THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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BLUE ORIGIN LAUNCHES ALL-WOMAN CELEBRITY CREW ON SPACE FLIGHT

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin launched his fiancee Lauren Sanchez into space Monday with an all-female celebrity crew that included Katy Perry

10-MINUTE-LONG FLIGHT TOOK OFF FROM TEXAS

The New Shepard rocket blasted off on the quick up-and-down trip from West Texas. The fringes of space beckoned some 65 miles (105 kilometers) up, promising a few precious minutes of weightlessness. Sanchez, a helicopter pilot and former TV journalist, invited the others for the 10-minute flight, packing on star power with Perry and Gayle King

US' FIRST SPACEFLIGHT WITH WOMEN CREW

- Blue Origin declined to say how much the flight cost or who paid what. The trip came two months before Sanchez and Bezos marry
- The celebrity launch of the space flight was the nation's first where an all-women crew filled seats. The other all-female crew in 64 years of human spaceflight was in 1963 helmed by Valentina Tereshkova

11th

HUMAN SPACEFLIGHT FOR THE WASHINGTON STATE-BASED COMPANY

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

Villagers expel family after dowry death, transfer funds

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Nellore

VILLAGERS of Utukuru Peddaputapalle, in Vidavalur mandal have expelled a family accused of killing their daughter-in-law for dowry and decided to transfer the family's property to victim's children.

The decision was taken by village elders, led by the local Kapu community leader, following the gruesome murder of Suguna, a young woman who was allegedly beaten to death by her husband Harikrishna, his parents, and other family members on April 10, 2025. The accused then staged the crime scene to make it appear as a suicide. Suguna, originally from Tatithetlapalem in Bogole mandal, married Harikrishna in 2021. The couple had two children.

Over time, Harikrishna and his father Nagur reportedly developed a severe gambling habit and began pressuring Sugu for more dowry. The situation escalated tragically when Harikrishna, along with his father mother and other relatives, allegedly murdered Suguna.

Outraged by the incident, the villagers declared the family a disgrace to the community and decided to banish them. In an unprecedented move, village elders also resolved to ensure that all the family's property is legally transferred to Suguna's children. Nellore rural DSP G Srinivasa Rao confirmed that Harikrishna, Nagur, and Narasamma have been arrested. He added, "Villagers who try to block entry of Suguna's family members will be summoned and given counselling."

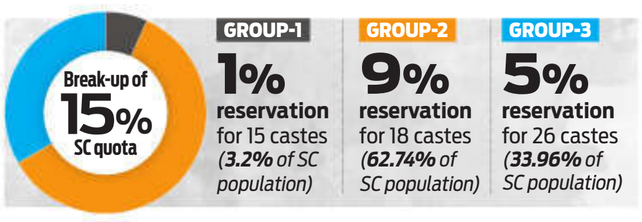


HONOURING BABASAHEB WITH GRACE

President Droupadi Murmu with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union minister J P Nadda, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and party leader Sonia Gandhi during a ceremony to pay tribute to B R Ambedkar on his birth anniversary, in New Delhi on Monday. There was a generous show of courtesy and grace from all sides at the event | PTI

As promised, T'gana first off the blocks on SC sub-quota

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Hyderabad



TELANGANA on Monday became the first state in the country to implement SC categorisation, with the state government issuing GOs notifying the Telangana Scheduled Caste (Rationalisation of Reservation) Act, 2025, its guidelines as well as roster points.

"On the auspicious day of the birth anniversary of Dr B R Ambedkar, the Telangana state government paid the best tributes by bringing into force a great Act of social justice addressing a long overdue demand of classification of SC sub-castes," Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy said in a post on social media.

In its August 1, 2024 verdict, the Supreme Court had upheld the power of states to legislate separate quotas within the SC category. The same day, the chief minister declared in the state assembly that Telangana would lead the nation in legislating sub-categorisation.

The Telangana Scheduled Caste (Rationalisation of Reservation) Act creates three distinct bunches within the existing 15% SC reservation based on population and socio-economic indicators.

Group-1, consisting of 15 castes with 3.2% of SC population, will get 1% share in the quota pie; Group-2 with 18 castes and 62% population get 9% share, while Group-3 with 26 castes and 33.96% population have been awarded the remaining 5%.

This restructuring follows long-standing demands for equitable distribution of reservation benefits among all SC sub-castes, particularly from the Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS).

A one-man commission under Justice Shameem Akhtar drafted the bill which was passed during the recent Budget session of the assembly on March 17.

India intensifies bid to extradite fugitive Choksi

Team to travel to Belgium to seek custody of arrested diamantaire named in PNB scam

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

THE Indian government has intensified efforts to extradite fugitive diamond trader Mehul Choksi following his April 12 arrest in Antwerp, Belgium.

Sources said a multi-agency Indian team is likely to travel to Belgium to push for Choksi's extradition in connection with the ₹13,000 crore PNB loan fraud case. The process will need to pass through Belgium's domestic legal system.

Earlier this year, India submitted an extradition request under a 2020 bilateral treaty after learning that Choksi was residing in Antwerp. Belgian authorities executed an Indian arrest warrant after the Antwerp Public Prosecutor's Office deemed the foreign warrant enforceable, which source said shows the "progress on how two sides are working together." The arrest was carried out as Choksi was allegedly preparing to move to Switzerland.

Choksi seemed to have submitted "forged documents" to obtain residency, concealing his Indian and Antiguan citizenship. "He is being detained and further judicial proceedings are awaited and as per the local law, access to his legal counsel has been assured," sources said.

"The India and Belgium treaty... covers fraud, money laundering, cheating and economic crimes related to taxation and revenue — many of them relevant in case of Mehul Choksi'. We are working on the extradition process and we have already shard all the necessary documents with the Belgium authorities," sources said. The ED and CBI have been actively pursuing Choksi's extradition, especially after the Interpol Red Notice against him was withdrawn.

Choksi had fled India in 2018. Both Choksi and his nephew Nirav Modi are wanted for allegedly defrauding Punjab National Bank (PNB) of over ₹13,500 crore in 2018. PNB had filed a criminal complaint naming Choksi, Modi, and the managing director of Gitanjali Gems, for orchestrating the fraud.



File picture of Mehul Choksi. He is in Antwerp after being denied bail | ANI

ARSON ATTACK

Now, Waqf Act protests spread to South Bengal

SULAGNA SENGUPTA @Kolkata

CLASHES erupted between police and Indian Secular Front (ISF) members protesting against the Waqf (Amendment) Act at Bhangor in South 24-Parganas district of West Bengal on Monday when police put up a barricade to stop the protesters from marching towards Kolkata. A large police force was deployed to bring the situation under control.

"What started as a demonstration escalated and took a communal colour," said an eyewitness.

The situation in violence-hit Murshidabad was tense, yet under control after three days of protests. Many shops have reopened and families displaced by the clashes have started to return homes. Zafarabad, Suti, Dhuliyan, Shamsherganj, and Jangipur are the areas worst-hit by the violence. In Zafrabad, a large number of houses and shops belonging to Hindus were reportedly set ablaze, forcing many to flee. Temples were vandalised during the unrest.

The Calcutta High Court had to instruct that Central forces be deployed in Murshidabad along with the state police.



Police vehicles set on fire by members of Indian Secular Front | PTI

Ex-TTD chief's allegations on cow deaths baseless, says Shyamala Rao

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @TIRUPATI

TIRUMALA Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Executive Officer J J Shyamala Rao on Monday refuted the allegations made by former TTD Trust Board Chairman Bhumana Karunakara Reddy over the death of 100 cows in TTD Goshala as baseless and made with the intention to malign the reputation of TTD, thereby hurting the sentiments of scores of Hindus.

Citing the TTD Vigilance Report, the EO said there were a lot of corrupt practices carried out in SV Gosala from March 2021 to March 2024 and explained in detail about the misappropriation of funds during that time with the help of video clippings and statistical evidence.

The EO said, on an average, nearly 15 cows die every month due to old age and some other diseases. He said in 2024, 179 cows died in SV Gosala, and



from January to March this year, around 43 cows died because of old age and diseases. He said a total of 59 calves have also born during the same period this year. When the reality is like this, it is unfortunate that the former TTD Board Chief made baseless allegations that TTD has ignored the fodder for the cows which resulted in the deaths of these cattle. In fact, the TTD Vigilance Report clearly said about the negligence shown and the misappropriation of funds during the YSRCP regime in SV Gosala. Unhygienic and poor-quality quality fodder was given to cattle, illegal floating of fodder tenders. The YSRCP regime also prevented vigilance inquiry to suppress the cow deaths, among many other issues.

"If they (the YSRCP leaders) are really concerned about the cows, then why they have they not carried out any investigation on all these irregularities during their ruling? After the appointment of the new director for SV Gohala, all these issues came to the fore, and at present, we are correcting all the lacunae," the EO asserted.

Earlier, the TTD EO said that since last June, many reforms were brought to TTD, including enhancement of the taste of Annaprasadam and Srivari Prasadams, laddu quality, transparency in Seva, Darshan tickets, and accommodation, getting rid of brokers, strengthening the IT wing of TTD, and transferring incompetent persons holding superior posts. P4

Will revive Ambedkar Overseas Scheme: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Guntur

ON the occasion of Dr B R Ambedkar Jayanti, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reaffirmed his government's commitment to social justice and the upliftment of underprivileged communities, particularly Dalits. Speaking at a public meeting in Ponnekallu village of the Tadikonda constituency on Monday, he announced the revival of the Ambedkar Overseas Education Scheme, aimed at assisting Scheduled Caste (SC) students in pursuing higher education abroad. He also promised to establish more residential schools to ensure quality education for marginalized children.

Naidu participated in the Ambedkar Jayanti celebrations by paying floral tributes and interacted with locals as part of the "Margadarsi-Bangaru Kutumbam" (Mentor-Golden Family) initiative. He criticized the previous YSRCP government for its lack of action regarding public welfare and He condemned the opposition for spreading false claims about cow deaths in Tirumala. He questioned their sudden display of religious devotion, given their history of temple desecration.

Recalling various instances of misinformation, including the pink diamond conspiracy and the murder of YS Vivekananda Reddy, he accused the previous YSRCP regime of manipulating public sentiment through lies to secure electoral victories. "If we don't expose such conspiracies, it will harm society," he warned.

Naidu strongly defended the P4 (Public-Private-People-Partnership) model, describing it as a revolutionary welfare initiative aimed at eliminating poverty and inequality. P4



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu interacts with a motor mechanic during his visit to Tadikonda constituency on Monday | EXPRESS

EXPRESS READ

Natl Task Force to set up portal on student suicides

New Delhi: The Supreme Court-appointed National Task Force (NTF) on the mental health concerns of students and the prevention of suicides in Higher Educational Institutions, in its second meeting, discussed developing a portal for data collection.Held under the Chairmanship of Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, a former SC judge. I P7

Goal is to build empowered India, says Amit Shah

New Delhi: Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said that the Government has been taking transformative steps to modernise the country's criminal justice system. Forensic teams are now required to visit crime spots. . Shah claimed that the introduction of three new criminal laws "is the biggest reform of the 21st century."I P7

DIVINE TOUCH

Prayer and devotional songs ahead of every match: LSG's traditional touch

FIROZ MIRZA @ Lucknow

THERE are different rituals teams perform before a series or a season. And sometimes before every match. There are beliefs each team has. Lucknow Super Giants is one such team this IPL to follow more a traditional and pious path to invoke the spirits.

Unlike other franchises, Lucknow Super Giants perform a *puja* at the South Corridor, South Block here at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow followed by Ganesh *aarti* before every match.

Even when Lucknow were to face Chennai Super Kings on Monday.

The soothing voice of famous singer Anuradha Paudwal fills the air with devotional songs spreading positivity.

"Yes, we perform *puja* before every home match here at the venue," Vinay Chopra, LSG's chief executive officer, told this daily. The practice is an attempt to inculcate Indian tradition in the league. The *puja* is performed in the presence of whosoever is available in the team management.

It's not that other teams do not perform *puja* or follow religious rituals. But most of them perform it at the beginning of the season. Take for instance, Punjab Kings, whose home games are being hosted in a relatively newer venue, Mullanpur, Chandigarh. They organised a *havan* (a sacred fire ritual) at the venue with head coach Ricky Ponting, players and other support staff attending the customary practice. "Yes, we hold religious rituals ahead of the tournament seeking blessings of God. A prayer will also be organised before PBKS's first game in Dharamsala," a PBKS spokesperson told this daily.

Given the importance of the Monday's game, Chennai Super Kings CEO Kasi Viswanathan also accompanied the team to Lucknow. When asked about any customary practice the team follows at Chepauk, he said, "I am a devotee of Ganesha so I offer prayer everyday. There are individuals who like to pray before matches and they do so but collectively as a team we do not offer prayers."

LSG might be different in this sense but the pious beginning in following Indian traditions is certainly a commendable step.

On the ground though things did not go the way LSG would have wanted. The visiting team restricted them to just 166 runs in their allotted 20 overs. The Lucknow team is fourth on the IPL points table.



LSG skipper Rishabh Pant on way to half century against CSK on Tuesday | AFP

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

RAYALASEEMA

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ALMANAC TODAY

Tuesday : 15/04/2025 **Year:** Sri Viswavasu **Aayanam:** Uttarayanam
Rutuvu: Vasantha **Masam:** Chaitra **Paksham:** Bahula **Tithi:** Vidiya 10.55 am
Nakshatram: Vishakha 03.10+ am **Durmuhurtham:** 08.31 am - 09.21 am
Varjyam: 06.31 am - 08.19 am **Rahukaalam:** 03.00 pm - 04.30 pm

WEATHER

MIN 24°C | MAX 41°C

FORECAST Partly sunny

Sunrise 05:59 AM
Sunset 06:25 PM
Moonrise 08:22 PM
Moonset 07:54 AM

AP will support women entrepreneurs: Bharath

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kurnool



MINISTER for industries, commerce and food processing TG Bharath said on Monday the government is working to realise Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's vision of nurturing one entrepreneur per household.

The Minister said while addressing the valedictory function of a three-month training camp on millet-based food product preparation, held at Vibhu Parinaya function hall in Kurnool. The event was organised by the Confederation of Women Entrepreneurs of India (COWE), AP Chapter, and the Australian Consulate General.

Bharath distributed certificates to participants, interacted with women trainees, and tasted their millet-based dishes. He praised the organisers for empowering women with skills to generate sustainable income.

He assured full support from the government and TGV Group for women-led entrepreneurial ventures. He urged women to submit Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) to facilitate land allotment at Orvakal Industrial Park for food processing units. He praised NGOs for training Kurnool women in millet-based culinary skills, helping them become entrepreneurs.

Nellore Nagaravanam to be the largest park in AP

DFO says, Centre will provide ₹60 lakh fund for development soon

D SURENDRA KUMAR @ Nellore



Nellore Nagaravanam | EXPRESS



THE Forest Department is preparing to complete the Nellore Nagaravanam project near Kothur in Amancherla, following the expected release of ₹60 lakh from the Central government. Spread over 125 hectares, the urban forest is poised to become one of Andhra Pradesh's largest green spaces.

Launched in 2017 under the TDP government, the Nagaravanam project received ₹1.4 crore from the Centre and ₹2.10 crore from the State in initial phases. The first 50 hectares have already been developed with further expansion pending final funding. The park is open to the public daily from 6 am to 6 pm.

District Forest Officer (DFO) Mehaboob Basha said, "We are developing the Nagaravanam as the largest park in the State. So far, around ₹3.5 crore has been spent on the development of 50 hectares. We are awaiting an additional ₹60 lakh from the Centre, which we expect within a month. Once received, we'll complete the remaining works and bring the entire park into full operation within the next three months."

The park currently offers a wide range of visitor-centric and eco-friendly features including walking and trekking tracks, a yoga centre, musical fountains, children's play areas, canteen, wildlife-themed archways, open gyms, function halls, and viewpoints. These facilities position the park as a combined leisure and wellness destination.

Since June last year, the Forest Department has collected nominal entry fees—₹20 for adults and ₹10 for children. Photography permits cost ₹500, while mini function halls can be rented for ₹5,000 and larger halls for ₹10,000 per day. The department also rents open spaces for birthdays, cultural events, and small gatherings. These activities have generated an average monthly income of ₹3 lakh.

Officials also plan to permit film and video shoots within the park to boost tourism and departmental revenue. Environmental activist Dr R Sreedhar said to TNIE, "Urban forests like these are vital for balancing development with nature. They not only offer recreational value but also serve as key instruments for environmental education and biodiversity preservation."

'Ambedkar's vision still empowers India'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Nellore / Kadapa / Tirupati



MP Daggumalla Prasad Rao addressing the Students and faculty at NSU | MADHAV K

BR Ambedkar was not only the architect of the Indian Constitution but also a tireless champion of the weaker sections, said Chittoor MP Daggumalla Prasada Rao on Monday.

Speaking at a seminar organised at National Sanskrit University (NSU) in Tirupati to mark the 134th birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar, the MP highlighted the leader's contributions to establishing freedom, equality, and fraternity in India. He said Ambedkar's efforts continue to benefit every citizen through the constitutional rights they enjoy today.

The MP emphasised that Ambedkar's legacy as an international intellectual, reformist, and economist remains unparalleled. He recalled how, while many on the Constitution Drafting Committee hesitated to contribute, Ambedkar diligently studied constitutions from countries like the US, UK, and Canada to draft a comprehensive charter for India.

Ambedkar Jayanti held with tributes & welfare progs

Rich tributes were paid to BR Ambedkar on his 134th birth anniversary across Nellore and Kadapa districts on Monday. In Nellore, Sarvepalli MLA Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy said during the event at VRC Junction, "Inspired by Dr Ambedkar's ideals, our alliance government is giving top priority to the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Tribes." He announced the revival of the SC/ST Sub-Plan, SC Corporation, and ST Corporation, affirming dedicated efforts towards empowering marginalised communities.

In Kadapa, District Collector Sridhar Cherukuri paid homage to Ambedkar at the Collectorate along with JC Aditi Singh and DRDO in-charge Srinivasulu. "Ambedkar's contribution to building modern India is monumental. His intellect, commitment, and vision are guiding lights for generations," said Sridhar. .

We cannot imagine a country without Ambedkar: MP

Anantapur: Hindupur MP Ambika Lakshminarayana and Anantapur Urban MLA Daggupati Venkateswara Prasad said we cannot imagine a country without Ambedkar, whose vision continues to shape the nation. They led a rally through streets to the Ambedkar statue at Zilla Parishad office circle.

Min Farooq pays tribute to Ambedkar

Kurnool: Minister for Law and Minority Welfare NMD Farooq on Monday paid tribute to Dr. BR Ambedkar during the 134th birth anniversary celebrations at Bommalasatram in Nandyal. Farooq, alongside District Collector G Rajakumari, highlighted Ambedkar's pivotal role in empowering marginalised communities and drafting the Indian Constitution, describing his contributions as timeless and inspirational

JSP cadres slam abusive posts against Deputy CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Nellore



JSP leaders organised a protest in Nellore against comments made on Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan | EXPRESS

JSP leaders condemned abusive and inappropriate comments made on social media targeting Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and his family members. The remarks have sparked widespread outrage within the party.

Under the direction of TIDCO Chairman Vemulapati Ajay, JSP leaders staged a protest in Nellore city and lodged formal complaints at the Nellore Rural DSP Office, Rural Police Station, and several other police stations across the city.

JSP District General Secretary Kishore Gunukula said, "If someone was raised with family values, have felt the love of grandparents and the responsibility shared by sisters, they wouldn't resort to such disgraceful language." He demanded the identification of the offenders and strict action against them. "Let them show their faces and post such things, then we'll see if they survive the consequences," he warned.

"If individuals are allowed to continue such behaviour unchecked, we may run out of good leaders in the future. Criticise ideologies or political decisions, but do not stoop to personal abuse. This is unethical and unacceptable," he said. He also stressed the need for responsible use of social media.

GOVT INITIATIVE

Specially-abled people urged to use NDFDC schemes

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Anantapur

ANANTAPUR District Collector Dr Vinod Kumar V on Monday urged differently-abled individuals to make full use of loans and tools provided under government self-employment schemes.

The Collector said the administration distributed ₹27.55 lakh in loans to 12 differently-abled beneficiaries under the National Disabled Persons Economic Development Corporation (NDFDC) and the Andhra Pradesh Differently-abled and Elderly Welfare Corporation.

He also stated that laptops worth ₹9.50 lakh were distributed to 25 differently-abled students pursuing higher education and vocational training. Authorities provided touch phones worth ₹58,000 to four hearing-impaired individuals and wheelchairs worth ₹56,000 to five others.

Vinod encouraged beneficiaries to utilise the support effectively to become self-reliant and improve their quality of life. MP Ambika Lakshminarayana said the government is giving priority to the welfare of differently-abled citizens by launching initiatives that promote self-confidence and economic independence. Urban MLA Daggupati Venkateswara Prasad called on differently-abled individuals to take advantage of the schemes and resources provided to them.

EXPRESS READ

SBI donates ₹2L RO plant to NYSS

Tirupati: SBI donated a Reverse Osmosis (RO) water purification plant worth ₹2 lakh to the Nehru Yuvajana Seva Sangam (NYSS) in Pichatur, Tirupati district, on Monday to mark Dr BR Ambedkar Jayanti. The event took place in Pichatur and was attended by Regional Manager Venkateswara Rao, CM (HR) Mahendra, and others

Nadyal police arrests habitual offender

Kurnool: Nandyal police arrested Mekala Hanumanthu, a habitual offender involved in thefts and dacoities since 2019, recovering gold, silver, and cash. Superintendent of Police (SP) Adhiraj Singh Rana said the accused was involved in multiple offences. Police recovered 5 tolas of gold, 30 tolas of silver and ₹12,000 cash

SEIL Energy observes National Fire Service Day

Nellore: SEIL Energy India Limited (SEIL) marked the beginning of National Fire Service Fortnight on Monday, with a series of safety-focused activities under the theme 'Unite to Ignite, a Fire Safe India.' It will run from April 14 to 28, featuring fire safety drills, training sessions, awareness campaigns on fire prevention and mitigation

AKPL celebrates Fire Service Day

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Nellore

ADANI Krishnapatnam Port Limited (AKPL) CEO Jagdish Patel stressed the importance of fire safety and urged all stakeholders to promote awareness among employees, families, and the public.

Speaking at the 80th National Fire Service Day, he paid tribute to disaster martyrs and emphasised preparedness to mitigate risks. He praised the AKPL Fire Department for their dedicated service.

The event featured a live fire demonstration by fire personnel, and the safety pledge was administered to attendees.

YSRCP MP backs Bhumana, urges Centre's intervention into Goshala row

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Nellore

YSRCP MP Maddela Gurumoorthy on Monday expressed grave concerns over administrative lapses and alleged failures in cow protection linked to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) goshala controversy.

Addressing the media-persons at the YSRCP district office in Nellore, Gurumoorthy backed senior party leader and former TTD chairman Bhumana Karunakar Reddy's claims, stating, "His concerns about TTD's negligence in cattle care are based on truth and facts."

"Even the TTD Executive Officer (EO) and Chairman engaged in a heated argument in front of the Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu himself, which clearly shows the chaotic State of affairs in the administration," he said.

Criticising those questioning Bhumana's religious identity, he remarked, "Whether he is a true Hindu or not can be known by simply visiting his home and seeing how he lives."

Calling for accountability, Gurumoorthy demanded a joint all-party investigation into the matter and urged the Central government to intervene into the matter.

