from June 6.

Collector Nagarani, flanked by SP Adnan Nayeem Ashimi, held a meeting with the officials here on Wednesday and reviewed the arrangements being made to conduct the mega DSC examination to be held from June 6.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Nagarani said that computer-based exams would be conducted in five centers for 23 days from June 6th to June 30 th adding that 16,634 people will appear for these exams in the district and the exams will be conducted in three sessions.

"The first session will start from 9.00 am and 9.30 am and will end at 12.00 pm, the second session will start from 2.00 pm and 2:30 pm and will end at 5.00 pm, and the third session will be held from 4.00 pm to 5.30 pm.

A total of five centers have been set up at Bhimavaram DNR College of Engineering and Technology, Dantuluri Narayana Raju College, Tadepalligudem Sri Vasavi Engineering College, Shashi Institute of Technology and Engineering, and Swarnandhra College of Engineering and Technology in Narasapuram," the Collector explained.

The Collector asserted that ten departmental officers and two flying squads have been deployed for the conduct of the exams, stating that the police department has been instructed to provide police security at 5 centers.

"Section 144 will be in force within the examination centers and the revenue officials have been instructed to close Xerox centers within a 100-meter radius. The transport department has been asked to provide the necessary vehicles for the flying squads," the Collector noted. She made it clear that no electronic devices of any kind will be allowed in the exam center.

The Collector instructed the electricity officials to ensure uninterrupted power supply during the exams and to talk to the management of the centers and get generators set up. She also ordered the medical department officials to assign duties to medical staff at the exam centers and keep necessary medicines and ORS packets ready. The Collector warned of action if mistakes were found in conducting the exams.

Superintendent of Police Adnan Naeem Asmi said that there should be no gathering at the examination centers, adding that entry into the examination center will be allowed only after a thorough inspection. He warned that action will be taken against anyone who violates the rules. DRO Mogili Venkateswarlu and DEO E Narayana and Assistant commissioner of examinations N Satyanarayana were among those who attended the meeting.

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ACROSS THE STATES



India wins presidency of Belgium-based IIAS

In a first, India has won the presidency of the Belgium-based International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), an official statement issued on Wednesday said. The IIAS, a global non-profit organisation, is a federation of 31 member countries, 20 national sections and 15 academic research centres jointly collaborating for scientific research on public administration. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) has represented India as a member state of the IIAS since 1998. For the 2025-2028 presidency of IIAS, Prime Minister Narendra Modi nominated the Indian candidacy of Secretary DARPG V Srinivas in November 2024. The hearings for the IIAS presidency were held in February 2025 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. Four nations -- India, South Africa, Austria and Bahrain -- submitted their nominations for the IIAS presidency for the period 2025-2028 and participated in the hearings before the Council of Administration of IIAS, which were held on the sidelines of the Annual IIAS Conference 2025.



13 Bangla nationals arrested in Tripura

A total of 13 Bangladesh nationals have been arrested in West Tripura's Hapania area, police said on Wednesday. Out of the 13 Bangladeshis, two are women and the rest are men. Acting on a tip-off, police conducted a raid in a rented accommodation near Tripura Medical College and Hospital at Hapania on Tuesday night and apprehended thirteen people, Amtali Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), Sakar Chandra Das said. Initially, they claimed they were residents of Tripura's Gandacherra subdivision adjoining Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) and had come to Hapania for treatment. "However, they could not produce any valid document substantiating their claim of being residents of Tripura. During search, we found some Bangladesh documents indicating that they were actually Bangladesh nationals. "Accordingly, they were arrested for illegally entering India without valid documents," he said.



India thanks Iran for safely rescuing its 3 nationals

India on Wednesday thanked Iran for safely rescuing its three nationals who went missing in the country last month, saying Tehran's support reflects the "true spirit of friendship" between the two nations. They were "freed in a police operation against the hostage takers in Varamin in south Tehran," the Tehran-based Tasnim news agency reported on Tuesday. "The 3 kidnapped Indian citizens have been safely rescued & are now under the care of the Embassy of India, which is facilitating their early repatriation," the Embassy of India in Iran posted on X. "We sincerely thank the Government of Iran for their swift and effective efforts in securing their release. Your support reflects the true spirit of friendship between our two nations," it added. The Iranian Embassy in New Delhi confirmed the recovery of Indian nationals on Tuesday. "Three missing Indian citizens freed by Tehran police," the Iranian embassy said in a post on X. Last week, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said it was in touch with the Iranian authorities over the missing Indians.

Punjab Regimental Centre inducts 622 Agniveers

PNS ■ RAMGARH (JHARKHAND)

The Punjab Regimental Centre (PRC) in Jharkhand's Ramgarh town on Wednesday inducted 622 Agniveers in a colourful passing-out parade, an official statement said.

Punjab Regiment, one of the oldest regiments of the Indian Army, inducted the Agniveers after they successfully completed the 31-week physical training and mental conditioning, it said. Brigadier Sajesh Babu PG, commandant, Punjab Regimental Centre, congratulated the Agniveers and lauded the trainers who imparted stringent training to recruits.

9 killed as trailer overturns on van in MP

PM Modi, CM express grief

PNS ■ JHABUA (MP)

Nine persons, including five minors, were killed and two others injured after a cement-laden trailer truck overturned and crushed a van in Madhya Pradesh's Jhabua district in the wee hours of Wednesday, police said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Mohan Yadav expressed grief over the incident and announced financial assistance for the victims' kin.

The accident took place around 2.30 am under Meghnagar tehsil area when the victims were returning in the van from a wedding function, officials said.

The trailer was crossing an under-construction rail overbridge through a temporary road near Sanjeli railway crossing when it overturned on the van, Jhabua Superintendent of Police (SP) Padmavilochan Shukla said. Nine persons were killed and two others injured in the accident, he said.

"Deeply anguished by the loss of lives due to an accident in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh. Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. May the injured recover soon," said the Prime Minister's Office on X, quoting the PM. "An ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh from PMNRF (Prime Minister's National Relief Fund) would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would be given Rs. 50,000," it said.

The victims, belonging to two families, were returning from a wedding in Bhavpura to their native Shivgarh Mahuda village when they met with the accident, said SP Shukla. The deceased have been identified as Mukesh Khaped (40), Savli Khaped (35), Vinod Khaped (16), Payal Khaped (12), Madhi Bamania (38), Vijay Bamania (14), Kanta Bamania (14), Ragini (9) and Akli Parmar (35), he said.

The bodies were sent for post-mortem, and the injured persons were referred to Thandla hospital for treatment.

The truck driver absconded from the spot after the accident, the official said, adding a case was registered and further investigation was underway.

Meanwhile, expressing grief over the accident, CM Yadav announced an assistance of Rs 2 lakh each to the family of the deceased persons and Rs 50,000 to the injured ones, an official said.



India, Norway hold bilateral talks on maritime technologies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Wednesday held bilateral meetings with top Norway ministers to explore possibilities of cooperation between India and Norway in multiple areas, including further deepening of their maritime relationship.

According to an official statement, Sonowal held meetings with Norway's Transport Minister Jon-Ivar Nygård as well as with Minister of Fisheries and Ocean Policy, Marianne Sivertsen, on the sidelines of the Nor-Shipping event in Oslo. Highlighting India's renewed push to modernise its maritime sector with a green and sustainable focus, the Ports, Shipping and Waterways minister underscored the country's initiatives in green shipping and digital transformation.

"Both parties also agreed to deepen cooperation and exchange experiences on ferry system electrification, drawing inspiration from Norway's successful implementation of the initiative," the statement said.



"Both parties also agreed to deepen cooperation and exchange experiences on ferry system electrification, drawing inspiration from Norway's successful implementation of the initiative."

Building on the Green Coastal Shipping Programme and Green Voyage 2050, India and Norway discussed deeper collaboration in green maritime technologies, it added.

"Both sides explored joint efforts in smart logistics, digital port ecosystems, and clean coastal shipping," it said.

During the bilateral meeting with Norway's Minister of Fisheries and Ocean Policy, Marianne Sivertsen Næss, Sonowal emphasised on possibilities and opportunities in Ship Recycling, Seafarer's Training, Sustainable Fisheries and Ocean Management, Ocean Renewable Energy, and Offshore Hydrocarbons.

Meanwhile, the Indian side proposed to conduct a joint feasibility study for operationalising the Northern Sea Route (NSR) with Norwegian and Indian agencies, the statement said. This study will focus on ensuring safe and sustainable shipping practices in Arctic waters, addressing the unique operational challenges posed by extreme weather conditions, and minimising environmental impacts.

"India expressed its keenness to work with Norway in Arctic navigation by collaborating on R&D in Arctic shipping, design and construction of ice-class vessels, advancement of navigational technologies," it said.



'No pensioner should face problems to get dues'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stressing on administrative sensitivity and efficiency in redressing pensioners' grievances, Union minister Jitendra Singh on Wednesday said no retiree should have to run from pillar to post to get dues.

He called for a time-bound redressal mechanism of pension-related grievances, aligning it with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's broader governance model that places the citizen at the centre.

Speaking at the 13th All India Pension Adalat here, Singh underscored the need for administrative sensitivity and efficiency in ensuring the dignity of India's pensioners.

At the day-long event that brought together pensioners, government officials, and department heads from across the country, the minister said that the Pension Adalat model is one of the most citizen-friendly reforms undertaken in recent years. "A pensioner, who has dedicated a lifetime of service to the nation, should not have to run from pillar to post for what is rightfully theirs," said Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel.

He asked departments to adopt a "whole-of-government" approach in resolving such matters.

Singh emphasised that redressal should not merely be reactive, but also anticipatory, supported by technology and driven by compassion.

'One of the best things I've ever done'

Musk's father on visit to Ayodhya's Ram temple

PNS ■ AYODHYA (UP)



Errol Musk, father of tech billionaire Elon Musk, visited the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Wednesday afternoon and described the experience as "wonderful" and one of the "best things" he has ever done.

Errol also paid obeisance at the Hanumangarhi temple nearby. He was initially scheduled to visit the Taj Mahal in Agra as well but the plan may be dropped due to extreme heat in the region.

"It's wonderful, absolutely wonderful (Ayodhya visit). It's one of the best things I've ever done. "I'm so glad I came to see it and can't wait till the temple gets completed, the big temple, it's going to be something like a wonder of the world," Errol said.

Separately, talking to reporters after visiting both temples, he said, "My experience here in India has been wonderful. I'm here (in India) to begin working with Servotech and am looking forward to spending a lot of time in the country. The temples are marvellous and so are the people."

'Bullet train to Gujarat won't take away biz'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday said the improved connectivity with Gujarat through the bullet train will not lead to a migration of business out of the financial capital.

Fadnavis cited the case of the diamond trade and financial services to underline the preferences of businesses to stay put in Mumbai even when they see alternatives.

"No way that such connectivity will take away any business," Fadnavis said here.

Acknowledging that the development of a diamond bourse in Surat had led to concerns over the future of the diamond trade in Mumbai, Fadnavis said the local trade concentrated in BKC and also parts of south central Mumbai is unaffected.

SC junks Delhi Waqf Board's plea claiming rights on property

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a plea by the Delhi Waqf Board which claimed that a property in Shahdara area in the capital was a "waqf property" and said a Gurudwara was functioning there since long.

"There is a Gurudwara, let it be. Even if there is any claim, you should relinquish that claim saying a Gurudwara is already there," a bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Satish Chandra Sharma told the counsel appearing for the Delhi Waqf Board.

The apex court was hearing the board's plea challenging a September 2010 order of the Delhi High Court, which dismissed its suit for possession of the property. The suit alleged that the property in question was a waqf property, being used as a waqf since time immemorial. The apex court, however, said, "There is a Gurudwara functioning out there."



'There is a Gurudwara, let it be. Even if there is any claim, you should relinquish that claim saying a Gurudwara is already there."

The waqf board counsel referred to the findings of the trial judge in the matter and said a mosque existed there.

He said one of the witness of the defendant himself admitted that there was a mosque and "some kind of a Gurudwara" was made there but it was not registered.

"Not some kind of a Gurudwara, it is a fully functional Gurudwara," the bench said. Dismissing the plea, the top court referred to the high court's order observing one of the witnesses admitted that the Gurudwara was functioning in the property since 1947.

Mann takes jibe at BJP over Operation Sindoor

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann took a jibe at the BJP over Operation Sindoor on Wednesday, saying this is the first time that Indian representatives have been sent abroad to convey about the country's victory in an armed conflict.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader's remarks came a day after he took a swipe at the BJP over Operation Sindoor, accusing it of seeking votes in the name of "sindoor" (vermillion) and asking the saffron party if it has launched a "one nation, one husband" scheme.

The chief minister was talking to reporters after chairing a cabinet meeting here on Wednesday.

Replying to Union minister Ravneet Singh Bittu's charge that he is speaking Pakistan's language, Mann asked why did the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) withdraw its decision to send "sindoor" door to door.

"This is happening for the first time that our representatives have been sent abroad to convey that we have won a conflict. When one wins (a war), it becomes evident," he said.



'Wrong to think Modi is India and India is Modi'

Congress slams BJP's criticism of Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday said it is wrong to think that "Narendra Modi is India and India is Narendra Modi", as it slammed the ruling BJP for its criticism of Rahul Gandhi over his dig at the prime minister and doubled down on the "Narendra-surrender" jibe.

Amid the BJP's criticism of his remarks, Gandhi reposted a post he had made on X on June 21, 2020, in which he had said, "Narendra Modi is actually Surender Modi."

Congress's media and publicity department head Pawan Khera claimed that Gandhi's "Narender...surrender" remarks encapsulate how the prime minister has time and again "surrendered India's national interests in situations where the requisite deft and the "vishwaguru" status should have been shown.

