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REJECTION



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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

Congress MLAs should evaluate their performance. The performance of the majority of MLAs is not good and it is their responsibility to improve. MLAs need to work hard for better results in local elections. The leaders should work with double enthusiasm as they are in power. There would be a chance for the party to come to power again if the leaders work efficiently



- Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC Chief

P3

DON'T MISS...

Dalit girl gang-raped

A horrifying incident has come to light in Yedugurakalapalli village, Ramagiri mandal, Sri Sathya Sai district, where a minor Dalit girl was allegedly gang-raped, resulting in a six-month pregnancy. The case has sparked outrage and drawn strong condemnation from the YSRCP, which is criticising the police for their alleged inaction and delayed response. The harrowing ordeal was discovered when the victim complained of stomach pain to her parents, who then took her to a hospital. A medical examination confirmed the ...

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Indian envoy meets top Chinese official

Top diplomats from India and China discussed bilateral relations to implement the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries last year, the foreign ministry here said on Friday. The meeting between Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat and China's Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong on Thursday is the first diplomatic engagement between the two countries post the Operation Sindoor. Both sides expressed their willingness to work together to earnestly implement ...

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Bank, auto stocks soar on RBI's rate cut

Interest-rate-sensitive stocks were in huge demand on Friday, with the realty index climbing nearly 5 per cent as investors cheered the Reserve Bank's jumbo rate cut of 50 basis points. Home, auto and other loans are likely to cost less as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut interest rates by a larger-than-expected 50 basis points, and unexpectedly reduced the cash reserve ratio for banks to make available more money to lend in a bid to boost the economy. The RBI's six-member monetary policy committee, headed ...

-PAGE: 8

Piyush announces retirement

Veteran leg-spinner Piyush Chawla, who was part of India's two World Cup-winning campaigns, on Friday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket after a career spanning more than two decades to undertake a "new journey" that he did not specify. The 36-year-old made the announcement via an Instagram post. "After more than two decades on the field, the time has come to bid adieu to the beautiful game," Chawla wrote. "Though I step away from the crease, cricket ...

-SPORTS



Naidu orders water release to Krishna-Godavari Delta

Crop calendar to be advanced to mitigate cyclone risks

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to immediately release water to the Krishna and Godavari deltas to commence agricultural activities without delay. Stressing the need to advance the crop calendar, he said this would help ensure harvesting is completed before the onset of the cyclone season. He called for a focused approach to improve groundwater levels, fill reservoirs, and optimise water resource management across the state.

During a review meeting with Water Resources Department officials at the Secretariat on Friday, the Chief Minister emphasised the importance of enabling three crop cycles annually to ensure green fields throughout the year. Expressing dissatisfaction over the non-functioning of piezometers and automated weather stations (AWS) in several areas, he ordered the immediate release of Rs 30 crore for procuring new equipment. He also called for the rectification of technical deficiencies and the implementation of scientific water audits.

Naidu instructed that all pending irrigation projects in Rayalaseema, Uttarandhra and other regions be prioritised and completed without delay. He asked officials to provide detailed data on mandals where groundwater levels are below 20 metres, and those where they range between 8 and 20 metres. He directed that central and local water bulletins be released regularly on a basin-wise and district-wise basis, with a clear focus on improving average groundwater levels statewide.

Continued on Page 2

NAIDU'S 'VIZAG VISION 2032'

AP's economic powerhouse

- The proposed Visakha Economic Region will integrate eight districts — Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Srikakulam, Anakapalli, Kakinada, East Godavari, Alluri Sita Ramaraju, and Manyam — as a unified growth engine for the State.
- The region, which currently generates about USD 49 billion in economic activity, is expected to create 24 lakh jobs over the next seven years. Officials have been directed to identify one lakh acres for development projects across the zone.
- Naidu's development blueprint includes six ports, seven manufacturing nodes, 17 agricultural zones, six service hubs, and 12 tourism hubs.
- Infrastructure expansion plans involve construction of 7.5 lakh housing units, 10,000 hotel rooms, 20 innovation centres, 10 colleges, 7,000 hospital beds, 80 million sq ft of office space, and 60 million sq ft of warehousing capacity.
- A coastal corridor will be developed, with beach roads from Mulapeta to Visakhapatnam and from Visakhapatnam to Kakinada, to be linked with national highways.
- As part of the state's energy strategy, Andhra Pradesh will prioritise solar, wind, pumped hydro, battery storage, and green hydrogen.
- The state's current installed capacity is 27.3 GW, and electricity demand is projected to grow from 69.7 BU in 2025 to 163.9 BU by 2035.



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday laid out an ambitious roadmap to transform Visakhapatnam into a major economic powerhouse over the next seven years.

The CM stressed the need to establish a Visakha Economic Region by integrating eight districts, with the goal of generating economic activity worth USD 120 billion by 2032.

"Naidu has directed officials to develop the 'Visakha Economic Region' as the growth engine of Andhra Pradesh, aiming for a USD 120 billion economy from this region by 2032. He highlighted the need to transform Visakhapatnam into another Mumbai in the next seven years, said an official press release.

The Visakha Economic Region includes eight districts Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Srikakulam, Anakapalli, Kakinada, East Godavari, Alluri Sita Ramaraju and Manyam.

Naidu instructed officials to develop projects that will boost economic activity across this eight-district zone and also ordered them to identify one lakh acres for various projects.

Continued on Page 2

Under the Integrated Clean Energy Policy, the government aims to achieve 78.5 GW of solar power, 35 GW of wind, 22 GW of pumped hydro storage, 25 GW of battery storage, and 1.5 MMTPA of green hydrogen production. Other targets include 1,500 KLPD ethanol, 5,000 EV charging stations, and 10,000 TPD of bio-CNG/CBG production

Top Naxal Bhaskar killed in encounter

PNS ■ BIJAPUR



Top Naxalite leader Bhaskar, who carried a cumulative bounty of Rs 45 lakh, has been killed in an encounter with security forces in Indravati National Park area in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Friday, a senior police official said citing "preliminary identification of body".

Continued on Page 2

'Naidu allowing AP to slip into law and order crisis'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday came down heavily on TDP chief and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, accusing him of being responsible for a total breakdown of law and order in the state.

In a strongly worded post on X, Jagan said he was "deeply shocked and pained" by what he described as the complete collapse of governance under Naidu's leadership. "The systems in our state have been rendered ineffective due to political vendettas and criminal actions by Chandrababu Naidu and his party leaders. The arrogance and rowdyism of the ruling party have created an atmosphere of fear, leaving no safety or security for our people," he alleged.

He cited several incidents to back his claims, including one in Srikalahasti, Tirupati district, where a constable was reportedly assaulted by the driver of an MLA's wife after being issued a challan for drunk driving.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with NVIDIA to establish a proposed Artificial Intelligence (AI) University and foster a robust AI ecosystem through skilling, research, infrastructure development, and startup acceleration.

As part of the partnership, 10,000 engineering students across Andhra Pradesh will be trained in AI over the next two years. NVIDIA will provide curriculum guidance and technical training resources to support AI education in engineering colleges throughout the state.

The MoU also emphasises enhancing research and development capabilities. NVIDIA will assist in identifying and setting up AI research centres to tackle key

AP govt, NVIDIA ink pact to boost AI education



technological challenges and develop transformative sectoral solutions.

Speaking on the occasion, Nara Lokesh, Minister for IT, said, "This partnership with NVIDIA marks a decisive step in our vision to position Andhra Pradesh as a national leader in artificial intelligence.

RS polls: Kamal Haasan files papers



PNS ■ CHENNAI

Makkal Needhi Maiam president and top actor Kamal Haasan on Friday filed nomination papers to contest for the June 19 biennial polls to Rajya Sabha from Tamil Nadu. Haasan, in the presence of Chief Minister MK Stalin, Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin and leaders of his party, signed and presented the papers to officials at the Secretariat here.

TTD takes legal action to protect the sanctity of Tirupati 'laddu'

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In a bid to uphold the sanctity and intellectual property of the famed Tirupati Laddu, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has initiated legal proceedings against several unauthorised entities for misusing the "Tirupati Laddu" name in violation of its registered Geographical Indication (GI). Acting through Sahadeva Law Chambers, TTD served legal notices to multiple online vendors and platforms, including PushMyCart (Mahita LLC) and Transact Foods Limited, for the unauthorised sale and promotion of products falsely linked to the temple. The notices emphasised that the Tirupati Laddu, a sacred prasadam, is produced exclusively within the Tirumala temple under TTD's supervision, adhering to a time-honoured and sanctified process.

TTD asserted that the unauthorised commercial use of the Tirupati Laddu name not only infringes legal rights under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, but also undermines its spiritual significance.

Following the legal notice, PushMyCart acknowledged the communication and, in a gesture of goodwill, suspended the infringing product listings pending legal review. Several other vendors have also removed their listings in response to TTD's proactive enforcement efforts.



PM Modi to attend G7 Summit in Canada

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said he will be attending the G7 Summit later this month in Canada and that he looked forward to meeting his newly elected Canadian counterpart Mark Carney.

Carney called up Modi as the Indian prime minister thanked him for the invite to the Summit in Kananaskis.

Modi said on X, "As vibrant democracies bound by deep people-to-people ties, India and Canada will work together with renewed vigour, guided by mutual respect and shared interests. Look forward to our meeting at the Summit."

He also congratulated Carney on his recent election win. India's ties with Canada had turned frosty under the government of Carney's predecessor Justin Trudeau over a host of issues, including the activities of Khalistani separatists in the country.

4 officials of RCB, event firm remanded to 14-day custody

PNS ■ BENGALURU



A city court on Friday remanded four people, including an official of the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), to 14-day judicial custody in connection with the stampede outside M Chinnaswamy stadium here.

The Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate court sent to custody Nikhil Sosale, Head of Marketing and Revenue of RCB, along with Sunil Mathew, Sumanth and Kiran Kumar from DNA Entertainment Private Limited, the event management firm involved in organising the event.

All the four were arrested this morning in a joint operation by the crime branch and Bengaluru police.

Sosale, who was arrested at Bengaluru Airport, as he was heading to Dubai, had filed a petition challenging his arrest at the Karnataka High Court.

Justice S R Krishna Kumar, who heard the petition, had declined an interim relief from arrest and adjourned the case to June 9.

HOME, AUTO LOANS TO GET CHEAPER

RBI goes for steepest interest rate cut in 5 yrs

PNS ■ MUMBAI



The RBI has now cut interest rates by a total of 100 basis points in 2025, starting with a quarter-point reduction in February - the first cut since May 2020 - and another similar-sized cut in April

Home, auto and other loans are likely to cost less as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut interest rates by a larger-than-expected 50 basis points on Friday, and unexpectedly reduced the cash reserve ratio for banks to make available more money to lend in a bid to boost the economy.

The RBI's six-member monetary policy committee, headed by Governor Sanjay Malhotra and consisting of three external members, voted five to one to lower the benchmark repurchase or repo rate by 50 basis points to 5.5 per cent. It also cut the cash reserve ratio by 100 basis points to 3 per cent, adding Rs 2.5 lakh crore to already surplus liquidity in the banking system.

With the latest reduction, the RBI has now cut interest rates by a total of 100 basis points in 2025, starting with a quarter-point reduction in February - the first cut since May 2020 - and another similar-sized cut in April.

The central bank, at the same time, changed its monetary policy stance from 'accommodative' to 'neutral' which means rates could increase or decrease in future depending on incoming data, with Malhotra stating that it may have limited space for further easing.

The repo rate is the rate at which the RBI lends money to banks to meet their short-term funding needs. With the latest cut in the repo rate, all External Benchmark Lending Rates (EBLR) linked to it will come down. And if the banks fully pass on this to the borrowers, equated monthly instalments (EMIs) on home, auto and personal loans will decline by 50 bps.

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Rahul's dy'nasty' politics on Op Sindoor

Shashi Tharoor, when asked about Rahul's "Narender Surrender" statement, laughed and rubbished the accusation. Salman Khurshid tweeted, "Is it so difficult to be patriotic? Manish Tiwari said that one should rise above the noise of party politics and try to take a view that is in the larger national interest



KISHORE POREDDY

What explains Rahul's statements on Operation Sindoor? Politics certainly doesn't. Anyone with a bit of political acumen will conclude that his statements, which were welcomed more in Pakistan than in India, do more harm than good to Congress's image among Indian voters. Not just average Indians, Rahul's rhetoric on Operation Sindoor has been rebuffed even by senior Congress leaders like Shashi Tharoor, Salman Khurshid, and Manish Tiwari, who are visiting world capitals as part of India's all-party delegations to explain India's new doctrine on terrorism.

Take, for example, Rahul's latest jibe - Narender Surrender - against Prime Minister Modi. Addressing Congress leaders in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday, Rahul accused Modi of surrendering to Pakistan on US President Donald Trump's instructions. Rahul's claim came weeks after the three Indian Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) made it amply clear that the decision to pause Operation Sindoor was in response to a request made by the Pakistani military on the DGMO hotline. Pakistan's request had come after India dominated Pakistani airspace like never before and inflicted crippling damage to their military infrastructure, including 11 airbases. Not just the armed forces but our external affairs minister, S. Jaishankar, and every member of our all-party delegations, irrespective of their party, have reiterated this sequence of events across the world.

Yet, Rahul Gandhi outdid even Pakistani generals and politicians in claiming that India paused hostilities under pressure from Trump. Shashi Tharoor, when asked about Rahul's "Narender Surrender" statement, laughed and rubbished the accusation by saying that as long as Pakistan uses the language of terrorism, India will use the language of force, and that doesn't require a third party. Salman Khurshid, another senior Congress leader part of India's delegations, had earlier tweeted, "Is it so difficult to be patriotic?" A third Congress leader, Manish Tiwari, in an interview, expressed that as a parliamentarian, one should rise above the noise of party politics and try to take a view that is in the larger national interest.

Though none of the three Congress leaders criticised Rahul Gandhi directly, it was obvious whose statements they were rubbishing or who they were asking to be "patriotic" or "to take the view that is in the larger national interest." Except for Rahul Gandhi and some Congress leaders like Revanth Reddy, the Chief Minister of Telangana, who were trying to impress their boss, every prominent opposition leader, including Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP's) arch-rival like Asaduddin Owaisi of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) have spoken in one voice on the spectacular success of Operation Sindoor.

When every opposition party in India can unite behind our defence forces and our government against Pakistan, why is it that Rahul and some Congress leaders are bent on diminishing India's military victory by supporting Pakistan's narrative? Politics is one explanation. Another is Rahul's hate for Modi, which often leads to personal attacks rather than constructive criticism. A third is that Rahul cannot read the mood of the nation and thus commits juvenile political mistakes. Yet another is that Rahul, albeit in his own way, is determined to fulfil Mahatma Gandhi's wish to dissolve Congress.

But the most plausible explanation is rooted in Rahul's dynastic legacy. Like every other dynast, Rahul has to defend, uphold, and, if possible, extend his family's reputation. Unfortunately for him, his family's track record on Pakistan, Kashmir, Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and terrorism has been disastrous. POK became a reality under Nehru. So did Article 370 of the Constitution, which, in Salman Khurshid's words, "somehow gave the impression that Kashmir was separate from the rest of the country", fuelling Pakistan's hopes of snatching it from India using terrorism.

Indira's record on Pakistan and POK was equally indefensible. The Indian Army won a spectacular victory in 1971 against Pakistan at the cost of more than 3000 Indian soldiers' lives. Yet, Indira returned the 15,000 square kilometres of Pakistani land and 93,000 Pakistani soldiers captured by our Army without asking for POK, which measures a little above 13,000 square kilometres - less than the land returned to Pakistan. Rahul's mother Sonia's record on Pakistan-sponsored terror attacks is even worse. The central government, of which Sonia Gandhi was the de facto Prime Minister, cowered under the nuclear blackmail of Pakistan and decided not to take any action after the 26/11 terror attacks, thus encouraging Pakistan to commit more terror attacks.

It is this family record that Rahul, as a dynast, needs to defend. Hence, his need to portray every Indian success under Modi against Pakistan as a failure. Be it Surgical Strikes, Balakot Airstrikes or Operation Sindoor. Revanth Reddy's remark that Rahul could have reclaimed POK if he were the PM is intended to diminish and, if possible, convert the victory a non-Nehru-family PM had achieved into a defeat. It is not politics over patriotism. It is family over nation for dynasts like Rahul-one more reason Indians should keep dynasts from power.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson.)

Yogandhra drive nears 2-crore milestone

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



The month-long Yogandhra programme, launched by the Andhra Pradesh government to promote yoga among the public, has reached its halfway mark with significant progress, surpassing several key targets.

Launched on May 21, the campaign has already recorded 1,86,46,143 registrations, which is 93% of the set goal of 2 crore participants. The progress report for the first two weeks was submitted to the Group of Ministers by Special Chief Secretary and State Coordinator M.T. Krishna Babu on Thursday evening. With two more weeks to go, officials expect the final number to exceed the 2 crore target.

The initiative has already surpassed monthly goals for trainer registration and training. Against a target of 2,600 Master Trainers, 5,451 (209%) have registered. At the Mandal level, 1,47,817 trainers have signed up, reaching 118% of the target of 1,25,000.Training has also been impressive: 5,451 Master Trainers (206% of target) and 1,43,881 Mandal Trainers (115%) have undergone training.

So far, 78,730 locations have been registered for yoga sessions across the State, against a target of 1,34,991, in preparation for International Day of Yoga on June 21, when the main event will be held in Visakhapatnam with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as Chief Guest.

Eleven of the planned Thematic Yoga programmes have already been held in various districts. Additionally, events have taken place at 42 of the 100 identified tourist locations, and 15,783 yoga competitions have been conducted at village and mandal levels.

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has set an ambitious goal of 5 lakh participants at a single location along the Visakhapatnam-Bheemili beach stretch on June 21.

Lokesh inspects kits for govt schools

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Minister for Education, IT, RTGS and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, inspected a range of kits to be provided to government schools for the upcoming academic year. Officials showcased the kits at his residence in Undavalli.

During the inspection, Minister Lokesh enquired about the details from the staff. STEM lab kits will be supplied to 222 PM SHRI schools across the state, each containing 335 items. These kits are designed to be research- and concept-oriented, aiming to enhance students' practical knowledge and skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The minister also examined library books designated for primary, upper primary and secondary schools. Additionally, he reviewed the Jadu Pitara Kit, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Print Rich Materials, and FLN Handmade Materials, all created for students in Grades 1 and 2.

On the occasion, staff presented drawings by M Mastan Rao, a second-grade student at Ramavarappadu Government School in NTR District, and O. Niharika, a second-grade student at Patamata MPUP School in Vijayawada, to Minister Lokesh.

Minister unveils ambitious edn reforms

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a major thrust towards educational reform, Minister for HRD, IT, and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, on Friday unveiled a comprehensive roadmap during a review meeting with senior education officials at his Undavalli residence. Describing the ongoing Mega DSC recruitment drive for 16,347 teacher posts as a "golden chapter" in the State's history, Lokesh announced that District Selection Committee (DSC) examinations would now be held annually to enhance the quality of teaching.

Commending officials for the smooth conduct of the first day of the Mega DSC, he noted attendance rates of 88% in the morning and 86% in the evening session. He highlighted the transparent, merit-based transfer of 27,000 school assistants and promotion of 4,000 others.

Lokesh announced the launch of Akshara Andhra, a mission-mode programme aimed at achieving 100% literacy. Expressing concern over the 81 lakh adults aged 15–59 who remain illiterate, he cited the success of the Ullas initiative, under which 3.95 lakh candidates were tested in March with a pass rate exceeding 90%. He vowed to make Andhra Pradesh one of the top three literate states in India within three years.

Director Kritika Shukla informed that 109 posts remain vacant out of the 247 sanctioned. Lokesh assured that these would be filled by committed individuals from the school education sector.

Turning to youth employability, Lokesh instructed officials to align skill training programmes with industry needs and upgrade the APSSDC Skill Portal. CEO Ganesh Kumar reported that 6.83 lakh youth had registered this year, with 6.45 lakh trained and over 77,000 placed in jobs.

Top Naxal ...

Continued from Page 1

The encounter was part of the same anti-Naxal operation underway since Wednesday by personnel from the state police's Special Task Force (STF) and District Reserve Guard (DRG) as well as the CRPF's specialised unit CoBRA, Inspector General of Police, Bastar Range Sundarraj said.

"After the exchange of fire stopped, the body of a Naxalite along with one AK-47 rifle and other explosives, weapons, and ammunition were recovered from the encounter site. Preliminary identification suggests the body is of Bhaskar alias Mailarapu Adellu, a special zonal committee (SZC) member of the Telangana State Committee (TSC) of the outlawed Maoists," he said.

Naidu orders water ...

Continued from Page 1

He asked officials to examine the feasibility of diverting Sileru waters to the Krishna delta and to expedite widening works on the Handri-Neeva main canal. He also directed that the first stage of the Veligonda project be completed by June 2026. The Chief Minister further instructed officials to seek financial support from the Centre through the State Authority for Special Projects (SASKI).

Immediate repair works were ordered for the plunge pool of the Srisailam project. He also directed the removal of silt and thorny vegetation from the Budameru river to allow free flow of water. Stressing the need for long-term planning, the Chief Minister said water management should ensure resilience for three to four years even in case of abundant rainfall in a single year. He called for the revision of crop patterns, formulation of action plans for both wet and dry crops, and the construction of water harvesting structures to enhance conservation.

On the Polavaram –Banakacherla linkage project, Naidu instructed officials to complete all required forest and environmental clearances, as well as Detailed Project Report (DPR) approvals. He said land acquisition should be kept ready and the project implemented under the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM). Tender documents must be finalised with expert input from the state-level technical committee, and the tendering process should be completed by the end of June.