He accused the ruling alliance of abandoning Ambedkar's Constitution, stating, "The false cases against Kakani Govardhan Reddy are a clear example."

He also alleged widespread illegal mining and diversion tactics, adding, "The entire mining sector has become a hub for irregularities."

Daily Starscope

PETER VIDAL

15TH April : One very intriguing planetary pattern joins Venus, bringer of love and affection, together with Uranus, a planet of big surprises. It's a moment for emotional independence, and the only commitments which will last, will be those which are entered into with total freedom, and with absolutely no outside pressure at all.

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr. 20)
It is still a fact of life that little will go your way unless you make a leap of the imagination and try to see the world through fresh eyes. There is a lot to recommend the perspective which a close partner has now adopted - and you have much to learn.

TAURUS (Apr. 21 - May 21)
You have little real reason to feel hurt or betrayed, the reason being that you are as responsible as anyone else for the direction that events have taken. The solution is to be more aware of your own motives in future, for self-awareness leads to self-discipline, and great success.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
It is pleasant to be praised by people who are more accomplished than you. The way forward lies in restoring old friendships, thanks to Venus' dominant position. Try to focus on the bigger picture - on what partners actually mean, rather than on what they've said.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
The overall planetary position is calm, yet these are still exciting times for Cancerians. Therefore, you can, indeed must, continue to push for the fulfilment of your personal ambitions with no hint of compromise. And if you meet major obstacles, slow down, pause for thought and then redouble your efforts.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23)
The real key to current twists and turns lies in a dimension of astrology more subtle than that revealed in your solar chart. The really important developments are not yet clear, and that's why you should tread with care, caution and consideration for your companions.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23)
Many of you have not had much luck communicating clearly in recent months - all of you can point to some situation or other where you could have been more persuasive. One option now is to distinguish what is useful on a practical level from your emotions and irrational fears.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23)
A little-known characteristic of your sign is its connection with generals and military men. This is of interest now because over the next two weeks you still have the opportunity to fight and win an important battle. But you need allies who will stick by you, no matter what.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)
Almost everything, from the initial planning stage until the final act, seems to be taking place with a degree of secrecy. If other people are unaware of what is going on you must take it upon yourself to protect their interests. They would expect no less!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 22)
Make partnership the key to your success over the next two weeks. You must take on board a few simple home truths particularly that, if you collaborate, you may seriously enhance your prospects. Also, if you still have a long-held but undeveloped creative talent, now is the time to let rip.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 23 - Jan. 20)
In no circumstances must you be pressurised into abandoning your personal career or worldly ambitions, no matter if partners do try a little emotional blackmail. The people who try to pressurise you might have little idea of your actual needs, so you may have to sit down and tell them once again!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)
Believe it or not this is now the astrologically ideal moment for a journey into the unknown! This may not fit in with other pressures, but perhaps you can make a start on future plans. Actually, it's a day which could bring new responsibilities and professional opportunities.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar 20)
There are sound astrological reasons why you should not be too hasty in your financial judgments. However, there is plenty of time for you to search out different information and assess the options. You've got a good financial sense, and you may be ready to make a firm, long-term decision.

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle ⬇

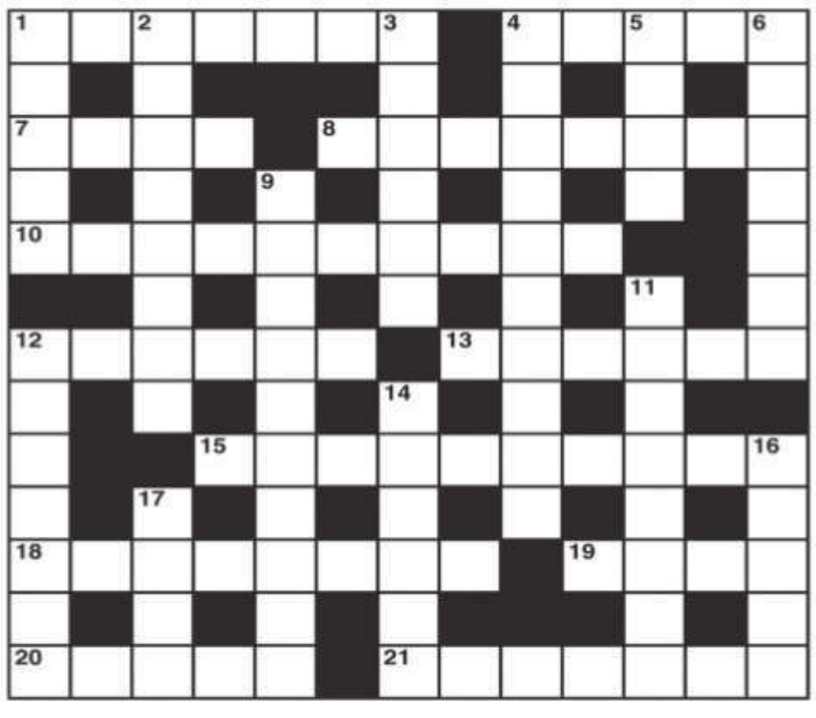
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			1					3

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

SUDOKU EVIL

TEST YOUR NUMBER CRUNCHING SKILL WITH OUR UNIQUE PUZZLE

Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3X3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



CROSS WORD

ACROSS
1 Policemen get little money (7)
4 Engagement ring (5)
7 Period of time - spring for example (4)
8 Played with babies? (8)
10 Boxing champion employed in the circus (10)
12 The spirit of enmity (6)
13 A street to flatten out for a gentle walk (6)
15 Champions in five shows (10)
18 Public transport stops here when time runs out (8)
19 Nail turned blue (4)
20 Break up a dancing partnership (3,2)
21 Travelling goods will be in it (7)

DOWN
1 Trace misdirected supply (5)
2 Movingly depict an academic (8)
3 Speak forcefully providing a cause of tension (6)
4 He's bound to learn a job in paper etc. (10)
5 Looked over carefully? I'd say! (4)
6 Learns a way to produce a magazine (7)
9 Charge for firearms (10)
11 Strives to study minds (8)
12 Acquit a drunk now living on water (7)
14 Tune gets the publicity deserved (6)
16 Shared a small bottle (5)
17 Summons an author without hesitation (4)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS

Across: 1 Regulations, 9 Inexact, 10 Prior, 11 Lido, 12 Antimony, 14 Nipped, 16 Geneva, 18 Twenties, 19 Asti, 22 Maria, 23 Spartan, 24 Stone's throw.

Down: 2 Emend, 3 Upas, 4 Attend, 5 Impaired, 6 Noisome, 7 Killing time, 8 Army rations, 13 Restrain, 15 Pierrot, 17 Census, 20 Set-to, 21 Hash.

JUMBLE

UNSCRAMBLE THESE JUMBLES, ONE LETTER TO EACH SQUARE, TO FORM FOUR ORDINARY WORDS.

BY DAVID L. HOYT AND JEFF KNUREK

NIRGB

WYNSO

DIUQIL

RUUSEN



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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: ( ) - ( )

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: FROZE BUNNY STUDIO CUDDLE
Answer: The pirate's allegation that his men weren't searching hard enough was — UNFOUNDED

RICH TRIBUTE Rashtriya Ispat Nigam (RINL) celebrated the birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar in Visakhapatnam on Monday. Director (Projects) Arun Kanti Bagchi recalled contribution towards drafting the Indian Constitution

Lokesh to felicitate 52 Inter merit students

Minister Lokesh's emphasis on quality reforms in the Intermediate education has led to strong academic outcomes

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Vijayawada

HRD and IT Minister Nara Lokesh will felicitate 52 meritorious students from government junior and vocational colleges at his residence in Undavalli on Tuesday, as part of the State government's push to promote academic excellence in educational institutions.

Lokesh will interact with the students, which aims to bring government junior and vocational colleges on par with private institutions.

He will felicitate 28 students from government junior colleges, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), APR Junior Colleges, Adarsh Schools, and High School Plus programmes, along with 24 students from government vocational colleges. Among the total, six students have demonstrated exceptional and diverse talents.

The detailed list includes 29 students from government junior colleges, seven from KGBVs, seven from APR Junior Colleges, six from Adarsh Schools, and three from High School Plus.

The Minister's emphasis on quality reforms in Intermediate education has led to strong academic outcomes.

This year, government junior colleges achieved a 69% pass percentage in the second year of Intermediate, the highest in the past decade. The first year saw 47% of students pass, the second-best result in 10 years.

Government vocational colleges also recorded notable progress. The first year of Intermediate Vocational registered a 64% pass rate, while the second year reached an unprecedented 82% — both marking the highest in the last ten years.

Since taking charge, Lokesh has introduced several reforms including reintroduction of the mid-day meal and free textbooks for Intermediate students, promotion of 217 principals after five years, implementation of centralised assessments, review-based teacher performance monitoring, revised college timings, targeted study materials, and launch of the Take Care system for student support.



2,070 litres of ID liquor destroyed during raids

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Vijayawada

THE Andhra Pradesh Prohibition and Excise Department launched a large-scale crackdown on interstate illicit liquor networks under Navodayam 2.0, targeting brewing hotspots along the borders of Odisha, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka.

The raids resulted in the dismantling of illegal brewing setups, and the registration of 28 cases across multiple districts. Principal Secretary (Excise) Mukesh Kumar Meena directed the operation to tackle rising instances of cross-border smuggling and unauthorised distillation. Commissioner Nishant Kumar and Enforcement Director Rahuldev Sharma led the coordinated enforcement drive, deploying 381 officials, including 228 from AP and 153 from neighbouring States.

Officials destroyed 56,200 litres of fermented jaggery (FJ) wash, seized 2,070 litres of illicitly distilled (ID) liquor, 220 kilograms of jaggery, 25 kilograms of ammonia, and dismantled 50 brewing units during the operation.

In Srikakulam district, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha officials conducted joint raids on April 11 at Potkasing, Budajola, and Gongapur, destroying 26,500 litres of FJ wash and seizing 1,750 litres of ID liquor and 100 kilograms of jaggery. Twelve cases were booked.

The officials also raided Parvathipuram Manyam, Alluri Sitarama Raju, Anatapur, Sri Sathya Sai districts and other areas. Nishant said the strategic raids were crucial to dismantling illegal liquor networks.

Man kills pregnant wife over quarrel in Vizag, arrested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Visakhapatnam

A nine-month pregnant woman was allegedly strangled to death by her husband over an argument at Madhurawada under PM Palem police station limits in Visakhapatnam on Monday morning.

Police identified the accused as Gnaneshwar (28), a resident of Duvvada in Visakhapatnam, and the deceased as Anusha (27), from Anakapalle district.

PM Palem Circle Inspector Bala Krishna said Anusha had married her boyfriend Gnaneshwar two years ago against her family's wishes. The couple had been living in a rented house in Madhurawada, and Gnaneshwar ran a fast-food stall in the city.

According to reports, Gnaneshwar informed Anusha's family and friends that she had fallen unconscious. However, doctors at the hospital declared her brought dead. Suspecting foul play, her family approached the police.

During interrogation, Gnaneshwar confessed to strangling Anusha with a cloth following a quarrel. Police registered a case and launched an investigation. The body was shifted to King George Hospital for postmortem examination.

EXPRESS READ

Eluru IG lauds SIT for resolving pastor's death case

Rajamahendravaram: Eluru Range Inspector General GVG Ashok Kumar on Monday said the Special Investigation Team (SIT) resolved the suspicious death case of pastor Pagadala Praveen Kumar in a systematic, scientific and transparent manner. He lauded the team for their thorough probe and evidence-based approach. The IG revealed that the SIT collected over 400 CCTV footage clips and questioned more than 100 individuals during the course of the probe. He lauded East Godavari SP D Narasimha Kishore, Kovvur DSP Dev Kumar, DSP Srikanth and the five other teams

Police register case against manager after Kailasapatnam firecracker blast

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Visakhapatnam



Home Minister V Anitha speaking to the media in Anakapalle on Monday | EXPRESS

HOME Minister Vangalapudi Anitha on Monday announced ₹15 lakh ex-gratia for the families of the deceased in the Kailasapatnam cracker unit blast.

Speaking to the mediapersons in Anakapalle on Monday, she said, "Though the usual compensation for fire accident victims is ₹5 lakh, the government has announced an enhanced ex gratia of ₹15 lakh to the families of the deceased," the Minister stated. She assured that the compensation would be disbursed to the victims' families at the earliest and that the government would also bear the funeral expenses. An ex-gratia of ₹1 lakh would be provided to each injured person by the State government, while the Centre has also announced ₹2 lakh for the deceased and ₹50,000 for the injured. All medical expenses for the injured will be borne by the government, she added.

Preliminary investigations indicated that raw materials stored at the unit exceeded permissible limits. Forensic samples were sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory for detailed analysis. Legal action will follow after the full report is received, and a State-wide probe is underway to check firecracker units for adherence to safety norms.

Anitha said 21 licensed firecracker units operate in Anakapalle district. A committee will be formed to inspect all such units in the State.

Anakapalle police registered a case against M Janakiram, the manager of Vijayalaxmi Ganesh Fireworks, who sustained burn injuries. Proprietor Appikonda Pallayya (50) died in the blast. Police booked Janakiram under Sections 105 and 125 (a) read with 3 (5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Sections 3 and 5 of the Explosive Substances Act. Anakapalle SP Tuhin Sinha said preliminary findings revealed that labourers were pulverising sulphur, potassium nitrate and rock salt in Unit-II when a spark caused an explosion, which then spread to Unit-I. The unit had a permissible limit of 15 kg of raw materials, and the forensic report will confirm whether this exceeded.

Of the eight injured, two were shifted from KGH to a corporate hospital in Vizag, four are under treatment at KGH, and two are being treated in Narsipatnam, police added.

भारत कोकिंग कोल लिमिटेड
(कोल इण्डिया लिमिटेड की एक अनुषंगी कंपनी)
BCCL
BHARAT COKING COAL LIMITED
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)
(एक मिनीरत्न कंपनी / A Miniratna Company)
(भारत सरकार का उपक्रम / A Government of India Undertaking)
Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

NOTICE

All the tenders* issued by Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of BCCL **www.bcclweb.in**, Coal India Limited (CIL) e-procurement portal **https://coalindiatenders.nic.in** and Central Public Procurement Portal **https://eprocure.gov.in**. In addition, procurement is also done through GeM Portal **https://gem.gov.in**.
*This is applicable to all Open (Domestic / Global) Tenders issued through e-procurement portal of CIL.

ANDHRA PRADESH STANDS No. 2
IN ECONOMIC GROWTH RATE 2024-25*
(*AS PER GSDP SURVEY OF GOVT OF INDIA)

WHAT DOES No.2 MEAN?

It Means We Will Work Harder To Build Infrastructure & Attract Investments.

It Is A Reminder That WE WILL BE No.1 SOON.

We Invite You To Partner, Invest & Work In AP

Because No.2 Means We Work Harder.

#APBackOnTrack
#APWeWorkHarder

ANDHRA PRADESH GETTING BACK ON TRACK

MINOR SHUFFLE Anjani Kumar has been appointed as DG (Prisons), replacing Kumar Vishwajeet. Meanwhile, Abhilasha Bisht, returning from child care leave, has been posted as Chairman of the AP Road Safety Authority

Power utilities geared up to ensure 24x7 supply amid rising demand: CS

Electricity officials expect daily power consumption to touch 260 MU in coming months

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Vijayawada

ANDHRA Pradesh power utilities have intensified measures to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply across the State as summer temperatures and power demand continue to rise.

Chief Secretary, Special Chief Secretary (Energy) and Chairman and Managing Director of APTRANSCO K Vijayanand on Monday said the utilities remain fully geared to meet the increasing grid load and are exploring all possible measures to ensure 24x7 quality power supply to all consumers, including remote rural areas.

At a programme held in Vidyut Soudha on the occasion of Dr BR Ambedkar's 134th birth anniversary, he stated that the government is working with a firm resolve to ensure affordable and uninterrupted electricity for domestic and industrial consumers. He said the farming community continues to receive nine hours of free power supply during the day for agricultural use.

According to AP State Load Dispatch Centre data, the State recorded its highest power consumption of the year on March 28, 2025, reaching 256.8 million units (MU). Between January and March 2025, the total energy demand met stood at 20,498 MU, slightly higher than the 20,475 MU recorded in the same period in 2024. From April 1 to 12, 2025, the demand met stood at 2,801 MU.

Officials expect daily power consumption to touch 260 MU in the coming months.

The utilities remain on high alert and are taking proactive steps to manage the load efficiently while ensuring continuous supply.

Chief Secretary Vijayanand highlighted the inclusive, welfare-oriented measures undertaken by the power sector under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and the support of Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar. He said the government provides substantial tariff subsidies to benefit a wide range of consumer categories.

He said the utilities would continue acting as enablers of development, equity and empowerment.

"Under the Uchita Vyavasaya Vidyut Pathakam, agriculture consumers receive nine hours of free power daily. To ensure 24x7 affordable supply, the government bears the additional ARR gap as domestic subsidy. Aquaculture farmers with farms up to 10 acres receive power at ₹1.50/unit, with ₹2.35/unit subsidised by the government," he said.

He added that SC/ST households receive up to 200 units of free power per month, along with rooftop solar systems up to 2KW. Other concessions include free power to horticulture nurseries, dhobi ghats, BPL Rajaka laundries, goldsmith shops and MBC households. Handloom households receive 200 units free per month, and power looms up to 500 units. The government also offers a special tariff of ₹3.75/unit to the rolled gold industry in Machilipatnam.

JMD APTRANSCO Kirthi Chekuri, APGENCO Director M Sujaya Kumar, and senior officials, staff and employees of APTRANSCO and APGENCO were present.



Concessions to marginalised communities

The Chief Secretary said the power utilities are committed to Ambedkar's ideals by implementing welfare schemes for marginalised communities. "The SC/ST households receive up to 200 units of free power per month, along with rooftop solar systems. Handloom households receive 200 units free per month, and power looms up to 500 units. The government also offers a special tariff of ₹3.75/unit to the rolled gold industry in Machilipatnam," CS Vijayanand said

Dr BR Ambedkar laid foundation to modern India, says BJP AP President

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Rajamahendravaram

BJP State president and MP Daggubati Purandeswari, Union Minister of State Bhupatiraju Srinivasa Varma and several district officials paid rich tributes to Dr BR Ambedkar on his 134th birth anniversary on Monday in the Godavari districts.

In Rajamahendravaram, MP Purandeswari garlanded Ambedkar's statue at Gokavaram bus stand and hailed him as a visionary who laid the foundation for modern India. She criticised the Congress party for disrespecting Ambedkar and claimed the BJP alone has carried forward his ideology of social justice and upliftment of the marginalised.

BJP MLC Somu Veerraju and district president Pikki Nagender were present at the event. East Godavari Joint Collector S Chinna Ramudu and Superintendent of Police D Narasimha Kishore also offered floral tributes at Ambedkar's statue in the city.

In Bhimavaram, Union Minister Srinivasa Varma paid tributes at Ambedkar Circle. He said Ambedkar gifted the nation with an inclusive Constitution and that the Modi government is committed to his vision by working for the welfare of deprived sections.

Deputy Speaker K Raghu Rama Krishna Raju also paid homage by garlanding Ambedkar's statue in Bhimavaram.

In Palakollu, Water Resources Minister Dr N Ramanaidu participated in Ambedkar statue slab works and said he felt privileged to contribute to the construction.



BJP AP chief D Purandeswari garlanding BR Ambedkar's statue on Monday | EXPRESS

Innovation Hub: Govt issues op guidelines

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Vijayawada

THE State government on Monday issued operational guidelines for the establishment of the Ratan Tata Innovation Hub (RTIH) and its regional centres, known as spokes. The initiative is part of a long-term vision to achieve the 'one entrepreneur, one family' by leveraging state-of-the-art technologies and promoting a startup and innovation culture.

According to the government order, the RTIH will be set up in Amaravati as the central hub and will serve as a beacon of innovation for startups and institutions across the State.

The RTIH will work in collaboration with five regional centres — or "spokes" — to be located in Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, NTR, Tirupati, and Anantapur districts.

The hub and spoke centres will be funded and managed by the private players, with the government providing partial seed capital and grants through the CEO of the Andhra Pradesh Innovation Society (APIS).

Graft charge: Health Minister orders probe against drug inspector

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Vijayawada

HEALTH Minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav has ordered a regular departmental inquiry into allegations of corruption against a drug inspector who served in Adoni prior to 2024.

The official is accused of demanding annual bribes from medical retailers and shielding violators from action.

According to sources, the drug inspector allegedly collected bribe from chemists in exchange for turning a blind eye to irregularities. He also reportedly defied orders from his superiors by failing to suspend a chemist who had committed serious violations of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.



A preliminary inquiry conducted into the matter substantiated the allegations.

Based on the findings, the Minister directed initiation of disciplinary proceedings under the Andhra Pradesh Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964, citing behaviour unbecoming of a public servant and violation of integrity norms.

The decision came during a recent review meeting on enforcement by the Drugs Control Administration (DCA), where the Minister expressed serious concern over negligence and lapses by some field-level officials. He warned of stringent action against those indulging in misconduct.

"There will be no tolerance for corruption or negligence. Officials are expected to uphold the highest standards of accountability and enforcement," Gottipati said during the meeting. The DCA currently operates with 47 Drug Inspectors against a sanctioned strength of 59.

ABV slams Jagan, hints at political entry

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Kakinada

RETIRED IPS officer AB Venkateswara Rao on Sunday visited individuals allegedly affected during the tenure of former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, as part of his statewide outreach programme. He met Janipalli Srinivas who was implicated in the Kodi Katti incident, in Amalapuram and is expected to visit the family of one Veedhi Subrahmanyam in Kakinada next.

Speaking to mediapersons, ABV revealed his intention to enter politics, though he has not yet decided on joining any existing political party. "I want to stand by the people who have suffered," he said, emphasising that many lives were lost during Jagan's five-year rule, and he too was a victim of political vendetta. Sources indicate that ABV was offered the position of RTC Chairman by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu after assuming office, but the former IPS officer reportedly declined the offer respectfully.

It may be noted that ABV's remarks, labelling Jagan's tenure as 'monstrous', have triggered political discussions.

Liquor policy scam: SIT raids Kasireddy's properties

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Vijayawada

THE Special Investigation Team (SIT), constituted to probe alleged irregularities in the liquor policy implemented during the previous YSRCP government, conducted surprise raids at the residences and offices of Kasireddy Rajashekar Reddy in Hyderabad on Monday.

The raids followed Kasireddy's failure to respond to three notices issued by investigation officers. Three special teams were deployed to search his house and multiple office locations across Hyderabad, seizing what officials described as incriminating evidence.

According to sources, SIT chief SV Rajashekhar Babu served the notices to Kasireddy Rajashekar Reddy, an IT consultant during the YSRCP government, in connection with the multi-crore liquor scam.

The SIT was formed based on a complaint filed by TDP leaders to investigate alleged misappropriation and irregularities in the liquor policy, which is said to have caused significant losses to the State exchequer.

During the investigation, SIT officials reportedly uncovered the involvement of political leaders, private individuals and others, along with major discrepancies in liquor sales.

Statements recorded under Section 164 of the CrPC from excise officials. It was suggested that the scam may exceed ₹4,000 crore.

BEE's standards & labelling programme prevents 58 MT of CO_2 emissions

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Vijayawada

THE Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under the Ministry of Power, is intensifying enforcement of its Standards and Labelling (S&L) Programme through expanded market surveillance to ensure consumer protection and support India's energy-saving targets.