"The BJP people were making a film for their hero for the last 11 years -- 'Muqaddar Ka Sikandar'. But when the film was ready, it turned out to be 'Narender Ka Surrender'. Actually, there is no injection of bravery, but it is inbuilt in the character of a person.

The history of BJP-RSS people has been of cowardice," Khera told a press conference at the Congress's Indira Bhawan headquarters here.

When such a person takes over the reins of the country, its future comes in danger, which is being witnessed at present, he claimed.

No objection if Kejriwal's passport renewed for 10 years: Delhi court

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday said it had "no objection" if the passport of former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, an accused in the Delhi excise policy cases, was renewed for 10 years.

Special Judge Dig Vinay Singh passed the order in the alleged scam-related corruption and money laundering cases, being probed by the CBI and the ED respectively, considering that Kejriwal would have to take formal permission of the court before travelling abroad.

"Presently, the applicant is not seeking any permission to travel abroad, obviously as he may not be planning to travel abroad in the immediate near future, but that too cannot come in the way of granting permission to the applicant for renewal of the passport for complete 10 years. After all the bail conditions already prescribes that the applicant shall not travel abroad without formal permission of court," the order said.

'Brain scan may tell emotional development in babies'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Brain scans of three-month-old babies could reveal how emotions and self-soothing abilities might evolve over the following six months, potentially helping identify children at risk of developing behavioural and emotional challenges, researchers said.

The team, led by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh, US, examined 95 pairs of infants and caregivers and found distinct patterns linking white matter structure to emotional outcomes.

Referred to as the brain's 'information highway', white matter helps different brain regions rapidly communicate with each other.

Infants having more diffused neuron endings in the forceps minor -- a tract for white matter which connects the brain's hemispheres -- showed an increased negative emotionality between three and nine months of age.

Conversely, infants with a more complex structure in the left cingulum bundle -- another white matter pathway which connects brain regions involved in executive control -- displayed more positive emotions and improved self-soothing ability.



The results, published in the journal Genomic Psychiatry, suggested that the brain's structure in early infancy sets the stage for emotional development, with certain patterns in connections potentially predisposing infants to heightened reactivity, the researchers said.

"Understanding these early neural markers could transform how we approach infant mental health, allowing for targeted interventions during critical developmental windows," lead researcher Mary L. Phillips, professor of psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh, said.

Previous studies have shown that a higher tendency for negative emotions as an infant is related to an increased risk for anxiety and behaviour disorders in future, and a lower tendency for positive emotions with depression and social difficulties.

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Editor's TAKE

Way forward in Ladakh but still long road ahead

The measures announced by the Govt aim to address some of the issues but they fall short of the Ladakh's aspirations

Since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 and the bifurcation of the former state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories — Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh — the people of Ladakh have been voicing growing concern over the erosion of their cultural identity, land rights, and political agency. Recent protests, sustained campaigns, and appeals from civil society groups across Leh have led the central Government to respond, culminating in the announcement of new measures on June 3, 2025. The policies notified by the Centre aim to address some of the grievances raised by the people of Ladakh, particularly regarding their language, culture, and access to land and jobs.

Among the key measures announced is a provision for up to 85 per cent reservation for indigenous people in government jobs. In a bid to regulate residency, the Government has defined domicile criteria requiring a person to have lived continuously in Ladakh for 15 years from 2019 onwards. This effectively means that migrants arriving after the withdrawal of Article 370 would only qualify as domiciles after 2034, providing a degree of protection to the local population from sudden demographic shifts. The policy also acknowledges the linguistic diversity of Ladakh by recognising English, Hindi, Urdu, Bhoti, and Purgi as official languages. Moreover, a third of the seats in the region's hill councils are to be reserved for women, a measure aimed at enhancing gender representation in governance.

While these steps signal an intent to preserve Ladakh's unique identity and ensure indigenous access to employment and representation, they stop well short of the demands that have been persistently raised by local civil society organisations and political groups.

The people of Ladakh have long sought full statehood, which would grant the region its own legislature and greater autonomy in policymaking. Equally important is their demand for inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which offers special protections for tribal regions. There is also a growing call for the allocation of a second seat in the Lok Sabha to ensure that both Leh and Kargil have distinct and equitable political representation. Another critical demand is the establishment of a dedicated Public Service Commission.

Despite the creation of over 1,200 gazetted posts since 2019, not a single one has been filled. While the Centre's recent announcements are a step in the right direction, they remain administrative in nature and fail to address the core structural and constitutional concerns of the region. Moreover, the continued lack of employment avenues and meaningful political representation only deepens the alienation felt by many, especially the youth.

Neglecting the aspirations of the people living in such a sensitive region is not just a matter of domestic politics; it is a national security concern. The emotional integration of Ladakh with the rest of the country requires more than administrative announcements. It demands constitutional empathy, political inclusion, and economic empowerment. The June 3 measures may be a beginning, but the journey toward justice and dignity for Ladakh must go much further.

India at the crossroads of global conflict

Amid this global unrest, where diplomatic declarations are often drowned out by the din of war, India emerges as a steadfast advocate for peace — not through passive neutrality, but through principled strength



In a world bristling with tension — from the razed streets of Gaza to the blood-soaked fields of Ukraine, from the persistent unrest in Kashmir to the volatile Taiwan Strait — peace is increasingly becoming an endangered ideal. Every diplomatic forum today rings with commitments to non-violence, yet the deafening sounds of war and terror often drown them out.

At this crossroads, India finds herself emerging not just as a stakeholder but as a conscience-keeper, calling for peace with accountability, dialogue with dignity and action with principle. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi said during the G20 Summit, "This is not an era of war." These words, resonating beyond India's borders, have become emblematic of India's foreign policy posture, peace-oriented, yet unwilling to sacrifice justice and sovereignty at the altar of terrorism wherever it breeds.

In the contemporary international order, the line between terror and political resistance is often blurred, frequently shaped by geopolitical interests rather than universal principles. Professor Harsh V Pant, Vice President — Studies and Foreign Policy, at Observer Research Foundation (ORF), argues, "There can be no moral equivalence between a state that fights terror and those who use it as an instrument of policy." India's call to the world is both simple and urgent — 'peace cannot be built on platforms that provide impunity to terrorism'. The 2008 Mumbai attacks, the 2016 Uri assault, the 2019 Pulwama bombing, and the very recent mayhem at Pahalgam on April 22, 2025, are seared into India's national consciousness and raised by India across several national and international platforms, going beyond the realm of strategic silence.

Dr K Subrahmanyam, widely regarded as the father of India's strategic culture, once warned, "If you do not define terrorism objectively, you become complicit in its perpetuation." India's insistence on a 'Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism' at the United Nations has long been blocked by nations unwilling to alienate their proxies or strategic partners.

Many discussions on terrorism per se and the inability of the global community to arrive at a unified definition of terrorism have concluded, not because of the failure of language, but as scholars and analysts of foreign policy, such as Professor C Raja Mohan, have validated it as a 'failure of will'. Further, India's former envoy and permanent representative at the UN, Syed Akbaruddin, once remarked that "States have a duty to protect their citizens, and that cannot be held hostage to the veto power of transnational terror." He was alluding to the UN's patchy record in addressing terrorism (here, Pakistan-supported) that directly affects India, especially when state sponsors of terror receive cover under larger strategic alliances.



RAJDEEP PATHAK

A September 24, 2024, statement released by the United Nations regarding its 79th session, clearly declares the hardest truth, yet it looks like merely a paper document. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on impunity warned, "We are in a purgatory of polarity," and said that more and more countries feel they can trample international law, violate the UN Charter, invade another country, lay waste to whole societies, or utterly disregard the welfare of their people. "We see this age of impunity everywhere — in the Middle East, in the heart of Europe, in the Horn of Africa", he said. The statement further read that Gaza is a non-stop nightmare that threatens to take the entire region with it. The war in Ukraine is spreading with no signs of letting up, and civilians are paying the price. In Sudan, a brutal power struggle has unleashed horrific violence. The situation is growing increasingly dire even for those who do not live in war zones, he emphasised. Of the world's poorest 75 countries, one-third are worse off today than they were five years ago.

(https://press.un.org/en/2024/ga12633.doc.htm). It is also pertinent to note what Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva, President of Brazil, had to say in his statement. He said "The right to defence has become the right to vengeance." India's approach to international relations is increasingly being shaped by a nuanced doctrine — balancing hard power with Gandhian values of peace and dialogue. But this is not the pacifism of naivety; it is a peace rooted in strength.

The response of India to Pakistani terrorist outfits after the Pahalgam attack or the Balakot airstrike in 2019 was not just a military operation. It was a message to the world that India would not remain passive in the face of terror. This balance of assertiveness and moral grounding distinguishes India's diplomacy in an increasingly fractured world. India has supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine while maintaining communication with Russia. It has called for humanitarian aid to Gaza while opposing terrorism emanating from its soil.International peace mechanisms, from the UN Security Council to the Human Rights Council, often suffer from inertia or politicisation.

As history shows, from Rwanda to Syria to Afghanistan, delayed justice breeds deeper conflict. Justice must accompany peace, or peace becomes fragile and fleeting. India's warning to the world is not apocalyptic — it is pragmatic. As External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar has reiterated, "Terrorism cannot be one state's strategic tool while another state's humanitarian concern. The world must develop a unified response." This is not just about India's security but about the precedent the global order sets. "Terror and talks cannot go together" is the new forceful strategy.

India does not claim to be perfect. But its stance on terrorism and peace is rooted in its lived experience and its democratic ethos. In a world where great powers often prioritise expediency over ethics, India offers an alternative — principled realism. Ronald Reagan, the 40th president of the United States, once said, "Peace is not absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means."

That ability must come from courage, not cowardice; from justice, not just dialogue; from unity, not uniformity. The global search for peace is urgent. Terrorism must be called out, not explained away. Dialogue must be sincere, not strategic. And nations must stop treating terror as an instrument of foreign policy.

Nelson Mandela rightly summarised, "If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner." But if your enemy refuses peace and chooses terror, principle must speak louder than platitude. Unmistakably, if peace is the goal, justice must be the path.

(The writer is a programme executive of Gandhi Smriti Sansthan. Views are personal)

PIC TALK



Members of the newly created women's police team demonstrate their skills in tackling criminals in Hyderabad. PTI

Holding the Pen in the Age of Prompts

SECOND Opinion

There was a time, not very long ago, when people would ask me, "What do you do?" and I would say, a tad shyly, because in my opinion, what I did wasn't yet the biggest thing after sliced bread or before Google — "I write." But apparently, it was a big thing then. Not everyone could coherently string thoughts and communicate them with clarity and panache. Not everyone could weave narratives that touched hearts. So when I said I wrote, people's eyes would widen with amazement, some dropped their jaws, and others looked at me as if I could stand apart even in a carnival.

Writing, at that time, was as wondrous an occupation as chasing fireflies in the dark — elusive, luminous, and ignited from within. It breathed on its own and needed no ventilators or oxygen masks. It reflected the inner world in a cadenced manner. It described external wonders in a kaleidoscopic combination of phrases and words that only a wordsmith could summon in moments of deep contemplation.



ASHA IYER KUMAR

Those days, alas, are gone. Now, hundreds of writers are born every moment. Stories appear like graffiti on a goods wagon and the reverence a genuine literary voice once evoked has dimmed. For every writer who labours for hours to craft a story, a new one now emerges in a jiffy, built from a few prompts. Today, the writer of yore stands like a lone artisan at a digital assembly line, watching machine-made marvels flood the shelves, while they still shape sentences by hand, chiselling meaning out of silence and memory. This is not a declaration drawn from hubris or conceit. It comes from a place of doubt, and a fear of becoming inconspicuous. It arises from a vulnerable spot that throws up a question aloud: In a world where beautiful language is freely available, where anyone can sound 'writerly' and poetic, how do I remain distinct? How do I continue to speak in a voice that carries the textures of a human soul? The angst is genuine, and it has already started to show on my nerves whenever I sit down to write.

What if my writing doesn't surprise or matter to my readers any longer? Should I follow the trend and adopt the technologies to stay relevant, or continue in a voice so innately mine that anything else would feel synthetic and devoid of life? I do not have clear-cut answers to the predicament I find myself in. But this much I know: In a world where machines can become anything but human, I need to be more human than ever. I must feel deeper, process my emotions in a legitimate way no prompt can replicate and write with an openness no automation can emulate. I need to push myself to a point where, like Hemingway, I sit at the computer and just bleed. Word by word. Line by line. Squeezing my veins to get the essence of my thoughts out because it is the only way I know to be true. Some argue that the soul of the story is still theirs, that the thoughts are their own, and that all they ask of AI is a little literary finesse. A polish. A ribbon tied around their raw words. And perhaps that is harmless. Perhaps it even helps those who never had the means to say things beautifully, finally find a way to be heard. But for someone like me, whose entire being has been devoted to how something is said — to cadence, rhythm, nuance, and texture — I worry.

Not because others now write well, but because what once set me apart is becoming commonplace. I worry about the slow dilution of literary effort. The waning of the meditative solitude that writing demanded. These may soon be seen as obsolete habits. That my labour will be deemed superfluous. And yet, I cannot do it any other way. I still believe in the contemplative pause between paragraphs; in the tear that wells up uninvited when a sentence lands right; and in the thrill I feel when I end a piece with a final flourish.

Maybe this aching need to feel every word before I write it is what will remain mine. Perhaps, the only way to stay authentic now is not to write differently, but to feel more deeply. To be imperfect, sometimes messy and rough-edged. Because if there's one thing I still trust, it's this: Readers may forget ornate phrases, but they will never forget how I made them feel — with a voice that has been echoing long enough to still be heard.