The Polavaram – Banakacherla linkage project is being executed under the Jalaharathi Corporation, with a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) already set up. The state has submitted proposals to the Centre seeking financial assistance.

The total cost of the project is estimated at Rs 81,900 crore. Of this, Rs 40,950 crore will be raised through external aid programme (EAP) loans, Rs 16,380 crore is proposed as a central government grant, Rs 8,190 crore will come from state equity, and the remaining Rs 16,380 crore will be covered under the HAM model.

AP's economic ...

Continued from Page 1

Spanning 36,000 sq km, this region is home to a population of 15.5 million people and currently facilitates economic activities worth around USD 49 billion. According to the TDP supremo, this region could generate up to 24 lakh jobs by 2032, making it crucial for the state's future growth.

During a review meeting today with NITI Aayog officials at the secretariat, the Chief Minister discussed the development of the Visakhapatnam Economic Region. He proposed development centred around six ports, seven manufacturing nodes, 17 major agricultural zones, six service hubs and 12 tourism hubs.

NITI Aayog officials presented a detailed power point presentation, said the press release. A total of 41 key projects are to be prioritized for implementation, said the release.

On realising these goals, within the next seven years, the region could see the construction of 7.5 lakh housing units, 10,000 hotel rooms, up to 20 innovation centres, 10 colleges, 7,000 hospital beds, industrial development across 20,000 hectares, 80 million sq ft of office space and 60 million sq ft of warehousing capacity.

"We will develop beach roads from Mulapeta to Visakhapatnam and Visakhapatnam to Kakinada.

These will be connected to national highways. The coast is a treasure trove, we must leverage it fully, said Naidu, outlining plans for a coastal corridor as a wealth generator. He further said Andhra Pradesh is prioritising the development of solar, wind, pumped hydro, battery storage, and green hydrogen as part of its energy strategy.

The CM highlighted the state's abundant natural resources to support this vision and urged NITI Aayog to extend its support in bringing it to fruition.

Later, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Andhra government, NITI Aayog, and the ISEG Foundation for the State Energy Transition Roadmap.

The current installed power generation capacity in the state is 27.3 GW. Electricity demand in the state rose from 55.6 BU (billion units) in 2019 to 69.7 BU in 2025 while industrial demand grew by 4.8 percent and household demand by 5.1 percent, the release added.

Power demand is projected to rise from 88.6 BU next year to 163.9 BU by 2035.

Under the AP (Andhra Pradesh) Integrated Clean Energy Policy, the targets include 78.50 GW of solar power, 35 GW wind, 22 GW pumped storage, 1.50 MMTPA green hydrogen, 25 GW battery storage, 1,500 KLPD ethanol, 5,000 EV charging stations, and 10,000 TPD bio-CNG/CBG.

The state has already attracted Rs 5.78 lakh crore investments in clean energy, enabling 57.7 GW of power generation, the press release added.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi:	
Dwadashi:	Jun 07 04:48 AM to Jun 08 07:18 AM
Nakshatram:	
Chitra:	Jun 06 06:33 AM to Jun 07 09:39 AM
Swati:	Jun 07 09:39 AM to Jun 08 12:42 PM
Rahukalam:	8:59 AM to 10:37 AM
Yamagandam:	1:52 PM to 3:30 PM
Varjyam:	03:58 PM to 05:46 PM
Gulika:	5:44 AM to 7:22 AM
Amritakalam:	02:47 AM to 04:35 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:49 AM to 12:41 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 39°c
Humidity: 43%
Sunrise: 5:33 AM
Sunset: 6:38 PM

Updated: June 6, 2025 5:00 PM

YSRCP slams govt for lawlessness, Dalit oppression

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



YSR Congress Party MLA Tatiparthi Chandrasekhar from Yerragondapalem has strongly condemned the State government for the alleged collapse of law and order, accusing it of shielding TDP leaders while targeting Dalits and dissenting voices. "Women and children are unsafe, and Dalits are being treated like enemies," he said, citing instances of police brutality against Dalit youth and selective justice.

Chandrasekhar criticised the coalition government for failing to deliver on its promises and said that the public's support for YSRCP's 'Vennupotu Dinam' protest reflected its growing discontent. In contrast, he claimed the TDP's Mahanadu in Kadapa was a failure despite massive mobilisation.

"The people reject this arrogance. Chief Minister Naidu must face reality," he asserted.

The MLA alleged that the government was protecting TDP leaders involved in criminal activities, including unchecked ganja smuggling, which he said was admitted by TDP leader Ganta Srinivasa Rao. He also referred to heinous crimes such as the unresolved rape and murder of a minor girl in Muchumarri and the gang rape of a Dalit girl in Rapthadu, allegedly by 14 men linked to the TDP.

"Home Minister Anita is defending police excesses while ignoring such horrors," he charged, claiming that 700 attacks and 300 murders of YSRCP activists had occurred, including that of former MPTC member Ramesh Naidu in Kurnool.

Chandrasekhar accused the government of filing false cases against those who questioned power tariff hikes or delays in welfare schemes. He said, unlike the YSRCP's transparent welfare delivery, the current regime was mired in corruption. "The people's verdict is clear," he said, vowing to continue the fight for justice.

Free paper revaluation for Class 10 students demanded

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSRCP Student Wing has raised strong objections over alleged irregularities in the evaluation of Class 10 answer scripts, citing inconvenience and losses suffered by students across Andhra Pradesh.

On Friday, led by State President Panuganti Chaitanya, members of the student wing submitted a memorandum to District Education Officers (DEOs) in various districts.

Their demands included free revaluation of answer scripts for all students who request it, a temporary suspension of admissions based on Class 10 results until final marks are confirmed, strict action against those responsible for the evaluation lapses, and the resignation of Education Minister Nara Lokesh, whom they held accountable for the issue.

The student representatives urged the education department to act swiftly in addressing the students' concerns and ensure transparency in the evaluation process.

AIIMS Mangalagiri crosses 25 lakh OPD consultations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AIIMS Mangalagiri has reached a milestone by recording over 25 lakh (2.5 million) Out-Patient Department (OPD) consultations since the commencement of its services just over five years ago. This achievement highlights the institution's commitment to delivering accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare to the people of Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring regions.

Since launching OPD services, AIIMS Mangalagiri has swiftly evolved into a trusted centre of medical excellence, addressing the healthcare needs of lakhs of individuals with compassion and professionalism. Its multidisciplinary teams continue to work diligently to meet the rising demand for both general and specialised medical services.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
TRIBAL WELFARE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
NIT No. 72 to 86/2025-26/S.E/T.W/D.B Date: 04-06-2025
Online tenders are invited under the jurisdiction of the Tribal Welfare Engineering Circle for **15 works** with an estimated value of **Rs 5080.00 crores**. Online tenders are invited. Tender Schedule: Start Date: **09.06.2025, 4:00 PM**, Last Date for Tender Submission: **23.06.2025, 4:15 PM**. For further details, visit: **www.apeprocurement.gov.in** or contact: **0891-2783210**.
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Tribal Welfare, Visakhapatnam
DIPR R.O.No: 16838/CL/AD/VIT1/1/2021-22, Dt. 06.06.2025

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VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | JUNE 7, 2025



Yoga session organised for Special Protection Force

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of the 'YogAndhra' month, a special session was organised for the Andhra Pradesh Special Protection Force at Dr NTTPS Sports Complex, Ibrahimpatnam, on Wednesday.

This session was conducted by Shantivan Yoga Foundation. Head of the foundation, Lanke Janardhan, demonstrated various asanas to the personnel of the Special Protection Force. Other members of the foundation, Lanke Lakshmi, AV Subramaniam, A E, A Srinivasa Rao ADE, N Srinivasa Rao, N Krishnaveni, Uma, Raghu, Bhanu Prakash, also took part in the yoga training.

The chief guest of the programme was Dr CM Trivikrama Verma, IPS, Director General, Andhra Pradesh Special Protection Force, who explained the importance and benefits of practising yoga. He explained that yoga increases concentration and physical strength, brings mental peace, and thus one can achieve good health.

He added that 248 staff members of the 1998 batch are serving as constables. The State Cabinet has decided to promote all of them.

As many as 300 Special Protection Force personnel participated in the yoga session. AP Special Protection Force Inspector General B Venkata Ramireddy, Dr. NTTPS Chief Engineer P Siva Ramanjaneyulu, Vijayawada Zone Commandant Muddada Shankar Rao, Assistant Commandants Krishnamachari, Mallikarjun Rao, K Srinivasulu, TK Rao and Dr. NTTPS Vigilance DSP Venkateswara Rao, Inspectors, SIs, ASIs, and staff were present.

Essential school kits distributed to students

Initiative benefits 72,627 government school students in Visakhapatnam

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



The Visakhapatnam district administration has commenced the distribution of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan kits to students of government schools, ahead of the new academic year. The initiative, benefiting 72,627 students from Classes 1 to 10, includes essential school supplies and aims to ease the financial burden on families.

Each student will receive a kit comprising a school bag, three uniforms, shoes, socks, textbooks, notebooks, a belt, and a dictionary (pictorial or Oxford, based on the class). The kits are being dispatched mandal-wise across the district.

Among the mandals, Visakhapatnam Rural tops the list with 12,475 beneficiaries, followed by Gopalapatnam (8,618), Visakhapatnam Urban (8,365), and others including Bheemunipatnam, Pendurthi, and Gajuwaka. The kits are available in three sizes, tailored for different age groups. In a notable move, uniform stitching charges are being credited directly to mothers' bank accounts, promoting transparency and convenience.

District officials including District Education Officer (DEO) N. Premkumar, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan Additional Project Coordinator Chandrasekhar, and CMO representative Demudu Babu are overseeing the distribution process and ensuring timely delivery.

In response to earlier feedback, the administration has ensured better quality school bags this year. The School Readiness Programme will begin on June 9, with the formal distribution of kit scheduled for June 12, during parent committee meetings, coinciding with the reopening of schools.

VMC to initiate measures to tackle monsoon challenges

Roads with potholes that may pose danger should be repaired immediately

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner HM Dhyanachandra has instructed officials to identify monsoon-related issues in all three Assembly constituencies under VMC, and implement necessary measures for immediate and long-term solutions. He conducted a teleconference on Friday with the heads, staff and secretaries of the Engineering, Sanitation, Town Planning departments. The discussion focused on identifying and addressing problems arising during rainfall in the VMC limits.

The Commissioner directed the officials to submit a detailed report covering the nature of problems encountered during rains at the secretariat, ward, and constituency levels, along with proposed temporary and permanent solutions. "Each secretariat should identify and report the number and location of dangerous potholes, and ensure that they are repaired immediately. Locations where rainwater tends to stagnate should be marked as black spots, and VMC vehicles must be deployed to clear the water. If the existing fleet is insufficient, additional vehicles should be arranged."

Dhyanachandra also directed that roads with potholes that may pose a danger during rains should be repaired promptly. If repair is not possible immediately, warning sign boards should be placed to alert the public.

The Commissioner asked officials to analyse the causes of water stagnation in the city and submit a report with both short-term and long-term remedies so that rainwater does not remain stagnant on city roads.

Additionally, officials were instructed to identify the rehabilitation centres where the affected population can be relocated and submit a detailed report on the same.

The VMC Commissioner further stressed the need to accelerate the desilting process in city canals. He stated that desilting must be an ongoing process, and that drains within the city as well as the outfall drains leading to final discharge points should be covered completely.

Senior KGH docs resist transfers despite govt orders

Senior professors allegedly leveraging political connections to retain their positions

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



The ongoing reshuffle in the Medical and Health Department has triggered unrest at King George Hospital (KGH), where several senior doctors are reportedly resisting mandatory transfers in defiance of government directives.

Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav and Principal Secretary M.T. Krishna Babu have made it clear that the doctors who have served over five years in a single post must be transferred. However, sources allege that some senior professors at KGH are leveraging political connections from Amaravati to retain their positions. "Our contacts will handle it," some are reported to have said.

This resistance has led to discontent among staff and raised questions over transparency and fairness. While senior doctors argue that the process is being applied selectively, the officials stress the need for discipline and uniformity.

The Director of Medical Education (DME) recently convened a Zoom meeting with hospital superintendents and medical college principals, emphasising that all transfers—unless medically exempt—are mandatory and will be scrutinised.

Despite warnings, defiance continues. Allegations have surfaced of certain doctors filing baseless complaints to block others' transfers while shielding their own roles. One senior professor allegedly lodged a false complaint against a colleague, later found unsubstantiated.

Among those flagged for transfer are orthopaedics professors Dr. P. Sivananda, Dr. Loknath, Dr. Shyam Kumar, and Dr. Bhavana Prasad—all of whom have exceeded their tenure. A senior official stated: "False complaints are under review. Disciplinary action is imminent. Transfers will be enforced without exception."

Ram Mohan Naidu inaugurates healthcare upgrade at Srikakulam GGH

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

Minister for Civil Aviation Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu on Friday inaugurated a significant healthcare initiative at the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Srikakulam, aimed at strengthening diagnostic and treatment capabilities for rural communities. The initiative, supported by aerospace major Boeing in partnership with humanitarian organisation Doctors For You (DFY), seeks to enhance medical services for nearly 2.8 million residents in the region.

As part of the programme, the hospital has been equipped with seven advanced medical devices to address longstanding diagnostic and therapeutic gaps. The equipment includes an autoclave for sterilisation, BERA and PTA machines for hearing assessments, and an ELISA reader to detect infectious diseases.

A High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) system has also been installed to aid in the diagnosis of haematological disorders such as thalassemia and sickle cell anaemia — conditions more prevalent in rural areas.

Further additions include a Complete Blood Count (CBC)/haematology analyser, a ureteroscope for conducting kidney surgeries, and a modern hospital laundry system to support infection control through improved hygiene.

Ram Mohan Naidu, talking to the media after the inauguration, said that vital equipment has been provided to enhance local healthcare infrastructure. He pointed out that, in the past, people frequently had to travel to Visakhapatnam for medical testing, but the donation of equipment valued at Rs 45 lakh by Boeing will help to alleviate this issue.

The Minister underlined the key role of hospitals, public healthcare facilities, and health education within society. He mentioned that both governmental and private entities are collaborating to assist underprivileged communities and enhance healthcare service accessibility. By concentrating on these fundamental areas, he believes improvement can be made in aiding those in need.

No signal: Tribal man carried uphill for e-KYC

Poor road access and lack of network coverage hinder access to government services in Gudem Kotha Veedhi mandal

PNS ■ PADERU



Locals transporting a bedridden tribal man on a cot to a hilltop in search of mobile network signal

The villagers of Gurrallagondi in Rinthada panchayat were forced to carry a bedridden tribal man up a hill on a cot to complete his ration e-KYC process due to lack of mobile connectivity.

The incident occurred on Friday when Pangi Somaraju, confined to bed for the past three months due to illness, had to be taken to a hilltop—the only area with mobile signal—for Aadhaar-based e-KYC verification. With the deadline for the process approaching, villagers, assisted by Deputy Sarpanch and TDP leader Somesh Kumar, and digital assistant Chinna Rao, made the arduous journey to ensure Somaraju remained eligible for the public distribution system (PDS).

According to residents, the ordeal is symbolic of larger systemic neglect. In Gudem Kotha Veedhi mandal, poor road access and lack of network coverage routinely hinder access to government services. "Despite several appeals, no mobile towers have been installed. It is deeply unfortunate that a sick man had to be carried for something so basic," Somesh Kumar told The Pioneer.

The incident has renewed demands from local leaders and civil society groups for urgent government intervention. They stress that without simultaneous improvements in digital and physical infrastructure, efforts toward inclusive governance will remain ineffective.

Villagers have appealed to the district administration to prioritise mobile towers and all-weather road connectivity to prevent such hardships.

All set for Bakrid celebrations today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Eid-ul-Adha, also known as Bakrid, will be celebrated across Andhra Pradesh on Saturday with religious fervour and festive spirit. Muslim leaders have announced that the special Bakrid Namaz in Vijayawada will be held at 7.30 am at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium, following an Islamic sermon (khutbah) and special prayers (dua).

Similar prayer gatherings will take place at various Idgahs and mosques across all 26 districts of the State between 6 am and 10 am, based on local arrangements. Committees in charge of Idgahs, along with minority community leaders, have made all necessary preparations to ensure the peaceful conduct of the prayers. Local legislators, including MLAs, MPs and MLCs, are expected to join the congregational prayers in Vijayawada, Guntur, Machilipatnam, and other major cities.

Islamic scholars explained that Bakrid, observed on the 10th day of Dhul Hijjah — the final month of the Islamic calendar — commemorates Prophet Ibrahim's devotion to God. Imam Altaf Ali Raza noted that Muslims mark the occasion by offering Qurbani (sacrifice of sheep or cattle), dividing the meat into three parts: one for relatives and friends, one for the needy, and one for the family.

However, a sharp rise in the prices of rams, sheep and goats this year has placed a financial strain on families intending to offer Qurbani. Livestock traders from across Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka have set up temporary markets in Vijayawada, Guntur, Eluru, Rajahmundry, Visakhapatnam and other major towns. In Vijayawada's one-town area, the markets are bustling, though buyers are expressing concern over the steep prices.



Majority MLAs' performance not good, says TPCC chief

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC Chief B Mahesh Kumar Goud suggested that the MLAs should evaluate their performance. The performance of the majority of MLAs is not good and it is their responsibility to improve, Mahesh directed MLAs that they need to work hard for better results in local elections.

AICC in charge Meenakshi Natarajan, Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar participated in the Karimnagar Lok Sabha constituency review meeting at Gandhi Bhavan on Friday. The Government Whip Adi Srinivas, MLA and DCC president Kavvampally Sathyanarayana, senior leader T Jeevan Reddy, MLC Balmoori Venkat and others participated in the meeting.

Speaking on this occasion, TPCC Chief said that it is good that the party sent Meenakshi Natarajan, who is spotless leader, as an incharge of Telangana. However, leaders have to concentrate on strengthening the party, he said.

Mahesh said, "The leaders should work with double enthusiasm as they were in power. There would be a chance for the party to come to power again if the leaders work efficiently. The party construction should be done from booth level. The leaders have to take the government schemes to the people. The government should work tirelessly. There is a need for the leaders to work in coordination as the party cadres are in disappointment".

He said that the government is not getting expected publicity. He said that the PCC executive committee and cabinet expansion would take place this month only.



Delay in GVMC Commissioner appointment sparks heated debate

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The NDA government faced strong criticism at the first Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) council meeting of the year over the delay in appointing a Municipal Commissioner for over four months. The issue drew flak not only from the Opposition YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), but also from within the ruling NDA alliance.

The YSRCP corporators staged a protest during the meeting, accusing the government of administrative negligence and highlighting the disruption caused by the absence of a full-time civic chief. Rajya Sabha member Golla Babu Rao and YSRCP floor leader Banala Srinivasa Rao demanded regular civic hours from the District Collector, who is currently handling GVMC affairs as an additional charge. BJP MLA P. Vishnu Kumar Raju supported the call for urgent appointment, especially in light of the upcoming International Yoga Day, likely to be attended by the Prime Minister.

The session also witnessed sharp exchanges over alleged bias in developmental planning. YSRCP leaders accused the NDA-led administration of sidelining their proposals, while JSP corporators alleged preferential treatment to unelected YSRCP leaders during the previous regime. Banala Srinivasa Rao countered by citing GVMC records that showed equitable development across TDP-represented wards.

PARA-SPORTS CHAITANYA YATRA FLAGGED OFF

City Police Commissioner hails para-athletes as symbols of inspiration and resilience

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



City Police Commissioner Shankhabrata Bagchi has expressed strong confidence in the growing potential of para-sports athletes from the region, stating that their journeys are poised to redefine sporting excellence and inspire generations. He was speaking at the inauguration of the Para-Sports Chaitanya Yatra, organised by the Andhra Pradesh Para-Sports Association near the Kalimata Temple on RK Beach Road on Friday.

Demonstrating his support, the Commissioner joined para-athletes and officials in a symbolic foot march, underscoring solidarity with their aspirations. He also unveiled the official poster of the Yatra and lauded the athletes for their dedication and perseverance in the face of adversity.

Addressing the gathering, Bagchi said, "We are fully committed to empowering persons with disabilities. My doors are always open—please do not hesitate to seek support or report any challenges you encounter." In a gesture of encouragement, he also presented certificates of appreciation and awards to outstanding para-athletes.

Para Sports district honorary president Dr Sheetal Madan highlighted the proactive measures taken by the government in support of para-sports. She cited Government Order No. 04, which mandates a three-per cent reservation in government employment for para-athletes, with exemptions from qualification tests, subject to educational criteria. The reservation spans key services including Group I, Group II, DSC, Excise, and Forest Departments.

She further acknowledged the State's sports policy that extends financial and institutional incentives to medal winners at national and international levels, expressing gratitude to the coalition government for its inclusive initiatives.

Among those present at the event were Andhra University Sports Director N. Vijaya Mohan, State secretary Muralikrishna Ramaswamy, Vizianagaram honorary president Dayananda, coordinator Sivaganga, and a spirited contingent of athletes.



2 fraudsters involved in Rs 9-cr cyber crimes nabbed: K'nada SP

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The Kakinada police have arrested two fraudsters involved in cyber crimes amounting to Rs 9 crore by misusing bank accounts opened in the names of unsuspecting individuals. Efforts are underway to trace and apprehend two more suspects, including the alleged kingpin and his aide, for whom lookout circulars have been issued.

According to district SP Garikipati Bindu Madhav, the gang employed a novel method by luring gullible youth with promises of bank loans. They persuaded them to open accounts in various banks and collected their passbooks, ATM cards, SIM cards, and cheque books under the pretext of arranging a loan of Rs 5,000 per month. However, these details were used for large-scale cyber fraud.