This flagship initiative has led to estimated energy cost savings of ₹54,324 crore, prevented 58 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions, and spurred a fivefold increase in the production of star-labelled appliances—from 10.5 crore units in 2014 to 58 crore in 2024.

BEE has urged all State Designated Agencies (SDAs) to step up market surveillance efforts to ensure that only compliant, star-labelled products reach consumers. This includes preventing counterfeit labelling, ensuring label visibility, and enforcing Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS).

Strategic spot checks of high-volume appliances will help detect violations, with legal action taken under Section 26 of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.

State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) will oversee hearings and impose penalties.

The enforcement framework includes BEE to set standards, empanel testing labs, and support SDAs with technical expertise while SDAs act as nodal bodies, conduct inspections, report violations to SERCs. The SERCs enforce penalties and ensure due legal process.

Andhra Pradesh's State Energy Conservation Mission (APSECM), TSREDCO (Telangana), and EMC (Kerala) were among several SDAs praised by BEE for strong surveillance and enforcement efforts.

During a review of the S&L programme, BEE Secretary Milind Deore, along with directors Kamran Sheikh and Abhishek Sharma, noted that international agencies have recognized the programme for contributing to climate change mitigation and economic development.

Currently, 39 appliances are covered under the scheme, with 16 under mandatory labelling.

The BEE Secretary emphasised that the S&L Programme alone contributes 60% of India's total energy efficiency–related carbon savings and supports the nation's goal of reducing 1 billion tons of emissions by 2030.

EXPRESS READ

Congress calls for law to ensure effective SC-ST funds utlisation

Vijayawada: The Congress leaders have called for a legislation to ensure the effective utilisation of funds allocated under SC-ST subplan for the development of the SCs and STs, on the occasion of Dr BR Ambedkar's 134th birth anniversary. They paid floral tributes to the statue of the architect of the Constitution. The party leaders emphasised the need to prevent the misappropriation of these funds. Furthermore, the Congress leaders also urged the State government to conduct a caste-based census along with general census



IN SRIVARI SEVA

Anna Lezhneva, wife of Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan, donated ₹17 lakh for Annaprasadam at the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam on Monday | EXPRESS

Shyamala Rao exposes donor passbook abuse

Continued from page 1

"Adulterated ghee was procured for making the sacred laddus prasadam offered to the devotees during the YSRCP regime, and we have cancelled those suppliers and blacklisted them," the EO said.

"Similarly, in the name of donating organic products for making Srivari Annaprasadams, the donor supplied ₹5 crore worth of adulterated products and took the benefit of donor passbooks to the tune of ₹25 crore in violation of norms. We have cancelled this donor passbook benefit also," Shyamala Rao revealed.

"Today, Srivari devotees are expressing immense satisfaction with the taste and quality of both Annaprasadams and laddu prasadams, and we are committed to protecting the sentiments of a multitude of devotees by taking up more and more pilgrim-friendly reforms in TTD", EO Shyamala Rao reiterated.

7k students benefitted from overseas scheme during TDP's earlier term

Continued from page 1

"Those criticising P4 don't even understand it. Have they ever helped even one family in their lives?" Naidu questioned. Under this initiative, 11 individuals have committed to adopting 369 poor families in Ponnekallu.

The Chief Minister honoured the mentors who volunteered to support these families, referring to the programme as an extension of the Janmabhoomi initiative he launched during the then united Andhra Pradesh government in 2004, which aimed to mobilise NRIs for village development.

During the event, beneficiaries shared their challenges. Srigala Neelima, a widowed mother of two working at a grocery store for ₹8,000 a month, received assurance from the Chief Minister for her son's ear surgery, funded through the CMRF. Highlighting the achievements of the SC Sub-Plan during the previous TDP regime, Naidu noted that ₹27,737 crore was spent from 2014 to 2019 on various welfare schemes for SCs, including agriculture, drinking water, and housing.

He pointed out that over 7,000 students benefited from ₹467 crore disbursed under the overseas education scheme during that period, while the YSRCP government supported only 430 students. In a virtual interaction, beneficiaries of the Ambedkar Overseas Education Scheme expressed their gratitude. K Ratnalatha, a network engineer in Australia, credited Naidu for transforming her life. Anil, an engineer in Canada earning ₹60 lakh per year, stated his desire to assist others through the P4 programme. Both pledged to support families in their native villages.



Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu paid floral tributes to the statue of Dr BR Ambedkar in Ponnekallu village of Guntur district on Monday | EXPRESS

YSRCP hits back over Smriti Vanam

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Vijayawada

YSRCP leader and former minister Merugu Nagarjuna condemned the TDP-led NDA government's move to privatise the operation of Ambedkar Smrithi Vanam under the PPP model, calling it a deliberate attempt to erase Dr BR Ambedkar's legacy. He recalled that the ₹450 crore project was initiated by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy to uphold Ambedkar's ideals.

YSRCP leaders on Monday paid tributes to Dr BR Ambedkar at the Smirithi Vanam on his Jayanthi, slamming the government's neglect, allegedly denying electricity, poor maintenance, and making the site inaccessible.

Nagarjuna warned against attempts to repeat past moves like offering the land to private entities.

MAN KILLED A man was killed in a road accident near Osmannagar Circle in Kollur on Monday. The deceased, S Prabhakar, was a resident of Gulmohar Park. He was hit by a tipper, allegedly driven by the driver in an inebriated condition

APSCHE launches File Information Status System

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Vijayawada



APSCHE Chairman held a meeting with officials on Monday | EXPRESS

THE Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education (APSCHE) launched the File Information Status System on April 14 to streamline administrative processes and enhance stakeholder engagement. The launch, coinciding with Ambedkar Jayanti, reaffirmed APSCHE's commitment to Dr BR Ambedkar's vision of inclusive development and transparency.

The digital platform aims to eliminate the need for physical visits to the APSCHE office. Students, faculty, and institutional heads can now track the status of their files and applications in real time. The system reflects the Council's motto: "No wasting money, No travel, Just instant access to APSCHE," promoting ease of access, accountability, and operational efficiency.

Chairman of APSCHE Prof. K Madhu Murthy said the initiative marks a major milestone in the Council's digital transformation. "This initiative will reduce unnecessary delays, promote transparency, and allow officers to focus on core functions rather than responding to frequent in-person inquiries," he stated.

The key features of the system include real-time file status updates, reduced costs and time for stakeholders, and improved internal efficiency. Every file movement is recorded and accessible online, enhancing transparency and building trust in APSCHE operations.

Prof. Madhu said the platform ensures that every stakeholder, whether a student, faculty member, or institutional head, can engage with APSCHE more transparently and efficiently.

By minimising manual tracking and in-person visits, the system is expected to improve productivity, speed up decision-making, and enhance coordination with universities and affiliated colleges. APSCHE officials and staff have received training to ensure smooth integration of the platform across departments.

The File Information Status System is now live and accessible through APSCHE's official portal, marking a step forward in tech-enabled, paperless governance in the higher education sector.

Chennai sees rise in seizure of smuggled drones

Last year, Customs officials confiscated at least 200 Chinese made drones worth ₹2 cr

SIDDHARTH PRABHAKAR
@ Chennai

GOLD, wildlife, and narcotics have been the usual contrabands seized by the Chennai Customs, but of late, smuggling of Chinese drones into Tamil Nadu from Southeast Asian nations and Gulf countries through airports and seaports is on the rise. This is due to the spike in demand for the equipment in the grey market, sources said.

According to a 2022 February notification of the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, import of drones is completely banned in fully assembled Completely Built-up (CBU) form, fully disassembled Completely Knocked Down (CKD) form, or partially assembled Semi Knocked Down (SKD) form, barring exceptions provided for Research and Development, Defence and security purposes.

In the last financial year, Chennai Air Customs has seized at least 200 Chinese-made drones worth more than ₹2 crore from passengers who arrived by air from Singapore, Malaysia and UAE. Data sourced through RTI shows that this is a significant increase from the 67 drones seized in 2019-20 and 30 in 2023-24.

This might just be the tip of the iceberg, say sources, pointing to the seizure of 4,240 toy drones worth ₹2.34 crore by the Chennai Seaport Customs on February 12. RTI data also show that drones are smuggled through Bengaluru airport too, with around 250 drones seized from 2019-20 to 2023-24. Multiple cases have also been busted by the Delhi Customs and Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) teams across the country. Most of these drones have been sourced from DJI, a Chinese firm, sources said.

Going by the thumb rule that Customs foils just 10% of all smuggling bids, the number of drones brought into the country could be significantly more.

Official sources say that smugglers dismantle the drones and conceal it in their checked-in baggage and declare it as electronics to avoid Customs scrutiny.

These are sold in electronics shops across cities. In Chennai, they are available in Triplicane, but the traders don't issue any sales receipt for them.

Drunk man creates trouble in temple, killed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bhubaneswar

A 55-year-old man was hacked to death by a group in Bolagarh, about 67 km from the state capital, after he reportedly created nuisance inside a temple under the influence of alcohol.

The deceased Pratap Sethi was a native of Gudia Sahi within Bolagarh police limits in Khurda. Sethi, reportedly in an inebriated state, entered the Shiva temple in his village during the Pana Sankranti rituals. He even attempted to touch the feet of the deity when one of the accused persons stopped him. Sources said, Sethi reportedly assaulted him for opposing his entry into the temple. After a few hours, Sethi and his family members again went to the person's house to confront him and a heated exchange broke out between them.

The latter's supporters rushed to his rescue and a brawl broke out between the two groups. At least five persons attacked Sethi with sharp weapons and fled. He sustained injuries in his chest and was rushed to a hospital where the doctors declared him received dead. His son Rasananda Sethi was also injured in the attack but his condition is stated to be stable. Police said the identity of three accused persons involved in the crime have been established and a search operation has been launched to nab them. A case was registered.

3 killed, 2 hurt after speeding SUV rams into electric bus & police patrol vehicle

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kadapa



High-speed road accident in Kadapa claims three lives and left two other injured on Monday | EXPRESS

A high-speed road accident near Nadimpalle in Vontimitta mandal, Kadapa district, claimed three lives and left two others injured on Monday. The incident involved a Scorpio SUV, an electric bus, and a highway patrol (Rakshak) vehicle.

Vontimitta police said the Scorpio, travelling from Tirupati to Nandyal at over 100 kmph, rammed into an electric bus heading towards Tirupati from Kadapa. The force of the collision propelled the Scorpio into a highway patrol vehicle trailing the bus, which subsequently hit a roadside tree.

The Scorpio was completely mangled, with its roof torn off. The three occupants inside died on the spot due to severe head injuries. Police identified the deceased as Dharma Reddy (30) of Kothapalli in Chagalamarri mandal, Vinod (30) of Somayajulapalli village in Bandi Atmakur mandal, and Tejeshwar Naidu (32) of Housing Board Colony, Nandyal.

Sunil Kumar, also from the Housing Board Colony, sustained serious injuries. Constable Raghunath Reddy, who was driving the Rakshak vehicle, and another individual were also injured.

Vontimitta Circle Inspector (CI) Babu and Sub-Inspector (SI) Shivaprasad reached the scene and shifted the injured to Kadapa Government Hospital using 108 emergency services. Police confirmed that the accident was caused by the excessive speed of the Scorpio. They registered a case and launched an investigation.

Minister for Transport and Youth Services Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy offered condolences to the families of the deceased and directed medical officials to provide the best possible treatment to the injured.

Fire dept rescues 1,055 lives, averts ₹935 cr loss

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Vijayawada



Fire dept display the gadgets as a part of Fire Services Commemoration Week | PRASANT MADUGULA

DIRECTOR of Fire Services D Murali Mohan on Monday said the department rescued 1,055 people during various calamities reported in the State, reaffirming its commitment to saving lives and preventing property loss during fire accidents and other untoward incidents.

The Fire Services Department launched a week-long Fire Services Week celebration at its State headquarters in Vijayawada. Officials and staff paid rich tributes to SH Ravikanth Mandal from Bihar, who was martyred in the line of duty.

In an official release, Murali Mohan said department officials averted several major mishaps across the State and saved property worth ₹935.26 crore during incidents such as fire accidents and floods. He noted that the department responded to 14,223 fire rescue calls across Andhra Pradesh. He said the department plans to purchase 111 additional fire tender vehicles in the coming year and upgrade all fire stations across the State. During the Budameru flash floods, fire services personnel cleaned 74,000 flood-affected houses and cleared 325 kilometres of road.

Murali Mohan said fire tenders have effectively prevented the spread of fire to nearby areas, thereby minimising loss of life and property.

He added that Fire Services Week is also being used to raise public awareness.

Officials are reaching out to schools, colleges, apartment complexes and hospitals to educate the public on fire prevention and safety measures.

TG govt is damaging nature, endangering wildlife: PM Modi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Hyderabad

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi has accused the Telangana government of chopping trees in the controversial 400-acre Kancha Gachibowli land near the University of Hyderabad.

Addressing a gathering in Haryana, on Sunday, after laying the foundation stone for Deenbandhu Chhotu Ram Thermal Power Plant at Kali village in Yamunanagar, the Prime Minister alleged that the Congress government in Telangana forgot its promises made to the people during the elections.



Modi said: "The Congress government in Telangana is busy clearing the forests with bulldozers. The State government is damaging the nature, endangering the wildlife. This is the working style of the Congress party. While the BJP government in Haryana is trying to make Bio-gas plants (Gobardhan), the Congress government in Telangana is destroying the nature and forests."

He said that there are two models of governance in front of you. "One is Congress model, which runs on lies. Another is BJP model, which runs on the basis of truth and our dream is to make Viksit Bharat," he added. Reacting to the PM's comments, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka in an informal interaction with reporters, said: "Narendra Modi has made comments on Telangana to distract and divert the attention of the people from SC sub-categorisation and enhancement of reservations to 42 percent for BCs." He said that the state government nowhere destroyed forests and killed animals. "It's our government's commitment to protecting forests," he added.

The TPCC Chief B Mahesh Kumar Goud alleged that Narendra Modi inaugurated five buildings in University of Hyderabad (UoH), which he said, were constructed by cutting off several trees without Forest, Municipal, and Environment permissions.

He lamented that the PM is shedding crocodile tears over Kancha Gachibowli land. Ridiculing Modi's speech on environment conversation, alleged that the PM had given lakhs of acres of forest land to corporate companies.

EXPRESS READ

30-year-old held for sexually harassing minor girl in TN

Coimbatore: A 30-year-old man was arrested under the POCSO Act for allegedly marrying and sexually harassing a 13-year-old girl. The incident came to light after the girl's parents reported her missing. The accused, Robert Clive, from Sulur allegedly lured her with promises of marriage. He took her to a temple, where he allegedly married her without her parents' knowledge. Based on a complaint, police arrested him

Four held with 106 kg of ganja worth ₹53 lakh in T'gana

Mahabubabad: The Kuravi police of Telangana arrested four smugglers and seized 106 kilograms of ganja worth ₹53 lakh. Based on the information, the police apprehended B Mahendra, M Narsing, M Chandra, and M Ramchandra while they tried to flee from the cops. During interrogation, the accused admitted to purchasing the ganja in Odisha and transporting it to Hyderabad for sale

బహిరంగ ప్రకటన

ఐదుమాలుమంగా యావన్మందికీ తెలియజేయునది ఏమనగా నా భర్తృదారుడు పాదల మోహన్‌సాయి, నుబర్ తోట నుబాయమ్మ, నెల్లూరు నివాసి వీరిని U.R. Enterprises తరపున మేనేజింగ్ పార్టనర్ రామయ్యదాం ఉప్పుర్ అనువారు శ్రీంది పెద్దాలు రాశాల ఆస్తికి జనరల్ పవర్ ఆఫ్ అటార్నీ ఏజెంటుగా నియమించినారు అలా ఉండగా G.P.A. అయిన పాదల మోహన్‌సాయి శ్రీంది పెద్దాలు రాశాల ఆస్తికి సంబంధించిన సేల్ డాక్యుమెంట్లు Document No. 2184 / 2014, dated 11/6/2024 మరియు Document No. 1429/ 2020 dated: 15.5.2020 (Sub Registrar Tirupati Rural) ను ఇట్లు మాలిపుడు దారిపోయినవి భగుల ఏవరికైనా పై డాక్యుమెంట్లు దొరికిన యెడల శ్రీంది తెలిపిన విరునామాకు పేర్కొనినదిగా కోరడమైనది. మరియు ఇందుమూలముగా ఏవరికైనా ఆర్థంతరాలు ఉన్నయెడల ఈ ప్రకటన వెలువడిన 7 రోజులలోగా తెలియజేయగలరు లేని యెడల ఏటువంటి ఆర్థంతరాలు లేనిదిగా భావించబడును.

ఆస్తి వివరాలు: తిరుపతి జిల్లా, తిరుపతి రిజిస్ట్రేషన్ డిస్ట్రిక్ట్ పరిధిలో, తిరుపతి రూరల్ సబ్-రిజిస్ట్రారు పరిధిలో చేరిన, తిరుపతి మండలం, ముత్తరాపాళ్యం పంచాయితీ సం.39లు బంట్రపాళ్యం గ్రామం, సర్వే నెం. 234/1, 234/2, 235/1, 235/2, 235/3, 235/4, 235/5, 224/బి, 225/బి, 227/4, 233/2 ఎర్రుదోని మెజర్డ్ శ్రీ వసుంధర డెవలపర్స్ సంస్థ గల యు 7.70ఇం భూమిని ఈదా తిరుపతి నారపే యుల్‌మెనిం. 41/జన/2134గా తే:21.05.2013నిన అప్రూవ్డ్ కాండిన శ్రీ బ్లుడాపన్ గార్డెన్స్ అను పేరు గల ప్లాట్‌లో సం.13వ ప్లాటు సదరు ప్లాటు ప్లాటులో నిర్మించి ఉన్న మిద్దెయిళ్లు గలు వగైరాలు.

హద్దులు: తూర్పు: సెం. 20వ ప్లాటు, దక్షిణం: సెం. 12వ ప్లాటు, పడమర: 40 అడుగులు వెడల్పు గల రే-అప్రుడ్ రోడ్డు, ఉత్తరం: సెం. 14వ ప్లాటు.

ఈ హద్దులలోని (1.08 అంకణములు స్థలము ఇందులో నిర్మించి ఉన్న జి.ప్లస్ మిద్దెయిళ్లు సమేతు 30 అంకణములు, ఈ ఇంటికి ఆమ్మి అయి యావత్తు వరకారములనూ ఇయిందు సంబంధించిన హుమాలు రాబోయే యావత్తు బాజీమిండే హక్కులతోబ్బి

Sd/-. ఎన్.మనోహర్, M.A., B.L.,
అడ్వకేట్, తిరుపతి. సెల్: 93469 81333.

CHANGE OF NAME & DOB

I, Venkata Laxmi (Name of spouse as per NOK) is legally wedded spouse of No 1261262M, Rank NAIK (TS), Name Kalgur Narayana Swamy, Residing at D.No: 12-5-120, FCI Colony, Near Housing Board, Anantapuramu City, Anantapuramu Dist - 515 001, A.P. I have Changed my name from Venkata Laxmi (Old Name) to **KALGUR VENKATA LAKSHMI** (New Name) and Date of Birth also changed from 1964 to 10-06-1964. This is for kind information of all concerned

कोल इंडिया लिमिटेड
(एक महारत्न कंपनी)

"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of Coal India Ltd **www.coalindia.in** / respective Subsidiary Company, CIL e-procurement portal **https://coalindiatenders.nic.in** and Central Procurement Portal **https://eprocure.gov.in** In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal **https://gem.gov.in**".

SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED
Registered Office : Sri Towers,Plot No.14A, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai- 600 032.
Administrative Office for the states of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana at No-3-6-478,4th Floor, Anand Estate Liberty Road, Himayath Nagar, Hyderabad-500029, Website : www.Shriramfinance.in
Branch Office : PUNGANUR

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

We, M/s. Shriram Finance Limited (formerly known as "Shriram City Union finance Limited" amalgamated with Shriram Transport Finance limited and converted as Shriram Transport Finance Limited as per the orders of NCLT Bench-II Chennai dated 09.11.2022) and thereafter obtained the approval to rename as Shriram Finance Ltd (Ministry of Corporate Finance letter dated 30.11.2022), is a company registered under the Companies Act, 2013 and also registered with RBI to do Non-Banking Finance business having its registered office at Sri Towers, Plot No.14A, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600032.

Where as, the undersigned being the authorised officer of Shriram Finance Limited (SFL) under the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (said Act) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (said Rules) issued demand notices to the Borrowers details of which are mentioned in the table below to repay the amount mentioned in the said demand notices.

The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said Rules, on this **11.04.2025**

Borrower Name and Address
1) **B.Sarath Babu,** S/o.B.Reddenna Chetty,D no-656,Main Bazar, PeddaMandyam , Thambalapalli, Annamaiah Dist-517297
2) **B.Rani Haritha,** D/o. Sarath Babu,D no-656,Main Bazar, PeddaMandyam ,Thambalapalli, Annamaiah Dist-517297
3) **B.Rani Harshitha,** D/o. Sarath Babu, D no-656,Main Bazar, PeddaMandyam , Thambalapalli, Annamaiah Dist-517297
4) **Mithra Mukesh,** S/o.Sarath Babu, D no-656,Main Bazar, PeddaMandyam , Thambalapalli, Annamaiah Dist-517297
5) **M.Subramanyam,** S/o.Late.Pedda Reddenna,Residing at Bus Stand center, PeddaMandyam , Thambalapalli, Annamaiah Dist-517297

Amount due as per Demand Notice: Topay:Rs.9060407/- (Rupees Ninty Lakh Sixty thousand Four Hundred and seven Only) under reference of Loan A/c No:- PUNGATF2302240005
Date Of Demand Notice: 08..03.2024
LoanAmount : Rs.50,00,000/- (In words Rupees. Fifty Lakhs Only)
Possession Taken on: 11.04.2025

DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY
Annamaiah District, erstwhile Chittoor District, Thamballapalli Sub District, Pedda Mandyam Mandal, Pedda Mandyam Gram Panchayat and village accounts, Ward No.6, Western Row of Galivedu to Gurramkonda bus Road, Circar Dry Sy.No.485/2 a total extent of 250 sq.yards of site and in it constructed building, bounded on:- East : Galivedu to Gurramkonda Road; West : Road leading from the main road to the land in Sy.No.485/1, North : Land of B. Sharath Babu, South: Land of B.Sharath Babu;

This notice is also hereby to caution the general public at large that the authorized officer of SFL is in the lawful Symbolic Possession of the immovable property mentioned herein above and the Borrowers or any person shall not after receipt of this notice transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise deal with/ alienate any of the above mentioned secured assets referred to in this notice, without prior written consent of SFL.

Place : Punganur **Sd/- Authorised Officer**
Dated : 11.04.2025 **Shriram Finance Limited**

SBI STATE BANK OF INDIA
STRESSED ASSETS RECOVERY BRANCH, 3rd Floor, Upstairs of KFC, Surya Prakash Square, Gurunanak Nagar Road, N.T. R. District, Vijayawada - 520008. A.P. Ph: 0866-2546922
Authorised Officer's Details: Name: Sri M. Veerabhadra Rao (Chief Manager), Mobile No.77022 76699
For Property Inspection : 92912 32223

E - AUCTION SALE NOTICE

SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 READ WITH PROVISO RULE 8(6) r/w 9(1) (SALE OF IMMOVABLE ASSETS CHARGED TO THE BANK UNDER THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002).