(The author is a Dubai-based columnist, independent journalist, and writing coach. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Elon Musk's stint at the US Govt ends

After winning the presidential election, Donald Trump, who is himself an industrialist, appointed Elon Musk, the richest person in the world, as his chief adviser. Despite not being used to the Government environment, Musk took various decisions to achieve his goals.

However, these decisions were not very successful, nor did the expected results come. To reduce the expenses of the Trump Government, Musk decided to reduce Government staff and sent employees from many departments home. Elon Musk cut the funds given to domestic and international organisations. Many unpleasant steps were taken to save the Government's expenses. The reduction of staff created widespread resentment. There were protests against the Tesla company. Due to this, Elon Musk and his company suffered a huge loss on a personal level. Musk had a dispute with Trump's close Government officials. Musk had spent $250 million on Trump's campaign.

Musk had entered the Trump administration to bring about changes in American politics and the Government system. But due to the lack of expected success and the impact on the sales of American citizens and, most importantly, Tesla cars, Musk's "Space X" came to the ground. As a result, Elon Musk has stepped down from the position of special adviser in the Trump administration, because the sales figures of his Tesla company have fallen.

DATTAPRASAD SHIRODKAR | MUMBAI

Northeast reeling under monsoon fury

Landslides triggered by heavy rains damaged roads across Nagaland, with crop destruction reported from some districts. In Kohima district, a major land sinking occurred near Kisama Heritage Village, while a major landslide was reported along the Kigwema-Mima-Chakhabama road. The road sinking at Phesama village near Kisama Heritage Village, where a 50m stretch of NH-2 has collapsed, cut off the key route between Nagaland and Manipur.

This is the third major road collapse at this location since 2013. A permanent solution is long overdue. Continuous rainfall led to landslides and road blockages in several districts across the state.

Storms and heavy rain damaged paddy and maize fields in many villages. The people are being urged to remain alert as the monsoon intensifies, stressing the need to prioritise the protection of lives and property.

The Mizoram Government has issued a travel advisory urging all dignitaries and officials from both the Centre and state Governments to avoid visiting the state. The advisory came after incessant heavy rainfall triggered widespread landslides, mudslides and flash floods across Mizoram, leading to loss of lives and affecting normal life across several districts. The current wave of landslides, floods, incidents of house collapse and other calamities triggered by heavy downpours has so far claimed many lives.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Cycling comes of age

Cycling in India can be a challenge, with unruly traffic, potholed roads, and no lanes for bicyclists. Yet, the community is growing, with some using it as a fitness tool, a few to commute, and some as an adventure sport. Specialist biking stores have opened up, there are niche races, and better cycling gear.

All they ask is that you join the club, helmet firmly in place and if you wear arm and leg gears its well and good as an additional protection from an impending danger. Cycling is mainly an aerobic activity, which means that your heart, blood vessels and lungs all get a workout. You will breathe deeper, perspire and experience increased body temperature, which will improve your overall fitness level. Cycling as a family is a fun way to spend your free time, and a great bonding experience.

You will enjoy the excitement of discovering new routes together and the shared sense of achievement as your fitness improves and you become more confident, experienced cyclists. And there lies the cycling success. Cardiovascular diseases include stroke, high blood pressure and heart attack. Regular cycling stimulates and improves your heart, lungs and circulation, reducing your risk of cardiovascular diseases. Whether it's to boost your fitness, health or bank balance, or as an environmental choice, taking up bicycle riding could be one of the best decisions you ever make.

NIKHIL CK MANIAM | MUMBAI

PRECAUTION IS A MUST TO KEEP COVID AT BAY

This sounding caution against the surging numbers of Covid-19 cases (4-6-25) is timely. The World Health Organisation has already cautioned, saying the Covid wave is not over and it can reappear anytime, anywhere, in any form. The variant coming round this time is said to be mild, which simply means it doesn't claim lives.

But the incapacitating symptoms and the psychological fear it poses can do enough damage.

Moreover, though the variant is claimed to be non-fatal, its potential to cause long-term health issues cannot be commented upon now as it needs to be studied in detail.

By the time the details come out, it can only be a matter of mere academic interest as another variant may be playing havoc. Above all, the most important point is that the country has neither learnt lessons from the Covid-19 that shook the nation with heavy loss of lives and heavy damage to the economy, nor made any worthy preparations to meet a health emergency situation. The condition that prevailed in 2019 remains the same except for a few oxygen plants erected. Infrastructure, manpower, and medicine continue to be insufficient to meet an emergency.

Even test results are to be flashed only after two days. The situation was worse even in countries where around 10 per cent of GDP was allocated to health. With around 1 per cent allocation, the condition in India can be easily understood.

Another important lesson India has failed to learn is that private healthcare institutions do not rise to the occasion in an emergency like a pandemic. A complete revamping of our healthcare system with the public sector playing a major role is required to be prioritised.

AS RAJMOHAN | ANANTPUR

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

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | THURSDAY | JUNE 5, 2025

India's dilemma: Farm yield rises, industrial growth sluggish

As the Government boosts minimum support prices and extends credit schemes to sustain rural momentum, policymakers face a complex balancing act — how to nurture farm-driven optimism amid factory-floor fatigue and an uncertain global trade climate

FIRST Column

India's agricultural sector is charting new territory as record-breaking food production sets the stage for a stronger presence in global export markets. While farms flourish, a contrasting picture emerges in the industrial landscape, where stagnating production signals underlying economic strain. This divergence underscores a shifting balance in India's growth narrative — buoyant fields amid faltering factories.

To pace it up further, the Centre also increased the kharif crop minimum support price (MSP) focusing on pulses, oilseeds and coarse grains. The MSP for paddy was raised by ₹69, three per cent, to ₹2369 per quintal. The MSP of 14 other items including groundnut, sunflower seed, cotton, tur/arhar, and niger seed benefitted.

The Centre claims that its procurement of wheat has surpassed previous three-year records yet is below the target. The 5 per cent interest subvention scheme on Kisan Credit Card up to ₹3 lakh will continue. Amid such a farm yield bonanza, the stymied industrial production remains a concern. The country's industrial output growth slowed to an 8-month low in April, dragged down by contraction in mining, sluggish electricity and manufacturing sectors. It is dipping since reaching a peak of 6.2 percent in April 2024 which had fallen to minus 0.1 percent during mid-year.

India has achieved a record food grain production of 353.95 million tonnes (MT) in the 2024-25 crop season. This is largely due to record harvests of paddy (rice) — 149.07 MT, wheat — 117.50 MT, and maize — 42 MT.

India surpassed China to become the world's largest rice producer. Maize production jumped by 12.3 per cent. Oilseeds yield also rose by 7.4 per cent.

Data show a record production of rice, wheat, maize, soybean, rapeseed, mustard, and sugarcane. "The third estimated production of major crops such as paddy, wheat, soybean, groundnuts, oilseeds, and pulses are going to be a record," says Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan. This is against agricultural ministry figures of about a 1.2 per cent fall in production a year back.



SHIVAJI SARKAR

8-year-record

The food-grain estimate claims a 6.6 per cent record increase in major crops in eight years. Chouhan announced that the country's food grain production reached 3539.59 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) in 2024-25, which is 216.61 LMT higher than last year's (2023-24) 3322.98 LMT.

Another heartening news is India's agriculture exports rising 6.4 per cent to $51.9 billion in 2024-25, from $48.8 billion during the preceding fiscal year that ended March 2024. This was as against the almost flat 0.1 per cent growth in the value of its overall goods exports in 2024-25.

In 2024-25, India's total merchandise exports reached $374.1 billion, a 6 per cent increase from the $352.9 billion in 2023-24, excluding petroleum products. This marked a record high for non-petroleum merchandise exports. Overall, India's total exports (merchandise and services) reached $824.9 billion, the highest ever. Services exports reached a high of $387.5 billion. However, the country's exports in February 2025 experienced a decline, marking the fourth consecutive month of contraction. The export value fell to $ 36.91 billion, a 10.85 per cent decrease compared to the same period last year. Both exports and imports saw a sharp contraction. This decline was primarily attributed to factors like volatility in petroleum prices, global uncertainties, and the impact of sanctions on the gems and jewellery sector.

The country is hit also by lower capital expenditure hitting the ₹86000 crore construction equipment industry. It grew 21 per cent in 2022-21 per cent and 24 per cent in 2023-24. Companies like Caterpillar, JCB, Tata Hitachi, Cummins and Volvo CE are piqued at the overall growth of 3 per cent in 2024-25.



THE CENTRE ALSO INCREASED THE KHARIF CROP MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE (MSP) FOCUSING ON PULSES, OILSEEDS AND COARSE GRAINS. THE MSP FOR PADDY WAS RAISED BY ₹69, THREE PER CENT, TO ₹2369 PER QUINTAL. THE MSP OF 14 OTHER ITEMS INCLUDING GROUNDNUT, SUNFLOWER SEED, COTTON, TUR/ARHAR, AND NIGER SEED BENEFITTED

Private sector laggard

Overall construction infrastructure activities are stated to be slowing down. The infra and construction goods sector slowed by 4 per cent in April against 8.5 per cent in April 2024, according to the National Statistics Office (NSO).

The construction industry has been thriving on liberal Government expenditure. Its thaw speaks a lot that the private sector's contribution to the country's growth is below the expectations.

The manufacturing sector remained subdued, growing by 3.4 per cent in April, lower than the 4.2 per cent a year earlier. The IIP dip is stated to be lower than estimated at a 2.7 per cent fall. The slowdown is broad — based across sectors, according to rating agency ICRA. The infra and construction goods sector slowed to 4 per cent in April against 8.5 per cent in April 2024.

In 2024-25, India's private sector capex also saw a decline, falling by nearly 9 per cent to ₹26.8 lakh crore. This represents a three-year low and the second consecutive year-on-year decline.

Both the developments, in agriculture and industry, are significant in the light of the US policy manipulations by President Donald Trump. India is in protracted negotiations with the US to moderate and modify the tariff regime, particularly in the thawed world market, where multilateral UN institutions, including the World Trade Organisation, are being bypassed. Surfeit of bilateral transactions like the Indo-UK trade deals are changing the global trade scenario. The developing countries are particularly at the receiving end as they have to spend more effort, time and resources on talks. The settled multilateral norms are being gradually bypassed. It reflects on their exports and global growth. There are issues of farm exports particularly in the light of Russia-Ukraine war, conflict situations near the Mediterranean zone and Israel-Gaza — the Middle East. India must resolve these to boost global trade.

Despite a ceasefire in the wake of Operation Sindoor, Pakistan has not lifted the ban on its airspace for Indian airlines. It is bleeding the airline industry by a cost overrun of 30 per cent a flight. Air India estimated it lost over ₹100 million in a month for detouring Pakistan.

The stock markets too are tizzy having lost severely since January as it crashed with the US President Donald Trump's tariff hikes and retaliation from China fueled investors' jitters amid fears that a full-blown trade war could impact economic growth across the world.

The pace of policy pronouncements, along with postponements and modifications, has created heightened uncertainty for companies and US trading partners. A fluid trade policy environment is likely to continue as the administration continues to negotiate, takes steps to impose additional sectoral tariffs and reviews requests for product-specific exemptions from tariffs amid the latest US Federal Court striking down Trump tariffs.The coming year months may see many global changes and the fortunes of India.

Despite an impressive agricultural surge—marked by record food grain output and rising agri-exports—India's broader economic landscape remains uneven. Sluggish industrial growth, faltering manufacturing, and declining private capex cast a shadow over rural gains. Global uncertainties, fluid trade policies, and weak infrastructure demand further complicate recovery. While Indian farms bloom, factories struggle to regain momentum. The Government's challenge now is to bridge this rural-urban growth divide and sustain momentum in both agriculture and industry amid global flux.

(The writer is a policy analyst. Views expressed are personal)

A national cooperative framework for ethical biodiversity economy

As India enters its Amrit Kaal, a deeper transformation is unfolding — one not just of infrastructure or economy, but of thought and soul. The Five Prans laid out by Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi are not abstract ideals; they are a declaration that Bharat will no longer walk the path laid out by colonial rule. Among them, the resolve to end the colonial mindset and break the culture of servitude stands out like a blazing torch. For centuries, India's vast biodiversity was viewed through an extractive lens — its forests seen as timber depots, its tribal knowledge dismissed as folklore, and its people treated as passive suppliers to global industries. That mindset must end. A new India is rising — one that respects its people, reclaims its knowledge, and builds prosperity from the grassroots.

In a landmark move, the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) has reinforced this shift by issuing a decisive order on the enforcement of the Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) mechanism under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002. This mechanism ensures that communities who have traditionally conserved biological resources and associated knowledge are no longer invisible in the value chain. Whether it is a medicinal herb in the Himalayas or microbial wealth in the Eastern Ghats, any commercial exploitation of biodiversity must now be accompanied by fair and equitable benefit-sharing with the very people who nurtured it for generations.





BINOD ANAND

But the question remains: How do we operationalise this mechanism in a way that is people-centric, employment-generating, and equitable? The answer lies in India's oldest and most democratic economic system — the cooperative economic framework. With over 95,000 PACS (Primary Agricultural Credit Societies), hundreds of tribal and forest cooperatives, women SHGs, and digitally connected FPOs, India already possesses a grassroots engine capable of delivering ABS at scale. These cooperatives are not mere financial units; they are people's institutions, rooted in local soil, culture, and trust.

Through the cooperative system, Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) at the village level can negotiate access contracts, monitor resource use, and direct benefit-sharing into community-led green enterprises. PACS can serve as aggregation points — documenting biodiversity use, collecting royalties, and channelling funds into bio-enterprise clusters. A tribal cooperative in Bastar could sell sal seed products with Geographical Indication (GI) tags. A forest-based SHG in Odisha could process and export mahua oil.