Briefing the media on Friday, SP Bindu Madhav described the case as one of the largest cyber crime operations uncovered in the district. Of the four-member gang, Narni Satish Chandra and Dasari Verera Venkata Satyanarayana, both from Samalkot, have been arrested, while the prime accused Putta Ramu and his associate Udaya Kiran are absconding.

The fraud came to light after Korra Lova Krishna of Sambamurthy Nagar filed a complaint at the Three Town Police Station. He approached Karnataka Bank when Satish Chandra failed to fulfil his promise of arranging a monthly loan, only to discover that Rs 50 lakh had been fraudulently transacted from his account.

Given the magnitude of the case, the SP constituted three special investigation teams. The probe revealed that the gang had used the victims' bank accounts to transfer funds through networks in Bengaluru and Dubai. Preliminary findings indicate that transactions totalling Rs 9 crore were made through 48 bank accounts, affecting at least 50 victims from the Kakinada and Samalkot areas.

SP Bindu Madhav stressed the importance of public awareness, urging people not to rent out their bank accounts or fall for offers of 'easy money'. "Stay vigilant and do not trust deceptive offers from cyber fraudsters," he warned.

Kakinada SDPO Manish Devaraj Patil, DSP (Special Branch) Chavvakula Sriramakoteswara Rao, and Circle Inspectors Nagadurgarao, Ankababu, and V. Krishna were present.

Govindaraja receives jewels from Lord Venkateswara

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

As part of the ongoing annual Brahmotsavams at the Sri Govindaraja Swamy temple in Tirupati, the grand Garuda Seva will be observed on Friday evening.

It is customary to offer gifts on behalf of Lord Venkateswara of Tirumala to Sri Govindaraja Swamy on this auspicious occasion each year.

This year, the Hill deity presented jewellery worth Rs 34.46 lakh to Sri Govindaraja Swamy, which included three gold dollars bearing images of the deities. The sacred offerings were brought to the temple in a colourful procession featuring traditional paraphernalia and dance troupes.



Dalit girl gang-raped

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR



A horrifying incident has come to light in Yedugurakalapalli village, Ramagiri mandal, Sri Sathya Sai district, where a minor Dalit girl was allegedly gang-raped, resulting in a six-month pregnancy. The case has sparked outrage and drawn strong condemnation from the YSRCP, which is criticising the police for their alleged inaction and delayed response.

The harrowing ordeal was discovered when the victim complained of stomach pain to her parents, who then took her to a hospital. A medical examination confirmed the minor's advanced pregnancy. Upon questioning by her parents, the girl revealed she had been repeatedly molested by several youths from her own and neighboring villages.

The Ramagiri police have registered a case based on the victim's complaint. The girl has reportedly identified six accused individuals, all of whom are currently absconding. Police have reportedly summoned the parents of the alleged perpetrators for questioning.

Adding to the gravity of the situation, the YSRCP has stated that the minor was allegedly assaulted by as many as 14 accused over several months, with evidence recorded and used for blackmail.

Former Minister Sake Sailajanath, addressing the media in Anantapur, vehemently condemned the police's "shameful indifference" to the case. "Is a Dalit girl's suffering less important?" he questioned, highlighting concerns about the lack of swift justice for marginalised communities.

Sailajanath announced that the YSRCP will file a formal complaint tomorrow, demanding immediate police action to locate the victim and her mother, ensure their safety, and bring the accused to justice. He urged for the formation of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) and called upon the DGP and Satya Sai police to act decisively.

"The government must deliver justice and secure the victim's future," he asserted, vowing that the YSRCP would fight for the victims and demand systemic measures to prevent similar crimes.

BC Welfare Minister demonstrates simplicity by having breakfast at roadside hotel

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR



Minister for BC Welfare, S Savitha, once again showed her simplicity by having breakfast at a roadside hotel in Palasamudram village of Gorantla mandal on Friday.

While overseeing preparations for Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sithara man's visit, Minister Savitha was travelling to Palasamudram to welcome her on Saturday. En route, she noticed a small roadside eatery locally known as 'Kaka Hotel'.

The Minister halted her convoy and stepped out of her car to enter the modest establishment. She ate breakfast there like an ordinary visitor and spoke with the owner, enquiring about the hotel's business. She also asked whether they were receiving free gas cylinders provided by the government under the Deepam scheme.

The hotel owner and his wife were surprised and delighted by the Minister's choice to dine at their humble hotel, appreciating her down-to-earth attitude despite her official position. Minister Savitha's simplicity has won widespread praise from the local community.

Collector inspects DSC examination centre

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM



West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani inspected a DSC examination centre at DNR College here on Friday. She reviewed the arrangements and interacted with the examination officials.

The Collector enquired with the Chief Superintendent about any issues faced during the conduct of the examination. She sought details regarding the number of candidates who appeared and whether any technical difficulties had arisen.

She also visited the medical camp arranged at the centre. "Proper arrangements must be made to provide first aid to any candidate facing health issues. If necessary, they should be shifted to the government hospital," she instructed the officials.

Collector Nagarani informed that 16,634 candidates would appear for the DSC examinations at five centres across the district.

She said the exams would be conducted in three shifts daily from June 6 to June 30. In addition to medical camps, drinking water facilities had been arranged at all centres, she added.

The Collector noted that police security had been deployed and Section 144 imposed at the examination centres. DEO E Narayana, Chief Superintendent Tangirala Hari Anand Prasad, and College Principal Dr M Anjan Kumar accompanied the Collector during the inspection.

Akhanda Godavari project to boost tourism: Minister Durgesh

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY



Minister for Tourism Kandula Durgesh has stated that the Akhanda Godavari project will transform the region into a major tourism hub.

In a statement on Friday, the Minister announced that Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan and MP D Purandeswari will lay the foundation stone for the Akhanda Godavari tourist project on June 19.

Durgesh said that tourism development works worth Rs 97 crore have been sanctioned by the Centre under the SASC-2024-25 (Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment) scheme. These works will cover Rajahmundry, Dhavaleswaram, Kadiyam, Kovvur, Nidadavolu, and surrounding areas.

He revealed that all project works would be completed before the Godavari Pushkarams. The aim is to enhance the areas around the Godavari River with better facilities to offer visitors an enriched experience of the region's historical and cultural heritage.

"The historic Havelock Bridge, with its 127 years of history and status as a heritage symbol, will be modernised. The area will feature attractions such as waterfalls, glass bridges, a gaming zone, a space theme park, an urban craft bazaar, hanging gardens, a hologram zoo, time travel exhibits, a rail museum, and aquarium tunnels," the Minister explained.

He added that Pushkar Ghat, located next to Havelock Bridge, will be further developed as a spiritual destination. The plan is to link Havelock Bridge and Pushkar Ghat, creating a vibrant tourist spot.

Durgesh said surrounding temples will be developed with architectural and design improvements to enable year-round holy baths at Pushkarala Revu, enhancing the spiritual experience.

The Minister also highlighted plans to attract tourists to Kadiyam Nursery, one of India's largest nurseries, and restore the nearby Godavari Canal and other historical sites. Visitors will be able to relax by the Godavari River, enjoy the peaceful surroundings, and take boat rides along the canal.

"As part of the Akhanda Godavari Project, the Sri Kota Sattemma Temple in Thimmarajupalem, Nidadavolu Mandal, a renowned spiritual pilgrimage site with a unique history, strong ramparts, an impressive main gate, and a tall Rajagopuram, will be beautified further. Additional pilgrim accommodation will also be provided," he said, adding that the temple's Rajagopuram will be modernised.

Timber worth crores of Rupees destroyed in fire at Rayachoti

PNS ■ RAYACHOTI

Timber valued at several crores of rupees was destroyed in a fire at a depot in Rajampet town, Annamayya district.

Police reported that the fire broke out after midnight and quickly spread throughout the depot. The timber yard, located near ASR Kalyana Mandapam, stored hundreds of teak logs.

With gusty winds and intense heat waves continuing, all the teak and other valuable timber logs were completely consumed by the flames.

Two fire engines rushed to the scene, but the fire brigade was unable to extinguish the fire until morning due to the strong winds fuelling the blaze. The depot owner, Harikrishna, confirmed that timber worth several crores was lost. Fire officials said the exact extent of the damage is still being assessed.

'Bhoomi Puja' performed for Rs 18.2-cr Akshaya Patra kitchen

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Rural MLA Pantham Nanaji and District Collector Dr Shan Mohan performed the Bhoomi Puja for the second phase of the Akshaya Patra central kitchen at a function held at Varalakshmi Nagar in Vakalapudi, Kakinada Rural Mandal, on Friday.

The Collector stated that the second phase of the central kitchen is being constructed at a cost of Rs 18.2 crore under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds. The facility will cater to the midday meal requirements of government schools in the region. He added that the kitchen would be built in accordance with ISO standards and will have the capacity to prepare food for 25,000 students within three hours.

Akshaya Patra President and Hare Krishna Movement India chief Satya Goura Chandra Dasa, ONGC CGM Prabal Sen Gupta, Executive Director and Services Manager Rajat Malhotra, and ONGC Dehli CGHM PVV Satyanarayana Murty were among those present.



Srivari Mettu DD token issuance begins at Alipiri

PNS ■ TIRUPATI



The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) commenced the issuance of Divya Darshan (DD) tokens for the Srivari Mettu footpath route from Friday evening at the Alipiri Bhudevi Complex.

Speaking to the media on the occasion, Additional Executive Officer Ch. Venkaiah Chowdary stated that the response from devotees to shifting the DD token counter from Srivari Mettu to Alipiri has been overwhelmingly positive.

He explained that setting up counters at the Srinivasa Mangapuram temple requires permission from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which is still awaited.

As the process may take time, the token counters were temporarily relocated to the Bhudevi Complex, which already has the necessary infrastructure and manpower, as SSD tokens have long been issued there.

Four dedicated counters have been arranged for issuing Srivari Mettu DD tokens, and devotees have expressed satisfaction with the new arrangements, he added.

The Additional EO further noted that Alipiri is well connected by public transport and has a nearby bus stand, making it convenient for pilgrims to access Srivari Mettu.

TTD has made elaborate arrangements to ensure smooth issuance of DD tokens by deploying administrative, vigilance, and additional sanitation staff, along with Srivari Seva volunteers, to assist devotees. JEO V. Veerabrahmam, CV&SO K.V. Muralikrishna, and other officials were also present.

Free bus travel, 'Thallaiki Vandanam' to be implemented: Anagani

PNS ■ GUNTUR



Minister for Revenue Anagani Satyaprasad has reiterated that the government's flagship schemes — free bus travel for women and 'Thallaiki Vandanam' — will be implemented as promised.

The Minister received petitions from the public and assured them that their grievances would be addressed. Speaking on the occasion, Satyaprasad stated that he had undertaken over 300 development works for the people within a year, averaging nearly 100 works per day.

He highlighted that the government is actively implementing its 'Super Six' schemes, which include pension distribution, Anna canteens, the Deepam scheme, and the conduct of the DSC examination to fill vacant teacher posts. He further announced that the 'Annadata Sukhibhava' scheme for farmers would be rolled out this month. The 'Thallaiki Vandanam' and free bus travel schemes are scheduled to begin from August 15.

Taking a dig at former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, the Revenue Minister criticised him for visiting anti-social elements in Tenali. He pointed out that Jagan had failed to visit the family of Amarnath Goud, a schoolboy who was brutally murdered during his tenure. He alleged that Andhra Pradesh had regressed by 30 years under the YSRCP regime.

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ACROSS THE STATES



UP: Ex-serviceman's wife, daughter commit suicide

A retired army officer's wife and daughter allegedly committed suicide by hanging themselves at their home in Bijli Kheda locality of Uttar Pradesh's Banda district on Friday, police said. Circle Officer (CO) Rajeev Pratap Singh said, "Heermani (46), wife of retired serviceman Nankai Prasad, and their daughter Ranjana (19) died allegedly by hanging themselves in their home this morning." Upon receiving information from neighbours, police arrived at the scene, forced open the door, and recovered the bodies, he said."Preliminary investigations suggest that the suicides were a result of a domestic dispute. Nankai Prasad, the husband and father, was visiting relatives at the time of the incident," the CO said. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem and further probe is underway.



Over 18,000 bottles of fake IMFL seized in Thane

Police in Maharashtra's Thane district have seized more than 18,000 bottles containing spurious Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) worth over Rs 45 lakh, and arrested four persons in this connection, officials said on Friday. The operation, which began on Wednesday night, continued till the next morning in Dombivli area in the district, they said. Addressing a press conference, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Amarsingh Jadhav said, "Our officials received a tip-off that a gang was transporting low-grade IMFL from Goa to Thane. Based on this input, the police laid a trap on June 4." "Around 8.30 pm, a transport vehicle was intercepted at Govindwadi area in Dombivli and found to be carrying liquor bottles. However, the driver failed to produce any documents for the transportation," he said. The investigation led the police to a house in nearby Sudamwadi area, where a huge stock of fake liquor bottles was found, he said, adding that two of the accused were found repackaging it with counterfeit labels of reputed liquor brands for sale.



RPF's commandos to protect J-K Vande Bharat trains

Commando forces of the Railway Protection Force (RPF), popularly known as CORAS, have been deployed for the security of Vande Bharat trains on the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla railway line, ferrying passengers between the Kashmir Valley and Katra, the base camp of the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu and Kashmir. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday flagged off the Vande Bharat train service between Katra and Srinagar in J-K — the first train connection between the Kashmir valley and the Jammu region. "The RPF's Commandos for Railway Security (CORAS) have been deployed on Vande Bharat trains on USBRL (Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link) between Katra and Kashmir," an official told PTI. The commandos made their presence felt on the inaugural trains flagged off by the prime minister. Each of the two Vande Bharat trains will have 15 commandos and a supervisor each on board to ensure the security and safety of train travel, officials said.

PM: Won't allow terror attack to hinder development work in J-K

PNS ■ KATRA



Assuring his full support to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, which he termed "crown of India", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday pledged not to allow the Pahalgam terror attack to hinder development works in the union territory.

He also praised the border residents for bravely facing indiscriminate cross-border shelling by Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, and announced an additional relief of Rs 2 lakh for the families whose houses were completely damaged and Rs 1 lakh for those whose houses were partially damaged.

"I will not allow the Pahalgam terror attack to stop development in J-K. The dreams of the youth will be fulfilled and any obstacle has to face Modi first," the prime minister said while addressing a public rally after flagging off the first train service to the Kashmir Valley here.

The terrorist attack at the Baisaran meadow in Pahalgam on April 22 killed 25 tourists and a local pony rider, bringing tourism to a standstill in the Valley.

"Today, people in J-K are looking at new dreams, and fulfilling them as well. The youth are happy with the construction of shopping malls, opening of cinema halls. They want J-K to become a prominent shooting destination for films. They also want the region to become a sporting hub," the prime minister said.

Modi also lauded the heavy turnout at the famous Kheer Bhawani Mela, a major festival of Kashmiri Pandits, and noted that the annual Amarnath Yatra is scheduled to commence on July 3.

Indian envoy meets top Chinese official, discuss bilateral ties

PNS ■ BEIJING



Top diplomats from India and China discussed bilateral relations to implement the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries last year, the foreign ministry here said on Friday.

The meeting between Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat and China's Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong on Thursday is the first diplomatic engagement between the two countries post the Operation Sindoor.

Both sides expressed their willingness to work together to earnestly implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, the Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said.

The two sides are also working out ways to promote cultural exchanges and mutually beneficial cooperation, properly manage differences, and promote the development of China-India relations along a healthy and stable track, it said.

The two sides also exchanged views on the issues of common concern, the statement added.

Sun is the former Chinese Ambassador to India and currently Chinese Foreign Ministry's pointsman on South Asia.

Thursday's meeting also took place as the two countries are finalising preparations to resume the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra in Tibet for the Indian pilgrims.

Evening of music and discussions to celebrate king of fruits

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



A one-of-its-kind evening in the national capital will celebrate the mango through storytelling, music, discussions and a culinary experience, all dedicated to singing paeans to the king of fruits.

The evening dedicated to the mango, 'Bazm-e-Aam', will be organised by Kashkol Collective at the India International Centre on June 14.

The event, led by Kashkol Collective's Ambreen Shah and Ashhar Haque, will feature a qissagoi session, a riveting discussion on the fruit's cultural and historical significance, a musical performance and a curated dinner menu centred around the mango.

"In every home, the mango arrives not merely as fruit, but as memory - nostalgia wrapped in stories of elders known for their love of its flavor. 'Bazm-e-Aam' is our way of coming together to celebrate those memories - sweet, tangy, timeless," Shah said in a statement.

The evening will begin with a dastan by noted storyteller Ashhar Haque, tracing the mango's journey from Buddhist parables to Mughal memoirs, colonial kitchens, and folk wisdom.

The dastangoi session will be followed by a discussion on 'The Cultural Life of the Mango' by historian Sohail Hashmi and writer-environmentalist Sopan Joshi. The duo will reflect on oral histories, rural ecologies, and seasonal rhythms that have shaped our relationship with this beloved fruit.

Dholak Rani Ensemble, led by vocalist Shivangini Yeashu Yuvraj and styled by Isha Priya Singh, will blend classical raags and folk songs to evoke the emotional and seasonal landscape of the mango.

The evening will blend into the night with chef Sadaf Hussain's mango-themed culinary treats. Hussain's specially curated "Aam Menu" will reimagine mango as a story, flavour, and sentiment, reviving forgotten recipes and culinary roots.

UP cops sponsor wedding after family's breadwinner shot dead

PNS ■ GONDA (UP)

The police in Gonda city organised the wedding of a young woman whose family was in dire straits due to the death of its breadwinner among other financial hardships, officials said on Friday.

The wedding took place in Dhannipurwa village in the Umri Begumganj area on Thursday night.

Uday Kumari lost her brother in a dacoity incident in April, which forced the family to postpone her wedding, originally scheduled for May. Taking the family under their wing, the police took full responsibility for the wedding and solemnised the ceremony in a grand, traditional manner.

The event was carried out with the support of the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF), Superintendent of Police (SP) Vineet Jaiswal said.

"The girl was to be married on May 5, but on the night of April 24, her brother Shivdeen was shot dead by robbers who had broken into their home. As a result, the wedding had to be called off," he said.

The investigation led the police to the Pasi gang.

Acting swiftly, multiple police teams were deployed, resulting in the identification of six accused individuals. Four were arrested during encounters, in which three sustained bullet injuries.

The gang's kingpin, Gyan Chand Pasi and another wanted criminal, Sonu Pasi, were killed in separate encounters by the STF and the police on May 20 in Umri Begumganj and May 22 in Barabanki, respectively.

Ritu Shahi, the wife of STF Circle Officer DK Shahi and a member of the State Women's Commission, along with Dr Tanvi Jaiswal, wife of SP Vineet Jaiswal and chairperson of VAMA Sarathi (a police family welfare organisation), visited Kumari's house.

Besides consoling the grieving family, they also assured to take full financial responsibility for Kumari's wedding.

On Thursday, officers from the police and STF participated in the wedding festivities. From decorations and food to rituals, every detail was handled by the police.

The police chief and his wife attended the ceremony and presented Rs 1.51 lakh in cash, along with essential jewellery and household items to the newlyweds on behalf of the department.

"We wanted to send out a clear message: we are not just here to fight criminals, but also to stand strongly with victims in their times of need. When a family is in crisis, it is our duty to protect, reassure, and help bring their lives back on track," the SP said.

Kumari's father admitted that he had lost all hope of seeing his daughter married, but thanks to the police's help, the family was able to hold the wedding.

Social media influencer Sharmistha released on bail

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Social media influencer Sharmistha Panoli was released from prison on Friday after the Calcutta High Court granted her interim bail in a case involving alleged communal remarks made in a video uploaded on social media. The Calcutta High Court on Thursday granted interim bail to Panoli, who was arrested by Kolkata Police last week following an FIR lodged at the Garden Reach Police Station.

The court observed that the complaint against Panoli did not disclose any cognisable offence.

Panoli, a 22-year-old law student, was arrested from Gurugram in Haryana last week after the FIR was registered.

The court directed that she be enlarged on a bail bond and a security of Rs 10,000. It also instructed her to cooperate with the investigation. The court further directed that Panoli shall not leave the country without its prior permission. However, it allowed the trial court to consider her application if she seeks to go abroad for educational purposes.

After her release, Panoli walked out of the prison dressed in blue denim and a round neck t-shirt, wearing a surgical mask. She was greeted by her family members, who took her inside the car and drove off, as media personnel were seen busy clicking her pictures.

Following Panoli's arrest last week, the Kolkata Police had stated: "Hate speech targeting any religious figure or community or any class of citizens of India, which has potential to incite disharmony and hatred between different communities, is a punishable offence in the newly implemented Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

CJI: Marginalised communities holding highest offices in India

PNS ■ LONDON



The representatives of marginalised communities are today holding some of the highest constitutional offices in India in keeping with Dr B R Ambedkar's vision of "equality, liberty, justice and fraternity" for all, Chief Justice of India B R Gavai has said.

Delivering a special lecture to commemorate 75 years of the Indian Constitution on Thursday evening at the historic Gray's Inn in London, where Ambedkar received his qualification as a barrister in England over a century ago, Gavai highlighted the enduring legacy of the social justice reformer as the chief architect of the Constitution.

Gavai said it was an "incredibly emotional moment" for him to reflect upon the legacy of one of the greatest legal minds in modern history who also had a profound impact on his own career path.

As someone who shares the same Dalit social background as Ambedkar, the CJI pointed to some of the highest constitutional offices in the country today being occupied by representatives of marginalised communities in keeping with Baba Saheb's vision of "equality, liberty, justice and fraternity" for all sections of Indian society.