The undersigned as Authorized Officer of **State Bank of India** has taken over **POSSESSION** of the following property u/s 13(4) of the SARFAESI Act 2002. Public at large is informed that e-Auction (under SARFAESI Act, 2002) of the charged property mentioned below for realisation of Bank's dues will be held on **"AS IS WHERE IS" and "AS IS WHAT IS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS" BASIS** and on the terms and conditions specified hereunder.

Borrower : **Uppala Nalini**, W/o Dasari Srinivasulu, Dr No.12-24/1, Salman Centre,Opp Lakhsmi Weigh bridge, Hasthinapuram,Chirala-523 155,Andhra Pradesh. **Dasari Srinivasulu**, S/o Kondaiah, Dr No.12-24/1, Salman Centre, Opp. Lakhsmi Weigh bridge, Hasthinapuram, Chirala, Prakasam Dist -523 155,Andhra Pradesh. **Uppala Nalini**, W/o Dasari Srinivasulu, Assoc. Professor in ECE Dept, St. Anns College of Engineering. TECH Nayunipalle (V),Vetapalem (M), Chirala, Prakasam Dist -523 157, Andhra Pradesh. **Dasari Srinivasulu**, S/o Kondaiah, Assoc. Professor in ECE Dept, St Anns College of Engineering.TECH Nayunipalle(V), Vetapalem (M), Chirala, Prakasam Dist -523 157, Andhra Pradesh. **Uppala Nalini**, W/o Dasari Srinivasulu, Dr no 2-22/1, Nadimur, Vivekananda Statue Street, Kaligir, SPSR Nellore-524224, Andhra Pradesh. **Dasari Srinivasulu**, S/o Kondaiah, Dr no 2-22/1,Nadimur, Vivekananda Statue Street,Kaligir, SPSR Nellore-524224, Andhra Pradesh. **Demand Notice Date : 09-10-2024**

Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs.30,12,745/- as on 09.10.2024 + interest and other expenses, costs, charges etc (Less repayment if any).

SCHEDULE OF PROPERTY

Schedule - A: All that piece and parcel of property situated in Guntur District, Guntur Sub-District, Guntur Municipal Corporation Area, Guntur Not yet Surveyed D No.579, Ac.7.00 cents, D No. 578, 568/1, 567-A, as per Guntur Municipal Corporation Survey, Guntur D.Nos. 579,578/1A, 568/1A, 567-A, an extent of 18360 Sq.Yds of site, is being **Bounded by (Nearest Door No. 15-15-79): East:** Property belongs to T Lakshmi Narayana and others, **North:** Property belongs to B Venkata Subbaiah and others, **Again East:** 40' width road to some extent and Thota Venkateswarlu's property to some extent, **South:** Property belongs to Thota Sambaiah and others, **Again East:** Property belongs to Thota Sambaiah and others, **Again South:** Property belongs to Thota Venkateswarlu, **West:** Tholusuri Sadasiva Rao, Talari Ramu's property to some extent and Manchikalapudi Srinivasa Rao's property to some extent, **Again North:** Property belongs to Gudi Ram Prasad and others, **Again West:** Property belongs to Athota Chalapathi Rao, **Again North:** Property belongs to Athota Sridevi.

Within these boundaries an extent of 18360 Sq.yds or 15351.34 Sq.mts of site, in which

Schedule - B: An extent of undivided, unspecified share measuring 47.1/4 Sq.yds or 39.50 Sq.mts of site in an extent of undivided and unspecified extent of 11642.1/4 Sq. yds out of 18360 Sq. yds along with one Double Bed Room Flat No.503, located in the fourth floor of 'B' Block i.e. Anjanadri Block in "Tirumala Garden" with a plinth area of 1117 Sq.ft (including common area and one car parking area in the stilt floor of Anjanadri Block) and along with right upon common amenities and common passages, is being **Bounded by: East:** Common Corridor, **South:** Open to Sky, **West:** Open to Sky, **North:** Open to Sky.

(Covered under Regd. Sale Deed Doc. No.2110/2019 dated: 01.03.2019)

In the above said four boundaries a plinth area of 1117 Sq.fts flat, including common area and parking area and with all easement rights.

Reserve Price:Rs.19,43,000/- EMD: Rs.1,94,300/- Bid Multiplier Amount: Rs.10,000/-

Date of E-auction: 22-05-2025 Time: 11.00 AM to 04.00 PM

Date & Time of Inspection of property: 15-04-2025 to 21-05-2025 from 10.00 A.M to 04.00 P.M.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE E-AUCTION ARE AS UNDER:

1) For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in **State Bank of India**, the Secured Creditor's website **www.sbi.co.in/web/sbi-in-the-news/auction-notices . For Registration, EMD, Auction Details etc., visit https://baanknet.com/eauction-psb/x-login** of the service provider : **M/s PSB Alliance and M/s. Baanknet, e-Auction Portal: https://baanknet.com & Toll free Number : + 91 - 8291220220, Mail ID : support.baanknet@psballiance.com.**

2) The purchaser shall bear the applicable stamp duties/ additional stamp duty/ transfer charges, fee etc. and also all the statutory / non-statutory dues, taxes, rates, assessment charges, fees etc.

Note: Interested bidder may deposit Pre-Bid EMD with PSB Alliance before the close of e-Auction. Credit of Pre-bid EMD shall be given to the bidder only after receipt of payment in PSB Alliance's Bank acount and updation of such information in the e-auction website. This may take some time as per banking process and hence bidders, in their own interest, are advised to submit the pre-bid EMD amount well in advance to avoid any last minute problem.

The Sale will attract the provisions of sec 194-1A of the Income Tax Act.

Date: 11-04-2025, Place: VIJAYAWADA **Sd/-Authorized Officer, STATE BANK OF INDIA**



Like writing, reading is a protest against the insufficiencies of life

Mario Vargas Llosa

INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY. IT IS A MISSION.

— Ramnath Goenka

LESSONS IN MOHUN BAGAN'S DOUBLE TO LIFT INDIAN FOOTBALL

INDIAN football is teetering on the edge, beset by severe administrative lapses and factionalism. A recent high court order has stayed a decision taken by the All India Football Federation to appoint a secretary general who was part of the elected body's executive committee. Over a week after the I-League closed, its winner is yet to be officially announced because of the federation's indecision. Churchill Brothers, who finished with 40 points, and Inter Kashi (39 points) are awaiting a verdict from the AIFF Appeals Committee. This bizarre situation comes after the national body's earlier decision to award Inter Kashi three points after Namdhari FC were found guilty of fielding an ineligible player during a match in January. That ruling was later stayed by the appeals panel. On Sunday, Churchill Brothers threatened to boycott the upcoming Super Cup in protest, accusing the AIFF of denying them their "rightful place and trophy".

Meanwhile, the future of the Indian Super League hinges on a meeting between the AIFF and the top league's promoters. The national team has also found the going hard in recent times. The team was in such a desperate situation that it had to request Sunil Chhetri, 40, to come out of retirement. After their goalless draw against Bangladesh in the AFC Asian qualifier in Shillong last month, coach Manolo Márquez questioned the state of Indian football.

Amid all this gloom, Mohun Bagan Super Giant have made it a season to remember. One of India's oldest football clubs took a giant step last week by winning both the ISL Cup and Shield. Mumbai City FC had achieved the double four years ago, but that was under the limits imposed by the Covid pandemic. There is a lesson for other Indian football clubs in Mohun Bagan's resurgence after a long fallow phase. When the ISL started, the club got into a tussle with the AIFF over joining the league. Then came assured finances with a change in ownership and an intrepid result-oriented overhaul that kept the club's huge fan base at home and across the world on its side. Such a transformation is easier said, especially for older clubs. But some hard lessons need to be learned if India is to get anywhere in the world's biggest sport.

ENSURE DIVERSITY AT INFO COMMISSIONS

THE Odisha government's appointments to the State Information Commission last week came after a long wait. It picked a full-time state chief information commissioner and three information commissioners at one go. The move lends strength to the panel that was operating with just two commissioners since October and would hopefully expedite the disposal of information requests and clear the backlog of more than 10,000 appeals. However, what came as a surprise was the government's decision to select three retired government service officers. Two of them, including the state CIC, retired as IAS officers, while the third was an IPS officer. It's not that bureaucrats have not been picked for these positions earlier, but not in such a number at once. A report prepared in 2019-20 by the Satark Nagrik Sangathan and Centre for Equity Studies had found that close to 59 percent of information commissioners were retired government officers. The question is whether a panel loaded with former bureaucrats would allow smooth access to information that can hold the government answerable.

The Right To Information Act 2005 clearly laid out that the commissioners should be persons of eminence in public life and specified diverse fields such as law, social service, science and technology, management, journalism, administration and governance, from which they can be selected by a committee headed by the chief minister with leader of the opposition and a cabinet minister as members. One standout feature of the law is it defined a basket of expertise from which the commissioners could be picked. Filling it with ex-bureaucrats would go against its spirit. In 2019, the Supreme Court had observed that states must look beyond bureaucrats while selecting CICs and information commissioners.

Today, access to information about the government faces increasing challenges, with more requests rejected or delayed. The law's spirit is facing dilution as a debate over Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023 rages. The RTI Act is one of the most consequential legislations India has seen in the last two decades. Giving common people the right to access information about public authorities is a powerful tool to make governments answerable. Ensuring the tool's effectiveness would require a fine balance in the information commissions' composition.

QUICK TAKE

KILLING TO SURVIVE

OVER 250 Mossad operatives—including three former chiefs of the intelligence agency—have backed a letter criticising Israel's return to war in Gaza. The letter, first signed by Israeli air force veterans and reservists, accused Benjamin Netanyahu of putting his political survival before the lives of soldiers and the remaining 59 hostages. In response, Netanyahu has ordered the dismissal of all the active-duty reservists who signed it. Meanwhile, Israeli forces intensified land and air attacks on Gaza and continued to block the entry of all humanitarian aid into the enclave. If the world ever needed a clear understanding of the reason so many Palestinians are dying again, this is it.

New research shows that seven out of 10 employees in India are insecure. This leads to anxiety, which in turn leads to unhappiness. Time for some hard questions

THE REALITY OF THE DISTRACTED EMPLOYEE

HARISH BIJOOR



Brand guru and founder of Harish Bijoor Consults



MANDAR PARDIKAR

THE 'new' four-letter word in our midst today is jobs. Those who have it are unhappy, and those who don't have it are equally unhappy. Those who are doing well in their jobs are insecure, and those who are doing badly even more so. Those who have good jobs are looking to do something else, and those who don't have those jobs are looking for those very same jobs. I am venturing out to say this based on a new piece of employee-exploration research.

I am just out of a skin-deep research exercise that covers 8,000-plus people all across India. This is an exercise carried out as a snap-poll across terrains of work that actually pay a monthly salary to an individual on their rolls. This is not about the gig worker. This is about anyone who has an appointment letter that makes them a 'permanent employee' (whatever that means). This research covers both physical and virtual spaces of work. It covers the IT worker as much as it covers those in manufacturing, telecom, pharma and nine other verticals of work that employ large numbers in India today.

The output is shocking. The one key element in the jobs marketplace of India is insecurity (71 percent). The second element is anxiety (59 percent) and the third in the pecking order is unhappiness (47 percent).

The headline output of this exploration—if it is to be believed—is that seven out of 10 employees in India are insecure. Insecurity can be good or bad. While insecurity is good to an extent to the employer, it is equally bad, as it makes the mind of the employee focused on to job search in the world outside that much more than to focus on the job at hand. The distracted employee is a reality at the workplace. And this leads to a lack of productivity.

While employee attrition rates are expected to be lesser in such an environment, this is not such a great positive. Insecurity cuts both ways. While keeping employees insecure just that wee bit is fine to get them to work hard, making them keep wondering as to when they will lose their jobs is not such a great thing at all. The negative angst can kill—it can kill productivity and interest altogether, among other things.

This latent insecurity, as expressed by a small set of explored people in the job market of India, is telling. Insecurity leads to anxiety (and attendant physical and mental health issues) and anxiety leads to unhappiness. Just as we seem to have those touted and highly advertised 'happy places to work', we seem to have a whole host of 'unhappy work places' which no one is wanting to explore or discuss for a start, leave alone celebrate.

Those who have jobs have job-envy. They are forever looking across the fence at a brother, a sister or even a father or a mother or a relative who has a 'better job' (again, whatever that means). Those who have jobs do have a condition called 'job insecurity'. What if I lose my job? And when will I lose my job? While three out of 10 are totally secure and happy, seven of that 10 sit in this rather insecure boat sailing a choppy sea of insecure global headwinds and the accompanying tumult of artificial intelligence and all that it promises (or threatens) to accomplish today.

As we explore age segments of people who sit across these proverbial two sides of the fence, the younger ones below 30 are largely that much more secure than the older ones. They are new to the workplace. They have been given the right responsibilities. They enjoy a work-life balance as promised to them in the campus pre-placement talk.

The 31-39 age group is confused. Those between the ages 40 and 59 are the most insecure, and those above that age group seem the happiest of the lot, having escaped the '*chakravyuh*' of the job market altogether post retirement.

The biggest age group with the biggest set of issues seems the 40-59 age group. This group has the biggest latent demand for a regular and secure salary-paying job. The children are growing up and the educational needs are to be funded. Parents are growing older and their medical needs need to be attended to. Their immediate workplace seems to be flooded with the young. New technologies are replacing competencies that were once considered needed. The headhunters have stopped calling them with new offers across the fence. The stress out here is palpable. There is plenty of sweat to smell in this category. Tears as well.

As you read this, it might be good to have a quick and honest answer at hand. Are you insecure at the job you are doing? Are you anxious as to what's going to happen next? Do you feel flossed over? Are you seeing younger folk outnumber the older in your work space (in the field and in the offices)? Are your skills coming under question? Is AI threatening your job? Have you embraced AI in totality at your work? Are you ahead of the curve of AI, on it, or behind?

If the answer to these questions is largely a yes, it's time for people of all ages to re-invent their attitude to jobs and work. In that order. It is time everyone looked at themselves as a workforce of one. It is time to re-invent the ability to work on your own and not for someone. Reinvent the ability to do something on your own. Something that can be monetised, even in a small manner. It could be a hobby you want to monetise. It could be your ability to write, your ability to teach, your ability to dance or teach, healthy eating or, for that matter, your ability to create socially relevant projects that can give you work, and maybe even an income in the future, if not now. Also your ability to be that specialised resource, whose ability can be sought after by industry on a consulting basis in the future.

The key question: must we then have jobs at all? Were we meant to be working for others on a monthly salary basis at all? Were we meant to sell our working hours to a company at all? Were we meant to be a salaried class? Were we meant to be wedded to our desks and our desktops? Were we meant to do more? And must we do more than just sell our hours to a job we have?

Even as we think that out, there is a calming thought in what Oscar Wilde had to say: "The best way to appreciate your job is to imagine yourself without one." On that abrupt note, touché!

(Views are personal)

(harishbijoor@hotmail.com)

CASTING A WIDER NET ACROSS INDIAN OCEAN

NITIN A GOKHALE



National security analyst and founder of BharatShakti group

INDIA recently withdrew transhipment facility for Bangladeshi goods through Indian ports and airports, citing congestion creating problems for Indian exports. In reality, India was sending a strong signal to Bangladesh's interim government led by Muhammad Yunus about limits to India's tolerance towards its hostile acts.

New Delhi has been patient in not reacting hastily to Dhaka's many provocations since Sheikh Hasina was ousted last August. But Yunus's invitation to China to refurbish a Second World War airbase at Lalmonirhat in Rangpur division may have crossed India's red line, forcing the decision on stopping transhipment. The airbase in northern Bangladesh is no more than 10 km from the Indian border and 160 km from the Siliguri Corridor, which connects India's northeastern states to the rest of India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with Yunus in Bangkok on the sidelines of the BIMSTEC summit, days prior to the decision to stop the transhipment facility, was marked by lack of any warmth.

In contrast, Modi's interaction with Thailand's leadership and his subsequent tour of Sri Lanka served to bolster India's Act East and Neighbourhood First policies, reflecting the mixed nature of India's immediate and extended neighbourhood. In Bangkok, India, along with Thailand, took the lead to reenergise BIMSTEC, the grouping that straddles the Indian subcontinent and southeast Asia, besides elevating the India-Thailand relationship to a strategic partnership.

In Sri Lanka, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake went out of the way to assure India about not allowing his country's territory for any act inimical to India's security interests. A defence pact—elusive for decades—signed during the visit is testimony to a newfound comfort between the countries. The optics and outcomes of the visit were evidence that India's unconditional assistance of over $4 billion to Sri Lanka during its worst financial and political crisis three years ago is not forgotten in Colombo.

A trilateral agreement between India, Sri Lanka and the UAE to develop the Trincomalee port as a strategic energy hub and India's assistance to Sri Lanka in further strengthening its digital infrastructure cements India's position as a major development partner.

Essentially, India has been generous to friends and cold to those who show signs of hostility or hubris, adopting a carrot and stick policy coupled with enormous patience in dealing with recalcitrant neighbours such as Maldives and Nepal, and of late, Bangladesh.

The PM's recent visits abroad indicate India's relentless focus on the neighbourhood. A month ago, Modi's trip to Mauritius was marked by a deeper engagement with the strategically located Indian Ocean island. On the visit to Mauritius exactly a decade after his first trip on its National Day, Modi announced the formulation of MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), which appears to be an upscaling of his 2015 SAGAR initiative (Security and Growth for All in the Region), also announced in Port Louis.



ANI

India has been generous to friendly neighbours and cold to those showing signs of hostility. The prime minister's MAHASAGAR vision, announced in Port Louis, can herald a new era of leadership in the Indian Ocean region

While the specifics of MAHASAGAR are yet to be spelled out, it could be harbinger of a new phase of Indian leadership in the Indian Ocean focused on trade, development and security assistance. The PM reiterated India's commitment to supporting the security of Mauritius's Exclusive Economic Zone. He pledged to extend assistance to the Mauritius Coast Guard, which has been mentored by India since inception.

Besides Mauritius, India has laid special emphasis on engaging with and providing security to smaller but important countries like Comoros, Seychelles, Madagascar and Mozambique to extend its reach in the western Indian Ocean.

In a period of heightened geopolitical uncertainty, India's MAHASAGAR articulation is a timely reminder of its focus on multidimensional cooperation with the Global South. The challenge for New Delhi would be to consolidate the gains of SAGAR and bring together the efforts of various arms of the government to deliver on its promise of trade for growth, capacity building for sustainable growth and activities for mutual security across the region whose shores are washed by the waters of the Indian Ocean. If the Modi government is successful in achieving a synthesis of its diverse sectoral efforts under the MAHASAGAR rubric, it may well herald a new, bolder role for India in the region.

European countries, buffeted by the Trump storm, are increasingly looking to India as a more reliable partner in the technology, security and economic spheres. Individually, European powerhouses such as France have invested heavily in their relationship with India, thanks to PM Modi's personal chemistry with President Emmanuel Macron. The recent visit of the EU president and 22 commissioners to New Delhi has given a new impetus to India-EU relationship and an India-Europe free trade agreement is likely to deepen it.

There are challenges, too. The ties with China, for one. Or balancing between Russia and the US at a time when none of the old templates of foreign policy may apply. Overall, India's multi-alignment strategy has resulted in beneficial outcomes. Navigating uncertain times that Trump's tariff war has unleashed will be a big challenge to the Modi government in the short term. *(Views are personal)*

MAILBAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

CPM's difficulty

Ref: *CPM's Baby faces tough tasks, gets to prove worth* (Apr 14). The editorial is apt. A party, which is near its political death because of the negative politics it played over decades, is now handed over to Baby to perform the last rites. To defeat Indira Gandhi, the CPI(M) joined hands with the BJP; now the same party is aligning with the Congress. It has failed to develop its own positive narrative to attract voters.
Duggaraju Srinivasa Rao, Vijayawada

Alliance blues

Ref: *AIADMK mortgaged itself after two raids, BJP tie doomed to fail: CM Stalin* (Apr 13). At the heart of this alliance lies a troubling narrative of compulsion. For Edappadi K Palaniswami, aligning with the BJP was a decision made at the metaphorical gunpoint to shield himself and his associates. The decision has not only alienated large sections of the party's cadre but also risks eroding its voter base, which has long valued the party's regional pride and secular credentials.
K J Haroon Basha, Vaniyambadi

Increasing fertility

Ref: *Andhra government to promote 11 major crops* (Apr 14). It's a significant move, particularly for small and medium farmers to 'rotate' the crops they sow. Scientifically, leguminous crops or pulses like pigeon peas, peanuts, soyabean, and black, red and green grams add nitrogen to the soil, which is important to increase fertility and is not possible through paddy. This awareness should be inculcated among farmers.
A Sreeramarao, Visakhapatnam

Caste correction

Ref: *Awakened by a slap* (Apr 13). An open-minded society can emerge with two rules. One, there should be no caste mentioned on any application form, starting with school admissions. Two, the caste name should not appear elsewhere too. Instead, the village, town or a parent's name can be added. Those who require reservation can submit their certificates to the appropriate authorities.
Preetha S, Ottapalam

US-Iran talks

Ref: *Iran says US rushing nuclear agreement* (Apr 13). A successful negotiation between Iran and the US may yield a number of positive outcomes. First, it will put a brake on Iran's uranium enrichment programme. Second, the lifting of sanctions on Iran will benefit the countries that were largely dependent on it for their oil imports, including India, the third largest buyer of Iranian oil in the world till 2018.
Tushar Anand, Patna

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POSTS OF THE DAY



Yogi Adityanath @myogiadityanath

There are many cases pending in our courts. To avoid unnecessary a waste of court time for pending cases, separate hearings should be held at the tribunal level.



Mamata Banerjee @MamataOfficial

I am saddened by the demise of Sri Sudhir Roy, President of the Shibmandir Durgapuja. He was a stalwart organiser and community leader, who made us proud.



Akhilesh Yadav @yadavakhilesh

Congratulations to everyone on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar! Only the unity of PDA will save the Constitution.

'EC must clear the air on surge in electors'

A more broad-based selection panel for CEC will create greater confidence, says former EC Ashok Lavasa

FORMER Election Commissioner (EC) **Ashok Lavasa** speaks to **Preetha Nair** about the current controversy on Epic duplication and says the only document available to weed it out is the unique identification number. **Excerpts**:

What's view on the row over duplicate Election Photo Identity cards?

We have to look at it from two different points of view. The complaint that has been filed concerns people having the same Epic number, that is, more than one person having the same Epic number. The Election Commission has also acknowledged that the problem exists and is trying to resolve it. It is a welcome sign, and the issue should not be politicised.

The other issue is de-duplication, which the EC has been attempting for a long time. One problem is one person having one Epic number registering himself in more than one place, and the other is two people having the same Epic number. We need to believe what the CEC has said - that they will try to ensure that every voter has a unique Epic number.

ECI said it's a legacy issue. How can it be addressed?

The ECI is right. Earlier, the electoral registration system was with the state chief electoral officers and district electoral officers. Now, the electoral roll database of states and UTs has been shifted to the integrated ERONET platform.

ERONET requires every state to have a different series. However, regarding the de-duplication issue, the EC has to devise a mechanism to identify which elector is registering at more than one place.

The ECI is set to link the voter ID card with Aadhaar. This is at variance with its earlier position that linkage could be optional.