An FPO in the Western Ghats could develop ayurvedic supplements from endemic herbs. These are not pipe dreams — they are now viable, legal, and scalable under the new ABS framework.

What is now required is a national institutional backbone to scale this up. There is a compelling need to establish a dedicated Multistate Cooperative for Biodiversity-Based Enterprises, with the National Biodiversity Authority as the Chief Promoter.

This cooperative would function as the nodal body to support, coordinate, and fund biodiversity — linked enterprises through cooperatives across the country. It would assist BMCs and PACS in contract formulation, ensure compliance with ABS protocols, facilitate branding and export of local biodiversity products, and link with existing cooperative structures like the National Cooperative Export Society, National Commodity Exchange Cooperative, and tribal cooperatives.

The proposed cooperative would also ensure a transparent Access to Benefit Transfer mechanism through digital platforms, enabling real-time monitoring of resource use, revenue inflow, and distribution of benefits.

This is especially important as India digitises its entire cooperative ecosystem, linking PACS to state federations and national apex bodies. A tech-enabled ABS cooperative could leverage data to inform policy, ensure compliance, and prevent biopiracy — while ensuring that "jan-bhagidari" (people's participation) remains at the heart of biodiversity conservation.

Importantly, this move aligns with the broader "PACS to Apex" vision of the Ministry of Cooperation, led by Hon'ble Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah, which seeks to empower cooperatives as value — chain creators, not just input suppliers. By embedding the ABS mechanism within the cooperative economic framework, India will not only ensure biodiversity conservation but also create millions of green, decentralised jobs across rural and tribal belts.

At its core, this is about restoring dignity. For too long, the tribal woman who held the secrets of the forest was ignored while pharmaceutical giants profited from her knowledge. The ABS mechanism, implemented through cooperatives, reverses that injustice — transforming her into a rights holder, an entrepreneur, and a contributor to the bioeconomy. It brings us closer to the vision of Sahkarita se Samriddhi — cooperation-led prosperity — and Sahkarita se Sanrakshan — cooperation-led conservation.

In the era of climate action, sustainable growth, and global green transitions, India's bioeconomy stands at the cusp of global relevance. But that future must not be built on exploitation. It must be built on cooperation, local leadership, and justice. With NBA at the helm of a Multistate Cooperative, India can become the world's most ethical and equitable bioeconomy — one where the biodiversity wealth of the land is matched by the economic dignity of its people.

As we prepare for a Viksit Bharat by 2047, let this be our message: India will not just be a powerhouse of innovation but also a custodian of nature and tradition. Let us rise — not just as a bioeconomy, but as a bio-civilisation.

"Prosperity comes from cooperation, protection comes from dedication. Where there is the village, there lies the world — India shows the path through cooperation." Let this be our Sankalp: From Sahkarita to Samriddhi, from Sahkarita to Sanrakshan. Let the world learn — from the heart of rural India — how cooperation can be the greatest form of conservation.

(The writer is Secretary General, Confederation of NGOs of Rural India; Views are personal)

Fire, Frequency, and Faith: Inside Modern Mysticism

Recently, Dhyan Foundation hosted a distinctive 6-night residential retreat in Jaipur centered around the Science of Yagyas and Divya Chikitsa Mantras. Under the leadership of Ashwini Guruji, the retreat promised not just theoretical knowledge but an immersive, transformative experience based on ancient Vedic practices — particularly the purifying power of fire rituals and the vibrational science of mantras.

Ashwini Guruji, a self-styled spiritual teacher and founder of Sanatan Kriya, has long positioned himself as a bridge between classical Indian wisdom and the modern world.

At the heart of this retreat were yagyas — fire-based rituals which, according to Guruji, are not merely religious rites but "a science to interact with the Divine."

As per his explanation, when yagyas are performed in the correct manner, the environment changes perceptibly — no smoke in the fire, fragrant air, and often, so-called divine manifestations appearing in the flames.

Such phenomena, reportedly captured in unedited photographs, were used to lend credence to his claims. Notably, Minister of State for New & Renewable Energy, Shri Shripad Naik, who attended a yagya at Dhyan Ashram, was quoted saying he had "never heard such a mantra uchharan before."



PRABHA GUPTA

Another focal point of the retreat was the introduction to Divya Chikitsa Mantras, a set of seven mantras taught by Ashwini Guruji himself.

These are said to target the body's nadis (energy channels) and chakras, creating a healing and transformational impact on the practitioner's mind and body. According to the Foundation, the mantras operate on the principle that "everything in creation vibrates at a specific frequency," and Vedic rishis had mapped these frequencies to various deities through sound.

Dhyan Foundation had even conducted an experiment using a "Mantra Scanner", which reportedly captured divine forms emerging from Guruji's chanting — a bold and controversial claim that remains unverified by independent scientific bodies.

Dhyan Foundation promotes such retreats through its official platforms and affiliated events, branding them as both experiential and spiritually potent.

They promote these opportunities as direct interactions with Ashwini Guruji, offering participants not only teachings but also energy transmissions through guided practices like mantra chanting, chakra balancing, and advanced pranayama.

The Foundation has carved a niche by presenting ancient practices through a modern lens, often conducting sessions in luxurious settings and combining esoteric Vedic wisdom with a touch of spectacle.

Their humanitarian efforts — especially in animal welfare — and advocacy of non-commercial yogic teachings have won them a dedicated base of volunteers and followers.

However, this modern packaging of spirituality hasn't come without criticism. Despite their spiritual claims and humanitarian image, questions about transparency, authenticity, and legality surround these operations:

Assertions such as diagnosing diseases via photographs at an Indian Medical Association event and scanning mantra frequencies for divine manifestations lack independent validation, inviting skepticism.

While Dhyan Foundation promotes a sattvic (pure) lifestyle, inconsistencies are observed — such as serving eggs and onions during high-end retreats, which contradict traditional yogic dietary norms.

The Foundation's animal welfare activities, particularly cow rescues, have led to over 2,000 legal cases. While they frame these as resistance from vested interests in the meat industry, critics argue that their tactics often resemble vigilante activism, sometimes clashing with law enforcement and raising questions about legal and ethical boundaries.

Dhyan Foundation undeniably contributes to the revival and reinterpretation of ancient Indian knowledge systems. Their Science of Yagyas and Divya Chikitsa Mantras retreat offers a glimpse into powerful, lesser-known aspects of the Vedic tradition. Yet, the blend of spectacle, and unverifiable claims creates a complex picture — both alluring and troubling.

As alternative spirituality continues to gain traction, the importance of discernment becomes ever more crucial.

Navigating the rapidly evolving landscape of modern mysticism requires both critical thinking and a clear awareness of its potential benefits as well as its hidden pitfalls.

In conclusion, Dhyan Foundation's Yajna retreat and Divya Chikitsa Mantras offer a compelling blend of ancient Vedic practices and modern presentation.

As the line between mysticism and marketing blurs, seekers must approach such experiences with open eyes and a discerning mind, honoring tradition while remaining vigilant about authenticity and ethical integrity in the spiritual space.

(The writer is a columnist writing on developent, social issues and spiritual practices. Views expressed are personal)

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IN BRIEF



Gold climbs Rs 260 to Rs 99,260/10g

Gold prices climbed Rs 260 to Rs 99,260 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid strong cues in the global markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The yellow metal of 99.5 per cent purity rose Rs 100 to Rs 98,700 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes).
"Gold showed a slight positive trend on Wednesday due to persistent uncertainties related to trade, along with economic concerns and geopolitical risks, continue to support the safe-haven appeal of the precious metal," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.
Also, silver rallied by Rs 1,900 to Rs 1,02,100 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) on Wednesday. The metal had closed at Rs 1,00,200 per kg in the previous market session.
On the global front, spot gold went up by USD 9.43 per ounce or 0.28 per cent to USD 3,362.6 per ounce.
In April, central banks added a net total of 12 tonnes of gold to global reserves.



Rupee falls 29 paise to close at 85.90 against US dollar

The rupee depreciated for the second consecutive session and settled for the day lower by 29 paise at 85.90 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, dragged down by risk-averse sentiments and foreign fund outflows.
Forex traders said the local unit remained under pressure on geopolitical tensions between Russia-Ukraine and elevated crude oil prices. Moreover, investors are also awaiting cues from the Reserve Bank's monetary policy announcements, they said. The Reserve Bank's rate-setting panel started its three-day brainstorming on monetary policy on Wednesday and the outcome is scheduled to be announced on June 6. Experts are of the view that the RBI may reduce the repo rate by 25 bps on Friday and another similar cut in the next policy. SBI research expects the central bank to go in for a "jumbo" rate cut of 50 bps in June itself. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.69 and moved between the high of 85.69 and a low of 86.05 against the greenback during the day.



Vedanta ramps up RE power capacity to 1.03 GW

Vedanta Ltd on Wednesday said it has increased its renewable energy power capacity to 1.03 GW and is on track to achieve 2.5 GW of green energy by 2030.
The company has ramped up its renewable energy round-the-clock equivalent power capacity to 1.03 GW through power delivery agreements, according to a statement. The goal of achieving 2.5 GW of green energy by 2030 is aimed towards the ambitious target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 or sooner, the statement said. "The 1 GW renewable energy will potentially enable Vedanta to mitigate more than 6 million tonnes of carbon emissions annually. This is roughly equivalent to carbon sequestration by nearly 350 million trees annually," it added. The renewable energy projects include a mix of wind, solar and pump storage technologies. "Our integrated approach to resource management and sustainability is central to Vedanta's vision of transforming for a sustainable future. As the Indian economy expands, Vedanta is undergoing a transformation that will support the rapidly growing needs of the economy.

RBI may reduce repo rate

Monetary policy panel starts deliberations; decision tomorrow

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank's rate-setting panel started its three-day brainstorming on monetary policy as expectations are high of a 25 bps or even a jumbo 50 bps rate cut to fuel economic growth amid uncertainties created by Trump's tariff moves.

The decision of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), headed by Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra, will be announced on Friday.

The RBI reduced the key interest rate (repo) by 25 bps each in February and April, bringing it to 6 per cent.

This could be the third back-to-back reduction in the short-term benchmark lending rate.

In response to the 50-bps cut in the policy repo rate since February 2025, most of the banks have reduced their repo-linked external benchmark-based lending rates (EBLRs) and marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR).

Experts are of the view that the RBI may reduce the repo rate by 25 bps on Friday and another similar cut in the next policy. However, an SBI research expects the central bank to go in for a "jumbo" rate cut of 50 bps in June itself.

CareEdge Ratings said falling inflation will give the RBI the flexibility to prioritise growth amidst external headwinds.

While growth momentum has improved, challenges like uneven consumption recovery, muted private capex growth, and subdued manufacturing growth remain. CPI inflation is expected to stay comfortable in 2025-26, it said.

"This opens room for further monetary policy easing. We expect the RBI MPC to cut the policy rate by another 50 bps in FY26 (including 25 bps in June), with chances of a deeper rate cut cycle if growth falters," it said.

Deepak Aggarwal, Co-founder and Co-CEO of Moneyboxx Finance said that with inflation expected to remain below the RBI's 4 per cent target and growth holding steady, the upcoming MPC meeting presents an encouraging window for a calibrated rate cut.

"A lower interest rate regime, supported by targeted liquidity measures, can meaningfully strengthen credit flow to MSMEs and NBFCs, especially those serving rural and semi-urban regions," Aggarwal said.

Raoul Kapoor, Co-CEO of Andromeda Sales and Distribution, said there are strong indications and widespread expectations that the RBI will implement a third round of rate cut later this week.



While growth momentum has improved, challenges like uneven consumption recovery, muted private capex growth, and subdued manufacturing growth remain. CPI inflation is expected to stay comfortable in 2025-26, it said

Should another 25 bps rate cut occur, it would bring the cumulative rate reduction in the calendar year 2025 to a notable 75 basis points.

"The easing of rates not only provides immediate financial relief but also stimulates consumer spending and investment, potentially bolstering overall economic growth. As a result, both existing and potential borrowers can look forward to a more favourable borrowing landscape in the coming months," Kapoor said.

Mandar Pitale, Head, Financial Markets, SBM Bank (India) opined that the upcoming RBI MPC meeting is coming at the backdrop of a strong GDP growth print of 7.4 per cent, which was significantly higher than the market expectation of 6.8 per cent.

"We expect a 25 bp cut in policy rate at the June MPC meeting.

This, coupled with the ongoing accommodative stance, will position MPC to react to any data surprises on either side,' Pitale said, and added there may be another 25 bps reduction in August by the RBI. On his expectations from the 55th meeting of MPC, Rohit Arora, CEO and Co-Founder of Biz2X & Biz2Credit said a rate cut in the range of 25- 50 basis points appears likely, supported by inflation staying below the 4 per cent target and continued moderation in core inflation.

'No question of review of satcom spectrum recommendation'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Wednesday categorically ruled out any review of recommendations on satcom spectrum at this stage, based on industry body COAI's claims.

Sources in TRAI told PTI that the regulator has already given its recommendations to the government "after following the due consultation process exhaustively and transparently".



All stakeholders were given adequate opportunity to represent their viewpoint during the consultation process, they said.

There is no question of review of the recommendations at this stage based on reactions of the Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI), TRAI sources said.

The comments assume significance as COAI - whose members include Reliance Jio and Airtel - has approached the telecom department to raise concerns over TRAI recommendations on the satcom spectrum, claiming that "incorrect assumptions" have led to unjustifiably low spectrum charges for satellite services relative to terrestrial networks.

In a letter dated May 29, COAI claimed that TRAI's recommendations are based on incorrect assumptions and that their implementation will hit the sustainability of terrestrial services, which form the foundation of India's digital infrastructure.