"Standing here at this historic institution, I am reminded of the enduring legacy Dr B R Ambedkar left behind, not only in the legal field but in the very fabric of Indian democracy," Gavai said.

"I was born in 1960, almost four years after Dr Ambedkar left us; I was born as a citizen of India and not as an untouchable. Dr Ambedkar's presence was always felt in my home, from a young age I would hear stories of his courage, his intellect, his relentless pursuit of equality. Those stories became a part of my values, my outlook and my purpose," he said.

Gujarat Cong leader held for 'misleading' posts on Op Sindoor

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD



Gujarat Congress general secretary Rajesh Soni was arrested on Friday and charged under a tough section of the BNS for allegedly uploading "misleading" as well as "morale breaking" content on a social media platform related to 'Operation Sindoor', police said.

After registration of an FIR on Thursday, the Cyber Crime Cell of the state CID arrested Soni in the wee hours over his controversial posts on the operation launched by Indian armed forces to destroy terror hubs in Pakistan and PoK, said Superintendent of Police (CID-Cyber Crime) Bharatsinh Tank.

During the May 7-10 operation, launched in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, Indian armed forces also bombed airbases in Pakistan in retaliatory strikes.

Soni has been accused of breaking defence personnel's morale and putting India's sovereignty in danger through misleading posts on Facebook, said Tank.

The Congress leader has been booked under sections 152 (acts endangering sovereignty, unity and integrity of India) and 353(1)(a) (statements conducing to public mischief) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), said the SP.

The section 353(1)(a) can also be invoked against someone who makes, publishes or circulates any statement, false information, rumour, or report, with intent to cause, or which is likely to cause, any officer, soldier of India to mutiny or otherwise disregard or fail in his duty as such.

Punishment under BNS section 152 can range from life imprisonment to seven years, plus a fine.

The FIR lodged by the CID cited two Facebook posts of Soni, whose arrest was denounced by the opposition party.

In one of the posts, the Congress leader shared photos of posters of Operation Sindoor featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the uniform of a fighter jet pilot.

BENGALURU STAMPEDE

ADGP Intelligence transferred, CM's political secy removed

PNS ■ BENGALURU



Karnataka government on Friday relieved MLC K Govindaraj as political secretary to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and transferred Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Intelligence, Hemant Nimbalkar, following the stampede outside the Chinnaswamy Stadium that killed 11 people, official sources said.

These decisions came a day after Siddaramaiah suspended Bengaluru police commissioner B Dayananda and four other senior police officials.

The stampede occurred on Wednesday evening in front of the stadium, where a large number of people thronged to participate in the RCB team's IPL victory celebrations. Eleven people died and 56 were injured in the incident.

"The appointment of K Govindaraj as Political Secretary to the Chief Minister is hereby revoked with immediate effect. Accordingly, K Govindaraj is hereby relieved from the post of Political Secretary to the Chief Minister with immediate effect," an official notification said.

Though no official reason was given for Govindaraj's removal, the decision is said to be linked to the June 4 incident, according to official sources.

Amid allegations of intelligence failure over the stampede and the administration's inaction in this regard, the government has decided to transfer ADGP, Intelligence, Hemant Nimbalkar.

"Nimbalkar has been transferred, order is awaited," official sources said.

Conceding that there was an intelligence failure in connection with the stampede incident, the CM on Thursday said, "No decision has been made yet about what action to be taken in this regard. We have discussed it."

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Editor's TAKE

Bengaluru stampede tragedy: Lessons learnt

As the families of the deceased demand accountability, there is urgent need for strict safety protocols

The tragic stampede at Bengaluru's M Chinnaswamy Stadium on June 4 has left the city shaken and mourning. What was meant to be a grand celebration of Royal Challengers Bengaluru's (RCB) first IPL title win in 18 years turned into a devastating catastrophe, claiming the lives of 11 innocent fans and injuring many more. The event, which drew an overwhelming crowd of over 2.5 lakh people to a stadium with a maximum capacity of just 33,000, became a nightmare due to a fatal combination of poor planning, political grandstanding, and lack of co-ordination. The stampede broke out outside Gate 3 of the stadium, where the surge of the crowd led to people being crushed and trampled. It was not merely a case of over-enthusiastic fans, but a structural and administrative failure involving both the cricket franchise and the state Government. Preliminary investigations reveal that the tragedy was the result of a breakdown in communication and responsibility.

RCB had announced a victory parade early on the morning of June 4 through social media, despite not having secured the mandatory police permissions under the Karnataka Police Act. Their request for a parade, made the previous night, had already been rejected by the police due to the risk of a massive crowd. Regardless, the franchise went ahead with their announcement, and by 9 am the information had gone viral across platforms, bringing tens of thousands of fans to the streets. Simultaneously, the Karnataka Government decided to hold its own felicitation event for the RCB team at the Vidhana Soudha, just a kilometre away from the stadium, at nearly the same time. This resulted in the Bengaluru police being stretched beyond its capacity.

Officers had already been on duty late into the night due to the IPL finals, and were now expected to provide security for the team's airport arrival, transport, felicitation at the Vidhana Soudha, and the stadium event — all on short notice and with limited manpower. An FIR has now been registered against RCB, the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), and a private event management company called DNA Events for negligence. The Karnataka Government has since ordered a full inquiry into the incident. The High Court has taken suo motu cognisance of the tragedy and asked for explanations from all involved parties. Politicians have not escaped scrutiny in the aftermath. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who had taken the initiative to felicitate the team, attended both the Government and stadium events. This tragedy must serve as a wake-up call.

It highlights the dangers of allowing celebrations to go ahead without adequate safety checks, co-ordination, and crowd management. What happened on June 4 was not an accident — it was a preventable disaster born out of administrative chaos and competing egos. No public celebration should ever proceed without thorough planning, clear communication, and above all, respect for human life. The victory of a cricket team is meant to unite, uplift, and inspire — not become a day of mourning. The hope now is that lessons are learnt, responsibilities are fixed, and that never again will joy turn so swiftly into sorrow.

Reimagining higher education

As we near the 100th year of independence, India stands on the cusp of a historic leap empowered by knowledge. What we need is an education system that not only trains the head and hands, but also inspires the heart



As India marches toward the centenary of its independence in 2047, the vision of Viksit Bharat — a self-reliant, inclusive, and developed nation — places education at the very heart of its transformation. Higher education is not merely an instrument for economic growth but a vehicle for intellectual evolution, cultural continuity, and moral clarity.

It must not only equip youth with market-ready skills but also shape them into conscious citizens, ethical leaders, and visionary thinkers. The dream of a developed India extends far beyond infrastructure or GDP — it rests on harnessing the true wealth of the nation: its people. To unlock this potential, we need a complete reimagining of the spirit, structure, and purpose of education — an ecosystem that encourages critical thinking, creativity, life skills, global perspectives, and deeply rooted human values. A nation's future is scripted in its classrooms. For a country that boasts the world's largest youth population, education is not a sector — it is the soul of its progress. It bridges the gap between aspiration and achievement, between demographic potential and democratic excellence. As such, education must receive central focus in policy, investment, and innovation.

While India's premier institutions are gaining global recognition, there remains an urgent need to universalise quality education, particularly in rural and underserved regions. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, with its goal to raise the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) to 50 per cent by 2035, marks a pivotal step. Yet access alone is not the destination; excellence must accompany expansion. Every learner, regardless of socioeconomic or geographic background, must have a genuine opportunity to realise their full potential. This demands a flexible and diverse academic architecture — undergraduate and postgraduate programmes that are adaptable, interdisciplinary, and outcome-oriented. The emphasis must shift from traditional, input-heavy models to a learner-centred framework focusing on real-world applicability, innovation, and holistic development. In today's knowledge-driven world, critical thinking is not a luxury — it is a necessity. Our education system must evolve from rote memorisation to nurturing analytical minds. Students should be encouraged not only to answer questions but to question answers. The university space must transform into a zone of inquiry, dialogue, and debate — where every discipline encourages exploration and dissent. Pedagogies must promote problem-solving, project-based learning, interdisciplinary research, and Socratic questioning. In such an environment, curiosity becomes the compass and imagination, the engine. True innovation arises when science intersects with ethics and when technology blends with aesthetics. Creativity, too, must be seen not as a niche skill, but as central to national progress. As India aspires to lead in start-ups and innovation, we must instill creative confidence in our students.



RAGHAVENDRA PRASAD TIWARI

Traditional classroom settings — characterised by one-way lectures and passive learning — are increasingly losing relevance for Gen Z learners. Today's students are disengaged by rigid formats and static curricula. Their dwindling attention spans demand immersive, skill-based, and participatory learning methods. Modern students thrive in experiential learning ecosystems — where they learn through case studies, simulations, field visits, internships, classroom debates, and hands-on projects. They connect better when presented with real-life scenarios before abstract theories. Institutions should champion flipped classrooms, technology-enabled learning, and hybrid pedagogies to replace conventional "chalk-and-talk" models. Resources and training for educators are crucial to foster such dynamic, engaging experiences. In an era of constant disruption, technical prowess is necessary — but not sufficient. An educated individual must be equipped to navigate life with resilience, integrity, and empathy. Our higher education system must balance domain expertise with life literacy — the capacity to understand and manage one's emotions, collaborate effectively, and act responsibly. Skills like emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, environmental stewardship, digital discipline, and financial literacy must be made integral to all curricula. These are no longer auxiliary competencies — they are foundational for individual well-being and societal harmony. One urgent area is mental health. With rising stress, anxiety, and burnout among students, institutions must foster cultures of psychological safety and mindfulness. Dedicated counselling services, well-being workshops, stress-management programs, and spaces for reflection are no longer optional — they are essential. Education must nourish not only sharp minds but also kind hearts.

Equally crucial is the nurturing of human values. Qualities like vinay (humility), karuna (compassion), and seva bhav (a spirit of service) must be inculcated deeply. These values form the backbone of India's civilisational ethos. Consider the Sikh practice of Seva, or selfless service — reflected in community kitchens, grassroots outreach, and inclusive welfare. Such traditions teach us that true leadership lies not in control, but in service and humility. When students embody these values, they evolve from mere job seekers to nation builders. They become socially conscious, ethically grounded individuals who carry forward the spirit of India into every realm they enter.

India's aspiration to become a $30 trillion economy by 2047 hinges on how well we prepare our youth. The future will be shaped by breakthroughs in AI, robotics, biotechnology, space exploration, climate innovation, and digital transformation. Higher education must align with this future. Our universities must become centres of innovation — housing incubation hubs, research parks, and start-up accelerators. Industry-academia collaboration is vital. Curricula must reflect market realities, emerging technologies, and skill gaps. Stackable degrees, modular learning, and certification programmes should empower students to learn, unlearn, and relearn across their lifetimes. Entrepreneurial thinking should be embedded within every discipline. Our aim must be to produce not just job seekers, but job creators. Government initiatives like the Anusandhan National Research Foundation and Startup India need to be amplified at the institutional level. Every college, every university must become a breeding ground for innovation and enterprise.

Importantly, economic empowerment must be inclusive. Educational justice demands that all citizens — irrespective of caste, gender, location, or ability — have equal opportunities to thrive. Scholarships, digital equity programmes, mentorship, and special support for marginalised communities are essential pillars. As India embraces rapid technological change, we must also deepen our inner compass. Our curricula must prioritise not only breadth but depth, not only speed but reflection. Educational spaces should include zones for nature, meditation, contemplation, and ethical inquiry — alongside digital labs and high-speed connectivity.

In the age of acceleration, character will be our greatest differentiator. Let us design education that helps young people live wisely, act compassionately, and create meaningfully. We must nurture a generation that is grounded in India's wisdom yet global in its outlook; technologically adept yet ethically anchored.

(The writer is Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. Views are personal)

PIC TALK



Walled city of Jaipur on a cloudy day. PTI

Search for God: The one pursuit that cannot wait

SECOND Opinion

In today's world, life is a never-ending sprint — alarms, deadlines, emails, meetings, goals, and ever-growing to-do lists. We're constantly in motion, chasing success, recognition, and comfort. But in all this striving, one essential truth often gets lost: everything else can wait – except your search for God. Think about it.

Most people wouldn't dream of missing a job interview or a doctor's appointment. Yet, time with God? That often gets delayed, postponed, or forgotten altogether. Spirituality slips to the bottom of our list, pushed aside by urgent but often unimportant things. We tell ourselves there will be time later – after the project ends, after the kids grow up, after retirement.

But life never really slows down. There's always another storm, another milestone, another distraction. Time is a silent thief. No one can guarantee the next moment.

And beneath all the chaos, the soul is quietly calling out — whispering from the depths of our being, reminding us that we are more than our routines, our achievements, or our social media personas.



SAKSHI SETHI

We are spiritual beings, yearning for connection, peace, and meaning. We soothe ourselves with thoughts like, "I'll focus on God later." But later is uncertain. The search for the Divine is not a future task — it's a present invitation. Imagine being lost in a dense forest. Would you wait for nightfall before searching for a path, or would you begin while there's still light? The answer is clear. Begin now.

This journey inward is not about perfection, rituals, or religious performance. It is about presence. God isn't asking us to be flawless. He is simply asking us to show up — with our longing, our honesty, our brokenness, our hope. Even a single, sincere step toward the Divine is never wasted. As the Bhagavad Gita assures us, "Even a little effort in the right direction never goes to waste." We mistakenly believe we control time. But unexpected losses, illnesses, or global crises quickly shatter that illusion.

In a world that feels increasingly fragile, the search for God is not only important — it is urgent. Across traditions and centuries, spiritual masters like Rumi, Ramakrishna, Jesus, and the Buddha have shared a consistent message: Seek now. Not after you've achieved something. Not after life settles down. Not after the storm passes. Seek now. Why now? Because the soul is not fed by applause, wealth, or vacations.

The ego feeds on praise; the soul is nourished by silence, surrender, and sacredness. Real peace won't come from acquiring more but from going deeper — into stillness, into love, into God. And the search for God isn't about finding a figure in the sky or locating a temple or altar. It is about inner transformation — becoming more compassionate, more patient, more loving, more awake. As we seek the Divine, we begin to see the sacred everywhere — in strangers, in suffering, in nature, and even in ourselves.

This shift moves us from living by ego to living from essence. Importantly, God is not far. We are not separated by mountains or oceans. As the Holy Quran says, "We are closer to you than your jugular vein."

God is already near. It is we who have drifted. The spiritual journey is simply a return — to the part of us that already knows love, already knows peace, already knows truth.

So, pause. Breathe. Close your eyes. Whisper a prayer, hum a hymn, light a candle, or take a silent walk. Do whatever draws you inward. Let that moment of stillness remind you that your soul is not separate from the Source. Because in the end, everything else — careers, achievements, possessions — will pass.

What remains is the soul's eternal longing for God. That is the one relationship that will never fade, the one pursuit that brings meaning to all others. So don't wait. The perfect time is isn't tomorrow — it's this moment, right here, right now.

(The author is a councillor and an educator. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Cheers drowned by sirens

Apropos the news item, "PM shares anguish, 11 crushed in RCB victory frenzy", published on June 5, this is my response.

The heartbreaking loss of 11 lives during what should have been a joyous celebration at Bengaluru in connection with RCB's maiden IPL title triumph, is a stark reminder of the critical importance of meticulous planning, empathy, and safety in public gatherings. While the spirit of victory unites communities, it must never come at the cost of human life.

The most important question that continues to haunt us is why the celebrations continued despite the stampede taking place. When sirens were blaring outside the Chinnaswamy stadium, how and why the celebrations were allowed to carry on and who will take the responsibility for this crassitude? While it was wholly meant for fans, some of those fans lost their lives, and yet the celebrations went on!

Do human lives really matter or have we become totally heartless? What happened in Bengaluru should be a life lesson for all of us.

As we honour RCB's remarkable achievement, equally we must ask ourselves: how can Bengaluru or India as a whole build safer, more inclusive spaces for public joy that protect every individual.

RANGANATHAN SIVAKUMAR | CHENNAI

The aftermath of Operation Sindoor

In the aftermath of Operation Sindoor, seven all-party delegations visited several countries to convey India's message against cross-border terrorism. Key questions raised by countries visited by the delegations have been related to US President Donald Trump's role in the India-Pakistan ceasefire, the number of fighter jets India lost in the military face-off, the status of Muslims in India, the western narrative portraying India and Pakistan as equally responsible, the potential use of nuclear weapons, and Pakistan's inclusion in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list.

The most challenging outing was in Malaysia, where Pakistan tried to invoke "Islamic solidarity" to undermine India's outreach. While the Indian delegation was in Kuala Lumpur, the Pakistani embassy reportedly urged Malaysian officials to cancel the delegation's programmes. Malaysia, however, reportedly refused to entertain Pakistan's request. BJP MP Brij Lal, who was part of the Sanjay Jha-led delegation that visited Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, said, "Pakistan tried to scuttle our mission. The Malaysian embassy was very active and questioned why we were making the trip." With this, the Indian delegation failed to convince the countries they visited against Pakistan.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Justice served but shadows persist

The recent conviction in the Anna University rape case is a welcome step, but serious procedural lapses continue to cast a shadow.

BJP leader K Annamalai has flagged key concerns that warrant deeper attention. The then Chennai Police Commissioner's premature statement that no one else was involved — made even before the investigation was complete — was rightly criticised by the Honourable Madras High Court for potentially prejudicing the probe.

While the investigation proved that the convict's phone was in airplane mode when he pretended to call someone post-incident, Annamalai has raised doubts over actual calls made later to police personnel and political functionaries, and the taking into custody, release, and re-arrest of the accused.

These raise unresolved questions about possible wider involvement. Though a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was constituted, the lack of clarity on its reporting structure may have undermined its effectiveness. Moreover, the unethical leak of the FIR, despite court directions for action, appears to have gone unaddressed.

Justice, to be meaningful, must rest not just on conviction but on procedural integrity. For the sake of both the victim and public confidence, lingering doubts must be transparently resolved.

GOPALASWAMY J | CHENNAI

ENVIRONMENT: A DAILY AFFAIR OR ANNUAL RITUALS?

The editorial on environment concerns (6-6-25) is perfectly worded. There is a dire need to give up mere gestures and symbolic rituals but to take tangible steps with commitment to pass this Earth on to our own siblings for their comfortable living.

Most leaders deliver nice lectures on environmental damages and the steps to be taken but stop there without plunging into action. Plastic manufacturing can be banned. But it requires a lot of political will and social commitment to do so. Yet, every day passes with a callous attitude towards the imminent task of saving this Earth from plundering, which is nothing but hastening the task of making the Earth unsuitable for living.

The way forests are being destroyed by the avaricious investors and their sycophant rulers for their pecuniary concerns, positive turns are not in sight. Therefore, it should be the responsibility of the people to take up the task and act. As a first step, let people disown and reject plastics and show their commitment to preserve the Earth. Climate turning erratic and its furious manifestations fail to sensitise the concerned. Most of us are preparing to face and adjust our lifestyle to manage the damages rather than addressing the cause.

The latest findings about microplastic particles entering human and animal bodies should caution everyone and make them understand the seriousness of the situation turning too dangerous. Capital knows no mercy or sentiments, and its nexus with politics poses the imminent dangers, which could be effectively addressed only by a democratic movement of the people.It is our life and we can only save it. Let saving environment become a part of our life. Let us save nature for nature to save us.

AG RAJMOHAN | ANANTPUR

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

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | JUNE 7, 2025

Op Sindoor: How India's precision strikes forced a ceasefire

In a stunning display of technological prowess and strategic clarity, India's Operation Sindoor reshaped the contours of modern conflict by compelling Pakistan to request a ceasefire within just 80 hours

FIRST Column



The sudden ceasefire request by Pakistan within 80 hours of India's decisive Operation Sindoor left many analysts and strategists stunned. Pakistan had abruptly called off its own military operation, Bunyan Marsoos ("Wall of Lead"), signaling a white flag in what was expected to be a protracted escalation. What caused this rapid turnaround? The answer lies in the Indian Air Force's (IAF) precision strikes on Pakistan's most secure military assets — especially their deeply buried command and control centres at key airbases. These surgical strikes shattered Pakistan's operational capability and broke their will to continue hostilities.

The flashpoint for Operation Sindoor was the horrific terrorist attack in Pahalgam — the deadliest since the 2019 Pulwama bombing. This attack was claimed by The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy terror outfit linked directly to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which enjoys overt support from Pakistan's establishment. Despite global condemnation, Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and their Army Chief remained unapologetic and silent on state — sponsored terrorism.

India's response was swift and calculated. Since the 2019 Balakot airstrikes, the IAF had refined its doctrine of striking terror infrastructure deep inside Pakistan with surgical precision, backed by highly accurate intelligence. This time, nine terror-related targets were hit, including the JeM's training academy at Bahawalpur and LeT's headquarters at Muridke.

The Pakistani retaliation was brutal but ineffective: drone attacks, shelling border villages, and failed attempts by the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) to target Indian military bases. India, in turn, struck back with coordinated attacks on Pakistan's air defense radars, surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites, integrated air defense systems (IADS), and other critical PAF installations at 13 locations. These strikes were not just tactical but demonstrative — designed to showcase India's technological edge and disrupt Pakistan's ability to respond or escalate further.



VINAYAK BHAT

Targeting Pakistan's Hardened Deeply Buried Targets (HDBTs)

One of the most critical aspects of these strikes was the destruction of Pakistan's Hardened Deeply Buried Targets (HDBTs). These underground military complexes are designed to withstand aerial and even nuclear attacks. Militaries worldwide dig deep to protect their critical command, control, communications, and intelligence (C4I) centres from enemy strikes.

Pakistan's network includes at least 22 such underground bunkers around its major airbases and strategic cities like Islamabad and Karachi. These facilities are reinforced with multilayer concrete, steel rebar, and equipped with advanced heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to sustain prolonged occupancy underground.