The only document available to weed out the duplication of voter cards is the unique identification number (UID). So, if you link Aadhaar with the electoral roll that is the only possible way to assign any uniqueness to the voter list or the Epic unless some other viable technical methodology is found.

Many have raised concerns about privacy infringement, voter profiling, etc.

The Aadhaar Act does not make having an Aadhaar mandatory. The EC has held, and in my view, the right to vote is not dependent on having an Aadhaar. That should be separated. As far as the Aadhaar is concerned, it can be used for administrative purposes to de-duplicate. That doesn't mean you can deny somebody the right to be included in the electoral list if they are eligible.

Shouldn't it be optional?

If you make it optional, it cannot be used as a screening mechanism. The debate should be on how to de-duplicate. As far as the present system is concerned, this is the only way because Aadhaar has biometrics.

We need to ask ourselves a question: What harm can be caused to a voter if it is identified that she is the unique person registered on the electoral roll? The privacy of her Aadhaar can still be protected as provided for in the law.



Opposition parties flagged concerns on the alleged surge in electors during the Assembly polls in Maharashtra and Delhi. How will one explain the surge?

Identifying the voter's uniqueness is an answer to that problem because one person is not supposed to have more than one Aadhaar. Regarding the surge in the number of electors, the EC must explain why the number of electors registered increased abnormally. That is one part of the story.

The question is how to de-duplicate them if these people were already enrolled in another place and were also enrolled here. The EC is already in consultation with political parties and technical departments. So they have to come up with a solution because there are already 98 crore registered voters. We don't know how many people could be registered in more than one place; the same person registered in more than one place. In my view, Aadhaar is the only document that can be used for de-duplication.

The Opposition has been alleging of manipulation of EVMs. Are they susceptible to it?

Verbatim

These are two different questions - whether EVMs have been manipulated and if they can be manipulated. Since these matters are in court, the EC will come up with its explanation and let the courts decide. There have been over 40 cases in the courts on this. The court has given neither an opinion nor judgment against the EVMs or suggestions that EVMs are manipulated.

On the question of whether the EVMs can be manipulated in the future, I feel that the EC, along with the stakeholders, must continuously review the systems to plug any loopholes.

The Opposition wants 100% verification of VVPAT slips.

Let the EC talk to the stakeholders, and if they think this will create confidence, then they can go for 100% counting of slips in one or two random assembly constituencies. The courts have increased VVPAT verification to five random EVMs in each Assembly segment, and no discrepancy has been found so far. The electoral process is about building confidence.

How can the trust deficit between the EC and the Opposition be bridged?

It's about engaging with the stakeholders, taking their concerns seriously, and respond. Transparency will create more confidence.

CEC and ECs appointment under the new law is being contested by the Opposition

A more broad-based selection panel will create greater confidence.

Your view on 'One Nation, One Election'

It is essential to consider whether the administrative gains or the management efficiency through simultaneous elections is beneficial. I don't see how an election in Kerala or Nagaland affects any other state.

The provisions in the draft bill say that in the event of a government falling in the middle of its tenure, there will be a new election, but it will be for a curtailed period. If they are still not ruling out the possibility of elections taking place, it's of no advantage.

Shah says goal to build empowered India, hails 'scientific' justice system

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

HOME Minister Amit Shah on Monday said that the Government has been taking transformative steps to modernise the country's criminal justice system. Forensic teams are now required to visit crime spots in cases entailing punishment over seven years. Shah claimed that the introduction of three new criminal laws "is the biggest reform of the 21st century."



Speaking at the 'All India Forensic Summit' organised here, the Minister said, "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we are striving to ensure that those seeking justice get it timely and that the outcome is satisfying. Our main goal is to build a secure, capable, and empowered India."

'OLD LAWS NOT FOR CITIZENS'

The three old laws—IPC, CrPC, and Evidence Act—were not made to deliver justice to citizens but to maintain the rule of the British Government, said Shah.

Shah added that the Government has introduced three new laws to " strengthen the criminal justice system". The summit has been organised to discuss two key aspects: the effective implementation of these new laws and the future role of forensic science in countering terrorism, he added.

Highlighting the role of forensics in ensuring timely justice and improving conviction rates, Shah said, "The nature of crime has changed significantly—criminals are now using technology and modern communication tools, making crime borderless. Earlier, crimes were mostly confined to districts, cities, or countries, but now, they have no boundaries."

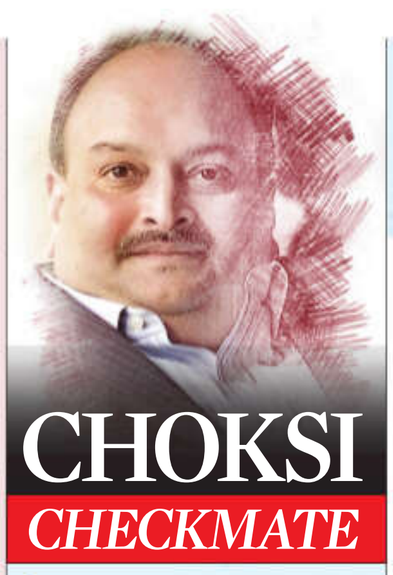
Noting that PM Modi recognised this trend, Shah said that in 2009, when Modi was the Gujarat CM, he proposed the creation of a Forensic Science University in Gujarat—a foundation that would support the country's criminal justice system for the next 50 years.

"If we are to ensure that even those accused do not face injustice while also protecting the rights of victims, forensic science must become an integral part of the criminal justice system," he added.

The three old laws—IPC, CrPC, and Evidence Act—were not made to deliver justice to citizens but to maintain the rule of the British Government. The three new laws—BNS, BNSS, and BSA—are made by the citizens, for the citizens, and to protect their rights. Shah noted that this is the biggest reform of the 21st century.

Meanwhile, paying tribute to BR Ambedkar on his 135th birth anniversary, the Home Minister, in his address, also mentioned his commitment to education, equality, and justice and his significant role in shaping modern India.

CHOKSI CHECKMATE



- **2017**: Choksi acquires Antiguan nationality
- **Jan, 2018**: Choksi flees India
- **Feb**: CBI registers case
- **March**: Non-bailable warrants against Nirav Modi, Choksi
- **July**: ED moves court seeking fugitive offender tag against Nirav Modi, Choksi
- **Aug**: India hands over request to Antigua to extradite Choksi
- **Dec**: Interpol Red Corner Notice against Choksi
- **June, 2019**: Choksi tells Bombay High Court he left India for medical check-up and treatment
- **Feb, 2020**: SEBI imposes ₹5 crore fine on Choksi, others
- **June**: ED brings back ₹1,350 cr worth polished diamonds, pearls of Nirav Modi, Choksi firms from Hong Kong
- **May 25, 2021**: Choksi goes missing from Antigua, but captured in Dominca
- **July, 2022**: Fresh CBI FIR against Choksi in Canara Bank fraud of ₹55.27 crore
- **Dec, 2024**: ED begins restitution of over ₹2,500 cr assets of Choksi
- **Feb, 2025**: Choksi goes to Belgium for cancer treatment, his lawyer tells court
- **April**: Choksi arrested in Belgium on India's extradition request

- **2014–2017**: Mehul Choksi, head of Gitanjali Group, allegedly colluded with his aides and certain officials from Punjab National Bank (PNB) to fraudulently obtain Letters of Undertaking (LOUs) and Foreign Letters of Credit (FLCs), bypassing established banking procedures. These instruments were then used to secure credit from foreign banks. The scheme caused PNB a loss of ₹6,098 crore. This sum was part of a broader scam totalling ₹13,850 crore, also involving Choksi's nephew, Nirav Modi
- **2017**: Anticipating legal consequences, Choksi secured citizenship of Antigua and Barbuda, a nation lacking an active extradition agreement with India. This move allowed him to establish legal protection while eluding Indian authorities
- **2018**: On January 2, shortly before the scam became public, Choksi fled India. He initially travelled to the US and later took refuge in Antigua. Following his departure, both CBI and ED launched criminal proceedings against Choksi, Nirav Modi, and others. Agencies carried out raids at over 136 premises associated with the accused and confiscated valuables and jewellery worth ₹598 crore. In total, assets worth ₹2,566 crore, including overseas and domestic properties, vehicles, bank holdings, shares, and other valuables, were attached or seized
- **2019**: Nirav Modi was arrested in London in May. Although he remains in custody, all of his legal attempts to resist extradition have been dismissed. He now awaits transfer to India
- **2021**: Choksi was held in Dominica allegedly while attempting to escape to Cuba by boat. His legal representatives claimed he had been abducted from Antigua and forcibly taken to Dominica. India's attempt to secure his extradition from Dominica was denied, and Choksi was repatriated to Antigua
- **2023**: In March, Interpol withdrew the Red Corner Notice issued against Choksi, citing concerns related to potential political motivation and the fairness of judicial proceedings in India. It significantly weakened India's position in its ongoing efforts to extradite him
- **2024**: Choksi's lawyers said he had been diagnosed with blood cancer and relocated to Belgium for medical treatment. His wife, Preeti, who holds Belgian citizenship, joined him, and together they obtained legal residency in the country



- **2025**: Choksi was taken into custody in Belgium following a renewed extradition request by Indian authorities, led by CBI and ED. His legal team has announced plans to oppose the extradition on health grounds and intends to seek bail in the Belgian courts

Aikeyme 25: 1st India, Africa 6-day maritime exercise on

MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

INDIA launched its largest-ever, six-day joint naval exercise with nine African nations called Africa India Key Maritime Engagement (AIKEYME) on Sunday to enhance interoperability and synergise action among the maritime forces of partner nations.

The exercise, concluding on April 18, involves Comoros, Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, and South Africa, alongside the co-hosts India and Tanzania. It is divided into two phases: harbour and sea operations. India and Tanzania jointly inaugurated the harbour phase in Dar-es-Salaam. Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, Tanzania's Minister of Defence and National Service, and Sanjay Seth, Union Minister of State for Defence, officiated at the ceremony.

Dignitaries present included the Chief of Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF), the Chief of Naval Staff of the Indian Navy, and the High Commissioner of India to Tanzania, reinforcing the importance of



bilateral defence relationships. Sanjay Seth emphasised the African proverb — If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together—to highlight the need for enduring partnerships in maritime security.

Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax underscored the necessity of a collective approach to address challenges such as piracy and trafficking.

The Indian Navy said in a statement, "She reaffirmed Tanzania's commitment to hosting future editions of Aikeyme and detailed the collaborative framework for regional maritime security."

Her remarks firmly established that the relationship extends beyond military affairs, advocating for broader regional cooperation, the Navy added.

Planned activities during the harbour phase include Table Top and Command Post Exercises focused on anti-piracy ops and information-sharing alongside joint training in seamanship and Visit Board Search and Seizure exercises in collaboration with the TPDF.

Additionally, Indian Naval ships will be open to visitors during the harbour phase to engage with the local population. The sea phase, scheduled from 16 to 18 April, will focus on strengthening maritime security cooperation among the participating maritime nations.

The exercise aims to develop collaborative solutions to common regional maritime challenges. The Indian Navy's maiden initiative also highlights the strong and friendly relations between India and African nations.

Indian Naval Ships INS Chennai (destroyer) and INS Kesari [Landing Ship Tank (Large)] have arrived in Dar-es-Salaam to participate in the exercise.

National Task force to set up portal for data collection on students' suicide

KAVITA BAJELI-DATT @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court-appointed National Task Force (NTF) on the mental health concerns of students and the prevention of suicides in Higher Educational Institutions, in its second meeting, discussed developing a portal for data collection.

Held under the Chairmanship of Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, a former SC judge, the meeting also discussed the existing regulations and guidelines. "During the meeting, actions taken so far were reported and discussed in detail. Agenda points included developing a portal for data collection, reports and regulations, dissemination of questionnaires, onboarding of officers from DoSEL and MoHFW, coordination with institutions and NIEPA, among others," said a Union Education Ministry statement.

The meeting had disability rights advocates, psychologists, and professors as its members. The task force also decided to form three working groups, each responsible for a different task. On March 24, the SC issued significant directions concerning the prevention of student suicides in higher education institutions..

The apex court also constituted an NTF under the chairmanship of Justice Bhat, along with other experts from various domains as members, to deliberate on issues related to mental health concerns among students, the prevention of suicides in educational institutions, and to recommend preventive measures.

The key areas of focus include identifying predominant causes leading to student suicides, such as academic pressure, discrimination, financial burdens, and the stigma surrounding mental health.

The first meeting of the Task Force was virtually held on March 29, in which the Chairperson outlined the agenda of the meeting. A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan in their order said, "The recurring instances of student suicides in higher educational institutions serve as a grim reminder of the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the existing legal and institutional framework in addressing mental health concerns of students on campuses and preventing them from taking the extreme step of committing suicides…"

NHAI timeline set for timely land acquisition

PARVEZ SULTAN @ New Delhi

TO mitigate delays and additional financial burdens, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has come up with a timeline for smooth land acquisition. The agency has made provisions for issuance of draft notification, its submission to the Competent Authority for Land Acquisition (CALA), actual possession and mutation. There are provisions for monitoring the land transfer process by the senior officials weekly and fortnightly.

The schedule has been prepared considering the window of 21 days available to the land owners during which they can object to the land acquisition notice.

The land is acquired by the NHAI as per the National Highways Act 1956 and 21-day period from date of publication of the notification in newspapers is stipulated to file objections.



NO POSSESSION

Several projects remain stuck for long because the authorities did not get possession of land required on time. The timeline stipulates number of days for submission of draft to CALA, uploading of draft 3D proposal on 'Bhoomi Rashi' portal, publication of gazette, securing Right of Way, declaration of award, disbursement of compensation, possession and mutation.

According to the officials, this window was not being utilised optimally hence delaying the acquisition thus resulting in cost escalation. The issue was deliberated and then the suggestion to formulate an indicative timeline corresponding to take over the land with mutation was approved to expedite the process.

Several projects remain stuck for long because the authorities did not get possession of land required on time.

The timeline stipulates number of days for submission of draft to CALA, uploading of draft 3D proposal on 'Bhoomi Rashi' portal, publication of gazette, securing Right of Way, declaration of award, disbursement of compensation, possession and mutation. The completion of the series of activities should be done in 336 days.

The portal was developed for online processing of land acquisition notifications to accelerate highway infrastructure development projects.

"The timeline outlined regarding the land acquisition activities shall be monitored by the project director (PD) on a weekly basis and by the regional officer (RO) on a fortnightly basis. Adherence to this timeline is essential to minimise overall delays in land acquisition for national highways projects. Any issues or deficiencies should be promptly reported to the concerned chief general manager (technical) at NHAI headquarters," read a circular regarding the timeline issued by the authority.

The Union ministry of Road Transport and Highways also conducts training for staff of the NHAI, National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) and states' public work departments (PWDs) for land acquisition for highways.

VANDALISM

A man has been arrested for allegedly damaging BR Ambedkar's statue in Rajasthan's Tonk district. The matter came to to light when people gathered there to pay tributes to Ambedkar on his birth anniversary.

1 DEAD IN ROAD ACCIDENT IN UP's PILIBHIT

INDIA	Max	Min		Max	Min
Ahmedabad	41	27	Mumbai	34	27
Bhopal	37	24	Panaji	35	28
Jaipur	38	28	Patna	31	24
Amritsar	36	23	Lucknow	34	24
Chennai	32	29	Port Blair	30	27
Kolkata	32	27	Imphal	27	18
Srinagar	24	09	Chandigarh	34	22

Cong insulted Baba Saheb: Modi

PM dares Congress to select a Muslim as its president or allocate 50% tickets to them

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

PM Narendra Modi on Monday strongly defended the new Waqf legislation and launched a frontal attack on the Congress, saying its opposition to the law was only on account of the party's minority appeasement policy.

Addressing a rally in Hisar, Haryana on the birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar, he dared the Congress to select a Muslim as its president or allocate 50% of tickets to Muslim candidates if it truly cared for the community. In a comprehensive attack on the principal Opposition party, the Prime Minister also raised the issue of price rise and deforestation in Karnataka and Telangana, respectively, where it is in power.

Before the rally, Modi laid the foundation stone of the new terminal building of the Maharaja Agrasen Airport worth over ₹410 crore and flagged off a commercial flight to Ayodhya. He reiterated his promise that even those wearing slippers would fly in aeroplanes, saying that the vision is now being realised countrywide.

Modi accused the Congress of turning Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and OBCs into "second-class citizens" when in power. He cited the case of Karnataka, where the government turned the reservations for SCs, STs, and OBCs into an appeasement tool, granting reservations in government tenders based on religion. He pointed out that the Constitution has no such provision.



Narendra Modi speaks during the inauguration and foundation stone laying ceremony of various development projects, in Yamuna Nagar, Haryana | PTI

Targetting the Congress on the appeasement issue, the Prime Minister said its appeasement policies significantly harmed the Muslim community, benefiting only a few and leaving the rest of society uneducated and impoverished.

He pointed to the Waqf Act as the biggest evidence of the previous government's flawed policies and noted that in 2013, just months before the general election, Congress amended the Waqf Act to appease its vote bank.

Regarding the availability of vast tracts of land under Waqf, the Prime Minister said they were meant to benefit the poor, destitute women and children but were exploited by a handful of land mafia. He claimed that the mafia was encroaching on lands belonging to SCs, tribals and backward classes, leaving the Pasmanda Muslim community without any benefits.

Defending the new Waqf Act, he said the amendments would end such exploitation, ensuring that Waqf Boards cannot touch tribal lands. He described this as a major step in protecting tribal interests.

He stated that the new provisions will honour the sanctity of Waqf, ensuring that the rights of poor and Pasmanda Muslim families, women, and children are upheld. He affirmed that this reflects the true spirit of the Constitution and genuine social justice.

On implementing the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Uttarakhand, Modi accused the grand old party of double standards on secularism. "The Constitution talks about a secular civil code, but Congress never implemented it. Today, a uniform civil code has been implemented in Uttarakhand. Unfortunately, the Congress is opposing this," he said.

Criticising the Congress for its treatment of Ambedkar, he said the party insulted him, orchestrated his electoral defeats, and conspired to exclude him from the system. After his passing, the Congress also attempted to erase his legacy and suppress his ideas, he claimed, adding that while Ambedkar aimed to bring equality, Congress spread the virus of vote-bank politics in the country.

Waqf Act would bring an end to exploitation: PM

Defending the new Waqf Act, he said the amendments would end exploitation, ensuring that Waqf Boards cannot touch tribal lands. He described this as a major step in protecting tribal interests. He stated that the new provisions will honour the sanctity of Waqf, ensuring that the rights of poor and Pasmanda Muslim families, women, and children are upheld. He affirmed that this reflects the true spirit of the Constitution and genuine social justice.

ICG & Gujarat ATS foil drug smuggling; ₹1.8K cr of narcotics recovered

DILIP SINGH KSHATRIYA & MAYANK SINGH @ Ahmedabad/New Delhi

IN a significant blow to the drug trafficking nexus operating near Indian waters, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), in a joint overnight operation with the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) on April 12-13, 2025, seized over 300 kg of narcotics (methamphetamine) worth approximately ₹1,800 crore off the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) near the Gujarat coast.

The ICG on Monday said the operation was "based on a corroborated input from Gujarat ATS, an ICG ship from the Coast Guard Region (West), which was on multi-mission deployment off the North Maharashtra/ South Gujarat area, diverted and intercepted an attempted transhipment in the proximity of the IMBL".

The ICG stated that the suspect dumped the consignment in the sea and fled towards the IMBL when it realised the ICG ship was approaching.

"The alert ICG ship deployed its sea boat immediately for recovery of the jettisoned consignment whilst commencing a hot chase of the suspect boat," it added.

The proximity of IMBL and the initial separation between the ICG ship and the boat at the time of its detection helped the perpetrators to evade interception before it crossed over the IMBL within a short time.

The crossover resulted in the termination of the hot chase and precluded the ICG ship from apprehending the suspect boat.

Meanwhile, the ICG team in a sea-boat, after a thorough search in the harsh night conditions, recovered a sizeable amount of narcotics dumped into the sea.

The seized narcotics have been brought to Porbandar by the ICG ship for further investigations.

The joint action of ICG and Gujarat ATS has led to 13 such successful operations in recent years reaffirm the synergy for national objectives, the ICG said.

Congratulating the agencies, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the Modi government is "ruthlessly" dismantling drug networks as part of its mission to build a drug-free Bharat.

"In the ceaseless pursuit of building a drug-free Bharat, a monumental feat was achieved by seizing 300 kg of narcotics worth ₹1,800 crore near the international maritime border," Shah posted on X. Shah called the operation "a shining example" of the government's approach, "I applaud Gujarat ATS and the Indian Coast Guard for the grand success."

CHANDIGARH DIARY

HARPREET BAJWA
Our correspondent in Chandigarh
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Kangana being Kangana over ₹1 lakh power bill

Bollywood actress and BJP MP from Mandi MP Kangana Ranaut raised eyebrows recently by claiming that she had received an electricity bill of around a mind-boggling ₹1 lakh for a single month for her "unoccupied" house in Manali. "It is a miserable situation. I feel ashamed as to what is happening," she had said while hitting out at the Himachal Pradesh government. State Industries Minister Harshwardhan Chauhan, however, dismissed it as a case of Kangana being Kangana. He noted that the actor is known for making sensational remarks. He further said that being dramatic on stage is a common trait among artistes, like just like Kangana.



BJP leaders bat for Waqf as protests continue

As members of Muslim organisations and Opposition leaders across the country are up in arms over the Waqf (Amendment) Act, BJP leaders are trying hard to allay the apprehensions of the minority community about the new legislation. Union Minister of Power and Urban Development and former Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar recently met with members of the Muslim community in Karnal and assured them that the amendment would ensure greater transparency and reduce land-related disputes. Khattar also said that thanks to the law, people will have the right to appeal Waqf board's decisions in court, a welcome change.

Mann and Hamdard bury the hatchet after two yrs

The bitterness between Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann and Barjinder Singh Hamdard, the managing editor of a leading Punjabi daily, appears to be fading away. It all started after the Mann government ordered a vigilance probe into the Jang-E-Azadi Memorial at Kartarpur, in which Hamdard had played a key role. The vigilance bureau named Hamdard in an FIR registered last May. Mann and Hamdard didn't see eye to eye after that for two years... until Friday, when the two came face to face at the last rites (antim ardas) of Resham Kaur, wife of former BJP MP Hans Raj Hans, at a gurdwara in Jalandhar. Mann and Hamdard hugged each other on the occasion.

Kukis oppose Meiteis' yatra in Manipur hill

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Guwahati

FRESH tension is building in Manipur as Kuki-Zo tribals oppose a Meitei pilgrimage to Thangjing Hill in the Churachandpur district.

Every April, Meiteis visit the hilltop shrine of Ibudhou Thangjing, the "guardian of the mountains". However, last week, six Kuki-Zo organisations asked them to refrain from entering Kuki-Zo areas by crossing the buffer zone.

In a joint statement, they stated, "Unless and until the Government of India reaches a political settlement for the Kuki-Zo community under the Constitution of India, no such friendly approach to the jurisdiction of Kuki-Zo land will be allowed for the Meetei community."

Members from the Kuki-Zo community staged a demonstration at Thangjing Hill on Sunday, opposing the pilgrimage.

Former Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh appealed to the community to reconsider the decision. "Kukis, Nagas, Muslims and Meiteis have lived together in Manipur since immemorial. On behalf of the Congress party, I would like to appeal to our Kuki brothers to reconsider the decision."