COAI has urged the Department of Telecom (DoT) to form a committee to "undertake a comprehensive review of the recommendations in their entirety, ensuring the process is guided by principles of fairness, transparency, and equity and also give an opportunity to TSPs (telcos) to share their views regarding the same".

The industry body argued that the recommendations provide a regulatory advantage to commercial Non-Geostationary Orbit (NGSO) satellites against terrestrial broadband service providers and, if accepted by the DoT in their present form, will undermine competition and create a non-level playing field.

COAI said that TRAI's recommendations do not appear to address the most fundamental and contentious issue -- the lack of a level-playing field between terrestrial service providers and satellite operators serving the same market.

Gland Pharma gets USFDA nod for generic drug

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gland Pharma on Wednesday said it has received approval from the US health regulator for a generic medication used to increase blood pressure.

The Hyderabad-based firm has received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) for its Abbreviated New Drug Application for Angiotensin II Acetate Injection 2.5 mg/mL, Gland Pharma said in a statement.

Gland Pharma is the exclusive "First-to-File" and is eligible for 180 days of generic drug exclusivity, it stated.

The company's product is therapeutically equivalent to La Jolla Pharma LLC's reference listed drug Giapreza.

The drug is indicated for increasing the blood pressure in adults with septic or other distributive shock. According to IQVIA, the product had US sales of around USD 58 million for the 12 months ending March 2025.

Stock markets rebound after 3-day fall

Sensex recovers 260 points

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Indian benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty snapped the three-day losing streak and settled in the positive territory on Wednesday, mirroring a rally in global markets and supported by buying in blue-chips Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank.

Market analysts said Indian equities closed with gains on better-than-expected US job market data and optimism over trade talks between the US and Chinese President this week also added optimism to markets recovery.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 260.74 points, or 0.32 per cent, to settle at 80,998.25. During the day, it jumped 349.78 points, or 0.43 per cent, to 81,087.29.

The NSE Nifty went up 77.70 points, or 0.32 per cent, to 24,620.20.

From the Sensex firms, Eternal climbed 3.32 per cent.



However, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Titan and Larsen & Toubro were among the laggards.

"Indian equities closed with gains following positive global cues with Nifty-50 up 0.32 per cent at 24,620. US markets ended higher on Tuesday after better-than-expected April job openings data, indicating resilience in the US labour market despite concerns over tariff policies.

"Further, Asian indices ended in the positive on optimism over trade talks between the US and Chinese President this week," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

Bharti Airtel, IndusInd Bank, Tech Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Tata Motors, HDFC Bank, Tata Steel and Hindustan Unilever were the other major gainers.

Oyster Renewable, Jindal Stainless forge green energy alliance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power producer Oyster Renewable Energy on Wednesday announced a partnership with Jindal Stainless to supply clean power to the stainless steel manufacturer. The tie-up is a step towards decarbonising the industrial sector in India. It raises the bar for transition to low-carbon manufacturing and accelerates India's path toward achieving its net-zero ambitions, according to a statement. "At the heart of this partnership lies a cutting-edge 282 MW interstate wind-solar hybrid project, strategically located across Bhuj (Gujarat) and Agar (Madhya Pradesh)," the statement said.. The project will combine 82 MW of wind plus 135 MWp of solar in Madhya Pradesh, as well as 99 MW of wind in Gujarat. With this collaboration, Jindal Stainless has acquired a 33.64 per cent equity stake in Oyster Green Hybrid One Pvt Ltd, a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) promoted by Oyster Renewable. The initiative is backed by a Rs 1,517-crore loan sanctioned by Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) and will operate under a 25-year group captive power purchase agreement (PPA).

UFI Filters plans doubling investments in India

PNS ■ MILAN

Italian filtration technology and thermal management major UFI Filters on Wednesday said it is planning to double investments in India in the coming years to expand the business, its chairman Giorgio Girondi said.

He said that the company is doing well in India.

"Our plan is to double our investments in India," he told reporters here after meeting Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

Goyal is here on a two-day official visit to meet Italian leaders and businesses to discuss ways to boost trade and investments between the two countries.

UFI Filters CEO Stefano Gava said that the company's revenues in India are in the range of 50 million euros, and investments are at around 25-30 million euros.

"We are going to double up very soon," he said.

Solar panels can provide power to farmers: Chouhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday suggested that a model could be considered wherein elevated solar panels could be installed above the crops to make farmers both food and energy providers.

The minister attended the National Agriculture-Renewable Energy Conference 2025 organised by the National Solar Energy Federation of India (NSEFI) here. On this occasion, Chouhan released the Federation's report and annual reference book on agriculture and renewable energy.

The conference was organised to push for dialogue and collaboration among policymakers, experts, and farmers regarding the integration of renewable energy in the agriculture sector, an official statement said.

Addressing the event, the minister said that solar panels can be a major source of providing electricity to farmers, and that the PM-KUSUM scheme is working in this direction to ensure energy security for them.



He also "proposed the model of installing elevated solar panels in fields with crops growing beneath them, stating that such models could transform small and medium-scale farmers into both food and energy providers."

The minister urged for more serious consideration and development of this model.

If effective and modern versions of this model are brought forward, the government will certainly support its implementation, Chouhan said.

He noted that six effective measures are being focused on to ensure prosperity of farmers: Increasing production; Reducing cost of production; Ensuring fair prices for produce; Providing compensation in case of losses; Diversification; and Balanced use of fertilizers to preserve the land for future generations.

Sebi warns investors against fake communications

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Wednesday cautioned investors about fake communications falsely issued in its name, misusing its logo, letterhead, and claiming to be from its officials.

The regulator asked the public to stay alert while sharing personal information or money in response to such fraudulent messages.



The cautionary statement comes after Sebi noted that certain individuals received communication wherein the sender falsely claimed to be an official of Sebi using letterhead, logo and seal of the regulator.

In certain instances, the sender issued notices through Social Media Platforms asking for payment of a fine to prevent the regulator from taking action against the recipient, sender forged sale Certificate to show that he was a buyer of PACL property, sender issued a fake certificate of use of third-party vendor account, Sebi noted.

Accordingly, the regulator has cautioned the public or investors "to verify communication purported to have been issued by Sebi...from the Sebi website".

Also, they have been asked to be vigilant while dealing with communication/senders demanding information or payment on behalf of Sebi.

The regulator has asked investors to verify the authenticity of any communication that they might deem to have received from it. Further, all the communication from Sebi can be verified from its website (www.sebi.gov.in).

Sebi said that every order passed by it bears a unique reference number, all the official communications used by it, such as letters, notices, show-cause notices, and summons issued by it have a unique document identification number.

All the orders, official communications and recovery certificates issued by Sebi are available on its website, it added.

CGD to drive India's gas demand

Set to become the biggest consumer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The city gas distribution (CGD) sector is expected to surpass fertiliser plants this year to become the largest consumer of natural gas in India, thanks to the fast growth of CNG and piped gas networks, industry leaders said on Wednesday.

CGD, which encompasses supply of CNG as fuel to automobiles, and piping gas to household kitchens for cooking as well as to industries, accounts for 21.22 per cent of the near 200 million standard cubic meters per day of gas consumption in the country.

Natural gas consumption is likely to rise to 300-250 mmscmd in the next 7-10 years, GAIL Director (Marketing) Sanjay Kumar said while speaking at the 11th CGD Conference here.

"Fertiliser sector consumes 60 mmscmd and this is likely to remain the same as no new fertiliser plants are on the anvil," he said.

"CGD sector consumption could go up to 100 mmscmd from 41.1 mmscmd usage in February/March 2025."



Anjani Kumar, Head (Gas Origination & BD), Shell Energy LNG, said, "CGD could very well become the largest consumption sector this year itself."

The CGD sector will drive India's ambition to raise the share of natural gas in energy basket to 15 per cent from the current 7 per cent.

But domestic production is insufficient to meet the demand and the country has to necessarily rely on imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Gas demand, he said, has grown 35 mmscmd in the last three years and 80 per cent of this has been met through LNG. Currently, roughly half of the gas requirement is met through imports.

India's CGD sector is experiencing rapid growth, driven by government initiatives, increased infrastructure investments, and a shift towards cleaner energy sources. City gas licences have been given out for almost the entire country in the recent auctions. The country now has over 8,000 CNG stations and 1.5 crore households using piped natural gas for cooking purposes.

GAIL's Kumar said domestic gas production can rise to 130-135 mmscmd in next 4-6 years as per the projections made by the national oil companies.

Aamir Khan defends *Sitaare Zameen Par*, says remakes are new creative perspective



Actor Aamir Khan is all set to return to the big screen this summer with *Sitaare Zameen Par*, in which he plays a basketball coach mentoring a team of players with special needs. The film is a remake of the Spanish hit *Campeones*, which also inspired the Hollywood movie *Champions*. While the project has already attracted some criticism for being "another remake," Aamir is unbothered, calling the discourse around remakes "useless."

This marks Aamir's first film since *Laal Singh Chaddha* (2022), the official Indian adaptation of *Forrest Gump*. Speaking on Raj Shamani's podcast, Aamir addressed the backlash he received for doing back-to-back remakes. "After *Laal Singh Chaddha*, a lot of people told me, 'You are making a remake again,'" he shared. "But I'm a different kind of person. I don't understand practical things. I don't have any problem with a remake, and I don't feel my creativity is diminishing at all. For me, it is new work. Someone else made this story, and I am giving it my perspective."

To further defend his stance, Aamir drew a parallel between film remakes and theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. "People still do Shakespeare to this day. Even today, the number one playwright in theatre is Shakespeare, worldwide," he explained. "Even today, his plays are adapted in every language. And we praise it. Why? It's a remake. Shut it down then. Why are you still doing Shakespeare? Write your own play. This is wrong thinking."

He believes adapting someone else's work still involves immense creativity. "When I adapt Shakespeare, I am putting my energies into it. I find this discussion on remakes completely useless," he added.





STANDALONE

Actress and sports enthusiast Saiyami Kher caught up with Manchester United stars Diogo Dalot, Harry Maguire and Andre Onana during their Mumbai visit. A fitness and adventure sports buff herself, Saiyami engaged the trio in an easygoing conversation about football, scuba diving, cricket, endurance training, and how they each unwind off the field, bonding over their shared love for sport and wellness.

15 YEARS OF *RAAJNEETI*

Prakash Jha confirms sequel is in the works

Fifteen years after its release, Prakash Jha's *Raajneeti* continues to resonate with audiences for its powerful storytelling, compelling characters, and star-studded ensemble. As the political drama completes a milestone, the filmmaker reveals that a sequel to the 2010 hit is in the pipeline. "Politics is a journey that never ends—*Raajneeti ki yatra toh anvarat hai*," Jha shares. "There has always been a vision for *Raajneeti 2*. While nothing is final yet in terms of casting or shooting, I am actively working on it."

Often referred to as a modern-day retelling of the Mahabharata, *Raajneeti* brought mythology and contemporary politics together on an ambitious scale. The film featured Ranbir Kapoor as the hesitant Arjun-like figure, Ajay Devgn as the cursed Karna, Nana Patekar channeling Krishna's wisdom, Katrina Kaif in a Draupadi-esque role, Arjun Rampal embodying Bhima's strength, Manoj Bajpayee as a stubborn Duryodhana, Sarah Thompson as Subhadra and Naseeruddin Shah representing a guilt-ridden godlike presence. The film's production itself was no less epic. "Pre-production took nearly a year. We even cast 8,000 actors to create realistic crowd scenes—it was a mammoth undertaking."

Bringing together such a massive cast is no small feat, but Jha says the script did most of the convincing. "Every actor we approached connected with the story and came on board willingly. They were excited to take on challenging roles. It became more than just another film—it felt like a mission for everyone involved."

While *Raajneeti* was hailed as a commercial blockbuster, Jha is more philosophical about its place in his filmography. "People often label *Raajneeti* as a turning point or a big hit, but for me, it's one among many that I hold close—whether it's Damul, Mritudand, Gangajal, Apaharan, or Satyagraha. Still, it feels rewarding when people continue to talk about it after so many years."



'NO SURGERY, JUST CARDIO'

Bhuvan bam responds to transformation speculation



YouTuber-turned-actor Bhuvan Bam has addressed online speculation about his recent appearance, which sparked rumours of plastic surgery. The buzz began after a Reddit user posted a comparison between Bhuvan's latest clean-shaven photos and older images, suggesting he looked drastically different—and not just due to age or lifestyle changes. The post, titled "Has Bhuvan Bam undergone any sort of surgery?", went viral with claims ranging from jawline modifications to hair medication and possible rhinoplasty. While some users speculated about surgical enhancements, others leaned towards subtle procedures like fillers.

One user commented, "He looks extremely different! Most probably on hair medication, and his jawline does look different." Another said, "There are definitely changes to the jawline which are not because of diet and exercise… Probably fillers. But then again, it's not surgery, so that's smart wordplay."

Amused by the chatter, Bhuvan himself chimed in on the thread with a candid and humorous response. "Hi doston (friends), Had a great time reading all the comments regarding my surgery. I also felt the same after looking at my changed facial structure, as if I had gone under the knife. But it's just 60 minutes of cardio and one hour of strength training supported by a strict diet. It does wonders, trust me."

He also addressed the age gap between the pictures being compared: "Also, the second photo is almost a decade old. So, naturally, people's appearance changes."