During Operation Sindoor, the IAF successfully struck two vital HDBTs: one at Chaklala (now Nur Khan) Airbase near Islamabad, and another at Murid Airbase on the Pothohar Plateau. According to the Indian Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) Air Marshal A.K. Bharti, these were command and control air defense centres — but the author contends they functioned more broadly as C4I nerve centres, integrating radar data, intelligence feeds, and coordinating air operations.

The Chaklala Airbase Strike: A Technical Masterclass

The underground facility at Chaklala was built in the 1990s by General Electric Aviation, a US company specialising in subterranean military infrastructure. It spanned roughly 750 square meters and was considered one of Pakistan's most advanced air defense hubs. In fact, VIPs and foreign military delegations frequently toured this bunker to marvel at Pakistan Air Force's indigenous technological integration.

The IAF's strike on Chaklala was a demonstration of extraordinary precision. Satellite imagery revealed the bomb entered through a tiny HVAC shaft barely 45 centimeters wide — an incredibly small target given the best satellite resolution of 30 cm per pixel. This meant zero margin for error, requiring perfect intelligence, exact coordinates, and probably the deployment of the best pilots and weaponry available.

> ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL ASPECTS OF THESE STRIKES WAS THE DESTRUCTION OF PAKISTAN'S HARDENED DEEPLY BURIED TARGETS (HDBTS). THESE UNDERGROUND MILITARY COMPLEXES ARE DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND AERIAL AND EVEN NUCLEAR ATTACKS

The bomb's explosion was so powerful that it blew a large chunk of the concrete roof into the air, pulverising the entire facility underground and everyone inside instantly. Following the strike, Pakistan took days to clear debris, eventually deciding to bury the remains of fallen personnel in situ since nothing else remained. This strike was likely the first of its kind in aerial warfare history — hitting such a tiny and deeply buried target with pinpoint accuracy and total destruction.

Overcoming Advanced Defences

Murid Airbase's underground facility was even more sophisticated. Pakistan's Special Works Department had learned from earlier constructions and implemented advanced countermeasures — extending HVAC shafts away from the facility to prevent precision strikes via ventilation ducts.

Faced with this challenge, the IAF adapted its tactics, opting to strike the central section of the bunker directly. Post-strike satellite images revealed a small, sharply defined crater consistent with a deep penetrating bomb exploding underground, not on the surface. The light color of the crater edges confirmed it was an impact crater with the explosion occurring deeper below.

Imagery showed a large truck stationed at the entrance, likely involved in salvage or recovery operations, and a lone ambulance nearby — suggesting at least one survivor but significant casualties among airbase personnel. Pakistan quickly cemented the crater to obscure evidence from overhead satellites.

Strategic Implications and Aftermath

Pakistan's attempts to shield critical command centres underground were foiled spectacularly by Indian ingenuity, intelligence, and precision weapons. The destruction of these two HDBTs, alongside other strikes at Sargodha and Jacobabad airbases, crippled Pakistan's air defense command and air operations infrastructure for months.

Further satellite imagery revealed additional bunkers, including one near Islamabad International Airport believed to protect the PAF Chief of Air Staff (CAS). Despite fortifications added as recently as March 2025, these too were rendered ineffective.

This lack of functioning C2 nodes meant Pakistan's air operations became fragmented and ineffective. Orders from the CAS could not reach field commands or aircraft, severely degrading Pakistan's ability to wage aerospace warfare or activate nuclear options.

A Calculated yet Devastating Message

The IAF's strikes were meticulously calibrated to avoid triggering Pakistan's nuclear threshold, while still delivering crippling blows to Pakistan's military infrastructure. The destruction was so complete that Pakistan had no face — saving nuclear option, yet the scale of damage forced them to seek an early ceasefire to prevent further humiliation.

India also took a strong diplomatic stance, suspending the Indus Water Treaty and cutting water flow to Pakistan until it ceases support for terrorism. This multi-domain pressure — from aerial strikes to economic leverage — exemplified a new, integrated approach to national security.

Conclusion: The Unseen Triumph

The world was largely silent on the satellite evidence, but India's demonstration of air power during Operation Sindoor was unprecedented in modern warfare. Within barely 80 hours, the IAF achieved what many believed impossible: obliterating the backbone of Pakistan's air defense and command capabilities underground, and forcing a reluctant adversary to call a halt to hostilities.

The strikes at Chaklala and Murid airbases remain benchmarks of precision, intelligence fusion, and technological excellence. These operations showcased India's ability to blend advanced ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) assets, superior weapons technology, and tactical innovation — sending a clear message that aggression backed by terrorism will meet with swift and decisive consequences.

This episode in modern conflict underscores a new paradigm of aerospace warfare, where intelligence accuracy, technological superiority, and surgical strikes dictate the outcome before full-scale battles even begin. For India, Operation Sindoor was not just a military success but a strategic victory that restored deterrence and sent an unequivocal warning to Pakistan and the world.

(The writer is a retired Colonel in the Indian Army. Views expressed are personal)

The case for a new international communications framework



Institutions in 2025 are undergoing a deep shift, one that's not just structural but perceptual. It's not only about geopolitics or multilateral equations anymore; it's about how the narrative of power is built, sustained, and fought over. Power shifts are no longer isolated; they play out on backdrops that are curated with strategy, layered with intent, and fuelled by the urgency to dominate the narrative space. The flashpoints keep growing, and so does the pace.

There is now a rising call, soft but persistent, for a global institutional framework that may help bring consistency to how the world communicates during geostrategic tension. It's not just about press releases or soundbites anymore. As crises multiply and conflicts evolve, a more permanent space to think, shape, and guide international messaging could prove invaluable. More and more, observers are asking: do we need a standing global body that can anchor communication strategy, information architecture, and perception management across borders?

Because here's the truth, we're facing gaps. Not just gaps in infrastructure or intelligence, but in alignment; between message, medium, and messenger; between the event and its interpretation; between what's real and what's allowed to pass as real. In this chaos, perception turns volatile, and messaging becomes a battleground.



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

Historically, conflict communication had a kind of order to it. It was ceremonial, visual, and symbolic — a white flag, a signed treaty, and messages delivered with intention and weight. Even in the Cold War, diplomacy expanded into media but still retained rhythm; grainy press visuals, state briefings, symbolic seating arrangements. It all meant something. It was slow but deliberate. Today, communication is loud, constant, and often borderless.

Social media, livestreams, memes, reels, podcasts; everything's a potential weapon or a viral distortion. We've entered a space where information carries no shared watermark of authenticity. No one knows what's true anymore, and no one's bound by any common standard. And that's where the need for a structured, collaborative approach starts to feel less like a good idea and more like an eventual necessity.

This is where the idea of a Framework for International Communications Collaboration comes in. Not a rigid authority, but a dynamic, evolving space; bringing together voices from across nations, with expertise in digital ethics, media regulation, information warfare, and communication law. Its job could be to gently lay the foundation for a shared protocol, something that may help fact-check at scale, design responsible crisis communication, and set broad contours for messaging ethics.

We don't have to imagine it from scratch. We've seen glimpses already. India's WAVES 2025 global media summit was one such moment; it showed that when storytelling, technology, and tradition are placed on the same table, something extraordinary can happen. WAVES didn't just host dialogue, it sparked trust, layered complexity with hope, and created space for nations to be seen and heard on their terms. The same spirit can shape this proposed framework, one that is inclusive, future-facing, and fundamentally human.

This framework, if realised, may align itself with values enshrined in the UN Charter and the Sustainable Development Goals. It could offer a moral compass, anchored in responsible communication, narrative equity, and truth as a shared global good.

The guiding principles could be kept simple but strong: communication as a public good; universal access to factual, verified information; accountability in digital and emerging media; respect for cultural nuance and narrative diversity; and zero tolerance for misinformation warfare.

The framework may also explore a visual authentication protocol, a watermark that confirms source credibility in real-time. A global fact-check network could be designed, powered by AI but human-led. It could supervise viral misinformation with urgency and care. Emergency communication standards may be developed for conflict, disaster, or humanitarian moments. Ethical audits for digital platforms may be introduced to assess intent and impact.

Training simulations could be offered to media professionals, built on the immersive models showcased at WAVES 2025. There is also scope to set light-touch norms for responsible content creation, especially in fast-growing mediums like podcasts and independent storytelling. The idea isn't censorship, but curation; to create incentives for platforms that promote constructive storytelling and take accountability for harmful virality, while still respecting freedom of expression.

Another critical dimension is balance. For decades, developing nations have been misrepresented or erased altogether in global news cycles. Western media bias isn't a conspiracy theory, it's a pattern.

A framework like this could gently shift the scales. It could offer emerging nations a fairer chance at narrative sovereignty, allowing stories to be told by those who live them, not filtered through the lens of geopolitical power centres.

To make it real, the process must start with a group of aligned nations. India may consider taking the lead, using the momentum and goodwill created by WAVES 2025. From there, regional dialogues could follow, supported by partnerships with global media alliances, tech platforms, AI councils, and institutions such as UNESCO, UNDP, and the G20. It doesn't have to be big on Day One; it just has to be sincere, strategic, and capable of growth.

Eventually, the framework could grow into something treaty-backed. It could carry legal recognition, soft enforcement authority, and enough institutional weight to influence norms. That's the long game, not to police narratives, but to protect truth from being drowned out by volume, algorithms, or viral fear.

Because today, warfare isn't just about weapons or borders. It's about timelines and trending hashtags; about distortion as a strategy. And in that kind of battlefield, the tools of storytelling can be as destructive, or redemptive, as anything else.

India isn't just offering an idea here, it's offering a way forward; a path from noise to clarity, from suspicion to consensus. This framework may not fix everything, but it might just hold the line, one that keeps truth visible, dignity intact, and global dialogue possible in the face of chaos.

(The writer is former civil servant, writes on cinema and strategic communication. Views are personal.
Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavie Srinivasan)

Katchatheevu: A longstanding issue of livelihood, and national interest

Over the past few days, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar addressed the longstanding and sensitive issue of Katchatheevu, a small island whose sovereignty remains contested between India and Sri Lanka. This dispute, along with other recurring conflicts such as the Cauvery water dispute, Mullaperiyar Dam controversy, and Palar river issues, tends to resurface annually in public discourse before gradually fading away.

Minister Jaishankar traced the origins of the Katchatheevu matter back to the early 1970s. Correspondences from that era reveal that the then Indian Foreign Secretary Kewal Singh engaged in discussions with Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi and other officials in 1973 and 1974. The central Government, including then Union External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh, kept the Tamil Nadu administration informed as part of ongoing diplomatic negotiations with Sri Lanka.

Despite this, Karunanidhi publicly opposed the transfer of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka, arguing that the island was handed over without the Tamil Nadu Government's proper consent. He called for protests and convened an all-party meeting that included opposition leaders, communist parties, and other political groups — though the ADMK, which had split from the DMK at the time, walked out in protest.



KS RADHA KRISHNAN

Historically, the issue predates this period. During Jawaharlal Nehru's tenure, parliamentary leaders raised concerns over Katchatheevu, but Nehru dismissed it as a minor land matter. In the 1960s, legal experts advised the central Government against ceding the island. Under Lal Bahadur Shastri's administration, a committee including Tamil Nadu's minister Pudukkottai Ramaiah was sent to Colombo to negotiate. Nonetheless, despite opposition, the island was officially ceded in 1974 during Indira Gandhi's tenure without parliamentary approval, based solely on diplomatic exchanges between India and Sri Lanka.This agreement, widely condemned by various members of Parliament — including leaders from the DMK and Atal Bihari Vajpayee — occurred amid broader geopolitical shifts in the Indian Ocean region. These included increased U.S. military presence in Diego Garcia and Sri Lanka's development plans for Trincomalee Port.

In exchange for Katchatheevu, India received the Wadge Bank, a 6,500 square kilometer barren sandbank within its Exclusive Economic Zone near Kanyakumari. A 1976 agreement formalised fishing rights and boundaries in the Gulf of Mannar, restricting Sri Lankan boats from fishing in Wadge Bank after a transitional period. However, this sandbank proved to be of little economic value to India, while the rich fishing grounds surrounding Katchatheevu became inaccessible to Indian fishermen.

Since the transfer, Tamil Nadu's fishing community has faced severe hardships. Reports document over 115 attacks by the Sri Lankan Navy on Tamil Nadu fishermen, resulting in more than 300 deaths and numerous boats seized or destroyed. Fishermen are often arrested or fired upon for crossing into disputed waters despite relying on these grounds for their livelihoods. Multiple political resolutions and legal challenges in Tamil Nadu have sought to reclaim the island. Notably, a unanimous 1991 Tamil Nadu Assembly resolution affirmed the fishermen's historic rights in the region.

The ongoing distress faced by Tamil Nadu fishermen is compounded by intensified harassment from the Sri Lankan Navy, which reportedly attacks fishermen by cutting their nets, seizing motorboats, and even sinking vessels. These incidents have been repeatedly reported to the central Government. Between 1983 and 1991 alone, the Sri Lankan Navy reportedly carried out 236 attacks, destroying or damaging 51 boats, injuring over 135 fishermen, killing more than 50, and arresting 205.

Historically, Katchatheevu belonged to the Sethupathi kings of Ramanathapuram, who leased it to traders for harvesting medicinal herbs. The island, located in the Palk Strait near Pamban Island, was part of the Ramanathapuram kingdom and was integrated into India after the Zamindari Abolition Act of 1947. The British also used the island for naval purposes. In 1955, the Indian Parliament opposed Sri Lanka's plan to use Katchatheevu for naval training.

While national leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi showed limited interest in contesting this transfer, Tamil Nadu politicians, including Vaiko and former Chief Ministers Jayalalithaa and Karunanidhi, have repeatedly raised the issue and pursued legal action to reclaim the island. Historical documents and maps affirm Katchatheevu's Indian ownership, a position even acknowledged by some Sri Lankan officials referencing the Ramanathapuram Samasthanam. The dispute is not merely territorial but also touches on matters of national dignity and security. Katchatheevu's strategic location offers advantages for security against foreign dominance, naval training, communication systems, and marine research. The unresolved status of the island threatens India's sovereignty and the livelihood of Tamil Nadu's coastal communities.

Given these stakes, the Tamil Nadu Assembly has demanded that the central Government intensify diplomatic and legal efforts to reclaim Katchatheevu. Some voices have even called for military options, if necessary, to protect India's geopolitical interests and the welfare of its fishermen.

(The writer is a political activist.
Views expressed are personal)

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IN BRIEF



US team for trade talks in India, aims at pact conclusion

The proposed trade agreement between India and the US would provide greater market access for goods by reducing tariffs, cutting trade barriers, and improving supply chain integration, an official said on Friday. The ongoing negotiations here between the teams of the two countries are aiming to achieve an expeditious and mutually beneficial conclusion of the initial tranche or phase of the BTA (bilateral trade agreement), the official said. As part of the ongoing talks for the BTA, a US delegation led by the Additional US Trade Representative is here from June 4-10. "The two countries are actively engaged in focused discussions to facilitate greater market access, reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers, and enhance supply chain resilience and integration," the official said. The two sides are engaged in detailed discussions on various aspects of the proposed BTA.
On February 13, 2025, both nations agreed to more than double bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030.



Delhi court acquits ex-coal secy H C Gupta, others

A special CBI court has acquitted former coal secretary H C Gupta, ex-joint secretary (coal) K S Kropha and then director K C Samaria on Friday in a coal scam case while it convicted JAS Infrastructure Capital Ltd and its then Director Manoj Kumar Jayaswal for cheating and criminal conspiracy. Special Judge Sanjay Bansal announced his verdict in connection with Mahugarhi Coal Block in Jharkhand. The judge will hear the argument on sentence on July 8, 2025. "This is the 19th conviction in coal block allocation cases investigated by CBI. Initially, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had filed final report (closure) in the case on November 20, 2014," the CBI spokesperson said in a statement. The special court had previously taken cognisance and framed charges against JAS Infrastructure Capital Pvt Ltd, Manoj Kumar Jayaswal, H C Gupta, K S Kropha and K C Samaria.



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RATE-SENSITIVE REALTY

Bank, auto stocks soar on RBI's jumbo rate cut

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Interest-rate-sensitive stocks were in huge demand on Friday, with the realty index climbing nearly 5 per cent as investors cheered the Reserve Bank's jumbo rate cut of 50 basis points.

Home, auto and other loans are likely to cost less as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut interest rates by a larger-than-expected 50 basis points, and unexpectedly reduced the cash reserve ratio for banks to make available more money to lend in a bid to boost the economy.

The RBI's six-member monetary policy committee, headed by Governor Sanjay Malhotra and consisting of three external members, voted five to one to lower the benchmark repurchase or repo rate by 50 basis points to 5.5 per cent. It also cut the cash reserve ratio by 100 basis points to 3 per cent, adding Rs 2.5 lakh crore to already surplus liquidity in the banking system.

The 30-share BSE Sensex ended the day higher by 746.95 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at 82,188.99.

Among realty stocks, Godrej Properties surged 6.75 per cent, DLF jumped 6.61 per cent, Oberoi Realty climbed 6.41 per cent, Prestige Estates Projects rallied 5.03 per cent, Sobha (4.72 per cent), Macrotech Developers (3.68 per cent), Signature Global (India) Ltd (3.02 per cent), The Phoenix Mills (2.31 per cent), Anant Raj (1.20 per cent) and Brigade Enterprises (1.19 per cent).

The BSE realty index jumped 4.74 per cent to 8,069.29.

"The RBI's aggressive rate and CRR cuts triggered a powerful rally in Indian equities, with the Nifty-50 breaking above 25,000 and the Bank Nifty hitting a record high. Rate-sensitive sectors -- banks, realty, and auto -- led the gains, fuelled by expectations of stronger credit growth and improved liquidity," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

The cut in CRR will take effect in four stages between September and December.

From the auto index, Ashok Leyland climbed 3.53 per cent, Maruti went up by 2.64 per cent, Hero MotoCorp (2.17 per cent), Bharat Forge (2.09 per cent), Mahindra & Mahindra (2.02 per cent), Apollo Tyres (1.84 per cent), Eicher Motors (1.80 per cent), TVS Motor Company (1.09 per cent), Bajaj Auto (0.92 per cent) and Tata Motors (0.24 per cent). The BSE auto index rallied 1.50 per cent to 53,094.15.

Among bank counters, Axis Bank advanced 3.15 per cent, IndusInd Bank rose 2.50 per cent, Bank of Baroda (1.65 per cent), Kotak Mahindra Bank (1.61 per cent), HDFC Bank (1.42 per cent), State Bank of India (0.84 per cent), Federal Bank (0.39 per cent) and ICICI

RBI has done its bit for growth, expect others to do their's: Guv

PNS ■ MUMBAI

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Friday said the central bank has done its bit for pushing growth, and it is now for the stakeholders to do their bit. Malhotra was responding to a specific question whether he expected fiscal authorities to support growth as the central bank after 50 basis points repo rate cut will have "very little space" for monetary policy action. "I believe in doing my work, and we have done that bit. And obviously, it is expected that everyone else will be doing their bit," the RBI Governor said. He was quick to add that it is not appropriate for him to suggest what others should be doing, and added that he believes in doing his job and will continue to do so ahead as well. At many instances in the past, there has been a lack of warmth between RBI and the finance ministry over the kind of policies to be adopted by the former. Often, the central bank's policies stemming from focus on financial stability and price rise have not been appreciated by the government. Earlier in the day, Malhotra said the RBI has already cut rate by 1 percentage point in three moves since he took over, and there is little more it can do to help prop up growth. He also announced a change in the monetary policy stance to "neutral" from "accommodative". "After having reduced the policy repo rate by 100 bps in quick succession since February 2025, under the current circumstances, monetary policy is left with very limited space to support growth," he said.

INVESTORS CHEER RBI'S JUMBO RATE CUT

Sensex jumps over 700 points, Nifty reclaims 25,000-level

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged nearly 1 per cent on Friday, driven by a rally in rate-sensitive sectors following the Reserve Bank's jumbo rate cut of 50 basis points.

Market analysts said in light of benign inflation forecasts, RBI has taken steps to boost growth. A 50 bps repo rate cut supported by phased 100 basis points CRR cut will boost growth and lower the borrowing costs.



The policy is broadly positive for growth and investment in a challenging global macro environment, they said.

After a muted start, benchmark sensitive index Sensex and Nifty soon recovered all the early lost ground fuelled by the RBI monetary policy decision and gained over 1 per cent.

The 30-share BSE Sensex ended the day higher by 746.95 points, or 0.92 per cent, to settle at 82,188.99. During the day, it surged 857.85 points, or 1.05 per cent, to 82,299.89.

The 50-share NSE Nifty reclaimed the 25,000-level and climbed 252.15 points, or 1.02 per cent, to settle at 25,003.05.

All key sectors contributed to the rally, with rate-sensitive segments such as realty, financials, and auto emerging as top gainers, closely followed by others.

Among sectoral indices, realty jumped 4.74 per cent, financial services (1.79 per cent), metal (1.56 per cent), auto (1.50 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.38 per cent), consumer durables (1.30 per cent) and bankex (1.25 per cent).

Industrials and capital goods were the only laggards.

Interest-rate-sensitive realty index jumped 4.74 per cent, while auto index went up 1.50 per cent and bankex climbed 1.25 per cent.

"The tone was initially cautious ahead of the outcome of the MPC's monetary policy review, but sentiment turned sharply positive following the surprise announcement of a 50-basis points repo rate cut and a staggered 100 basis points reduction in the CRR.

Silver continues record run for 2nd day, hit fresh peak

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Silver prices soared Rs 3,000 to hit another record high of Rs 1,07,100 per kilogram in the national capital on Friday amid buying rush by local jewellers and stockists as global macroeconomic uncertainties continued to fuel safe-haven chase.