Tejashwi to meet Kharge, Rahul in Delhi on Apr 15 ahead of Oppn meeting

RAMASHANKAR @ Patna

RASHTRIYA Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Prasad Yadav is likely to meet senior Congress leaders, including party president Mallikarjun Kharge and MP Rahul Gandhi, in New Delhi on Tuesday to deliberate upon seat-sharing and other issues pertaining to the upcoming assembly elections in Bihar.

Yadav's meeting with top Congress leaders in the capital is being seen as an attempt to sort out growing disagreement between two allies over some issues, including declaration of chief ministerial candidate of the Opposition in the election vis-a-vis NDA's Nitish Kumar.

RJD, Congress, CPI-ML (Liberation), CPI, CPM and VIP are the constituents of grand alliance in Bihar. Mukesh Sahani's Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) has already staked claim on 60 seats and a Dy CM's post.

Currently, Sahani has no MLA in the 243-member Bihar assembly. The MLA of the party who emerged victorious in byelection in Bochaha assembly seat in Muzaffarpur later joined BJP. The Congress has also announced it would contest 70 seats in the election.



NDA selects Nitish

NDA has already announced that the alliance would contest the assembly elections under Bihar CM Nitish Kumar's leadership. It has also declared that Nitish would become the chief minister after the assembly election results.

In 2020, it contested 70 seats but could bag only 19. The party's top leadership has clarified that it would go to polls in alliance with RJD.

Disagreement surfaced over declaration of chief ministerial candidate ahead of elections. While RJD is projecting Tejashwi as CM face of the Opposition, the Congress contended that a decision on the matter will be taken after the assembly election results.

3 Jain monks in MP temple attacked by youths from Raj

ANURAAG SINGH @ Bhopal

THREE Shwetambara Jain monks resting in a Hanuman Temple of a village on the Madhya Pradesh-Rajasthan border in western MP's Neemuch district were allegedly attacked by anti-social elements late Sunday night.

The incident triggered protests by local residents in Singoli town of Neemuch district, close to the state's border with Rajasthan's Chittorgarh district.

Prior to the protests the police had arrested six youngsters, whom it claimed were involved in the attack.

According to the FIR filed on the complaint of Singoli town resident Bhawarlal Mehta, the incident occurred in Kachchala village in the Singoli area of Neemuch district at around 11 p.m. on Sunday, while the monks were resting inside the temple before taking their onward journey to Rajasthan the next morning.

The youngsters approached them and asked for money and valuables. When the monks said that they were Jain munis on religious trek and had no money or valuables, the men mercilessly attacked them with lathis and rods. Despite being injured, the monks managed to escape to the main road and sought help from the local residents.

The matter was subsequently reported to the local police by the villagers. A 2.20-minute video showing the police at the spot after the incident has visuals which showed multiple injuries on the back, head, neck, and faces of the victims.

Acting on specific inputs, a police team traced the accused a few hours later.

"All six accused, which include a 16-year-old teenager, have been arrested. All of them hail from the adjoining Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan. They've been booked under major sections of the BNS and will be produced before the court later in the day. We're also working on figuring out whether they have been involved in criminal incidents in the past or not," Neemuch district police superintendent Ankit Jaiswal told this newspaper on Monday.

While one of the arrested accused is 16 years old, the other five (all in their early 20s) have been identified as Ganpat Naik, Gopal Bhoi, Kanhaiyalal Bhoi, Raju Bhoi, and Babu Sharma, all residents of the Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan.

The arrested men have been booked under BNS sections 115(2), 119(1), 3(5), 191(2). The injured have been shifted to a dharamshala. According to informed sources, the residents of Kachchala village had recently complained to the local police about men from the adjoining Chittorgarh district moving around in the village in a suspicious manner, but the police did not initiate action.

Angered over the Sunday late-night incident, local residents shut down Singoli town on Monday morning, but following the police action and meeting with the district collector and SP, the shutdown was withdrawn. The Jain community bodies have handed over memoranda addressed to the state's CM Mohan Yadav to the administration in Mandsaur and Neemuch districts of western MP.

SPARKS OUTRAGE

Angered over the incident, local residents shut down Singoli town. But it was later withdrawn. Jain community bodies have handed over memorandums addressed to the state's CM to the administration in Mandsaur and Neemuch districts

BJP leader named Gabbar among 8 arrested in Kasganj gang-rape case

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

A BJP leader, Akhilesh Pratap Singh, is among eight of the 10 accused arrested on Monday for the alleged gangrape of a minor girl in Kasganj district of western UP on April 10.

Singh is believed to be closely associated with Kasganj MLAs Devendra Rajput and Hariom Verma. Sources said he has been associated with the ruling party in UP for the last 15 years and has often been spotted with BJP MLAs and even former Kasganj MP Rajveer Singh, alias Rajju Bhaiyya.

The accused BJP leader, also known by an alias, Gabbar, has a criminal history with cases of illegal mining registered against him. His name also figures in a case of attacking the former MLA of Bulandshahr, Anita Lodhi. He currently holds no party post. The district police arrested the accused following raids at different locations across the Kasganj district on Sunday night.

The minor girl, aged 17, was gangraped near a canal in her village on the evening of April 10. She said in a police complaint that she and her fiancé were returning after an errand for a ration card and stopped to have food under a tree near the canal. The accused passed by at the same time, and seeing both sitting together, they surrounded the couple and assaulted the youth. They dragged both into different bushes and gangraped the victim. The victim said three persons raped her in front of her fiancé.

Before leaving, the accused issued life threats to them and even robbed them of ₹5,000 and snatched the girl's chain and ear studs.

Eight of the accused have been arrested, and two are still at large. Kasganj Superintendent of Police Ankita Sharma assured strict action against the arrested accused. She said that a hunt was on for the remaining two, and they would also be nabbed soon.

Fiancé assaulted by the accused

The minor girl, aged 17, was gangraped near a canal in her village on the evening of April 10. She said in a police complaint that she and her fiancé were returning after an errand for a ration card and stopped to have food under a tree near the canal. The accused saw both of them sitting together. They surrounded the couple and assaulted the youth. Three persons raped the girl in front of her fiancé.

Bajwa skips Mohali cyber cops' summons

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

PUNJAB LoP and senior Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa did not appear before the Mohali cyber crime police on Monday regarding his comments about "50 bombs" and sought an extension until Tuesday.

SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia accused CM Bhagwant Mann of targeting opposition leaders instead of controlling the situation of law and order. A case was registered against Bajwa Sunday at Mohali's Cyber Crime police station under various sections.

In an interview, Bajwa claimed, "I have come to know that 50 bombs have reached Punjab. Of this, 18 have exploded, 32 are yet to go off." Sixteen grenade attacks have been reported across the state since last September.

C'garh BJP MP expresses concern with CM over crime and traffic

EJAZ KAISER @ Raipur

BJP Lok Sabha MP from Raipur Brijmohan Agrawal has written to Chattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai to fill the police force's existing vacancies immediately in light of growing concern over rising crime and traffic issues in the state capital, Raipur.

He asked the chief minister to strengthen the law and order situation in the capital by promptly recruiting personnel against vacant posts and sanctioning additional strength in the police force deployed there.

"Understaffed police not just leads to long duty hours and stress among the personnel, affecting their proper functioning, but also makes life difficult for the 16 lakh population in the capital region", said Agrawal.

He said that of the 3,805 sanctioned posts in the police department for Raipur district, 796 were vacant, and the current security ratio was one policeman for every 477 persons.

"And out of the sanctioned 2,738 posts for constables, only 2,007 have been deployed. There is a need to increase the strength of the force in view of frequent VIP movements and rising population," he pointed out.

In response to the letter, the government stated it would consider the matters raised by the BJP MP.





Understaffed police not just leads to long duty hours and stress among the personnel, affecting their proper functioning, but also makes life difficult for the 16 lakh population in the capital region.

Brijmohan Agrawal, BJP Lok Sabha MP from Raipur

1 dead
4 rescued, 5 missing from capsized boat off Florida's Atlantic Coast

GLOBAL WEATHER

LR: Light Rain HR: Heavy Rain LS: Light Snow TDS: Thundershower LC: Light Cloud SNY: Sunny

Beijing	30	14	SNY	Los Angeles	21	12	LC
Colombo	32	26	LC	Melbourne	27	15	SNY
Dhaka	36	25	SNY	Moscow	17	7	LR
Dubai	36	24	SNY	New York	8	5	SNY
Houston	27	19	LC	Singapore	18	17	LR
Istanbul	11	5	LR	Toronto	7	1	LC
London	18	6	SNY	Washington	20	8	SNY



Mario Vargas Llosa | AFP

Peruvian Lit Nobel awardee Mario Vargas Llosa dies

LIMA

PERUVIAN author Mario Vargas Llosa, Nobel literature laureate and a giant of Latin American letters for many decades, has died, his son said Sunday. He was 89.

He was author of such celebrated novels as *The Time of the Hero* (La Ciudad y los Perros) and *Feast of the Goat*. A prolific novelist and essayist and winner of myriad prizes, Vargas Llosa was awarded the Nobel in 2010 after being considered a contender for many years.

Vargas Llosa published his first collection of stories *The Cubs and Other Stories* (Los Jefes) in 1959. But he burst onto the literary stage in 1963 with his groundbreaking debut novel *The Time of the Hero*, a book that drew on his experiences at a Peruvian military academy and angered the country's military. A thousand copies of the novel were burned by military authorities, with some generals calling the book false and Vargas Llosa a communist.

That, and subsequent novels such as *Conversation in the Cathedral*, (*Conversaci'n en la Catedral*) in 1969, quickly established Vargas Llosa as one of the leaders of the so-called 'Boom,' or new wave of Latin American writers of the 1960s and 1970s, alongside Gabriel Garc'a M'rquez and Carlos Fuentes.

Vargas Llosa started writing early, and at 15 was a part-time crime reporter for *La Cr'nica*.

Vargas Llosa came to be a fierce defender of personal and economic liberties, gradually edging away from his communism-linked past, and regularly attacked leftist dictators. *AP*

Tariffs on semiconductors coming next week, warns President Trump

Exemptions on electronic items just a temporary reprieve says US commerce secretary

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump said on Sunday he would announce new tariffs on semiconductors "over the next week," as he continues a push to impose punishing levies to address US trade issues.

"The tariffs will be in place in the not distant future," he said, referring to sector-specific semiconductor levies that would follow similar measures for steel, aluminum and automobiles. Asked what the rate for semiconductors would be, he said: "I'm going to be announcing it over the next week."

Tariff exemptions announced Friday on electronics like smartphones and laptops are only a temporary reprieve until the Trump administration develops a new tariff approach specific to the semiconductor industry, US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said Sunday.

White House officials, including President Trump himself, spent Sunday downplaying the significance of exemptions that lessen but won't eliminate the effect of US tariffs on imports of popular consumer devices and their key components.

"They're exempt from the reciprocal tariffs but they're included in the semiconductor tariffs, which are coming in probably a month or two," Lutnick told ABC's *This Week* on Sunday.

Trump added to the confusion hours later, declaring on social media that there was no "exception" at all because the goods are "just moving to a different" bucket and will still face a 20% tariff as part of his administration's move to punish China for its role in fentanyl trafficking.

The Trump administration late Friday had said it would exclude electronics from broader so-called reciprocal tariffs, a move that could help keep the prices down for phones and other consumer products that aren't usually made in the US.

China's commerce ministry in a Sunday statement welcomed the change as a small step even as it called for the US. to completely cancel the rest of its tariffs. Sparing electronics was expected to benefit big tech companies like Apple and Samsung and chip makers like Nvidia, though the uncertainty of future tariffs may rein in an anticipated tech stock rally on Monday. US Customs and Border Protection said items like smartphones, laptops, hard drives, flat-panel monitors and some chips would qualify for the exemption. *Agencies*



President Donald Trump waves from the stairs of Air Force One upon his arrival at Joint Base Andrews on Sunday | AP

China imposes visa curbs on US officials

Beijing: China on Monday slapped visa restrictions against US personnel who have acted 'egregiously' on Tibet-related issues in retaliation to additional visa curbs imposed by Washington on Chinese officials. Tibet affairs are purely China's internal affairs, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said. "In accordance with the Law on Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China and the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law of the People's Republic of China, China decided to impose visa restrictions on US personnel who have acted egregiously on the Xizang (Tibet)-related issues," Lin said. China refers to Tibet as Xizang. It was in response to similar restrictions by Washington

NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS

Next round of US-Iran talks likely to be held in Rome

ROME

TALKS between Iran and the United States over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program appeared ready on Monday to leave the Middle East, as an Italian source said the next round of negotiations would take place in Rome.

Meanwhile, the head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog separately confirmed he would be taking a trip to Iran later in the week, possibly to discuss ways to improve access for his inspectors to Tehran's program.

The stakes of the negotiations couldn't be higher for the two nations closing in on half a century of enmity. US President Donald Trump repeatedly has threatened to unleash airstrikes targeting Iran's nuclear program if a deal isn't reached. Iranian officials increasingly warn that they could pursue a nuclear weapon with their stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels.

A source in the Italian government confirmed that the next round would take place in Rome on Saturday. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to The Associated Press because they weren't authorised to speak publicly.

The person's comments came as Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani separately told media personnel in Osaka, Japan, that the Italian government has given its OK to host the talks.

The next round of talks will probably be held somewhere other than Oman

Esmail Baghaei, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson

"We received the request from the interested parties, from Oman, which plays the role of mediator and we gave a positive response," Tajani said. "We are ready to welcome, as always, meetings that can bring positive results."

Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp, speaking at a meeting in Luxembourg, also said the coming talks would be in Rome. Both Iranian and U.S. officials did not immediately acknowledge the venue of the second round of negotiations. The talks will follow a visit by Rafael Mariano Grossi of International Atomic Energy Agency to Iran this week. *AP*



A Palestinian boy walks away as smoke billows following an Israeli strike on a metalsmith workshop at the Zaytoun neighbouhood in Gaza City | AFP

Will free hostages if end to war guaranteed: Hamas

CAIRO

A senior Hamas official said on Monday that the Palestinian group is prepared to release all Israeli hostages in exchange for a "serious prisoner swap" and guarantees that Israel will end the war in Gaza.

Hamas left Cairo on Monday after negotiations with mediators from Egypt and Qatar—two nations working alongside the US to broker a ceasefire in the besieged territory.

"We are ready to release all Israeli captives in exchange for a serious prisoner swap deal, an end to the war, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the entry of humanitarian aid," Taher al-Nunu, a Hamas official, told AFP. However, he accused Israel of obstructing a truce.

"The issue is not the number of captives," Nunu said, "but rather that the occupation is reneging on its commitments, blocking the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and continuing the war".

"Hamas has therefore stressed the need for guarantees to compel the occupation (Israel) to uphold the agreement," he added. Israeli news website Ynet reported on Monday that a new proposal had been put to Hamas. Under the deal, the group would release 10 living hostages in exchange for US guarantees that Israel would enter negotiations for a second phase of the ceasefire.

The first phase of the ceasefire, which began on January 19 and included multiple hostage-prisoner exchanges, lasted two months before disintegrating. Efforts towards a new truce have stalled, reportedly over disputes regarding the number of hostages to be released by Hamas, with 58 people still held in the Palestinian territory. *AFP*



EXPRESS READ

Sunak's ex-aide charged in election betting case

London: A former Conservative lawmaker and 14 others have been charged with cheating when placing bets on the timing of Britain's general election last year, the Gambling Commission said on Monday. Craig Williams was one of several people who had been investigated for cashing in on insider knowledge on the date Rishi Sunak would call the election. Others facing charges included Russell George, a Conservative in Welsh parliament

Russia says Sumy attack hit military targets

Brussels: Russia on Monday claimed its deadly missile attack on Ukraine's Sumy that killed and wounded scores including children had targeted a gathering of Ukrainian troops, while European leaders condemned the attack as a war crime. Ukrainian officials have said two ballistic missiles on Palm Sunday morning hit the heart of Sumy, a city about 30 kilometres from Ukraine's border with Russia, killing at least 34, including two children, and wounding 119. It was the second attack to claim civilian lives in Ukraine in just over a week

ASIA MATTERS

SINGAPORE

GROWTH FORECAST DOWNGRADED

Singapore on Monday downgraded its economic growth forecast for this year, the government said, as the trade-dependent nation braces for the effects of sweeping US tariffs and the US-China trade war. Although President Donald Trump imposed the baseline 10 percent tariffs on Singapore is vulnerable to a economic slowdown caused by the much higher levies on dozens of other countries. The Ministry of Trade and Industry said preliminary estimates show that the economy grew 3.8% in the first quarter, slower than previous quarter's 5.0%



INDONESIA

QATAR TO INVEST $2 BN IN SOVEREIGN FUND

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto said Qatar is set to invest $2 billion in his country's new sovereign wealth fund as he looks to boost economic growth. Prabowo is on a five-nation tour of the Middle East, visiting the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Egypt, Qatar and Jordan to boost bilateral ties with the region

MALAYSIA

PM TO MEET MYANMAR JUNTA CHIEF

Malaysian Prime Minister and ASEAN chair Anwar Ibrahim said Monday he will meet Myanmar's isolated junta chief in Bangkok this week as the strongman makes a rare trip abroad to discuss earthquake relief. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has barred junta officials from summits after their 2021 coup deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and plunged Myanmar into a fractious civil war. But Anwar said he would meet Min Aung Hlaing on Thursday to discuss the safety of Malaysian aid workers dispatched to help after last month's earthquake

India-born doc, family die in US air crash

NEW YORK

AN India-born doctor and members of her family died in a plane crash in upstate New York over the weekend while heading to the Catskills Mountains for a birthday celebration.

Dr Joy Saini, a renowned urogynecologist, her husband Dr Michael Groff, a neuroscientist, their daughter Karenna Groff, a former MIT soccer player and the 2022 NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) woman of the year, and son Jared Groff, a paralegal, died when the twin-engine plane crashed, according to media reports.



Dr Joy Saini (third from left) with family | AFP

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said in a statement that on April 12 about 12:06 pm, a Mitsubishi MU-2B-40, N635TA, was destroyed when it was involved in an accident near Craryville, New York. The family boarded Groff's private plane at Westchester County Airport in White Plains, New York.

NTSB said its investigators are collecting evidence and interviewing witnesses.

The victims of the crash included Jared Groff's partner Alexia Couyutas Duarte, who had planned to attend Harvard Law School later this year, and Karenna Groff's boyfriend James Santoro who was an MIT graduate. According to media reports, the family was headed to the Catskills for a birthday celebration and the Passover holiday. *PTI*

Trial that could force Meta to break off Insta, WhatsApp starts

SAN FRANCISCO

META Platforms Inc faces a historic antitrust trial beginning Monday that could force the tech giant to break off Instagram and WhatsApp, startups it bought more than a decade ago that have since grown into social media powerhouses.

The looming antitrust trial will be the first big test of President Donald Trump's Federal Trade Commission's ability to challenge Big Tech. The lawsuit was filed against Meta then called Facebook in 2020, during Trump's first term.

It claims the company bought Instagram and WhatsApp to squash competition and establish an illegal monopoly in the social media market.

Meta, the FTC argues, has maintained a monopoly by pursuing CEO Mark Zuckerberg's strategy, "expressed in 2008: It is better to buy than compete." True to that maxim, Facebook has systematically tracked potential rivals and acquired companies that it viewed as serious competitive threats.

Facebook also enacted policies designed to make it difficult for smaller rivals to enter the market and 'neutralize perceived competitive threats,' the FTC says in its complaint, just as the world shifted its attention to mobile devices from desktop computers.

"Unable to maintain its monopoly by fairly competing, the company's executives addressed the existential threat by buying up new innovators that were succeeding where Facebook failed," the FTC says. *AFP*

All-female celebrity crew steers rocket into space

WASHINGTON

JEFF Bezos' Blue Origin launched his fiancee Lauren Sanchez into space Monday with an all-female celebrity crew that included Katy Perry and Gayle King.

It was the latest wave in space tourism, where more of the rich and famous than ever before or lucky and well-connected can enter the zero-gravity realm traditionally dominated by professional astronauts.

The New Shepard rocket blasted off on the quick up-and-down trip from West Texas. The fringes of space beckoned 107 kilometres up and provided a few precious minutes of weightlessness. Sanchez, a helicopter pilot and former TV journalist, invited the others along for the 10-minute, fully automated flight, packing on the star power with singer-songwriter Perry and 'CBS Mornings' co-host King. Moved by the views of Earth below, Perry said she couldn't resist singing 'What a Wonderful World" in space.

Also sharing the ride were film producer Kerianne Flynn; Aisha Bowe, a former NASA engineer who started her own companies to promote science education; and Amanda Nguyen, a scientist who studied planets around other stars and now advocates for survivors of sexual violence.

Blue Origin declined to say how much the flight cost or who paid what. The trip came two months before Sanchez and Bezos marry in Venice.

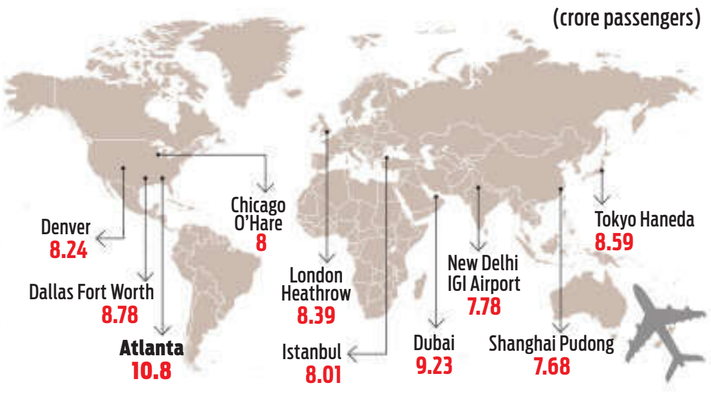
It was the 11th human spaceflight for the Washington state-based company, founded by Bezos in 2000 after making a fortune with Amazon. Bezos strapped in for Blue Origin's first space tourist flight in 2021 and accompanied the latest crew to the pad. *AP*



Blue Origin New Shepard's flight NS-31 lifts off from Van Horn, West Texas | AFP

Air passenger numbers hit 5 billion in 2024

THE 2024 GLOBAL TOTAL PASSENGERS ARE CLOSE TO 5 BILLION, REPRESENTING AN INCREASE OF 9% FROM 2023, ACCORDING TO AIRPORTS COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL (ACI) WORLD'S GLOBAL AIRPORT DATA RELEASED ON MONDAY. A LOOK AT THE 10 BUSIEST AIRPORTS



₹11.30 L Crore Investors lost since early this month as stock markets saw turbulence due to US President Donald Trump unveiling a reciprocate tariff plan

GCCs look beyond metro cities

Moving to tier-2 cities like Kochi, Coimbatore, Indore, Jaipur for cost agility, talent diversification

A NEW FRONTIER FOR GLOBAL CAPABILITY CENTRES

CITY	POSITIONING	PRIMARY DRIVERS OF GROWTH
Kochi	Delivery & risk operations hub	Professional services, healthcare operations
Ahmedabad	Mid-tier engineering & domain centre	Mfg -linked IT, automation
Coimbatore	Industrial tech & cloud support Centre	Automotive, industrial tech & cloud operations
Indore	GRC & shared services location	GRC, financial ops & healthcare analytics
Jaipur	BFSI & ecomm tech cluster	BFSI tech, credit risk,& ecomm-related development
Chandigarh & Bhubaneswar	Specialist hubs for pharma IT & embedded systems	Pharma IT & MedTech analytics. Bhubaneswar is attracting early-stage engineering services

- While AI & data science engineers with 4-8 years' experience ₹48L a yr, they earn ₹34 LPA in tier-2 cities
- Roles with AI, cybersecurity, cloud security and FinOps expertise seeing 20-35% YoY pay growth

GCCs are no longer just delivery hubs, they are innovation powerhouses. The pivot toward AI-first, cloud-native, and cyber-resilient ecosystems marks strategic inflection point for the industry

Kapil Joshi, CEO, Quess IT Staffing

UMA KANNAN @ Bengaluru

GLOBAL capability centres (GCCs) are now looking beyond metros for operations-led and mid-tier engineering roles as they are sourcing specialised talent from tier-2 cities. With increasing focus on cost agility and talent diversifications, tier-2 cities such as Kochi, Coimbatore, Indore and Jaipur are gaining traction, especially for domain-specific talent in cloud support and medtech, among others.