Clarifying one minor medical procedure, he added, "A few weeks ago, I underwent a lip surgery because of a painful boil, also known as a mucocele. It had to be removed because I've been prepping up for a show and had to be in a certain look." Signing off with a pinch of sarcasm and a lot of warmth, he concluded, "Thank you for your opinions which are just '*andhere mein lath ghumaana*' (wild guesses). Take care all. Lots of love." Looks like Bhuvan isn't just transforming physically—but also handling online noise with wit, grace, and a killer gym routine.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU

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

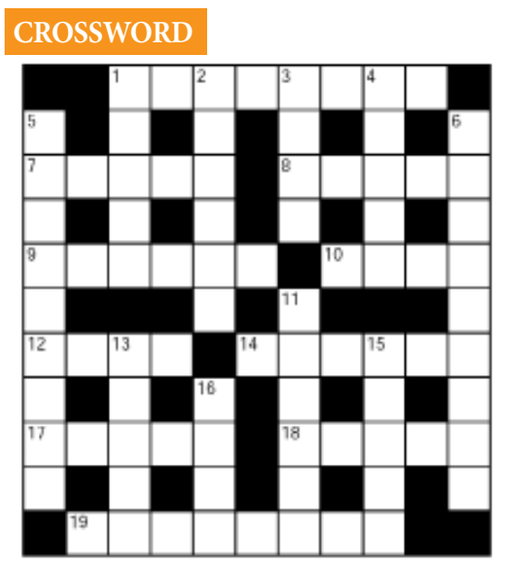
Yesterday's solution

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

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.

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Tiniest
7 A fish in rivers and lakes
8 Stick this on an envelope
9 Having a meal
10 Shout
12 Seeds in an apple
14 Opposite of weak
17 Precise
18 Nips with the teeth
19 Half of twenty-eight
6 Say you are sorry
11 A building where a horse is kept
13 A keyboard instrument
15 Frequently
16 A light in the night sky

DOWN

1 Fire a gun
2 Pretending
3 Mislaid
4 Frighten
5 Tried

SOLUTION

T	A	D	P	O	L	E	S		I	
R		R			E		T		I	
A	W	A	Y		S	T	U	P	I	D
V		K			S		D		A	
E	L	E	C	T		S	E	V	E	N
L		U				N			G	
L	E	A	R	N		S	T	A	G	E
E		I		C			C		R	
R	E	M	O	V	E		Y	O	Y	O
N		U		I			R		U	
D		S	U	I	T	A	N	A	S	

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THURSDAY JUNE 5, 2025

PARUL GULATI ON *DONALI*

‘We lived like locals — peeing behind bushes in the jungle, roughing it out’

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Making waves at Cannes in a gown crafted entirely from hair, Parul Gulati opens up about her evolution as an artist, her instinct-driven choices, and how storytelling fuels every facet of her life—whether on screen or in business. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, the actor and entrepreneur delves into her dynamic world, balancing the grit of portraying a gun-wielding bandit in her upcoming web series Donali with the creativity and drive behind her successful hair extension brand, Nish Hair

Parul Gulati is a powerhouse of talent and ambition — an actor who effortlessly inhabits layered characters on screen and a sharp entrepreneur redefining beauty norms with her hair extension brand, Nish Hair. Present here in Hyderabad for a whirlwind event filled with fan interactions, exciting games and ofcourse, the ‘Parul Smoothie’, Parul brought her signature charm and candor to the city. In this exclusive chat with ***The Pioneer***, she opens up about her upcoming web series *Donali*, her much-talked-about Cannes appearance in a gown made entirely of hair and how she’s balancing the glitz of showbiz with the grit of building a business from scratch.

From a fun trivia to treasure hunt at Broadway, the weekend had it all! Post an exciting weekend, just as always, her entrepreneurial energy already setting the tone, the *Haq Se* fame reflects on the love she’s received as an actor over the years, especially from her work on *POW: Bandhi Yuddh Ke*. “It feels rewarding,” she admits. “As people in creative fields, we just crave recognition and love. And when it comes, it humbles you. I feel really, really grateful.”

She’s now gearing up for her upcoming web series *Donali*, set in the early 1900s when dacoits ruled the Chambal terrain. “People haven’t seen characters or settings like this in a long time. It’s like a treasure hunt—these bandits are looking for treasure. It’s funny and serious at the same time, and I think people will love it.”



Gulati plays a young, gun-wielding bandit—a character that pushed her to learn new skills. “I had to learn action, shoot a double-barrel gun—which is what a ‘donali’ is—and I didn’t even have the strength to pull the trigger on a revolver at first,” she confesses, laughing. “Speaking in Bundeli, the dialect, was another challenge. I had to stay consistent with it over a year and a half of shooting. We lived like locals—peeing behind bushes in the jungle, roughing it out.”

Working alongside actors like Barun Sobti and Divyenndu added layers to the experience, though, surprisingly, she shot the most with Divyenndu. “There’s a huge cast—Chunky Panday, Shivani Raghuvanshi, Sandhya Mridul and so many more. We had often just sit around chatting between setups. The jungle shoots were intense. We’d carry snacks and literally live the life of the characters.”

She describes the tone of *Donali* as a satire with a touch of drama. Preparing for such a layered world wasn’t easy. “We started working on it during the 2020 lockdowns and finished in 2023. That entire period, I was fully consumed by this character—Phool. It really demanded everything from me.”

While Phool’s impulsiveness mirrors her own instincts, the rest of the character is a departure. “She deals with things I can’t even imagine. She’s not the leader of her gang but wants to be. She doesn’t have a phone, she has personal demons—so much I couldn’t relate to directly, but it was fascinating to become her.”

Parul also has a comedy film lined up, though she can’t talk much about it just yet. What draws her to comedy, though, is simple: “It has to make me laugh. That’s it! If I enjoy it, then I feel the audience will too.” She sees comedy as an instinctual rhythm. “I try not to rehearse comedic lines too much. I want it to land fresh. Comedy timing still confuses me a bit—I don’t always know what others will find funny, so I focus on keeping it real for myself.”

That instinct for originality showed in full force at Cannes, where she made a bold fashion statement in a gown made entirely of hair braids, weaving her own story. “When the Cannes conversation started, my team said, ‘Let’s create something unique. You’re not going with a film but as an Indian entrepreneur. Let’s show what Indian women entrepreneurs can do.’” The idea of a “Malkin” gown evolved—“I was like, let’s make a gown made out of hair!” After weeks of ideation, designer Mohit Rai came on board. “We didn’t want it to be gimmicky—no Chewbacca vibes. We wanted structure and elegance. We tried French braids, but they didn’t look right. We finally found a pattern with straight braids wrapping the bodice and stitched them onto a fitted structure.”

Walking the Cannes red carpet in that gown was surreal. “People like Niharika and Anushka Sen were there and they were like—Parul, is that a hair dress? And one of the volunteers at the theatre said it was the most unique dress she’d ever seen. That was a precious moment.”

She firmly believes that fashion can be storytelling—or even activism. “I literally weaved my story into braids and wore it. Everyone at Cannes was expressing something deeply personal—whether it was Alia in Gucci or Aishwarya with her sindoor. It was a proud moment for South Asians, especially South Asian women.”

Managing multiple roles—actor, entrepreneur, content creator—is no cakewalk, but Parul credits her team. “Leadership is about delegation. I’ve built strong teams over the years. My company director Reva travels with me everywhere. I don’t micromanage anymore because that limits growth. My acting is managed by one team, my brand by another, and they all work in sync.”

Despite her success, the *Girls Hostel* star remains grounded. “When I was just acting, I didn’t have this clarity. But running a business changes you. Some customers don’t even know I’m an actor. That humility—that reality check—keeps me anchored. Managing 60 women, selling directly to customers, it makes you understand human behavior better.”

She admits she’s constantly evolving. “Every project, every year, adds something new. I’ve been acting since I was 17. Now I make more conscious choices and the roles I’ve played—like journalists—let me research and empathise. That’s the beauty of being an actor. You walk in someone else’s shoes and come out changed.”

Asked about what kind of projects excite her, she says it boils down to character. “Sometimes the script placement matters, sometimes it’s just the role. Like in *Made in Heaven*, I really wanted to work with Zoya—” and here she trails off, a smile in her voice, clearly hinting at many exciting things still under wraps.

When I was just acting, I didn’t have this clarity. But running a business changes you. Some customers don’t even know I’m an actor. That humility—that reality check—keeps me anchored.

GAMIFYING FINANCIAL SERVICES

As attention has become a currency, the financial services industry is changing—using gamification to engage a more digital-first audience. And beyond the buzzword we are referring to, gamifying finance involves far more than points and badges—what we're looking at is looking at business models of financial literacy, customer retention, and transactional behaviours through the lens of behavioural design. While fintech companies have pioneered this space, traditional banks are also now realizing that engagement can and must feel less like homework and more like a game.



OVERCOMING THE ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGE IN FINANCE

Despite understanding the indispensable nature of financial wellness, most users do not use banking apps frequently. A 2023 survey in India conducted by Razorpay and FIS (Fidelity National Information Services) found that while over 70% of users have digital banking apps, only 24% actively use financial planning features. Financial literacy is another area of concern; according to the S&P Global FinLit Survey on financial literacy, only 27% of Indian adults are financially literate, and large gaps exist in emerging markets too - for Indonesia this means 32% and for Brazil this means 35%.

The disengagement does not come from need, but rather experience and emotional context. Banking interfaces are transactional - compartmentalised, sterile and intentionally non-stimulating with no opportunity for sustainable dopamine triggers. This is where gamification comes in, not as a gimmick, but a psychological unlock.

REWIRING BEHAVIORS THROUGH GAMIFICATION

Gamification leverages the motivators that are internal to individuals, which include curiosity, achievement, progression and competition. Several companies are changing behavior through gamification in financial services without trading off any of the substance of their service. For instance:

Progression: Acorn and Digit use visual representation of progress so users can understand how much closer they are to their savings goals.

Micro-rewards: In India, the app Fi provides scratch cards, with small cash backs for every transaction and turns what could have been a regular transaction into a reward based process.

Simulations & Quests: Monobank in Ukraine gave users a virtual cat to “feed” through saving and a fun metaphor led users to actually save money.

Leaderboards: Zogo and Step have users answer trivia and take money quiz tests to display their knowledge, rewarding top performers with actual perks.

Such mechanisms serve as an entry point of low thresholds for users who would have lacked engagement, but who may engage over the long term.

BUSINESS IMPACT- NOT JUST A VANITY METRIC

While engagement is a great pageview and talking point, it’s only worth anything if it drives business outcomes. And gamification is driving business outcomes and here’s how.

- **Increased usage of the app:** Nubank reported a 30% increase in daily active users after implementing reward-based task experience.
- **Reduced churn:** Gamified savings challenges in Revolut (a British multinational neobank and fintech company) resulted in a 19% improvement in 90-day retention.
- **Improved conversion rates:** Robinhood, an American financial services company, has publicly reported that their referral bonuses and milestone-based gamification has led to a 28% increase in first-time deposits.

Gamification is not about making finance a game; it’s about putting psychological design behind the journey to generate outcomes.

ETHICS IN FINANCIAL GAMIFICATION

While there is certainly a downside, manipulation and motivation are a fine line. If you constantly use variable rewards or social comparison, you could engage in impulsive behaviors—especially on the trading or credit-linked side. Responsible gamification means:

1. Clear rules
2. No addition loops
3. Rewards based on long-term behavior
4. Frictions in the flow that help people pause before making any high-stakes decision

Real gamification in finance is not about hijacking our attention but restoring it in meaningful ways.

THE ROAD AHEAD

As financial services become more and more a part of lifestyle platforms, from ride-hailing apps to health apps, the next frontier is what we call “invisible finance with visible rewards.” For example, what if fitness goals could earn a savings boost for a gym-goer or changes in a user’s behavioural choices in challenging, interactive budgeting games could reduce dynamic insurance premiums?

Gamification will not replace thoughtful, legitimate financial products but will be the UI layer for all services to pass on real value.

In a world where the average attention span is now below 8 seconds, it will be the financial institutions that play smartly, engaging users to make finance fun, relevant and behaviourally designed that will be the winners of this game.

(The author, Abbhinav R Jain, is the Co-founder & Chief Financial Officer, of AdCounty Media.)

Why smoking is a major risk factor in fertility and pregnancy treatment

In general, smoking has a significant impact on fertility and reproductive health of both men and women. Adding to this, in today’s fast paced with increased stress levels many couples find themselves lured into consuming tobacco products without realising the deleterious consequences. These consequences get exacerbated especially in IVF (In Vitro Fertilization) treatments. While cigarettes are the most commonly used tobacco product in pregnancy, alternative forms of tobacco use are e-cigarettes or vaping products, hookahs, and cigars, snus, lozenges, patches and gums.

TYPES OF IMPACT

In men, tobacco consumption causes erectile dysfunction and lowers the sperm DNA and quality. In women it impairs ovarian reserve, steroid hormone production, ovulation, menstrual regularity, fallopian tube function, uterine receptivity and embryo implantation.
It also leads to a range of complications in pregnancy for both the baby and mother.

MATERNAL COMPLICATIONS

- placenta previa
- abruptio placentae
- preterm prelabour rupture of membranes
- ectopic pregnancy and
- decreased maternal thyroid function

FOETAL COMPLICATIONS

- preterm birth
- low birth weight
- intrauterine growth restriction
- neonatal respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases
- transfer to the neonatal intensive care unit with admission for more than seven days
- Intrauterine death and neonatal infection



PASSIVE SMOKING

Harmful effects of smoking isn’t just limited to active smokers. Second-hand smoke, a mix of smoke from burning tobacco and exhaled smoke can be just as dangerous. In fact, side stream smoke (from the burning end of a cigarette) contains more harmful substances like tar, carbon monoxide and nicotine than the smoke inhaled by the smoker. There is no safe level of exposure whether active or passive.