According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal bounced Rs 2,000 to hit a fresh peak of Rs 1,04,100 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) in the local markets on Thursday.

So far this year, the metal prices have jumped Rs 17,400 per kg, or 19.4 per cent, since December 31 last year.

As per the Association, the precious metal of 99.9 and 99.5 per cent purity traded flat at Rs 99,690 and 99,100 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Friday.

Traders said silver prices saw an uptrend due to a rise in domestic demand as well as global influences.

The most-traded July contract for silver increased Rs 1,622 to hit a fresh peak of Rs 1,06,065 per kg. Also, the contracts for September delivery climbed Rs 1,650 to hit a lifetime high of Rs 1,07,130 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

Gold contracts for August delivery fell Rs 44 to Rs 97,830 per 10 grams on the MCX.

In the overseas markets, spot gold rose 0.22 per cent to trade at USD 3,360.05 per ounce.

According to Kotak Securities' AVP-Commodity Research Kaynat Chainwala, gold is trading firm as investors remain cautious ahead of the US Nonfarm Payrolls data to be released later in the day.

Goa surpassed all in vital development parameters: CM

PNS ■ PANAJI

Goa might be the size of a district of some of the bigger states but it has surpassed "everyone" in per capita income, gross state domestic product and literacy, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said on Friday.

He was addressing the 'Regional Rural Workshop 2025' under Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana in the presence of Union Minister of State for Rural Development and Communication Pemmasani Chandrasekhar here.

"Goa is spread over 3702 square kilometres, which could be compared to a district in any of the bigger states, but I would like to say that as far as per capita income, gross domestic product and literacy is concerned, we have surpassed everyone," he said.

"Goa is a pioneering state in sustainable development. It is the first coastal state to submit an eco-sensitive zone plan to the Centre.

KP Group, Delta Electronics India ink three initial pacts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Surat-based KP Group on Friday said it has inked three strategic initial pacts with energy and power management solutions provider Delta Electronics India.

This collaboration spans three high-impact areas: Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), Green Hydrogen and EV Charging Infrastructure and Solar PV Inverters, a statement said.

The Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed by Niranjan Nayak, Managing Director of Delta Electronics India, and Faruk Patel, Chairman and Managing Director of KP Group, marking a significant step toward co-developing future-ready energy infrastructure that aligns with India's clean energy ambitions.

Delta Electronics India and KP Group already share a long-standing relationship. The newly signed MoUs deepen this collaboration and provide a structured framework to accelerate renewable energy and clean technology deployment at scale, the statement added. The Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) MoU outlines a detailed framework for developing and deploying scalable BESS projects. In this, KP Group will help in project development, site integration, and regulatory coordination to accelerate the deployment of BESS solutions, whereas Delta will supply key power electronics, including inverters and energy management systems, along with design, integration, and commissioning support, it said.

Together, the two companies will deliver energy storage projects in India and potentially overseas markets.

As part of the pact focusing on integrated green hydrogen refuelling and EV charging infrastructure, KP Group will lead the development of green hydrogen production plants powered by renewable energy.

Delta will contribute critical technology, including energy management systems, hydrogen compression and dispensing components, as well as EV charging hardware and software, and integrated energy management systems.

Both parties will jointly design and implement green hydrogen stations and EV charging hubs across India.

Under the solar PV inverter agreement, Delta will supply approximately 1 GW of next-generation grid-connected solar inverters over the next 12 months for KP Group's upcoming solar projects across India and selected overseas markets.

Maternity leave is a woman's fundamental right: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



In a landmark decision, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India declared that availing maternity leave is not a privilege but a fundamental right for all working women. The apex court firmly struck down the decision of the Madras High Court, reinforcing that motherhood and maternity care are integral parts of a woman's right to life and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Satendra Singh, Chairman of the Indian Council of Industrial Management (ICIM) and a leading advisor for workplace equity and compliance, hailed the judgment as "a resounding affirmation of women's constitutional and human rights."

Background of the Case:

The case revolved around a woman schoolteacher in a government-aided high school in Dharmapuri district, Tamil Nadu. After her divorce in 2017, she was granted custody of her two children. In 2018, she remarried and later conceived another child.

When she applied for maternity leave in 2021 for her newborn, her request was denied by the Tamil Nadu education department on the grounds that she already had two children, which, as per state rules, disqualified her for further maternity benefits.

The High Court upheld the state's rejection, citing Rule 101(A) of the Tamil Nadu Fundamental Rules. However, the Supreme Court overturned this interpretation, emphasizing that denying maternity leave on such a ground violates the spirit of equality and dignity guaranteed to every woman.

No move on hiking foreign ownership limits in banks: RBI

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Friday said there is no move to increase foreign ownership limits beyond 15 per cent in a single institution at present.

Speaking to reporters at the central bank headquarters here, Malhotra said the RBI will be undertaking an exercise to relook at the ownership structure in banks and various issues like ownership structures and eligibility criteria.

Malhotra, however, said that a growing economy like India needs more banks, but was quick to add that we need owners and managers, who are trustworthy.

"We allow 15 per cent for non-residents, and it can go up above 15 per cent on a case-to-case basis. There is no change in this anytime soon or immediately," Malhotra said.

It can be noted that usually, the RBI allows a single foreign institution to hold 15 per cent in a lender and has made some exceptions like that of CSB Bank, where Canada-based investor Fairfax has been allowed to own 51 per cent and recently, it allowed Japan's SMBC to own 20 per cent of Yes Bank.

Terming it a "deeper question" which will take time to reach a conclusion, Malhotra hinted that the RBI may look at allowing higher foreign ownership of banks in the future.

"We have also said that we want to re-look at ownership structure and eligibility conditions under which non-residents, who are at 15 per cent, we are examining at present. It will not happen immediately, it will take time," he said, stressing that whatever is best for the economy will be taken on board.

"Certainly, our economy is growing, we require more banks. Keeping that in mind, if there is a need for change in the ownership criteria, we will do it," he added.

Meanwhile, when asked if the RBI will go back on its November 2023 regulation on increasing the risk weights in unsecured lending because of the comfort on asset quality from credit cards and personal portfolios, Malhotra replied in the negative, saying there are no such plans.

Battery breakthroughs are making EVs more dependable

PNS ■ GURUGRAM, HARYANA

Electric vehicles are surging ahead driven by breakthroughs in battery technology—an evolution that companies like VinFast are leveraging to push the industry forward.

It's easy to think of electric vehicles as a modern innovation, but over a century ago, they dominated the streets. In 1900, lead-acid batteries provided a range of up to 100 miles, which was quite remarkable at the time. As roads improved and vehicles became faster though, these heavy, low-energy-density batteries struggled to keep up. Internal combustion engines took over, and EVs faded into history.

Fast forward to 1996. An American manufacturer launched an all-electric car that relied on the same lead-acid technology from a hundred years before. Its second generation, also equipped with nickel-metal hydride (NiMH) batteries, failed to compete with gasoline-powered vehicles. The problem? Energy density. These batteries simply couldn't store enough power to make EVs practical for daily use.



Then, in 1998, A Japanese manufacturer introduced an EV with a lithium-ion battery. It didn't make headlines, but in hindsight, it marked a turning point. Lithium-ion technology could store up to three times more energy than lead-acid batteries and about twice as much as NiMH. A decade later, the world finally took notice.

However, "lithium-ion" is not a single technology but an umbrella term for several distinct chemistries. Most rely on a graphite anode, but the real advancements come from the cathode.

Early lithium-ion batteries combined lithium with nickel, cobalt, or manganese. Over time, manufacturers fine-tuned these blends to balance energy density, safety, and cost. One thing has remained consistent: the industry has been reducing cobalt content, which is both expensive and ethically controversial, in favor of high-nickel formulations.

Another chemistry, lithium iron phosphate (LFP), has taken off for its affordability and safety. The trade-off? Slightly less energy storage. Yet, by 2024, LFP and nickel-manganese-cobalt (NMC) batteries are expected to power 94% of light electric vehicles worldwide, according to S&P Global Mobility.

The improvements aren't just on paper. A recent study by Geotab found that EV batteries now degrade at just 1.8% per year, down from 2.3% in 2019. At this rate, batteries could last over 20 years—far exceeding concerns about longevity.

SUNNY KAUSHAL DROPS DEBUT RAP TRACK *MID AIR FREEVERSE*



Actor Sunny Kaushal has ventured into the world of music with the release of his debut urban Punjabi rap track, *Mid Air Freeverse*. The actor-turned-rapper shared that the song is especially close to his heart, as he has poured his emotions and creativity into every line. Speaking about his rap song, Sunny stated, "It's a super fun track, and I've poured my heart into it. I genuinely had a great time creating it and I really hope fans and listeners enjoy it just as much while listening."

Sunny Kaushal brought his vibrant persona to the forefront with his latest rap track, *Mid Air Freeverse*, created in collaboration with Mass Appeal. The *Shiddat* actor stepped into the spotlight not just as a performer but also as a lyricist and vocalist on this high-energy number. Produced by UpsideDown and ICONYK, the track stands out for highlighting Sunny's Punjabi roots, which shine through in both its style and spirit.

In addition to the powerful audio, the visuals of the track present Sunny Kaushal in a striking look, sporting a sleek black suit, a well-groomed beard, and timeless sunglasses that perfectly match the song's edgy vibe. However, *Mid Air Freeverse* also reveals a surprising, carefree side of Sunny that fans haven't seen before. Just a day prior to the release, he offered a sneak peek with the teaser shared on his Instagram. Sharing the video on Instagram, the actor wrote, "Suited and booted but you ain't ready for this *Mid Air Freeverse* out on all platforms."

Sunny Kaushal, the younger sibling of Bollywood actor Vicky Kaushal, began his journey in the film industry behind the camera, working as an assistant director on films like *My Friend Pinto* and *Gunday*. He stepped into the spotlight with his acting debut in the 2016 comedy-drama "Sunshine Music Tours and Travels," but it was his role in the sports biopic *Gold* that brought him broader recognition. Since then, Sunny has showcased his talent in projects like the web series *The Forgotten Army – Azaadi Ke Liye* and films including *Shiddat*, *Chor Nikal Ke Bhaga* and *Phir Aayi Hasseen Dillruba*.

Aamir Khan wasn't supposed to star in *Sitaare Zameen Par* — here's what changed



After taking a long hiatus following the underwhelming response to *Laal Singh Chaddha*, Bollywood star Aamir Khan is stepping back into the spotlight with his upcoming film *Sitaare Zameen Par*. Speaking candidly at the Bollywood Hungama Style Icons Summit & Awards 2025, Aamir opened up about his journey of turning down, and eventually reclaiming, the lead role in the film.

The actor revealed that director R. S. Prasanna and he had been planning *Sitaare Zameen Par* well before the pandemic. However, when COVID-19 hit, Aamir decided to pause his acting career to prioritize family time. "I told Prasanna that I needed a break," Aamir shared, adding that his emotional burnout, especially after *Laal Singh Chaddha*, pushed him into a low phase.

Initially, Aamir stepped away from starring in the project and chose only to produce it. At that point, the team had locked in Farhan Akhtar for the Hindi version and Sivakarthikeyan for the Tamil version. Both actors were enthusiastic about the script, and preparations were underway.

But something changed. "I always sit with the writer and director before prep to go through the script. And from the very first day of reading it, I kept wondering—why am I not doing this film?" Aamir confessed. The question kept returning until he finally told the writer Divya and director Prasanna, "I love this script, and I want to do it."

Aware that the cast had already been finalised, Aamir expressed hesitation. But Prasanna had no doubts. "He told me, 'I'm from Chennai. We take bullets that have already been fired and put them back into the gun!'" Aamir laughed. Prasanna's unwavering belief in Aamir—and the fact that he'd waited four years—led him to welcome the actor back into the lead role.

Out of courtesy, Aamir called both Farhan and Sivakarthikeyan to personally apologise. Though disappointed, they understood the situation. "They were gracious about it," Aamir said.

Now, with *Sitaare Zameen Par* officially marking his comeback, Aamir Khan seems recharged—emotionally invested and creatively inspired. His return, after grappling with failure and self-doubt, offers not just a new film but a deeply personal redemption arc.

'A very new genre for me': Rajkummar Rao on his upcoming film *Maalik*



After winning hearts with *Bhool Chuk Maaf*, Rajkummar Rao is ready to take audiences by surprise once again—this time in a completely new light. The versatile actor is gearing up for the release of his upcoming film *Maalik*, a project he describes as a significant turning point in his career.

In a latest interview, Rajkummar opened up about his excitement for the film and the opportunity to portray a character that is both physically intense and emotionally complex. Collaborating with director Pulkit, he said, has been "one of the most exciting experiences" of his professional journey. The teaser of *Maalik* was recently unveiled, receiving an overwhelmingly positive response online. The film is officially set to hit theatres on July 11.

"I'm absolutely thrilled about *Maalik*," said Rajkummar. "It's a completely new genre for me—something I've never attempted before. That alone makes it a very exciting project."

Over the years, Rajkummar has built a reputation for seamlessly slipping into a range of roles—from the haunting realism of *Shahid* and Trapped, to the charming simplicity of *Bareilly Ki Barfi*. Yet *Maalik*, he admits, challenged him in new and unexpected ways.

Describing the experience, he shared, "I had a great time making this film. Playing this character was a fun and fulfilling experience for me."

On the role itself, he added, "*Maalik* is a raw, tough guy—strong in every sense, both emotionally and physically. Portraying that kind of layered intensity was an incredible journey."

Rajkummar didn't hold back his admiration for director Pulkit, calling him "a phenomenal maker." "He strikes the perfect balance between authenticity and commercial appeal," the actor explained. "It's exactly the kind of cinema I love to watch myself."

Dino Morea under ED scanner in ₹65 crore Mithi river desilting scam



In a major development in the Rs 65 crore Mithi River desilting scam, Bollywood actor Dino Morea found himself under the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) scrutiny on Friday. A team of ED officials carried out an extensive search at his luxurious Bandra West villa early in the morning, as part of a wider probe into alleged money laundering associated with the civic scam. According to sources, investigators seized mobile phones and restricted the movement of those present at the residence during the search operation, which spanned across 15 locations in Mumbai and Kerala. The focus of the probe: suspected financial links and communication between Morea and one of the main accused in the case, Ketan Kadam.

Officials confirmed that Dino Morea's phone number surfaced during the analysis of call data records related to the accused. He was earlier summoned and questioned by Mumbai Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) on May 26, where he was asked to explain his possible association with Kadam—one of the 13 individuals booked so far in connection to the scam. The desilting scam, which rocked the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), allegedly involved the release of large sums of money based on forged documents and nonexistent work.

Investigations suggest that contractors, in collusion with certain BMC officials, generated fake bills and fake Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) for dumping desilted material—most of which, as per findings, was never actually removed from the river. Deputy Commissioner of Police (EOW) Sangramsingh Nishandar confirmed that an FIR was filed at the Azad Maidan Police Station after preliminary findings indicated serious irregularities. "In many cases, landowners whose names appeared on MoUs denied signing any such documents. In some instances, even the land or landowners mentioned simply did not exist," he stated.

The case names a wide array of suspects, including five private contractors and three BMC officials. Notable firms being investigated include Acute Design, Kailash Construction, N.A. Construction, Nikhil Construction, and J.R.S Infrastructure—companies accused of submitting fake MoUs to the civic body. Civic officials booked include Prashant Ramugade (Assistant Engineer, Rainwater Drainage), Deputy Chief Engineer Ganesh Bendre, and others. Private individuals named in the FIR include Ketan Kadam (Vodar India LLP), Jay Joshi (Virgo Specialities Pvt Ltd), contractor Bhupendra Purohit, Deepak Mohan, and Kishore Menon. Another company under scrutiny is Matprop, which allegedly manipulated terms of the desilting contract during a site visit in February 2020 with help from BMC insiders.

The scam came under the spotlight after BJP leaders and Members of Legislative Council (MLCs) Pravin Darekar and Prasad Lad raised the issue in the Maharashtra Assembly's monsoon session. Their concerns prompted the formation of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the matter.

The Rs. 65 crore desilting contract is a part of the larger ?1,100 crore Mithi River beautification and flood management initiative. The failure of the desilting effort is believed to have contributed to frequent flooding along the river's banks during Mumbai's monsoon.

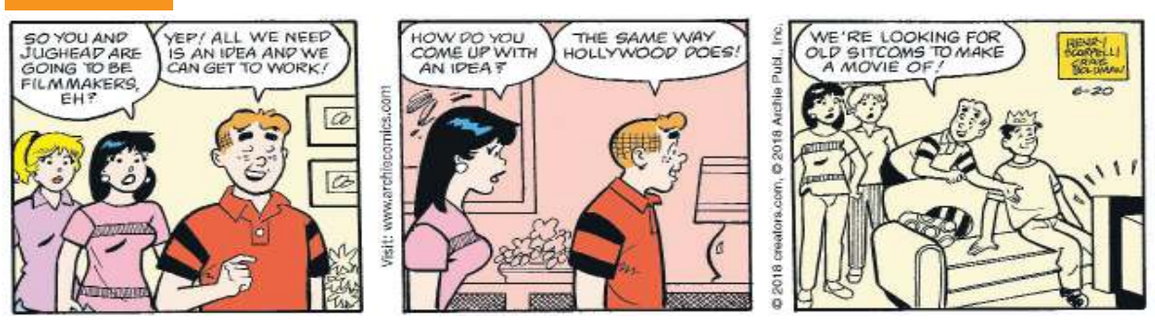
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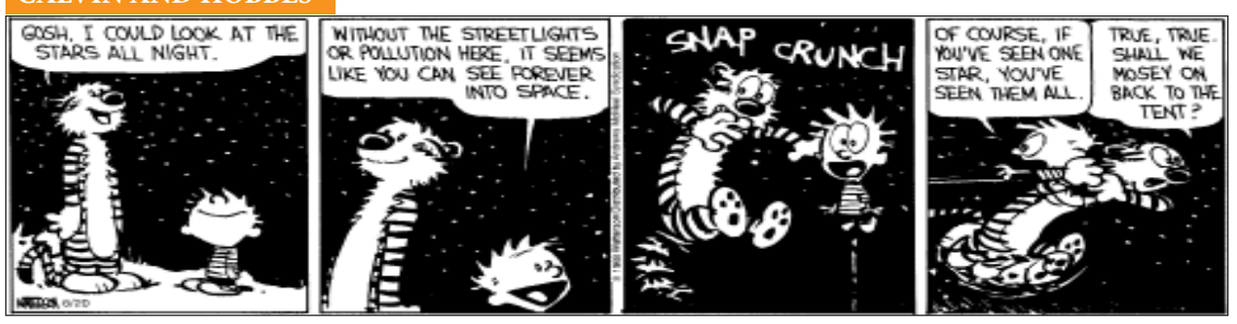
Bollywood actress Raveena Tandon was honoured by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis for her dedication to social and environmental causes. The felicitation took place on the occasion of World Environment Day, recognising her consistent efforts towards environmental conservation and animal welfare. Sharing her gratitude on Instagram, Raveena expressed her joy at receiving the honour from the Chief Minister and highlighted a heartwarming moment from the day—one of her rescued baby kittens found a home, thanks to PETA India.

FUN

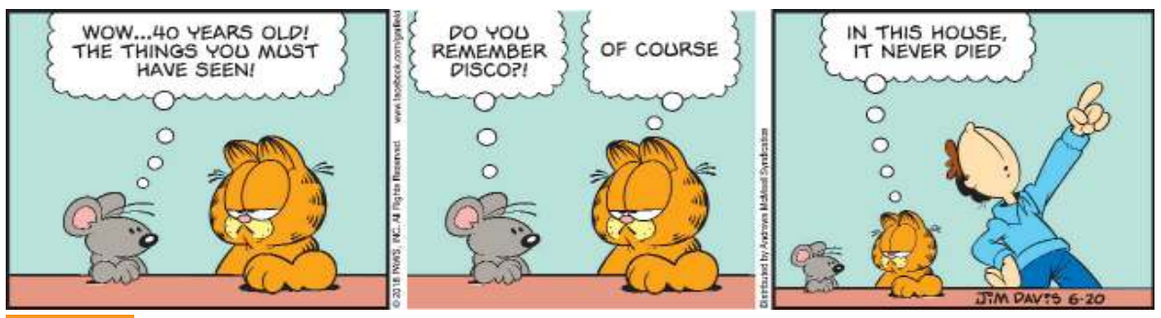
ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



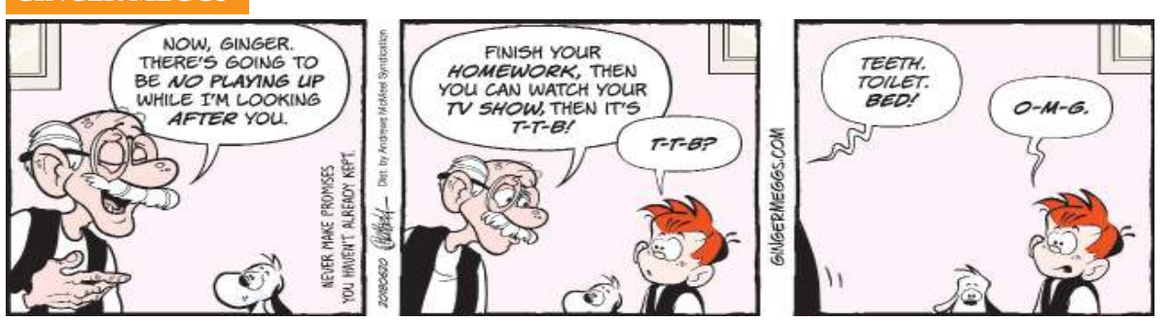
SPEED BUMP



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

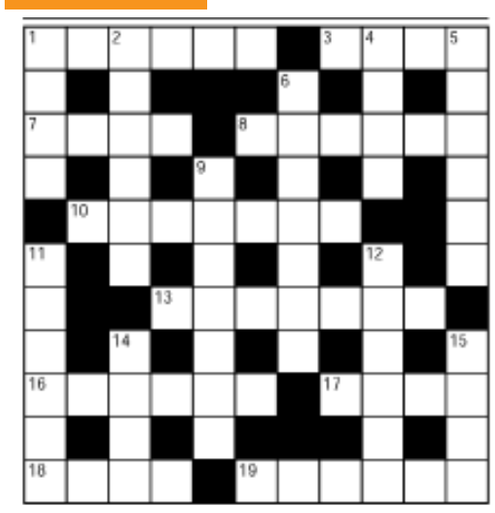
Yesterday's solution

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

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 Pepper might make you do this
3 Use needles and wool to make something
7 Quick
8 Spread this on bread
10 Rich
13 Injured
16 Repaired
17 Factual
18 Utters
19 A weight to stop a boat drifting
4 A short letter
5 Wearying
6 Shoving
9 Permitted
11 Postage stickers
12 Look carefully for
14 Jealousy
15 Expensive

DOWN

1 Not in danger
2 Less difficult

SOLUTION

		N	E	I	G	H	B	O	U	R				
			M		I		R		N					
W	H	A	R	F			A	C	T	O	R			
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SATURDAY JUNE 7, 2025

Chhal Kapat: No big surprises, just steady suspense

TEJAL SINHA
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PLOT

Set in a small town in Madhya Pradesh, *Chhal Kapat – The Deception* follows the sudden death of Shalu (Yahhve Sharma), a popular social media influencer, during a destination engagement. Initially assumed to be a suicide, the incident soon draws suspicion. SP Devika Rathod (Shriya Pilgaonkar), newly appointed in Burhanpur, is called to the scene and begins a methodical investigation. The haveli, where the incident occurred, becomes a closed circle of suspects—each with secrets, motives, and emotional baggage. As the investigation progresses, the layers of each character begin to unravel, revealing that the bonds of friendship may not be as pure as they seemed.