Technology staffing firm Quess IT Staffing in its India's GCC Tech Talent Landscape 2024 Report reveals Kochi is experiencing strong demand in professional services, healthcare operations and cybersecurity.

Within the GCC sector, certain tier-2 cities are turning into a specialised talent hub. Coimbatore is building strength in automotive, industrial technology and cloud operations. It is being considered for an engineering centre of excellence and IoT-led factory. Jaipur is also showing momentum in BFSI tech, credit risk and ecommerce-led development.

Compensation is also shifting rapidly due to talent scarcity and hiring in emerging GCC locations - Hyderabad, Pune, Ahmedabad and Coimbatore- is creating regional salary variations.

Roles with AI, cybersecurity, cloud security and FinOps expertise are witnessing 20-35% year-on-year compensation growth due to demand outpacing supply.

While AI & data science engineers with 4-8 years' experience earn up to ₹48 lakh per annum in Bengaluru, they earn only up to ₹34 LPA in tier-2 cities. The report reveals that AI compliance & risk ops engineer, zero trust security engineers, AI observability engineer and site reliability engineers (SRE) are not available in tier-2 cities.

"India's GCCs are no longer just delivery hubs—they are innovation powerhouses. The pivot toward AI-first, cloud-native, and cyber-resilient ecosystems marks a strategic inflection point for the industry. We foresee talent investments focusing on capability depth, building capacity, digital-first mindsets, and tier-2 city expansion," said Kapil Joshi, CEO, Quess IT Staffing.

Also, the report emphasises a growing demand-supply gap in emerging tech roles, alongside rising compensation premiums for niche skills. Currently, the country has over 1,800 GCCs with over 120 new centres launched in 2024. It is expected that by 2030, the GCC market will grow to $99–105 billion, with a workforce exceeding 2.4 million professionals.

Bengaluru leads strategic hiring with 61% in defence & aerospace and 35% in banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI). Hyderabad is the preferred hub for Healthcare & Pharma GCCs (41%) and emerging AI talent.



IT companies look for employees with specialised AI skills

UMA KANNAN @ Bengaluru

NEARLY 50% of IT services company Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)' lateral hires are coming in with high-end skills including Artificial Intelligence/ Gen AI and others.

Milind Lakkad, chief HR officer of TCS, said, "If you look at our trainee intake, the percentage of hires we have in digital is 40% compared to 17% last year."

The company has been seeing major adoption of data and AI initiatives. In Q4, AI, GenAI, data and cloud IoT, DE and enterprise solutions drove strong client engagements and growth for TCS. "Our pipeline of AI, GenAI engagement is higher than in last few quarters, and we saw a major rise in deal wins across AI for IT and AI for business," TCS CEO K Krithivasan said.

He added that in FY25, there was a noticeable shift in cloud market with major growth in sovereign cloud requirements, AI infrastructure investments and accelerated legacy modernisation. "Data modernisation has paved the way for more AI and GenAI in business activities. There is an increasing demand for GenAI use cases in areas of contracts management and sales campaign content creation... The propensity to roll out more GenAI use cases to production is increasing, and the organisational barriers seen earlier were diminishing," he added.

Our pipeline of AI, GenAI engagement is higher than in last few quarters, and we saw a major rise in deal wins across AI for IT and AI for business

K Krithivasan, CEO, TCS

Wipro, Infosys, LTIMindtree and HCLTech have been training their employees on specialised AI skill-sets. HDFC Securities in its IT sector preview recently said the deal activity will be centred more around cost optimisation/takeout initiatives. "GenAI is taking centre stage but also driving pricing changes as enterprises and hyperscalers integrate AI efficiency into their pricing models."

Nutanix, in its Enterprise Cloud Index (ECI) survey and research report reveals 52% of enterprises plan to invest in IT training and 48% are looking to hire new talents to support Gen AI. The report said 53% of respondents see advancements in GenAI as an opportunity to upskill and become AI experts. "India's rapid embrace of GenAI signals a transformative leap in innovation. Organisations that act now to invest strategically in these areas will not only unlock GenAI's potential but also gain a decisive competitive edge in AI-powered future," said Prasanna Ranade, senior director, enterprise & government sales, Nutanix India.

SEMICONDUCTOR

Foxconn scouts for land near Yamuna Exp for mfg facility

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

TAIWANESE contract manufacturer Foxconn is scouting for a 300 acre land parcel near Yamuna Expressway in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, for its manufacturing unit.

As per a report, this facility is expected to become one of Foxconn's largest manufacturing units globally and the company's first facility in North India. Foxconn is Apple's biggest vendor, and the proposed unit has the potential to surpass its upcoming facility in Bengaluru, which is set to become the company's second-largest globally. However, it is still unclear what specific products will be manufactured in Uttar Pradesh, as discussions with the state government are ongoing. A central government official confirmed that talks have begun to establish a Foxconn manufacturing services unit in UP. This marks the second major manufacturing announcement by Foxconn in the state. The first is the HCL-Foxconn joint venture for an outsourced semiconductor assembly and test (OSAT) facility, which is currently awaiting approval. HCL Tech has partnered with Foxconn and Intel Foundry to develop semiconductor chips and related products.

A source familiar with the matter said the land identified by Foxconn is located near the 50 acre parcel already acquired by the HCL-Foxconn venture for OSAT facility. Foxconn currently operates in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana, and according to reports, it plans to wind down its operations in Sri City, Andhra Pradesh.



Depositors to earn less as banks cut FD, savings a/c interest rates

BENN KOCHUVEEDAN @ Mumbai

BANK customers, especially those who depend on interest income, will now earn less on their deposits as banks are reducing their rates on fixed deposits, as well as savings accounts.

The move comes after the RBI slashed interest rate for the second consecutive time by 25 basis points last week to 6%. Since February, repo rate has come down by 50 bps. The measure by the second-largest lender HDFC Bank over the weekend comes in its bid to protect the margin.

While rate reduction for existing floating rate loans linked to the external benchmark (repo rate or EBLR) is automatic, those on fixed rates and MCLR (marginal cost-based lending rates) are not automatic. All new retail credit like housing and auto loans are based on EBLR but banks' board have to reduce lending rates for new customers.

Over the weekend, HDFC Bank became the first one to reduce savings deposit rate to 2.75%, from 3%. This is the lowest rate among private sector lenders, while system wide, SBI offers the lowest on savings deposits at 2.70%, that too if the balance is ₹3 crore and if less than that only 2.65%, and 3% if the balance is above ₹10 crore.

At this rate, the real interest rate — the interest earnings after inflation that averaged at 4.8% in FY25 — that a saver gets is minus 2.05% from HDFC and 2.15% from SBI.



Banks attempt to protect thinning margins

The rate cuts on savings deposits and on FDs are not just about banks adjusting to RBI cutting rates by 25 bps last week to 6% but it is their attempt to protect thinning margins in a system that is starting to creak, said a retired banker. After the RBI had on April 9 signalled a softer monetary policy, SBI, HDFC, Bank of India and Yes Bank have cut FD rates.

Since the past 18 months or so, banks faced with falling deposits for the fortnight ending March 21, deposits grew at 10.3%, down from 13.5% a year ago, while lending rose over 11%, less than half of the 20.3% reported in the year-ago period. Such falling deposits have forced banks to offer higher rates for fixed deposits, which averaged in the 7-8.5% range.

The rate cuts on savings deposits and on FDs are not just about banks adjusting to RBI cutting rates by 25 bps last week to 6% but it is their attempt to protect their thinning margins in a system that is starting to creak, said a retired banker.

Uday Kotak, who promotes Kotak Mahindra Bank that pays one of the highest deposit rates, recently said, "Borrowing funds at 8.5% and lending at 9% is not a business model, it's a death spiral." After the RBI had on April 9 signalled a softer monetary policy, SBI, HDFC, Bank of India and Yes Bank have quietly cut FD rates.

US tariffs may open up options for India: VW

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

GERMAN car brand - Skoda Auto Volkswagen India - on Monday said the new reciprocal tariff announced by US President Donald Trump may open up opportunities for the auto industries in the long term.

"We do not support the (reciprocal) tariffs but at the same time there are a lot of discussions about opening up the economy even in India through bilateral trade or free trade agreements," said Piyush Arora, MD at Skoda Auto Volkswagen India. The statement by Arora comes amid reports that the European Union is pushing India to eliminate car import tariffs as part of wider trade negotiations following a similar demand pushed by the US. The Trump administration has already imposed a 25% tariff on imported vehicles and tariffs on auto components like engines and transmissions are scheduled to begin on May 5. The tariff imposed by Trump earlier this month, however, has been postponed by 90 days.

Arora said there is a lot of uncertainty right hovering around the recent announcements on the tariff front. He, however, added that these developments might expedite the free trade agreements being discussed between India and the EU for a long time.

EXPRESS READ

Thermal power output falls by 32% in FY25

NEW DELHI: Thermal power generation capacity growth fell by 32% during first 11 months of FY25, as per a Central Electricity Authority report. The slowdown is attributed to delays in commissioning, land acquisition, and material supply, among other challenges. As of Feb, 3.9 GW of thermal capacity had been installed, as against 5.7 GW during same period in FY24. *ENS*

GMR Power to sell ₹4.4k cr stressed assets

NEW DELHI: In its effort to reduce debt levels, GMR Group firm - GMR Power and Urban Infra Ltd (GPUIL) - is deleveraging stakes worth close to ₹4,400 crore in non-operating assets by spinning off the gas plants and stressed assets. This move, as per GMR, is expected to strengthen group's financial health and also to meet the funding needs. *ENS*

'Building deep tech isn't only onus of start-ups'

NEW DELHI: Joining the debate on Indian start-ups' focus on online deliveries and betting apps instead of deep tech, tech founder Sanjeev Bikhchandani on Monday said on X building deep tech isn't the responsibility of start-ups as funds required for it are too large, and the government as well as deep-pocketed groups like Reliance and Adani need to step in. *ENS*

High-end housing sales jump 28% in top 7 cities in January-March quarter

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

LUXURY housing segment (units priced at ₹4 crore and above) saw 28% YoY sales growth in Jan-Mar 2025 across the country's top seven cities, as per real estate consultant CBRE South Asia's 'India Market Monitor Q1 2025- Residential' report. The segment witnessed total sales of approximately 1,930 luxury units during the quarter.

Among the top seven cities, Delhi-NCR led in quarterly luxury unit sales, recording nearly half of total sales at 950 units, followed by Mumbai, which had a share of 23% in overall sales. Bengaluru recorded the highest growth among southern cities, growing from 20 units in Q1, 2024 to about 190 units in Jan-Mar '25. Notably, Kolkata and Chennai had a 5% share in overall luxury unit sales.

"Luxury and high-end segments continue to gain traction, driven by rising disposable incomes, lifestyle upgrades, and a desire for future-ready living spaces. We anticipate residential demand to chart a steady course as infrastructure improvements and financing access continue to support housing demand across key cities. Recent cut in repo rate will further improve buying sentiments," said Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE.

LUXURY HOUSING SALES

CITY	% RISE (Q1'25)	% RISE IN (Q1'24)
Delhi-NCR	49%	13%
Mumbai	23%	30%
Pune	3%	6%
Bengaluru	10%	1%
Kolkata	5%	1%
Hyderabad	5%	45%
Chennai	5%	3%

(Luxury housing ₹4 cr and above)

Brothers settle disputes; Macrotech gets exclusive right to use Lodha brand

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ Mumbai

LODHA brothers Abhishek, who runs Macrotech Developers, and younger one Abhinandan, owner of plotted development firm House of Abhinandan Lodha (HoABL), have "amicably settled" their disputes over use of "Lodha" brand.

The brothers have been publicly making allegations against each other for past many years. In statements issued separately, the brothers and their companies said on Monday that "the brothers and the companies led by them have amicably resolved all outstanding disputes under the guidance of their parents."

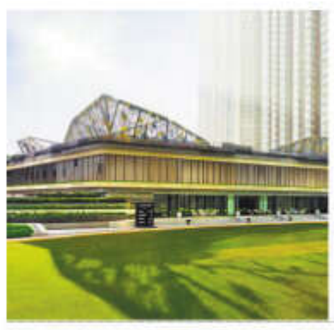
The statements further said the parties have agreed that Macrotech Developers, is the owner of, and has the exclusive right to use, the brand names Lodha and Lodha Group and Abhinandan is the owner of and has the exclusive right to use the brand name House of Abhinandan Lodha (HoABL).

The brothers — whose billionaire father Mangal Prabhat Lodha is a senior BJP leader and the minister of tourism and of skill development & entrepreneurship in the Fadnavis government — also have agreed that Lodha Group and HoABL have no connection with each other and that Abhinandan has no rights or claims in the Lodha Group and Macrotech or other businesses of Abhishek and vice versa.

A couple of months after their mother made a public appeal to end the disputes, earlier this month, Abhishek and his firm Macrotech had filed a brand infringement suit in January against Abhinandan and HoABL, accusing them of using the Lodha brand for its plotted development projects in Goa, Ayodhya, and elsewhere.

The elder brother had also accused the younger one of fraud and forgery and sought to stop HoABL from using the brand name, apart from demanding ₹5,000 crore in damages in its filing to the Bombay High Court.

In its response, HoABL denied it had used the brand Lodha for its projects, and the examples cited by Macrotech were used by third-parties such as brokers for which HoABL should not be held responsible, and that Abhinandan and HoABL had followed the family settlement signed between the brothers in 2017.



Ex-justice Raveendran mediated in the matter

The statements also said the settlement follows the mediation offered by retired justice RV Raveendran and to Bombay High Court justice Arif Doctor. The brothers parted ways in the early part of this decade after the family agreed to a division of the group between the two sons in 2018.

Apple leads smartphone mkt globally in 1st quarter; Samsung's share drops 5%

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

IPHONE maker Apple grabbed the top spot in the first quarter of this calendar year, capturing 19% of the global market share, driven by robust sales in India and Japan.

As per a Counterpoint Research report, Apple's growth was fuelled by the iPhone 16e launch and strong sales performance in emerging markets. While Apple saw double-digit growth in Japan, India, Middle East and Africa, and Southeast Asia, sales in its traditional markets like the US, Europe, and China remained flat or declined.

South Korean tech giant Samsung claimed the second spot with 18% market share. This represents a 5% year-on-year fall compared to the same period last year. The slower start is attributed to the later launch of the S25 series. Samsung's sales demonstrated double-digit growth in March, with the Ultra variant of the S25 series showing an increased share of sales. Overall, the global smartphone market expanded by 3% YoY in Q1, 2025.

"The market got off to a mixed start in 2025, where Q1 saw continued improvement in economic conditions, mainly in emerging markets. But mature markets like North America, Europe and China showed signs of fatigue after a recovery in 2024. Sales in January were strong, with a subsidy-led demand boost in China. The momentum continued with major launches like Samsung's S25 and iPhone 16e, but it turned quickly as economic uncertainties and trade war risks started mounting, especially towards the end of the quarter," said senior research analyst Ankit Malhotra. Chinese mobile maker Xiaomi grabbed third spot with 14% market share, up 5% compared to the same period last year.

Ferguson all but ruled out of remainder of IPL



Lockie Ferguson is all but ruled out for the remainder of the IPL with Punjab Kings fast bowling coach James Hopes saying that the pacer's chances of returning towards the back end of the tournament are low. The New Zealand quick hobbled off after bowling just two deliveries against Sunrisers Hyderabad last week.

Dhoni's CSK at home in Lucknow

Sea of yellow throng stadium as Super Giants made to work hard; Chennai chase 167

FIROZ MIRZA @ Lucknow

IT has become a norm nowadays as no matter where they play and how they perform, Chennai Super Kings are tend to get the maximum support from the crowd. Monday was no different as there was a sea of yellow at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow. And of course one MS Dhoni once again showed why he is considered one of the greatest crowd pullers in the country.

Among the 43,700 spectators in attendance at the stadium, more than 90 per cent were wearing No 7 jerseys and leaving no chance to cheer for CSK skipper Dhoni. Such vociferous were they in their support that Dhoni's counterpart from the home team, Rishabh Pant, has to say that they will ignore the crowd backing the visitors when asked about it after the toss. Dhoni on the other hand thanked the supporters saying, "I am blessed. Wherever we go, we get this kind of support." Knowing fully what the fans expect from him, the former India skipper even showed glimpses of his prime past when he ran out Abdul Samad in the last over.

Matheesha Pathirana's second ball of the 20th over was a full delivery down the leg side and the J&K batter along with Pant tried to steal a bye. Dhoni, however, had some other plans as he moved to his left, collected the ball and threw it over the sprinting Samad to hit the stumps at the non-striker's end. The crowd went berserk as the giant screen at the venue confirmed Samad was short of crease. Ironically, the home team has lost the wicket but how does that matter when none other than Dhoni has effected that run out. This has now been a routine scene at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, where the fans celebrate the fall of wicket as the next batter in is none other than Dhoni.



CSK's Ravindra Jadeja (2nd R) celebrates a wicket on Monday | AFP

Earlier, it was not an ideal start for the hosts as they lost opener Aiden Markram in the first over with Rahul Tripathi running backward to complete a sensational catch. Haryana pacer Anshul Kamboj then sent back in form Nicholas Pooran to reduce the Lucknow franchise to 2/23 in the fourth over.

Mitchell Marsh, who missed the last game against Gujarat Titans due to personal reasons, then rebuilt the innings along with his captain adding 50 runs off 33 balls. Ravindra Jadeja castled the Aussie to bring Ayush Badoni at the crease. The 25-year-old from Delhi survived a few close calls as a couple of reviews went in his favour but was undone by Jadeja with Dhoni completing the stumping.

Lucknow were crawling as by the end of 17th over, they were 121/4 with Pant battling on 40 from 39 balls. With the time running out for him and the team, the LSG skipper finally launched Pathirana for two sixes in the next over as the team's total raced to 139/4 after the end of the over. He along with Samad also hit a six each in the next over from Khaleel Ahmed's over collecting 16 runs. He scored 23 runs off the next 10 balls completing his first half-century as the LSG skipper. His innings was laced with four fours and as many sixes.

Chasing a tricky target of 167, Chennai managed 104/4 in 13 overs.

Team	M	W	Pts	NRR
GT	6	4	8	1.08
DC	5	4	8	0.89
RCB	6	4	8	0.67
LSG	6	4	8	0.16
KKR	6	3	6	0.80
PBKS	5	3	6	0.06
MI	6	2	4	0.10
RR	6	2	4	-0.83
SRH	6	2	4	-1.2
CSK	6	1	2	-1.5

Updated post DC vs MI tie on Sunday

Punjab eye comeback vs KKR

AFTER BEING HAMMERED BY SRH'S ABHISHEK SHARMA IN HYDERABAD, PUNJAB KINGS TAKE ON KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS AT MULLANPUR ON TUESDAY. A LOOK...

BOWLING CONCERNS FOR PBKS

Their batters might be scoring runs for fun but Punjab Kings' bowlers have been below par so far. All of them have a bowling average of nine and above with their key tweaker, Yuzvendra Chahal, averaging 11.13. He has taken only two wickets from five innings so far. They failed to defend a total of 245 against Sunrisers Hyderabad only a couple of days ago and that says it all.

KOLKATA SEEK CONSISTENCY

They have been inconsistent so far with three wins and as many losses in the tournament. But the way the Kolkata franchise won in Chennai against five-time champions must have boosted their confidence. Their bowlers were particularly good during the Chepauk outing and they would look to continue their form against a dangerous Punjab batting line-up.

KKR vs SRH, KOLKATA | 7:30 PM LIVE ON STAR SPORTS & JIOHOTSTAR

Man on a mission: Hungry Karun proving his worth

FIROZ MIRZA @ Lucknow

CHASING 206 against Mumbai Indians on Sunday, Delhi Capitals lost the wicket of their opener Jake Fraser-McGurk off the first ball making Karun Nair walk in as an impact player. Despite playing his first IPL match since 2022, the 33-year-old right hand batter played a comeback knock smashing 89 off just 40 balls. The knock might not have helped his team win but it certainly breathed a new life into Nair's career.



DC's Karun Nair made 89 off 40 balls against Mumbai Indians on Sunday | AFP

The way he took down Jasprit Bumrah, one of the most dangerous bowlers of this era, was a treat to watch. He plundered 28 off just nine balls from the MI pacer that included three fours and two sixes. He completed his fifty in just 22 balls. The half-century had come seven years after he had slammed his previous half-century in the tournament.

Nair has been a prolific scorer in the domestic tournaments for the past couple of years and had even helped Vidarbha to Ranji title last month. The Ranji team's coach Usman Ghani had seen him from close quarters and was not surprised at all when Nair made a lightwork of Mumbai Indians' bowling attack led by Bumrah and Trent Boult.

"He always tells me that he is an aggressive player. I tell him to play his natural game irrespective of the format. The freedom we gave him made him play the way he did this season," Ghani told this daily. The coach said Nair was waiting for an opportunity to prove a point to everyone and did exactly that. "He has been playing well in all formats. He wanted to prove a point or two to everybody. He always used to tell me that a lot of cricket is still left in him. He wants to make a comeback to the national side and is very determined to do that. His stint with the County team has also helped him and his fitness level has also improved a lot."

Karun, who has played six Tests and two ODIs for India so far, last featured in an international game on June 13, 2016 where he scored 39 against Zimbabwe in Harare. In six Tests, he has scored 374 runs including an unbeaten innings of 303. The coach credited his work ethics for the recent success. "He has a very good routine. He is very disciplined and focussed and knows what exactly he has to do to stay in contention. More than anything, he wants to make a comeback into the national fold and he is working in that direction only."

Speaking on Nair's fitness, Ghani said he is fitter than the previous year and that's why he has been scoring a plenty of runs in all formats. "The more fit you are, the more you will stay at the crease and score runs. That's my thoughts on fitness as a coach. You can see he is a lot fitter than last year. His performance was good last year and this year it is excellent in all the three formats. He can play all the formats." The coach also said that Karun has his own routine and works on his game throughout the year. "That eagerness to return to the Indian team has been motivating him to do the hard yards. He does have his own routines. He used to prepare with throwdown specialists during the domestic tournaments. If you want to excel then you have to do things differently. Apart from routine training, you have to put in additional efforts. He too used work on his game apart from routine training with Vidarbha teammates. He used to practice shots at nets because you cannot go out there and start playing the shots. You need to practice it and perfect yourself before executing those shots."