EFFECTS OF SMOKING ON IVF

Smoking is hazardous in any pregnancy may it be spontaneous conception or IVF pregnancy. It can

- decrease endometrial thickness,
- make embryo implantation more difficult and
- have only 50% success rate.

A Dutch study on IVF and smoking found that just one cigarette a day for 12 months reduces the chance of a live birth by 28 per cent

History of smoking or active smoking during first trimester is shown to have

- Defective embryogenesis
- Genetic development issues,
- Congenital defects like Orofacial clefts
- Increased risk of miscarriage

The American College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (ACOG) recommends screening and intervention of Nicotine and coexisting alcohol or drug Abuse as important part of prenatal care. The NHS in the UK now offers a breathalyser service to all pregnant women.

BENEFITS OF SMOKING CESSATION

Pregnancy influences many women to stop smoking, and approximately 54% of women who smoke before pregnancy quit smoking directly before or during pregnancy.

Smoking cessation at any point in gestation benefits the pregnant woman and her fetus. The greatest benefit is observed with cessation before 15 weeks of gestation



SUPPORT AND INTERVENTIONS

Healthcare professionals should individualise care by offering psychosocial, behavioural and pharmacotherapy interventions. Available cessation-aid services and resources, including digital resources, should be discussed and documented regularly at prenatal and postpartum follow-up visits.

(The author, Dr Subhashini Y, is a Consultant Obstetrician, at Fernandez Hospital.)

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | THURSDAY | JUNE 5, 2025

Gukesh loses Hikaru in Norway Chess

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Stavanger (Norway)



American Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura broke world champion D Gukesh's run of classical wins by comprehensively beating the Indian to earn three full points even as Arjun Erigaisi roared back to contention with victory over Fabiano Caruana in Norway Chess here.

India's Erigaisi trapped his opponent Caruana in a time scramble in the eighth round of the prestigious tournament on Tuesday. World Number 2 and former Norway Chess champion Nakamura pressed home the early advantage he got with the white pieces to dominate his 19-year-old opponent and score a "very smooth" victory and take revenge for his Round 3 loss to the Indian. Gukesh, who had regained his mojo after a disappointing start to the tournament when he beat world Number 1 Magnus Carlsen and Erigaisi in Round 6 and 7 respectively, was cornered by Nakamura, who didn't give his opponent an inch during the course of the nearly four-hour-long contest.With two more rounds to go, Gukesh was tied for third place with Nakamura on 11.5 points, while American GM Caruana, despite the loss to Erigaisi, was in the lead with 12.5 points.

Carlsen, who lost to China's Wei Yi in the Armageddon tie-break, was second with 12 points, while Erigaisi was fifth with 10.5 points. "It was a very smooth game, I'm very happy with it. It looks very good," said Nakamura after the win.

The 37-year-old Nakamura, winner of the 2023 edition of Norway Chess in which Gukesh finished third, said that the reigning world champion was uncomfortable with the pawn structure, which probably resulted in him coming under time pressure and giving an easy win to the American."I'm not sure what happened, whether Gukesh just didn't know this bishop g6 move, or what exactly it was, but it was very clear to me that, based on the long think, he didn't like the pawn structure at all," said Nakamura, who at 15 years of age had become the youngest American GM.

Nakamura added that his loss to Gukesh in Round 3 was more on account of him "slackening" a bit. "Just when I had equalised, I completely relaxed. I just fell asleep for like one to two moves, and immediately, I was in a lot of trouble, and I couldn't recover," he added.

Gukesh played horribly: Nakamura

Nakamura expressed surprise over Gukesh's play in the tournament so far, saying he was lucky to have survived Carlsen and Erigaisi in Round 6 and 7 respectively.

"It's a very strange term, because his result is very good, but if we're being objective about chess, I think he's played horribly. He should have lost to Magnus, he was completely lost against Arjun (Erigaisi). "Other than the first game against me, and maybe the game against Wei Yi, at some point, he was losing; even Fabiano (Caruana), he (Gukesh) was also losing in that game," said Nakamura.

"So, it's very, very hard to judge what his play is, but when I look at his game, one of the big things that he has, that I would say Arjun and R. Praggnanandhaa don't have, is he's mentally very strong.

"He's a lot less emotional than the other two players, and that has served him very well, especially in this tournament, so it's a mixed bag."

Nakamura added, "I think his defensive skills are very good, like in this game, I thought there were probably three or four moments when I was winning, and then I had to still find more moves to convert, so he's definitely showing very strong defensive skills."

'India is the next Soviet Union of chess'

Nakamura gave a strong indication that this could be his last appearance in Norway Chess, and that he had probably played his final classical game against Carlsen. He also averred that "the future of chess is in India."

"India is basically the new Soviet Union as far as chess goes. You have Gukesh, you have Arjun, you have Praggnanandhaa, I think Aravindh (Chithambaram) just broke into the top-10, if I'm not mistaken. "If I look forward to the next 5-10 years, Indians are going to dominate chess, there's no doubt about it," he said.

Humpy regains sole lead

Two-time world rapid champion, India's Koneru Humpy wrested back the lead with two rounds to go, beating Spanish International Master Sara Khadem in the day's only classical win.

Humpy, on 13.5 points, was one point ahead of reigning world champion China's Ju Wenjun. Ju's six-match winning streak was broken by R Vaishali — who is fifth on 9.5 points — in the Armageddon tie-break.

Results (Round 8):

(Open) Arjun Erigaisi (Ind — 10.5 points) bt Fabiano Caruana (USA — 12.5); Hikaru Nakamura (USA — 11.5) bt D Gukesh (Ind — 11.5); Wei Yi (Chn - 8) bt Magnus Carlsen (Nor — 12) in Armageddon tie-break.

(Women) Sara Khadem (Esp — 6) lost to Koneru Humpy (Ind — 13.5); R Vaishali (Ind — 9.5) bt Ju Wenjun (Chn — 12.5) in Armageddon tie-break; Anna Muzychuk (Ukr - 12.5) bt Lei Tingjie (Chn — 10) in Armageddon tie-break.

New Zealand Cricket seeks new head coach for all formats



Gary Stead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Wellington

New Zealand Cricket has begun a search for a new head coach to lead the Black Caps in all three formats after ruling out the incumbent Gary Stead, who has been national coach since 2018.

Stead stepped down in April from the white ball formats and said he was considering his future as test coach. NZC hurried his decision when it said Wednesday it is now looking for one coach to cover all formats.

South African Rob Walter, former New Zealand fast bowler Shane Bond and current assistants Luke Ronchi and Shane Jurgensen are expected to be interviewed. Stead coached the Black Caps in 52 test matches, winning 27 including the inaugural World Test Championship. Under his coaching, New Zealand won 56 of 97 one-day internationals and 64 of 119 Twenty20 internationals.

New Zealand was runner-up on a countback of boundaries in the 2019 World Cup and runner-up at the Champions Trophy earlier this year.

Stead took over as head coach from Mike Hesson, who had enjoyed success in company with captain Brendon McCullum.

"Brendon McCullum and Mike Hesson had left the team with strong values and a style of play and I've just tried to build and shape that further to grow our ability to be consistent in everything we do," Stead said.

"It's been nice to be competitive across all three formats and I'd like to think that regardless of results, the opposition know the Black Caps are a team that won't fold and will always show the grit and determination to compete.

India Women to open Asia Cup campaign against Thailand



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Indian women's hockey team will open its Asia Cup campaign against Thailand on September 5 before taking on defending champions Japan and Singapore, Hockey India announced on Wednesday.

The Indian team, which claimed the bronze medal in the previous edition, is placed in Pool B along Japan, Thailand and Singapore while Pool A consists of hosts China, Korea, Malaysia, and Chinese Taipei.

The tournament is set to take place in Hangzhou, China, from September 5 to 14 and the winner will get a direct qualification to the 2026 World Cup.

India's second match will be against Japan on September 6, followed by final Pool B contest against Singapore on September 8.

"Being placed in Pool B alongside defending champions Japan will test our skills and character from the very start. However, facing them in the pool stage will be a great opportunity to measure ourselves early in the tournament," India captain Salima Tete said. "Our focus will be on playing smart, disciplined hockey and taking it one match at a time. The ultimate goal is to lift the trophy and earn a direct spot in the 2026 women's FIH Hockey World Cup." Echoing Salima's sentiments, vice-captain Navneet Kaur said, "It will be a challenging tournament with Asia's top teams competing with each other, but we see it as a chance to bring out our best right from the first whistle."

"We've been training with intensity and purpose, and we will aim to execute our plans on the field during the tournament. Playing against Japan in the group stage gives us an early look at high-pressure hockey, which can only help us grow stronger as a unit. We're determined to make this Asia Cup campaign count and make the country proud."

India had won the Asia Cup back in 2017, when they defeated China in the final. According to the format, the top two teams from each pool will advance to the Super 4s Pool, where each team will play one match against each of the other three teams.

The top two teams from the Super 4s Pool will qualify for the final, while the third and fourth placed teams will compete in the 3rd/4th place match. The bottom two teams from Pool A and Pool B will play classification matches to determine the 5th to 8th positions in the tournament.

Diksha to lead contingent of 5 Indians at Tenerife Open

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Canary Islands

Diksha Dagar will lead a five-Indian contingent at the Tenerife Women's Open golf tournament in the Canary Islands this week on the Ladies European Tour (LET), which begins after a mini break. The tournament in Tenerife returns to the schedule for the first time since 2011.

Besides, Diksha, Avani Prashanth, Tvesa Malik, Hitaashee Bakshi and Sneha Singh are the other Indians in the field of 132 players from 35 nations at the Abama Golf Resort.

Pranavi Urs was also in the field but has withdrawn as she is yet to fully recover from her wrist injury.

After nine events this year, Diksha is the top Indian in eighth place on the LET Order of Merit, which decides the yearlong race to crown the Tour's number one player. Diksha has played nine events, made seven cuts and finished in Top-10 four times, including a runner-up finish in Morocco. Avani, at 39th, is the second best Indian on LET Merit list.

The Indian challenge includes the last two Hero Order of Merit winners in India.

LET rookie Hitaashee in two starts has done well to finish T-12 at the Dutch Ladies Open and T-34 at Jabra Ladies, while Sneha will make her first start.

Tvesa in six starts has made only two cuts with T-34 at Jabra Ladies as the best.

The top four of the current 2025 Order of Merit are in the field. They are England's Mimi Rhodes, compatriot Cara Gainer and Czech Republic's Sara Kouskova, who secured her maiden LET victory at Evian Resort. One spot back in the Order of Merit is Chiara Tamburlini, who will no doubt be as confident as anyone in Tenerife after she secured her best ever Major result last week. The Swiss star, winner of the 2024 Order of Merit, recorded a T-14 finish at the testing US Women's Open in Wisconsin, a score helped by rounds of 69-71 to start the week.

The field has 17 home stars, including Nuria Iturrioz, a four-time winner on the LET. The week will also see the return of Carly Booth after a three year injury absence. Booth last played at the Belgian Ladies Open in May 2022 but has since been sidelined due to an ACL injury and had a reconstructive knee surgery.

The three-time LET winner returns this week ahead of several European events in June. The tournament previously took place between 2002-2011 and the Abama Golf course provides a tricky test for the players this week with undulation and sloppy greens.

Spain beats England 2-1 in Nations League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Barcelona

World champion Spain beat European champion England 2-1 in the UEFA Women's Nations League in their last competitive game before the Lionesses defend their title next month. Spain substitute Clàudia Pina turned the game around by scoring twice within minutes of coming on in the second half on Tuesday after England led thanks to Alessia Russo's goal in the 22nd.

Barcelona forward Pina struck in the 60th and 70th minutes at Espanyol's stadium to ensure Spain topped their Nations League group despite losing 1-0 to England at Wembley Stadium in February.

"The second half, they started really quick," England coach Sarina Wiegman said. "They pressed even higher. We had some trouble to get out of the press and keep the ball." Spain, which also beat England in the 2023 Women's World Cup final, advances to the semifinals in October. The draw is made Friday and will involve defending champion Spain, France, Germany and Sweden. The European Championship is the priority this year, and the 16-team tournament kicks off July 2 in Switzerland.

England routs West Indies to sweep ODI series

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London



Late start, early finish. England needed just 30 of 40 available overs to beat the West Indies by seven wickets and achieve a 3-0 clean sweep of their one-day international series at the Oval on Tuesday. Jamie Smith's maiden ODI fifty, 64 of the 93-run opening stand in seven overs, launched England's successful assault on the rain-revised target of 246.

The game was delayed twice, first because a traffic lights outage trapped the West Indies bus long enough so the team wasn't even at the ground at the scheduled toss, and secondly for a 90-minute rain break. Without a warmup in the nets, and forced to bat in gloomy bowler-friendly conditions, the West Indies slumped to 28-3 before the rain and 154-7 soon afterward. That it eventually racked up 251-9 was impressive.

Sherfane Rutherford kept the innings alive with 70 off 71 balls, then teammates Gudakesh Motie and Alzarri Joseph, the Nos. 8 and 9 batters, gave their side a fighting chance with a partnership of 91 in 11.2 overs. In the highest ever eighth-wicket ODI stand by the West Indies against England, Motie and Joseph clobbered the host with five sixes and 10 boundaries. Joseph was out to a skier on 41 off 29, and Motie was bowled on the last ball on 63 off 54. Spinner Adil Rashid was the pick of the bowlers with 3-40. England players adapted to the pre-game traffic problems near the Oval by exiting their bus and hiring bicycles to get to the ground.

Smith used more of that dynamic thinking on the fly to deflate West Indies hopes again on his home ground.