HIGHLIGHTS

The series thrives on its old-school whodunit structure—complete with red herrings, hidden pasts, and timed revelations. What makes it engaging is its compact storytelling; with episodes running around 20 minutes each, the show wastes little time in moving the plot forward. There's a gradual build-up of tension that holds attention, and the confined setting of the haveli adds to the claustrophobic intensity. The mystery plays out like a game of psychological chess, where the viewers, like the protagonist, are forced to question every character's intentions. It also integrates a domestic abuse subplot subtly, giving a social context to the psychological stakes.

DRAWBACKS

Despite its watchability, *Chhal Kapat* doesn't offer anything particularly novel. The writing sticks too close to genre tropes and avoids narrative risks that could have made the mystery more dynamic. The subplots, especially SP Devika's troubled backstory hinted through flashbacks, remain underdeveloped. Some investigative breakthroughs—like blood reports or financial trails—come into play too late, reducing their narrative impact. Small technical oversights (such as an IPS officer being called an "inspector") also affect the credibility of the show. A more layered approach or earlier integration of clues could have elevated the storytelling.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The series makes good use of its location. The old haveli with its creaky corridors and rustic charm creates an eerie yet grounded atmosphere that suits the narrative. The cinematography is tight and functional, often focusing on facial expressions to amplify suspense. The pacing is sharp thanks to the short episode lengths, though this occasionally leaves little room for deeper character exploration. The background score is minimal but well-timed, helping build mood without overwhelming scenes. Directionally, the show plays it safe, sticking to a linear format and relying on genre familiarity rather than innovation.

PERFORMANCES

Shriya Pilgaonkar is the standout performer as SP Devika Rathod. Her composed, no-nonsense demeanor anchors the show and lends credibility to the investigative arc. She effectively balances strength with restraint, giving her character authority and depth. Kamya Ahlawat, Tuhina Das, Ragini Dwivedi and Yahhve Sharma, who play the group of friends, perform adequately but aren't given enough emotional range to make a lasting impression. Interestingly, it's the male characters—particularly Anuj Sachdeva as the politically connected Vikram—who add to the simmering tension, playing their parts with measured ambiguity.

VERDICT

Chhal Kapat – The Deception doesn't break new ground, but it doesn't need to. It functions well as a quick, tightly-packaged murder mystery that leans on classic storytelling devices. While it lacks bold twists or standout writing, the series benefits from strong pacing and a committed lead performance. It's a decent pick for viewers who enjoy traditional whodunits that deliver closure without demanding too much emotional investment.

BEYOND MEGAWATTS

How leadership in renewable energy is shaping India's economic future

India's progress in renewable energy showcases a blend of a purposeful approach and a sustained focus on planning. The shift is not just about producing clean power; it represents a vital step towards long-term self-reliance. Being one of the most rapidly growing economies and needing new sources of energy, India's leadership in renewables is shaping global perceptions of the country as both responsible and economically forward-thinking. The commitment to 'powering a cleaner future, sustainably and equitably' is already shaping a new era for the nation.

STRATEGIC POLICY: UNDERPINNING SELF-RELIANCE AND GREEN GROWTH

India's renewable energy transformation is no coincidence—it's the result of bold targets and well-executed plans. The government provides direction by setting milestones, such as a target of 500 GWof non-fossil fuel-based power generation capacity by 2030. Initiatives such as the National Solar Mission, the Production Linked Incentives (PLI), the aspirations outlined in the National Green Hydrogen Mission, and the forthcoming Green Hydrogen Policy are essential for transforming India into a global renewable energy hub. Notably, the National Solar Mission has helped propel India into the ranks of the world's top five solar energy producers. The aim of the PLI schemes is to create a dependent integrated domestic manufacturing value chain for advanced battery storage and high-efficiency solar modules, thus enabling lower imports and increased energy security. India has an installed renewable energy capacity (including large hydro) of around 232 GW as of early 2025, which is expected to increase over the next decade and is threefold from the past decade. These policies pave the way for incoming foreign investment, increase energy security, decrease trade deficits on fossil fuel imports and widen prospects of green technology exports.

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND THE GROWTH OF A SKILLED JOB MARKET

Leadership in the renewable energy sphere is a potent catalyst for diversifying India's economic foundations. The expanding solar, wind, biomass and emerging green hydrogen sectors are creating a substantial wave of employment across manufacturing, installation, operations, maintenance and R&D. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), India's renewable energy sector employed over sixteen million people in 2023, a figure projected to expand significantly by 2030. This job creation is particularly impactful in rural and semi-urban areas, offering sustainable livelihoods, fostering skill development and empowering local communities. Initiatives focusing on upskilling the workforce are crucial, ensuring human capital meets the demands of this technologically advancing sector. Bringing green jobs closer to home is helping reduce the need for outward migration and encouraging regional stability. This widespread employment generation helps reduce urban migration pressures and promotes balanced regional economic development.

CATALYSING NEXT-GENERATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENCOURAGING INDIGENOUS INNOVATION

The nationwide deployment of large-scale renewable energy projects necessitates ambitious infrastructural undertakings. This includes the development of expansive solar parks, resilient transmission networks and the critical deployment of advanced energy storage solutions to ensure grid stability. India's leadership is visibly investing in modernising its national grid, implementing smart meters, and expanding its EV charging infrastructure. A landmark initiative is the Green Energy Corridors project, designed to integrate vast renewable power seamlessly into the national grid, thereby catalysing development in remote regions. Furthermore, there is a significant push towards innovation in energy storage, evidenced by declining tariffs in Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) tenders and exploration of other solutions like pumped hydro. This infrastructural push, coupled with a growing R&D ecosystem, stimulates growth in construction, manufacturing and allied service sectors, fostering a cycle of innovation and sustainable progress. Such initiatives not only improve grid resilience but also unlock new economic opportunities across sectors.

PRIVATE SECTOR DYNAMISM AND A



THRIVING STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

India's enabling policy environment and long-term commitment to renewables have cultivated fertile ground for private enterprises and innovative startups. The scale of India's renewable ambitions presents an attractive market, drawing significant domestic and international private capital. This capital inflow is fueling cutting-edge innovations, making India a hub for next-generation renewable technologies. From pioneers in advanced solar panel technology to developers of AI-driven grid management platforms, a new generation of companies is flourishing. These entities are contributing massively to domestic capacity addition and are attracting substantial foreign direct investment (FDI). The renewable energy sector, for instance, attracted nearly 8% of India's total FDI inflows in FY25, a significant leap from approximately 1% in FY21, with FDI in the first three quarters of FY25 reaching USD 3.4 billion. This vibrant ecosystem, supported by venture capital, is a testament to the nation's entrepreneurial spirit and its potential to become a hub for green technology innovation.

ELEVATING GLOBAL STATURE AND WIELDING GREEN DIPLOMACY

India's proactive stance and tangible achievements in renewable energy significantly enhance its stature on the global stage. Its visionary role in co-founding the International Solar Alliance (ISA) positions it as a pivotal leader in fostering solar energy cooperation worldwide, particularly among developing nations. Its leadership extends beyond borders, influencing international energy policy and climate action through strategic diplomacy. The ISA aims to mobilise over USD 1 trillion in solar investments by 2030. India's leadership also extends to active participation in global platforms such as the G20 and COP, where it champions climate justice, technology transfer, and affordable financing for clean energy transitions. This engagement in green diplomacy strengthens India's geopolitical leverage and promotes collaborative solutions for shared global challenges, attracting vital international climate finance.

FORGING LONG-TERM ECONOMIC RESILIENCE AND HOLISTIC SUSTAINABILITY

The shift toward domestic renewable energy reduces exposure to international fuel markets, promoting both sustainability and economic sovereignty. This stepwise shift toward renewable energies is vital for instilling stability in the macroeconomics of India for years to come. An increase in renewable sources of energy allows a country's economy to safeguard itself from the rampant price fluctuations in fossil fuels at a global level. This process improves energy independence, resulting in a more stable balance of payments. Furthermore, the shift to clean sources of energy supports sustainable development by fostering a healthier environment and driving economic growth. In addition to these co-benefits, there are other factors that significantly enhance public health spending, such as improved air quality and reduced healthcare costs. To meetclimate targets and create environmentally self-sufficient resources, it is imperative for India to continually evolve its renewable infrastructure targets with reliability and ambition.

All in all, India's role in advancing renewables is solely focused on strengthening the economy, rather than portraying itself as an eco-warrior. Although challenges remain, the direction of current initiatives is positive. India is at the forefront of a clean energy revolution that promises to transform its industries, enhance its international reputation, create new employment opportunities and modernise public operations. Developing a comprehensive clean energy policy nationwide will empower India to take a leading role in the global energy landscape. Sustaining these commitments will propel India to the top of the clean energy dominators' chart.

(The author, Narayan Kumar, is the CEO of Kshema Power.)

You're not alone! Coping with hair loss after childbirth



Postpartum hair loss is a common experience for many women after giving birth, yet it often comes as an unexpected and distressing surprise. During pregnancy, the body undergoes a whirlwind of hormonal changes that not only support the development of the baby but also impact the mother's entire physiological system, including her hair growth cycle. Many women notice that their hair becomes thicker, shinier, and fuller during pregnancy. This is primarily due to elevated levels of estrogen, which prolong the growth phase of hair (known as the anagen phase) and reduce hair shedding. However, after delivery, as hormone levels rapidly return to their pre-pregnancy state, particularly estrogen, a large number of hair follicles abruptly enter the shedding phase (telogen phase). This condition, known as telogen effluvium, is responsible for the sudden and noticeable hair loss that can occur in the months following childbirth.

Typically, postpartum hair loss begins around two to four months after delivery and may peak around the four to five-month mark. Some women notice only a slight increase in shedding, while others may experience clumps of hair falling out during brushing or showering, leading to visible thinning around the temples, hairline, or parting. While it can be alarming, this type of hair loss is usually temporary. Most women will see significant improvement by the time their baby reaches one year of age, as their hair cycle gradually returns to normal. However, the emotional impact can be significant, especially when combined with the physical and psychological adjustments that come with caring for a newborn.

Coping with postpartum hair loss begins with understanding that it is a natural, temporary response to hormonal shifts rather than a sign of a more serious medical issue. However, certain factors such as stress, nutritional deficiencies (especially iron, zinc, vitamin D and biotin), thyroid imbalances, and a lack of sleep can worsen hair shedding or delay recovery. Therefore, ensuring proper nutrition and self-care is essential. A balanced diet rich in protein, fruits, vegetables and healthy fats supports hair health. In some cases, supplements may be recommended, but it is always best to consult a healthcare provider before beginning any new supplement regimen, particularly during breastfeeding.

Gentle hair care practices can also help manage postpartum shedding. Avoiding tight hairstyles like ponytails or buns, which can cause tension on already fragile hair, is advisable. Using a wide-toothed comb, minimizing the use of heat-styling tools, and choosing sulfate-free, gentle shampoos and conditioners can reduce breakage. Some women find benefit from scalp massages, which may stimulate blood circulation to the hair follicles and promote growth. Additionally, topical treatments like minoxidil are sometimes used to encourage hair regrowth, though they should only be considered under medical guidance during postpartum and breastfeeding.

Equally important is the psychological aspect of dealing with postpartum hair loss. The postpartum period is already filled with changes and challenges, and added concerns about physical appearance can affect self-esteem. It's helpful to talk openly about these changes, whether with a partner, friends, or support groups, as many new mothers share similar experiences. Wearing hair accessories, trying different hairstyles, or even opting for a shorter haircut can help manage the aesthetic changes and boost confidence during this phase. In cases where hair loss seems excessive or prolonged beyond one year postpartum, it's important to consult a healthcare provider or dermatologist to rule out underlying conditions such as postpartum thyroiditis or chronic telogen effluvium.

Postpartum hair loss is a temporary but very real experience for many new mothers. Understanding the causes and knowing that it is a normal part of the postpartum journey can provide reassurance. With proper nutrition, gentle hair care, and emotional support, most women can navigate this period with confidence and see their hair return to its pre-pregnancy fullness over time. As with many aspects of motherhood, patience and self-compassion play a vital role in coping and recovery.

(The author, Dr. Tejashri Shrotri, is a Senior Consultant (Obstetrics & Gynecology), at Apollo Cradle & Children's Hospital - Chirag Enclave, New Delhi.)

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Piyush Chawla announces retirement from cricket



After more than two decades on the field, the time has come to bid adieu to the beautiful game: Chawla

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Veteran leg-spinner Piyush Chawla, who was part of India's two World Cup-winning campaigns, on Friday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket after a career spanning more than two decades to undertake a "new journey" that he did not specify.

The 36-year-old made the announcement via an Instagram post. "After more than two decades on the field, the time has come to bid adieu to the beautiful game," Chawla wrote. "Though I step away from the crease, cricket will always live within me. I now look forward to embarking on a new journey, carrying with me the spirit and lessons of this beautiful game," he said. Chawla was a member of India's T20 and ODI World Cup-winning squads in 2007 and 2011 respectively. He represented India in three Tests, 25 ODIs, and seven T20Is, taking 43 wickets across the three formats of the game.

"From representing India at the highest level to being part of the victorious 2007 T20 World Cup and 2011 ODI World Cup squads, every moment in this incredible journey has been nothing short of a blessing. These memories will forever remain etched in my heart," Chawla said in the post. He thanked his coaches, teams and IPL franchises for playing a part in shaping his career, and described his time in the popular T20 league as "a special chapter in my career." "A heartfelt thank you to the IPL franchises who placed their trust in me — Punjab Kings, Kolkata Knight Riders, Chennai Super Kings, and Mumbai Indians.

"The Indian Premier League has been a truly special chapter in my career, and I have cherished every moment playing in it. I owe my deepest gratitude to my coaches — Shri KK Gautam and Late Shri Pankaj Saraswat-for nurturing and shaping me into the cricketer I became," he said.

"Today is a deeply emotional day for me as I officially announce my retirement from all forms of international and domestic cricket," he added.

The leg-spinner was a part of KKR's 2014 IPL-winning team and hit the winning runs for the Gautam Gambhir-led side in the summit clash against the Punjab Kings in Bengaluru. "A special mention to my late father, whose belief in me lit the path I walked. Without him, this journey would never have been possible," he stated.

Chawla made his competitive cricket debut at 15, and also represented India Under-19 and Uttar Pradesh Under-22 sides. He burst onto the scene when he bowled Sachin Tendulkar with a googly in the Challenger Series 2005-06, and made his his first-class debut at 17.

Chawla has over 1000 wickets across formats in domestic cricket.

Meetings would all be about how to dismiss Pujara: Rohit



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

How to dismiss Cheteshwar Pujara? It was the million dollar question Rohit Sharma and his Mumbai teammates discussed the most in a huddle during their junior cricket days, as they knew the Saurashtra batter could ground them to the dust over two or three days of persistent batting.

Rohit reminisced that the wicket of Pujara was often the difference between a victory or defeat for his team in age-group matches, the early signs of the doughty batter who made 7,195 runs at 43.60 with 19 tons and 35 fifties from 103 Tests.

"I still remember, team meetings only revolved around him (on) how to get him out, and if we don't get him out, probably we'd lose the game," Rohit said at the launch of Pujara's wife Puja's book 'The Diary of a Cricketer's Wife' here on Thursday.

The former India skipper quipped that his looks would change so much after playing against Pujara under the sun that even his mother would fret a bit.

"All I remember is that when I used to go to the ground, when I was 14-years-old, and when I came back in the evening, the colour of my face would be completely different," he said.

"Because he used to bat all day and we used to field in the sun for (even) 2-3 days. I still remember that my mother asked me a couple of times that when you go to play from home, you look different and when you come home, after a week or 10 days, you look different.

"I would say, 'mom, what do I do? There's a batsman by the name of Cheteshwar Pujara. He's been batting for three days'... So that is the first impression that we had of him," Rohit added.

Rohit credited Pujara for playing more than 100 Tests after suffering ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) injuries to both his knees right at the start of his career.

"(It was) such a big injury (and) such a bad injury. Both his ACL were gone. For any cricketer, leave alone if you are not an athlete or not playing any sport, for a sportsman it's very, very tough if you lose both your ACL," he said.

"We used to tease him about his running technique and all that but he managed to play more than 100 Test matches for India after that, a lot of credit goes to him for how he managed it. Great amount of dedication and passion he had to play the sport," Rohit said.

Pujara rated the Border-Gavaskar Trophy at home against Australia in 2016-17 as the toughest series he was involved in his career.

"I can mention one incident, in 2017, when India was bowled out for 200 odd runs against Australia, that was one of the toughest Test series I've been part of," Pujara said.

"This was the second Test match at Bangalore, and the team didn't do well in the first innings, and we were again in a spot of bother in the second innings, but I spoke to Anil (Kumble) bhai about how to tackle Nathan Lyon, and he came up with a technical suggestion." On his part, the former India coach Kumble said he was only trying to second-guess the bowler.

"Because I was second guessing the bowler, and I got it right after the 115 (read 132) Test matches, so it was all about guess work," Kumble said.

I am still heavily committed to DC, says Mitchell Starc

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Mitchell Starc is still "heavily committed" to his Indian Premier League team Delhi Capitals but only "time will tell the repercussions" after he decided not to return after the resumption of the tournament unlike some of his other Australian colleagues.

Starc decided against returning to India when IPL resumed on May 17 following a 10-day break after country's armed forces executed Operation Sindoor, a military operation in response to Pakistan-backed terrorists killing 26 civilians in Pahalgam. Starc, who was a vital cog in the Capitals' bowling line-up, took 14 wickets in 11 matches, featured in the contest against Punjab Kings in Dharamsala on May 8 when lights abruptly went off in the stadium and the game was abandoned.

> **Time will tell with repercussions or how it looks with guys that didn't return. But I've had my questions and concerns leading into that game**
> — MITCHELL STARC, CRICKETER

Starc's wife and Australia Women's captain Alyssa Healy was also attending the game when the game was stopped and the stadium was urgently evacuated due to Dharamsala's proximity with the international border.

The 35-year-old Starc said he had his doubts heading into that IPL game between Delhi Capitals and Punjab Kings given the tensions.

"I'm comfortable with my decision and how I felt about the whole situation and how it was handled," Starc was quoted as saying by The Age.

"That's why I made my decision post-that, and my focus changed to red-ball cricket for about a week prior to coming over here (the UK)."

"Time will tell with repercussions or how it looks with guys that didn't return. But I've had my questions and concerns leading into that game, and obviously we saw what happened, which played a part in my decision," he said.

Starc said for the same reasons he had decided not to travel to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy with the Australian team earlier this year.

"There was a little bit of that to my decision around the Champions Trophy (in Pakistan) and then once the tournament (IPL) was delayed, you start to think about guys' preparation for the Test match," he said, referring to Australia's World Test Championship final against South Africa to be played at Lord's from June 11.

Starc said things were "handled differently for different players and different teams" in Dharamsala.

Gukesh is tenacious defender but should not provoke struggle every time: Anand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Stavanger (Norway)

D Gukesh's tenacity in the face of setbacks is admirable but he shouldn't make it a habit to wait for mistakes from his opponents when faced with difficult situations in long-drawn-out games, feels his mentor and former world champion Viswanathan Anand.

The reigning world champion has pulled off wins against world number one Magnus Carlsen and world number four Arjun Erigaisi in the Norway Chess here, despite being in serious trouble, by provoking a struggle and forcing them to make mistakes.

World number two Hikaru Nakamura has expressed surprise at the Indian's style, saying he has been lucky to have survived Carlsen and Erigaisi being in a losing position for most part in both the showdowns.

"I feel he is a tenacious defender. People often give up and he just keeps on playing these totally lost positions, but not pointless ones. He plays the ones where he still has a little bit of counterplay and he finds resources to hang in there. And people get careless and fatigued," said Anand during an interaction on the sidelines of Norway Chess. "Is he doing it all the time? It's a couple of games in this time control (at Norway Chess). It's true here; this stuff is happening... I don't know. There are a lot of trends to unpack. There's also the fact that Hikaru was mentioning that it's very hard to find some interesting lines to play," added the five-time former world champion.

> **Both these games he played (against Carlsen and Erigaisi) extremely poorly. If that's a conscious decision to provoke a struggle, I would be alarmed**
> — VISWANATHAN ANAND, FORMER CHESS PLAYER

Gukesh has trained at the Westbridge Anand Academy set up by the 55-year-old chess maestro.

The 19-year-old prodigal talent has often stated that he wouldn't be where he is without his "Vishy sir".

And Anand said he does not want his ward to be a defensive player.

"Both these games he played (against Carlsen and Erigaisi were played) extremely poorly. If that's a conscious decision to provoke a struggle, I would be alarmed," said Anand.

"It tells me that he's an amazing fighter (and) at the same time, I would not be happy if he defended in this way."

Carlsen the best classical player

Anand has great admiration for five-time world champion Carlsen, saying he is still the best classical player in the game's history. The legendary Norwegian player has, of late, expressed his desire to move away from the long format to focus on Freestyle, Rapid and Blitz chess.

"He's done it (played classical chess) for quite a long time. And also it is natural (to move on). Let's be clear, if he stopped (playing classical chess), (and) these (Norway Chess games) were his last, he is still the best classical player in history," Anand said.

"I understand there are other contenders, but I think he probably pulls ahead because of many details. He's really put his stamp, especially very early, by keeping that quality all along, winning equal positions, snatching points out of the blue, he's done so much," he added.

However, Anand was clear that the game will find its new star when Carlsen leaves the scene.

Satwik-Chirag bow out of Indonesia Open

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jakarta



India's top men's doubles pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty bowed out of the Indonesia Open Super 1000 tournament after losing to Malaysia's Man Wei Chong and Tee Kai Wun in the quarterfinals here on Friday.

The former world number one Indian duo, who won the title in 2023, went down 19-21, 16-21 in a 43-minute contest against the flat-hitting Malaysian pair, who notched up their first win over the Indians in five meetings.

Satwik-Chirag's loss ended the Indian challenge in the competition.

The Indians looked rusty as they struggled with their serve and return against Man and Wee, who won the Malaysia Masters last month and Indonesia Masters in January.

The Indians also lacked the discipline in defence and anticipation and were often put in uncomfortable positions and rushed errors throughout the match by the Malaysians.

Satwik sent a couple into the net, allowing the Malaysians to edge ahead 9-7. They went into the mid-game interval leading 11-9.

Satwik-Chirag levelled at 11-all with aggressive flat exchanges, but Man and Tee restored a 15-12 cushion. The Indians clawed back to 17-17 after the Malaysians hit the net twice, but couldn't capitalise.

A quick return from Tee took the score to 19-17 before Chirag pounced on a loose net shot. However, Satwik faltered at the net again to hand the Malaysians game point, which they converted.

Switching sides, the Indians looked unsettled and trailed 3-7 early in the second game. The Malaysians used the flat trajectory and drift to their advantage, and a sharp smash from Tee widened the gap to 15-9. Despite being 13-17 down, the Indians showed late resistance. A run of attacking points brought them back to 16-18, including a couple of high-quality flat smashes.

But Man's brilliance at the net and Tee's curling floater at 20-16 sealed four match points and they sealed the contest without further delay to enter the semifinals.

Albania and Serbia face off in a politically charged World Cup qualifier

Tirana (Albania), Jun 6 (AP) The roar of the crowd or the thrill of the game are hallmarks of international soccer. But when Albania and Serbia meet Saturday in a 2026 World Cup qualifier, the energy will be different.

Brazil draws 0-0 with Ecuador in World Cup qualifying

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Sao Paulo



Brazil held Ecuador to a 0-0 draw Thursday in a South American World Cup qualifying game that marked Carlo Ancelotti's debut as national team coach.

The match in Guayaquil offered few scoring opportunities for either team, and featured once again a Brazilian lineup that struggled to be creative.

Ecuador edged closer to one of the direct World Cup spots by maintaining second place in the round robin competition with 24 points. Brazil is in fourth place with 22 points. The top six teams in South America qualify automatically for the World Cup next year in the United States, Canada and Mexico. World Cup champion Argentina, which has already secured its place at the 2026 global tournament, beat 10th-place Chile 1-0. Lionel Messi went on as a second-half substitute in his first run for the national team in seven months. Argentina has 34 points, 10 clear of Ecuador.

Paraguay moved into third spot on 24 points after a 2-0 home win over Uruguay, which dropped to fifth. Matías Galarza scored the opener in the 13th minute and Julio Enciso added a second from the spot in the 81st.

Ancelotti's changesAnceIottti made a lot of lineup changes compared with his predecessor, Dorival Júnior, who was fired after the team's 4-0 defeat at Argentina. The result was a team that successfully blocked the hosts almost all of the match but also failed to be creative and aggressive in offense, a flaw also under Ancelotti's predecessors.

The 65-year-old Italian coach gave Vinicius Júnior Brazil's No. 10, brought veteran midfielder Casemiro and striker Richarlison back into the starting lineup, gave a debut to defender Alex and played teenager Estêvão on the left wing as a replacement to suspended Raphinha.

Brazil seemed comfortable defending against Ecuador, which is unbeaten in its last 14 home games. The best chance for Ancelotti's team came in the 22nd minute, when Vinicius shot from close range and was stopped by goalkeeper Gonzalo Valle.

Ancelotti predicted Brazil won't be as defense-minded next week when it hosts Paraguay in Sao Paulo.

"We will have more opportunities to control the match, have more mobility and intensity," Ancelotti told a post-match news conference. "This game was more complicated for the three (strikers). We needed more of an offensive game. But Ecuador defended well." "It was a very good match in the defensive stage — I saw the team doing well with the ball, with a more fluid game," Ancelotti added. "This was a good draw and we leave here satisfied, with confidence for the next match."

The 33-year-old Casemiro, who played his first match for Brazil in more than a year, was happy to return and play under a coach he enjoyed a lot of success with at Real Madrid. "Little by little we will grow," Casemiro said.

"We had a strong, solid defensive system tonight." Vinicius said Ancelotti "is yet to show his game plan" for Brazil.

"We will manage. The World Cup is right there and we need to be together to do well at the end of South American qualifying and World Cup preparations," the striker said.

Brazil can qualify for the World Cup with a win over Paraguay next week, as long as its cushion over the seventh-place team is larger than six points.

Argentina accounts for ChileMessi barely had to play for an Argentina lineup missing several regular starters in Santiago. Julián Álvarez scored the winning goal in the 16th minute. Messi didn't have clear opportunities to score in his brief appearance. "It was a beautiful goal. We had a great first half, and we waned a little in the second," Álvarez said. "But we did well."

French Open: Coco Gauff faces Aryna Sabalenka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

The biggest difference Coco Gauff sees between the player who lost her first Grand Slam final at the 2022 French Open at age 18, and the one who will play for the trophy again on Saturday at 21, this time against number oneAryna Sabalenka, is the way she views the importance of the occasion.

Three years ago at Roland-Garros, Gauff was making her debut on that sort of stage and with that sort of prize at stake. It felt like the outcome meant absolutely everything, a burden that was a lot at the time and made her nervous. Now, the number two-ranked Gauff says, she understands "how miniscule" the result Saturday is in the scheme of things.

"Everybody is dealing with way bigger things in life than losing a final," the American said after beating 361st-ranked French wild-card entry Loïs Boisson 6-1, 6-2 in the semifinals Thursday.

"I'm sure there are hundreds of players that would kill to win or lose a final, so just knowing that (makes) me realise how lucky and privileged I am to be in this position," Gauff said. "At first, I thought it would be the end of the world if I lost, and, you know, the sun still rose the next day. Regardless of the result, the sun will still rise." Here's another key difference: The Gauff of today is a Grand Slam champion. She won the 2023 US Open; her opponent in that final just so happened to be Sabalenka.

"I just remember kind of feeling," Gauff said, "like I was holding my breath to the match point."Their head-to-head series is tied 5-5 entering the first number one vs number two matchup in a French Open women's final since Serena Williams beat Maria Sharapova in 2023. Sabalenka beat Gauff in their most recent meeting, which came at the Madrid Open in May on the type of red clay used at Roland-Garros.

So Gauff is well aware of Sabalenka's many talents, which were on full display during a 7-6 (1), 4-6, 6-0 semifinal victory over three-time defending champion Iga Swiatek.

"She can come up with some big shots and big winners pretty much at all areas of the court," Gauff said about the 27-year-old from Belarus. "She's a fighter, as well. She's going to stay in the match regardless of the scoreline."

After getting pushed to a third set by Swiatek, who had won 26 matches in a row at the French Open, Sabalenka was pretty much perfect down the stretch.







Akhil Akkineni ties the knot in a private Hyderabad ceremony

Nagarjuna's younger son Akhil Akkineni tied the knot in the early morning of Friday. He started a new chapter in his life as he married his longtime girlfriend, Zainab Ravdjee, at a ceremony in Hyderabad. Both Akhil and Zainab have been in a relationship for the past three years and got engaged last year on November 26. On Friday, the wedding ceremony took place following traditional Hindu rituals. Many of Nagarjuna's close friends and relatives attended the wedding.

The wedding took place at Akkineni Nagarjuna's residence and some of Nagarjuna's close friends from the industry, including Chiranjeevi, Ram Charan and Prashanth Neel, were present for the wedding. The entire wedding ceremony was a low-key affair, as Nagarjuna is arranging a grand reception on June 8 at his Annapurna Studios. Many film and other celebrities are expected to attend the reception in a big way, says the source.

Some of the wedding pictures of Akhil Akkineni are now going viral on social media. Zainab hails from Delhi and she is a theatre artiste and a social influencer. Her father, Zulfi Ravdjee, is a prominent name in the construction industry.

Despite flaws, *Devika & Danny* offers a pleasant escape with Ritu Varma at the helm

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
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Devika & Danny is the latest web series streaming on JioHotstar. Ritu Varma plays the main lead, with Surya Vashistta and Shiva Kandukuri in other important roles. B Kishore of Sreekaram fame directs the series. This also marks Ritu Varma's OTT debut and here's a look at the story and how it unfolds.

STORY

Devika (Ritu Varma) is a music teacher in a school and a very down-to-earth individual. She gets engaged to Jaggu (Subbaraju), a highly possessive man who wants to control every aspect of Devika's life. Just when everything seems to be going smoothly, an astrologer predicts that a second person will enter Devika's life before her marriage. Soon, Danny (Surya Vashistta) enters her world and unexpected events begin to unfold. Devika, who lives in a quiet village, decides to take a bold step. What is that decision? Who exactly is Danny, and why does he appear only to Devika? Who is Subbu (Shiva Kandukuri) and how is he connected to Devika? Does she eventually marry Jaggu? What happens in the end?

ANALYSIS

Director Kishore, who earlier directed *Sreekaram*, has always shown a flair for clean storytelling with village backdrops. Though *Sreekaram* wasn't a big commercial hit, it revealed Kishore's sensibilities and his preference for rooted narratives. In *Devika & Danny*, he brings back the village aesthetic and once again delivers a clean, family-friendly show — a refreshing change from many of today's web series that rely heavily on abusive language and double entendres.

Kishore takes a simple story centered around Devika, a calm and reserved village teacher who finds her life disrupted after Danny enters the scene. The revelation of who Danny is and why he only appears to Devika comes at the end of the second episode. Despite Danny being a ghost, the series is far from a typical horror show. Instead, it focuses on how Devika, inspired by Danny's request, transforms from a timid woman into a courageous individual with a mission. The story is told in a pleasant manner without too many twists and turns.

The initial episodes feel a bit slow and even dull, but the narrative gains momentum from the second episode onward. However, Danny's flashback lacks emotional weight and fails to make a deep impact. Kovai Sarala's character, too, could have been written stronger. Characters like Soniya Singh and Mounika Reddy are underutilised and Harsha Chemudu's character feels unnecessary and forced. Though the story is predictable, the series picks up from the third episode and remains engaging. Most importantly, it remains clean and decently enjoyable throughout.

PERFORMANCE

When it comes to performances, Ritu Varma undoubtedly steals the show with her lively and natural portrayal of Devika. She fits perfectly into the role and brings charm and grace to the character. Her chemistry with Surya Vashistta and Shiva Kandukuri works well and feels genuine. As an OTT debut, this is a solid project for Ritu. Surya Vashistta, who plays Danny, is impressive and brings warmth to his role, especially in his scenes with Ritu. Shiva Kandukuri appears as Subbu in the fourth episode and justifies his part effectively. Subba Raju appears sporadically and brings in a few laughs. Kovai Sarala, often known for her loud characters, surprises here with a subdued performance, though her role lacks depth. Soniya Singh and Mounika Reddy do their parts well, though they are not given enough screen time or development. Goparaju Ramana, Shivannarayana, Rajitha, and other supporting actors deliver solid performances. Abhinayasri makes a return to the screen after a long time in this series.

TECHNICAL ASPECT

Technically, the series is top-notch, boasting high production values that are rare in many current web series, which often resemble daily soaps. Cinematographer Venkat C Dilip does a commendable job capturing the scenic village locations and natural beauty. Jay Krish's music enhances the overall mood and supports the storytelling effectively. The dialogues are well-written and sensible.

VERDICT

Devika & Danny is a decently made web series with a clean and engaging narrative by director B Kishore. While there are a few loopholes and underdeveloped portions, the show is watchable, thanks to its pleasant storytelling and strong production values. Ritu Varma, in her OTT debut, delivers a standout performance and carries the show on her shoulders.

Cast: Ritu Varma, Surya Vashistta, Shiva Kandukuri, Subba Raju, Kovai Sarala, Mounika Reddy, Shivannarayana, Rajitha, Soniya Singh and others

Music Director: Jay Krish

Cinematographer: Venkat C Dilip

Producer: Sudhakar Chaganti

Director: B Kishore

OTT Channel: JioHotstar

Rating: 3/5

SHINE TOM CHACKO INJURED IN ROAD ACCIDENT, FATHER DIES

Malayalam actor Shine Tom Chacko was injured, while his father, CP Chacko, died early Friday morning in a road accident in Tamil Nadu's Dharmapuri district. The actor was in the news a few months back related to a drug case. He acted in many Malayalam films and also made his debut in Telugu with the film *Dasara*. Post that, Shine acted in a few other Telugu films. The accident occurred near Parayur, close to Palacode, when the car carrying the actor's family reportedly collided with a truck on the highway. Shine Chacko's father, CP Chacko, succumbed to his injuries on the spot, according to the police. Shine Chacko, his mother and another person who were also travelling with the family were seriously injured and are currently undergoing treatment at a hospital.

According to some media reports, Shine Tom Chacko, along with his mother, brother and the driver, sustained injuries in the collision. All were promptly taken to the government hospital in Palakottai for medical treatment.

Shine Tom Chacko reportedly suffered a fracture. The Malayalam actor is known in Telugu for films like *Dasara, Daaku Maharaaj* and *Rangabali*.



Aamir Khan teams up with Lokesh Kanagaraj for a superhero film

Aamir Khan is all set to work with another South director in his next film. The actor earlier worked with Ram Gopal Varma and AR Murugadoss for the films *Rangeela* and *Ghajini* respectively, and has now joined hands with another talented director, Lokesh Kanagaraj. This was disclosed by the actor himself in a media interaction promoting his latest film *Sitaare Zameen Par*.

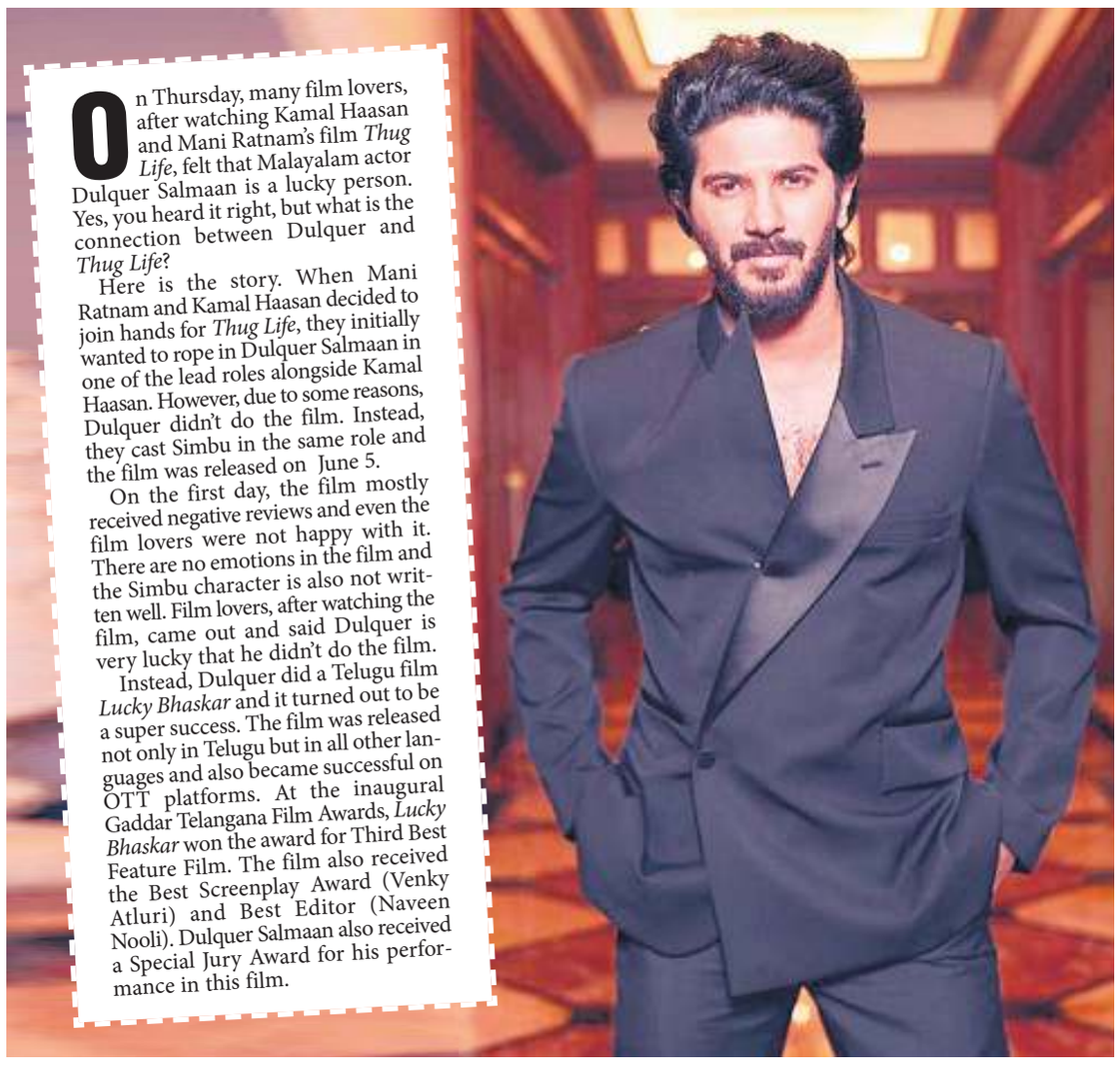
There are also reports that he is going to play a cameo in Lokesh and Rajinikanth's film *Coolie*, though it is still not confirmed. However, the actor is definitely doing a film with the director. It is said that this film is a superhero film. "Lokesh and I are working on a film in the superhero genre. It's a big-scale action film and will go on floors in the second half of 2026," said Aamir in the media interaction.

According to some reports, Lokesh initially wanted to rope in Suriya for the same superhero film, but because of various reasons, it got delayed. Now, Lokesh and Aamir Khan will collaborate for this superhero film, added the reports.

There are also reports that Aamir Khan would return as the alien in a sequel to his 2014 blockbuster *PK*. But the actor dismissed the rumors and said, "*PK 2* is a rumor. I don't know anything about it."

At present, Lokesh is working on the film *Coolie* that stars Rajinikanth in the lead, while Telugu actor Nagarjuna and Kannada actor Upendra are playing key roles in it.

Lucky Escape?: Dulquer Salmaan dodges bullet with *Thug Life* rejection



On Thursday, many film lovers, after watching Kamal Haasan and Mani Ratnam's film *Thug Life*, felt that Malayalam actor Dulquer Salmaan is a lucky person. Yes, you heard it right, but what is the connection between Dulquer and *Thug Life*?

Here is the story. When Mani Ratnam and Kamal Haasan decided to join hands for *Thug Life*, they initially wanted to rope in Dulquer Salmaan in one of the lead roles alongside Kamal Haasan. However, due to some reasons, Dulquer didn't do the film. Instead, they cast Simbu in the same role and the film was released on June 5.

On the first day, the film mostly received negative reviews and even the film lovers were not happy with it. There are no emotions in the film and the Simbu character is also not written well. Film lovers, after watching the film, came out and said Dulquer is very lucky that he didn't do the film.

Instead, Dulquer did a Telugu film *Lucky Bhaskar* and it turned out to be a super success. The film was released not only in Telugu but in all other languages and also became successful on OTT platforms. At the inaugural Gaddar Telangana Film Awards, *Lucky Bhaskar* won the award for Third Best Feature Film. The film also received the Best Screenplay Award (Venky Atluri) and Best Editor (Naveen Nooli). Dulquer Salmaan also received a Special Jury Award for his performance in this film.