Smith blasted 10 boundaries and three sixes before his off stump was bowled by Motie in the seventh over after scoring 64 from 28 deliveries. Smith scored at such a rate that England's 100 in the eight-over powerplay was the fourth fastest in ODIs, and its 121-1 after 10 overs was England's best-ever 10-over total. Ben Duckett propelled England further with 58 from 46, falling at 155-2 with the chase more than half over. The mopping up was left to Joe Root with a casual 44, and Jos Buttler's unbeaten 41.

The teams play three Twenty20s from Friday, starting at Chester-le-Street.

French Open: Lorenzo Musetti beats Frances Tiafoe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris



Lorenzo Musetti used his sleek one-handed backhand and sprint-then-slide court coverage to reach his first semifinal at the French Open, and second at a Grand Slam tournament, by beating Frances Tiafoe 6-2 4-6 7-5 6-2 in the same stadium where he won a bronze medal at last year's Olympics.

When the match ended on Tuesday, Musetti, a 23-year-old Italian, rolled up his green shirt's right sleeve and flexed his biceps. No one would be surprised if things get tougher on Friday: That's when Musetti will meet defending champion Carlos Alcaraz for a berth in the championship match. Alcaraz wasn't really tested Tuesday night during a 6-0 6-1 6-4 quarterfinal victory over Number 12 Tommy Paul, who had his right thigh heavily taped and wasn't able to produce his best tennis.

Number 8 seed Musetti and Number 1 Jannik Sinner — who faces unseeded Alexander Bublik in the quarterfinals Wednesday — gave Italy two male quarterfinalists at Roland-Garros for the first time since 1973. Tiafoe also was part of a rare accomplishment for his country: He and Paul were the first American men to get to the round of eight in Paris since Andre Agassi in 2003 — and the first duo to do it in the same year since Jim Courier and Pete Sampras in 1996. But with Tuesday's results, US men are 1-60 since 1999 at the French Open against opponents ranked in the top 10.

In women's action, three-time defending champion Iga Swiatek and No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka both won in straight sets to set up a semifinal showdown on Thursday.

Number 15 Tiafoe, a 27-year-old from Maryland, hadn't dropped a set on the way to the quarterfinals. But he wasn't up to the task against Musetti, a semifinalist at Wimbledon in 2024. Wearing a chain around his neck with a pendant reading "Big Foe" in capital letters, Tiafoe missed all eight first serves in his initial service game and sent a backhand wide to give Musetti a 2-0 lead. Tiafoe looked at his coach, David Witt, and complained about the wind.

"He didn't start as he wanted, but today it was really complicated to play well," Musetti said. "It was so windy and it was difficult to manage to hit properly." At match's end, Musetti had more winners, 44-33, and far fewer unforced errors, 51-32. Still, when two-time US Open semifinalist Tiafoe smacked a forehand to even the match at a set apiece, he let out a roar and shouted: "Let's go! Let's go!"

During that set, Musetti was warned for unsportsmanlike conduct for kicking a tennis ball that inadvertently hit a linesperson. Unlike most top-level tennis tournaments, which rely on electronic line-calling, there are still humans on court at Roland-Garros to decide whether shots land in or out. Told by the postmatch interviewer that he has an elegant game, Musetti joked: "I mean, we are Italian. We are elegant."

The point of the match came in the third set's sixth game.Musetti stretched wide of the doubles alley near the net to reach a shot at a seemingly impossible angle. Tiafoe then did the same in response, sending his near the baseline. Musetti ran and, with his back to the net, twisted his body to somehow flick a low ball back with a half-swing. It worked, though, and Tiafoe - perhaps startled to see the point wasn't over - netted an awkward, shoulder-high volley.

That set swung Musetti's way when he broke in its last game. On a 12-stroke exchange, Tiafoe tried an ill-advised and ill-struck drop shot that the speedy Musetti got to, conjuring up a down-the-line backhand winner. Now it was his turn to punch the air and yell.

He is 13-4 in his French Open career, and three of those losses came against an opponent ranked No. 1 - Novak Djokovic twice, Alcaraz once. The only way he'll need to deal with the top-ranked man this time in Paris is if it's his pal Sinner standing across the net on Sunday with the trophy in the offing.

Theegala has his task cut out as he tees up alongside McIlroy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Toronto

Indian-American Sahith Theegala knows his task is cut out for the next few weeks as he tries to regain the form that took him to world number 11 on the rankings. After missing the cut at the Memorial last week, Theegala will tee up at the RBC Canadian, which will also see Rory McIlroy in action at the TPC Toronto at Osprey Valley (North Course).

Theegala, who has been pushed back by a neck injury and some indifferent form has not had a single Top-10 in 2025 and has slipped to 39th in world rankings. Theegala's best in 2025 has been T-17 at the Genesis Invitational and T-18 at the Zurich Classic, the only team event on the PGA Tour. Though Theegala has missed the cut only twice this year — at the Palmer Invitational and the Memorial and withdrew from the Truist — he has not been able to find his form.

He is also trying to improve on his current FedExCup ranking, which is at 119 and he needs to be inside Top-70 to get into the play-offs in August and he is also hoping to find the rhythm ahead of the Ryder Cup, which has been his goal.

After the RBC Canadian, the schedule has two Majors and six other regular events left on and all Signature events are over. Theegala, who will also play the US Open, is the only Indian angle this week, as Akshay Bhatia has skipped the event ahead of the US Open. Aaron Rai is also sitting out for the Canadian Open. Theegala in his last three starts at the Canadian Open has finished T-53 in 2022, T-38 in 2023 and missed the cut last year. Last year, Robert MacIntyre won this tournament, finishing at 16-under. The field is headlined by two-time tournament champion and world Number 2 Rory McIlroy, who is looking to fine-tune his game one last time before the third major of the year, the US Open. MacIntyre returns to defend his title against a field that includes 2023 champion Nick Taylor, who became the first Canadian to win his national open in 69 years when he defeated Tommy Fleetwood in a playoff, as well as other notable players such as Shane Lowry, Ludvig Aberg and Wyndham Clark.

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Kamal Haasan faces ₹10–15 crore loss over language remark controversy



Versatile actor Kamal Haasan has decided not to release his film *Thug Life* in Karnataka. At a promotional event in the state, Kamal Haasan's controversial remark—"Kannada was born out of Tamil"—sparked backlash. The Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce (KFCC) and several Kannada organisations found the comment offensive and decided to ban the film.

Interestingly, Kamal Haasan is also the producer of *Thug Life*. He later approached the High Court, which stated that if the actor issued an apology, the issue would be resolved. However, Kamal refused to apologise, writing instead to the KFCC that his words were misinterpreted.

Karnataka is a major revenue-generating region for many Tamil films. Rajinikanth's *Jailer* grossed Rs. 67 crore in Karnataka, followed by Vijay's *Leo* (Rs. 41 crore), Mani Ratnam's *Ponniyin Selvan-1* (Rs. 28 crore) and Kamal Haasan's own *Vikram* (Rs. 22 crore). *Jailer* also featured Kannada superstar Shivrajkumar in a key role, which contributed to its strong performance.

By choosing not to release *Thug Life* in Karnataka, Kamal Haasan risks a substantial loss. If the film turns out to be a hit, the revenue from Karnataka alone could have matched or exceeded that of *Vikram*.

This situation could also impact theatre owners in Karnataka. *Thug Life* features a stellar cast including Kamal Haasan, Simbu, Trisha, Joju George, Nasser, Ahirami and Aishwarya Lekshmi. The film marks a reunion between Kamal Haasan and director Mani Ratnam after more than three decades, raising high expectations.

Kamal maintains that he said nothing wrong and will not apologise. The case is currently in court and has been adjourned to June 10. For now, audiences in Karnataka may have to wait until the issue is resolved.



HHVM FACES YET ANOTHER DELAY

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Pawan Kalyan starrer *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* is in the news again. The makers had officially announced that the film would hit the screens on June 12. But now, according to a source, the film is going to be postponed once again.

It has already been postponed several times, and everyone thought that the film would finally release on June 12. "The technical work is still pending, that's one reason. The other reason is that producer A.M. Rathnam has some financial problems from his earlier films, so he has to clear all those issues," said a source.

The makers officially cancelled the pre-release event that was supposed to be held in Tirupati on June 8. With this, it's clear that the film will not release on June 12 and the makers are now searching for another date. They have also stopped all promotions, as they know the release is going to be postponed.

The film actually started five years ago, but due to Pawan Kalyan's political commitments—and later his taking charge as the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh—the film was delayed. A few weeks ago, Pawan Kalyan allotted dates and completed his part, but the makers expected to complete the technical work in time. That hasn't happened, as there is still a lot of work left. So, they have no choice but to postpone the film, added the source.

When they announced the release date, Pawan Kalyan's fans were elated. But now, with another delay, fans are frustrated and are asking producer A.M. Rathnam to announce a fixed release date that won't be postponed again.

Director Krish Jagarlamudi initially helmed the project and shot most of the scenes, but due to delays, he left the film. Later, A.M. Rathnam's son Jyothi Krishna took over as director and completed the film.

Bunny Vas launches BV works with quirky new film

Bunny Vas, who is part of Geetha Arts along with Allu Aravind, is now launching his own production house called Bunny Vas Works. He has joined forces with two other production houses—Sapta Aswa Creatives and Vyra Entertainments—and dropped a whacky and wildly intriguing pre-look poster that's already sparking curiosity on social media.

Bunny Vas is presenting a film for the first time under BV Works, which strengthens confidence in the project. He and producer Bhanu Pratapa have collaborated earlier on Thandel and delivered a blockbuster. Their partnership continued successfully with *Aay* and *Single*, further raising expectations.

With Vyra Entertainments—makers of the feel-good *Hi Nanna*—also joining the project, the production gains even more momentum. The unveiled pre-look poster features a lineup of masked men donning quirky red caps and blue masks, hinting at a rollercoaster of fun, mystery, and madness. The first look is set to release on June 6. The film is directed by debutant Vijayendar S and produced by Kalyan Manthina, Bhanu Pratapa and Dr. Vijender Reddy Teegala.





Sekhar Kammula makes a heartfelt promise at *Kuberaa* audio launch

At the grand audio launch of the much-anticipated pan-Indian film *Kuberaa* held in Chennai, director Sekhar Kammula made a heartfelt promise to the audience, saying, "The film will come out really well. This is my promise to all of you." His words brought a wave of excitement and confidence among fans, who are eagerly awaiting the film's release.

This film marks the first collaboration between Sekhar Kammula and National Award-winning actor Dhanush, two artists known for their deep and meaningful work. It also marks a first-time collaboration with veteran actor Nagarjuna, who is joining forces with both Sekhar Kammula and Dhanush for the very first time.

Kammula's genuine belief in the project was evident throughout the event, adding to the growing buzz surrounding *Kuberaa*. The audio launch also celebrated the film's music, composed by Devi Sri Prasad, whose tunes have already started connecting with audiences. DSP, who has delivered several super-hit collaborations with Nagarjuna in the past, brings his signature touch to the soundtrack.

Produced by Suniel Narang and Puskur Ram Mohan Rao under the banners of Sri Venkateswara Cinemas LLP and Amigos Creations Pvt Ltd, *Kuberaa* is mounted on an epic scale, with Mugafi handling its Hindi and international release.

The film will release in five languages—Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Kannada and Malayalam—worldwide on June 20, 2025.

Siddu Jonnalagadda returns ₹4 cr after *Jack* bombs at box office

Siddu Jonnalagadda's latest film *Jack* was a huge disaster at the box office. BVSN Prasad is the producer, while Bommarillu Bhaskar directed the film. There were huge expectations because the actor's earlier films *DJ Tillu* and *Tillu Square* were very successful at the box office.

But *Jack* was released, and from the first day onwards, audiences rejected it. The collections were unimpressive and by the second day, the film was removed from some screens—indicating how poorly it was received. The producer had paid a high remuneration to Siddu, banking on the actor's recent track record.

However, the producer didn't even recover 10 percent of the budget and many distributors incurred huge losses. Aware of the situation, Siddu decided to return half of his remuneration to the producer. According to a source, he returned Rs 4 crore to the producer, acknowledging the financial loss.

With this gesture, many in the industry have appreciated Siddu's move. His understanding of the film business and support for the producer have become the talk of the town.



BELLAMKONDA, MANOJ & ROHIT'S COMEBACK FILM *BHAIRAVAM* TURNS DUD

The film *Bhairavam* released last Friday, featuring three actors—Bellamkonda Sai Srinivas, Manchu Manoj and Nara Rohit—coming together for the project. Directed by Vijay Kanakamedala, it is a remake of the Tamil hit *Garudan*. The Telugu makers promoted the film quite well, but unfortunately, it has ended up as a flop at the box office.

Produced by K.K. Radhamohan, the film was made on a budget of nearly Rs 30 crore, but the producer is expected to recover only around 30% of the investment. The movie collected nearly Rs 8.85 crore gross in the first three days worldwide. The pre-release business was around Rs 16.20 crore, and for the film to be considered a hit, it needed to collect Rs 17 crore. However, from Monday onwards, the collections dipped drastically. While the promotions were strong, the director seemed to focus more on showcasing the three lead actors rather than strengthening the story. This lack of narrative depth appears to have affected the film's performance.



One of the major reasons Bhairavam didn't do well is the re-release of Mahesh Babu's *Khaleja*, which drew huge crowds and performed strongly at the box office, despite being an older film.

The second reason is the Indian Premier League (IPL). With audiences focused on the matches, interest in the film dwindled. The IPL final took place on Tuesday, which further affected footfall, especially for a film already struggling to gain momentum.

Overall, the film has been a major disappointment—particularly for Bellamkonda Sai Srinivas. For Manchu Manoj, *Bhairavam* marked a comeback after a nine-year break. Similarly, it was also a comeback film for Nara Rohit. Sadly, the poor performance at the box office has dampened the impact of their return.