Full story: newindianexpress.com

TT talents set to go under hammer today

ENS/AGENCIES

CHINESE paddler Fan Siqi, World No 13 Bernadette Szocs, Olympians Aruna Quadri, Alvaro Robles and several rising Indian paddlers, led by junior World No 6 Ankur Bhattacharjee, will headline the Ultimate Table Tennis Season 6 player auction, set to take place in Mumbai on April 15. For the first time in UTT, team rosters will be shaped through a unique player auction, giving franchises greater control over their recruitment and strategies.

Among the 56 players in the auction pool, youngsters Diya Chitale and Yashaswini Ghorpade — country's top-ranked women's singles players — teen sensation Syndrela Das, and former U-17 World No 1 Payas Jain lead a group of 25 rising Indian stars under 25, who have earned their spot alongside seasoned pros like two-time champion Harmeet Desai, former winners Sathiyan Gnanasekaran, Manika Batra, Sutirtha Mukherjee, and WTT Contender Lagos 2024 winner Sreeja Akula.

Indian Open: Last chance to qualify for Fed meet

ENS @ Chennai

INDIAN Open Athletics Championships, an event that was included in Athletics Federation of India's (AFI) domestic calendar earlier this year, has not seen too many entries in certain categories since it began on April 1. Some of the events had entries in ones and twos in the last three editions too. But the Chennai edition, which will be held today, seems to have an extensive entry list. The men's 100m has some 54 entries while the 200m will witness around 35 participants. Similarly, 400m has 40 entries. Even on events where there were few participants in the earlier meets, the numbers have increased a bit. Men's pole vault, too, has seen a healthy number.

The AFI had come out with a guideline for qualifying to compete at the senior national federation athletics competition in Kochi and has made it mandatory for all athletes to compete in at least one regional or Indian Open Athletics Competition. The AFI's circular, dated April 1, said: "This notice is to inform you that the AFI has made it mandatory for all athletes seeking to qualify for the 28th National Federation Senior Athletics Championships 2025, scheduled to take place in Kochi, Kerala, from 21st -24th April 2025, to participate in either the Indian Open Athletics Meet or the Indian Grand Prix in the year 2025." Chennai is the last opportunity for all to qualify. However, it needs to be seen how many turn up on Tuesday.

Going by the response in the earlier Indian Open events, it seemed athletes were not interested in competing. Take for instance in the first Indian Open meet in Sangrur, Punjag. In the men's 800m, there were three competitors, while in the 5000m there were four. What seemed more embarrassing was the 10,000m where only two competed. There were did not starts (DNS) and disqualifications (DQ) as well. In the women's section, there were more than one categories where only one athlete competed. In the 5000m, of the two, one did not start.

SECOND TOUCH: FIGHT FOR CL SEMIFINAL BERTH

UNAI EMERY'S ASTON VILLA WILL LOOK TO MAKE THEIR HOME ADVANTAGE COUNT AGAINST AN UPBEAT PSG IN THE SECOND LEG OF THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTERFINAL IN BIRMINGHAM ON TUESDAY. DORTMUND SEEK A MIRACLE AGAINST BARCA. A LOOK...

ASTON VILLA VS PSG (FIRST LEG: PSG 3-1 VILLA)

Villa took the lead in the first half in Paris through Morgan Rogers only for the hosts to turn the game on its head thanks to stunning strikes by Desire Doue and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia either side of the interval. A stoppage-time Nuno Mendes strike changed the complexion of the tie. Villa, who have done very well to come this far, will be hoping to overturn the deficit in front of home fans at Villa Park. Unai Emery's side have a good record at home, having not lost a Premier League or Champions League game at home since a 2-0 defeat to Arsenal in August. However, PSG, led by players like Kvaratskhelia and Ousmane Dembele have also been one of the teams of the season. They have not lost by more than one goal since October and only once in 47 matches this season. It's clear that Villa will have to conjure something special to book a spot in the semis.

17

PSG have won 17 of their past 18 games in all competitions, the only exception being a 1-0 first-leg home defeat to Liverpool in the Champions League last 16, which they overturned at Anfield.



1

They have been to just one semi-final in Europe's elite club competition since 2015.

DORTMUND VS BARCELONA (1ST LEG: BARCA 4-0 DORTMUND)

Failing a collapse at Borussia Dortmund, Hansi Flick will take Barca through to the semifinals, confirming the Catalan club's reemergence as a genuine contender to win European football's biggest prize. This year marks a decade since Barcelona won the last of their five European Cups to date. Barca's attacking trio of **Lamine Yamal**, Raphinha and the veteran Robert Lewandowski have been firing all cylinders and they will be looking to seal the deal on Tuesday. Hansi Flick's side have been at their ruthless best and he'll be hoping to guide the team all the way to the top prize. Dortmund, on the other hand, have nothing to lose and they'll be hoping to make the tie interesting for the home fans.



LIVE ON SONY SPORTS NETWORK @ 12:30 AM (IST WEDNESDAY)

In-form Indian shooters set for Lima challenge

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

INDIAN shooters were among big-hitters during the ISSF World Cup (rifle/pistol/shotgun) in Buenos Aires held last week. In tricky conditions, the shooters from rifle and pistol categories shone bright to return with an impressive haul of eight medals (4 gold, 3 silver and 3 bronze). The Indian team were only behind China in the final medal standings then.

After barely any gap, the shooters will once again be hunting for medals when they part in yet another World Cup, the premier meet which is being conducted in Lima, Peru this time around.

Sift Kaur Samra (women's 50m rife 3 positions), Rudrankksh Patil (men's 10m air rifle), Vijayveer Sidhu (men's 25m rapid fire pistol), Suruchi Singh (women's 10m air pistol) were the standouts for India during the season-opening World Cup in Buenos Aires. On the first competition day (Tuesday) of the Lima edition, pistol shooters (men) will be in action. Saurabh Chaudhary, who bagged a medal in the mixed team event, had failed to get past the qualifying hurdle in air pistol event and he'll be hoping to be among medal contenders. Ravinder Singh and Varun Tomar, the other shooters who'll be in action on Tuesday, had finished sixth and fifth, respectively, in Argentina and they'll be looking to climb the podium this time. One high-profile shooter who'll hoping for improvements is Manu Bhaker. The double Olympic medallist, who participates in three events, had drawn blank last week. Given the competition within the national team, Manu needs to find her range and get back to winning ways.

Shotgun shooters have also made noticeable strides in recent years but they'll need to pull up their socks in order to have any chance of challenging for a medal. Not a single shooter (trap and skeet) from the country could make it to the finals (generally considered to be the first significant stage) in Buenos Aires.

END OF DROUGHT

Major victory: Masters glory at last for McIlroy

AGENCIES @ Augusta (USA)

WHETHER it was resetting after missing a putt to win or riding some well-earned luck at Augusta National, Rory McIlroy took pride in little details that made him a Masters champion.

The 35-year-old from Northern Ireland won his fifth Major title and snapped an 11-year Major title drought on Sunday by defeating England's Justin Rose in a playoff to complete a career Grand Slam.

McIlroy withstood two double bogeys and three bogeys with help from four birdies, but there was little margin for error in his victory. Following back-to-back birdies at the ninth and 10th holes that gave him a four-stroke lead at 14-under, McIlroy found himself in the right trees at 11.



USA's Scottie Scheffler puts the Green Jacket on Rory McIlroy | AP

McIlroy blasted his approach just shy of the green, the ball stopping just on the edge of a slope that would have sent it into a water hazard, likely turning his eventual bogey on the hole into a double-bogey or worse.

"I've rode my luck all week," said McIlroy. "I think with the things that I've had to endure over the last few years, I think I deserved it."

Those hard-earned luck storing moments include three major runner-up showings over the past three years. "Any time I hit it in the trees this week, I had a gap," McIlroy said. "You need that little bit of luck to win these golf tournaments."

A cheering crowd informed McIlroy his ball had avoided a watery grave, unlike playing partner Bryson DeChambeau.

"I didn't see the ball on 11, but I heard the sort of groan of the crowd as it was rolling towards there and then the cheer when it stopped," McIlroy said. "Bryson hit his shot in the water, and I was looking at my ball thinking, 'Should I run down and hit it? Should I go down and hit it out of turn to make sure it doesn't roll in?'

"But I got down there and it was on a little flat spot, so it was OK. But yeah, was quite fortunate."

How lucky was McIlroy this week? He became the first Masters champion with four double bogeys in his victory run.

He only won after overcoming the heartache of missing a four-foot par putt on the 72nd hole that dropped him into a playoff. McIlroy thanked caddie Harry Diamond for keeping his mental focus where it needed to be when it mattered most.

EXPRESS READ

Archery WC Stage 1: Dhiraj bags bronze

AUBURNDALE (USA): India wrapped up their campaign at the Archery World Cup Stage 1 with a creditable four medals, including a silver in the men's recurve team event and a bronze by rising star Dhiraj Bommadevara in the individual recurve category, here on Sunday. Dhiraj showed exceptional grit to clinch the bronze-medal match, bouncing back from a 2-4 deficit to beat Andres Temino Mediel of Spain 6-4 in a tense five-setter.

5 new faces in women's hockey team for Oz tour

NEW DELHI: Five new players — Jyoti Singh, Sujata Kujur, Ajmina Kujur, Pooja Yadav and Mahima Tete — got their first senior national call-ups as Hockey India on Monday announced a 26-member women's squad for the upcoming five-match tour of Australia, scheduled to take place from April 26 to May 4. India will take on Australia A in the first two games, followed by three matches against the senior Australia team.

Boxing legend George Foreman to be honoured

HOUSTON: Family, friends and the public are preparing to remember boxing legend, pastor and entrepreneur George Foreman during a memorial service in his hometown of Houston. George Foreman IV, one of five sons of boxing legend, along with Houston Mayor John Whitmire and former boxer Michael Moorer, who Foreman beat in 1994 to become the oldest man at age 45 to win the heavyweight title, are expected to speak at the service Monday. The service will be hosted by Foreman's family and the city of Houston at the Wortham Theater Center, a performing arts center that is home to the city's ballet and opera companies.

CAN INDIA ACHIEVE ITS AMBITIOUS TUBERCULOSIS ELIMINATION GOAL?



According to the data from the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry, Uttar Pradesh alone reported a staggering 6.7 lakh tuberculosis cases last year

HEMANT KUMAR ROUT @ Bhubaneswar

INDIA has set an ambitious target to eliminate tuberculosis (TB) by 2025, five years ahead of the global sustainable development goal (SDG) deadline of 2030. The SDG goal for 2030 is 90% reduction in TB deaths and 80% reduction in TB incidence as compared to 2015.

But can India achieve its self-imposed target, especially as TB notifications touched a staggering 26.07 lakh cases in 2024, the highest in recent years? Health experts are divided. Some claimed that the rise in cases is actually a good sign as the country plans to enter the elimination phase while others termed the target unrealistic given the uptick in new TB cases.

Dr Banani Jena, head of the Respiratory Medicine at SUM Hospital, Bhubaneswar and president of Odisha Chest Society, said a spike in TB notifications is a positive development from a public health perspective. It indicates that the system is identifying more cases and bringing them into treatment, which is crucial before entering the elimination phase, she explained.

TB, a bacterial disease caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis, mainly affects the lungs but can also impact other organs of the body, including the brain, kidneys, and spine. It spreads through the air when people cough, sneeze, or even talk.

Despite being both preventable and curable, TB remains one of the top infectious killers worldwide. According to WHO's Global TB Report 2024, an estimated 10.6 million people worldwide developed TB, and 1.3 million lost their lives to the disease.

WHO has identified 33 countries with low TB incidence rates as potential candidates for TB elimination. Nations such as Iceland and Cyprus have reached 'pre-elimination' levels, reporting fewer than 10 new cases per million people per year. However, no country has yet achieved full TB elimination.

As per WHO's End TB Strategy, countries are required to reduce deaths due to TB by 75% and incidence (new cases per one lakh population per year) by 50% to meet the 2025 milestone. "India had launched the elimination target in 2018. Had the mass screening been conducted in the year itself or the following year, the country would have achieved it as per the target. Given the rising number of latent and incipient TB cases, India will not be able to even meet the 2025 milestone set by the WHO, let alone achieve the elimination target," pointed out Dr Niroj Mishra, a public health expert.

UP tops states in TB burden

India alone accounted for over 27% of the global TB burden, making it the country with the highest number of TB cases in the world. Although the incidence rate dropped from 237 per lakh population in 2015 to 195 per lakh in 2023, and TB-related deaths reduced from 28 to 22 per lakh in the same period, experts cautioned that these aggregate improvements mask deep disparities between states.

According to the data presented by Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Anupriya Patel in the Rajya Sabha recently, Uttar Pradesh alone reported a staggering 6.7 lakh TB cases last year, continuing its trend as the state with the highest burden. Maharashtra (2.14 lakh), Bihar (2.03 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (1.77 lakh), Gujarat (1.29 lakh) and West Bengal (97,332) followed closely. Smaller states and Union Territories like Rajasthan (1.68 lakh cases), Delhi (90,281), Telangana (74,711), Punjab (60,456) and Odisha (59,483) have also shown persistent caseloads, reflecting that the burden is not limited to any particular geography.

Patel said India has made measurable progress in its ambition towards eliminating TB. The incidence rate has declined by 17.7% and deaths too saw a 21.4% drop. The number of missing cases has reduced from 15 lakh in 2015 to 2.5 lakh in 2023. TB treatment coverage has also increased by 32% in the last eight years from 53% to 85%, she said.

"The government has decentralised TB screening and treatment services with targeted interventions in high TB burden areas through state and district specific strategic plans. Intensified TB case-finding among vulnerable populations through mobile diagnostic units and provisions of free drugs, diagnostics, and nutritional aid will help achieve the target," Patel said.

What is 'elimination'?

In the global health lexicon, 'elimination' does not imply zero cases but refers to drastic reduction in incidence to less than one case per million people annually. For India, this would mean reducing the annual caseload to fewer than 1,400, a far cry from the over 26 lakh cases reported last year.

Dr Mishra said the target may not be practically achievable in the next nine months, but it has certainly helped detection of hidden cases which will lead to targeted intervention. "Reaching elimination by 2025 appears overly ambitious given the current incidence levels. Even if the goal is missed, the campaign is building essential health infrastructure and awareness that will yield long-term benefits," he said.

Dr Sudarsan Pothal, head of pulmonary medicine department at Sri Jagannath Medical College and Hospital in Puri, attributed the sudden rise to intensified screening and latent TB cases. He said more than 40% of the population in India carry the tuberculosis bacteria even if their microbiological test reports are negative.

"Although people carry the bacteria, the disease does not manifest in them and only around 10% of them develop the disease. These asymptomatic people keep spreading the disease. The need is to screen all patients coming to a doctor or hospital for treatment of any disease to detect latent tuberculosis in them. This can be done by using portable X-ray machines," he said.

Advancements in treatment

India has taken significant steps to modernise its TB diagnosis and treatment strategies. Molecular diagnostic labs have now been established across blocks, offering quicker and more accurate testing. Additionally, mobile diagnostic vans are being deployed to rural and tribal belts, helping identify cases that would otherwise remain undiagnosed. "Treatment protocols have evolved as well. Drug-resistant TB, once a major concern, is now being tackled with newer, shorter, and all-oral regimens like BPaLM (comprising bedaquiline, pretomanid, linezolid and moxifloxacin). These advanced regimens are critical in improving outcomes for drug-resistant cases, which were earlier extremely difficult and costly to manage. The treatment is also for a much shorter duration of 26 to 38 weeks," said Dr Pothal.

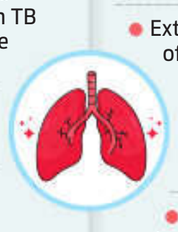
Dr Subhashree Samantaray, associate consultant (infectious diseases) at Manipal Hospitals said drug-resistant TB has become a growing concern. It develops in two forms - multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) and extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB), both of which do not respond to the standard first-line drugs. Treatment for such cases is more prolonged, toxic, and expensive, requiring specialised care and second-line medications, she said.

"Under India's National TB Elimination Programme, diagnosis and treatment are provided free of cost. The programme provides free medications for active TB cases known as directly observed treatment short course (DOTS). Management of latent TB cases has been introduced with TB preventive therapy," Dr Samantaray said.

Preventing TB is as important as treating it. The BCG vaccine, administered to infants, provides protection against severe forms of TB, especially TB meningitis and disseminated TB in children. Although its effectiveness in preventing adult pulmonary TB is variable, it remains a key part of India's universal immunisation programme.

IMPACT ON LUNGS

- Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by bacteria that most often affects the lungs. It spreads through the air when people with TB cough, sneeze or spit. The disease is preventable and curable.
- TB is broadly classified into two categories - latent and active
- In the latent form, the bacteria remain in the body without causing symptoms and are not contagious. They can become active when the immune system is weakened
- Active TB is symptomatic and infectious, requiring immediate medical attention. It has two forms - pulmonary TB and extra-pulmonary TB



SYMPTOMS

- Common symptoms include persistent cough, chest pain, coughing up blood, fatigue, and weight loss
- Extra-pulmonary TB affects parts of the body outside the lungs, including the bones, joints, lymph nodes, brain, and kidneys. Its symptoms vary depending on the organ affected
- TB in the spine may cause back pain, while TB in the kidneys might lead to blood in the urine
- TB meningitis can present with headaches, vomiting, and seizures
- Other types of TB include TB meningitis, drug-resistant TB, intracranial tuberculoma, spinal arachnoiditis and hepatic TB

NEW INNOVATIONS, AI TO ACHIEVE TARGET

Innovations are crucial for TB elimination, offering faster and more accurate diagnostics, improved treatment regimens, and better prevention strategies. ICMR has validated three indigenous handheld X-ray devices, which makes it possible to reach vulnerable population groups for TB screening. It has partnered with Institute of Plasma Research, Ahmedabad, to develop DeepCXR, a tool for artificial intelligence-based reporting chest X-ray films. AI tools are expected to be a game-changer in detecting presumptive TB patients and quick initiation of treatment. Serum Institute of India Ltd has developed a CyTb skin test for detection of latent TB infection.

Therapy can lower stress, improve success of infertility treatment

Infertility can trigger depression, as the emotional toll of unfulfilled longing for a child weighs heavily on individuals and couples. Studies suggest couples who attend therapy together report lower stress and better emotional resilience. Those who balance treatment with emotional outlets tend to fare better, says **Dr Lekha KL** (senior consultant, obstetrics and gynaecology, Apollo Adlux Hospital, Angamaly) in an interview with **Anna Jose**. Edited excerpts:





INTERVIEW
DR LEKHA KL

Studies show that the infertility rate has increased from 22.4% in 1992-93 to 25.3% in 2005-06 and then increased to 30.7% in 2015-16. What is causing a rising infertility rate in India?

Infertility is a fast-emerging global disease. The rising infertility rate is indeed a growing concern that reflects changes in both society and health over the years. Southern states with higher infertility rates also show lower overall fertility rates. One factor is age. Over these decades, people in India, especially in urban areas, have been delaying marriage and childbirth. Biologically fertility declines with age. After 35, a woman's egg quality and quantity drop significantly. For men, sperm quality can also decrease after 40. Couples who conceive easily the first time may face challenges later.

How does changing lifestyle contribute to infertility?

Lifestyle changes are a huge contributor. Since the 1990s, there has been rapid urbanisation, more sedentary habits, and a shift toward diets high in processed food. Obesity has become more common, and it is a known disruptor of hormones that regulate reproduction—for both men and women. Add to that smoking, alcohol, and stress from fast-paced lives, and it is a recipe for fertility issues. For men, these habits can lower sperm count and motility, while for women, it can lead to conditions like polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), which is increasingly common and a major cause of infertility. Pollution, exposure to chemicals, and infections are significant factors contributing to infertility. Specifically, exposure to substances like those found in plastics and pesticides can disrupt hormones crucial for conception. Stress and sleep deprivation are other factors contributing to infertility. Also, untreated sexually transmitted or pelvic infections, often stemming from poor menstrual hygiene or unsafe abortions, can damage reproductive organs, particularly the fallopian tubes, leading to secondary infertility. Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and thyroid disorders, partly influenced by lifestyle shifts, can affect ovulation, sperm production, and the ability to carry pregnancy to term.

How should the issue of infertility be handled?

Maintaining a healthy weight and balanced diet, engaging in regular physical activity, practising stress-reducing techniques, such as yoga or meditation, adequate sleep, avoiding smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and substance abuse can help. By adopting a healthier lifestyle, individuals can reduce their risk of infertility and improve their overall reproductive well-being.

What is the role of detecting and treating conditions like PCOD/PCOS and oligospermia in tackling the situation?

Ovulatory dysfunction (defective egg release) is the major cause of female infertility and PCOS is the main cause of ovulatory dysfunction. It affects around 10% of reproductive-age women. Oligospermia (low sperm count) affects men and is often discovered during fertility evaluations. It can result from lifestyle factors, hormonal imbalances, or varicoceles. Smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, certain childhood infections like mumps, and systemic diseases like uncontrolled diabetes and varicocele can negatively impact sperm numbers. Early detection of PCOS and oligospermia is crucial, as couples often remain unaware until they try to conceive.

Infertility often leads to depression. How can couples/individuals deal with it?

Infertility can indeed trigger depression, as the emotional toll of unfulfilled longing for a child weighs heavily on individuals and couples.

The journey often involves grief, guilt, and a sense of loss, compounded by societal expectations or personal dreams. For couples, open communication is key. Sharing feelings — whether frustration, sadness, or hope — prevents isolation and builds mutual support. Some seek professional help, like therapy or counselling, to process emotions and strengthen their relationship. Studies suggest couples who attend therapy together report lower stress and better emotional resilience. Support groups also offer a space to connect with others facing similar struggles. Those who balance treatment with emotional outlets tend to fare better. Faith or spirituality also sustains many, offering comfort and meaning amid uncertainty.

Has the emergence of assisted reproductive technologies in recent years helped in improving the rates?

Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) is a game-changer for fertility. In recent years, ART has undergone tremendous advancements, including, IVF (in vitro fertilization) refinements in IVF protocols that have enhanced success rates, ICSI (intracytoplasmic sperm injection), PGD (preimplantation genetic diagnosis). PGD enables genetic testing of embryos, reducing the risk of inherited disorders and egg and sperm freezing.

Diet, exercise, daily habits can influence cancer recurrence

RISHITA KHANNA @ Bengaluru

RECENTLY, on World Health Day, filmmaker and writer Tahira Kashyap revealed that her breast cancer had returned — seven years after her first diagnosis in 2018. In a social media post, she said, "Seven-year itch or the power of regular screening — it's a perspective," urging people to go for regular mammograms. "Round 2 for me … I have got this," the post added.

Cancer recurrence happens when cancer returns after a period of remission. It can occur in the same place as the original tumour (local recurrence), nearby (regional recurrence), or in a different part of the body (distant recurrence or metastasis). Recurrence, however, does not mean the treatment failed — it means some cancer cells remained in the body after treatment and later started growing again. Regular follow-ups and screenings play a crucial role in catching recurrences early, which can improve treatment options and outcomes.

Dr CN Patil, HOD, medical oncology and haemato-oncology at Aster RV Hospital, highlighted that emerging research suggests that lifestyle factors after treatment may influence the risk of cancer recurrence in ways not fully understood. "For instance, disruptions to the body's circadian rhythm — such as irregular sleep patterns or exposure to light at night — have been linked to changes in cell behaviour and immune function," Dr Patil said, adding that these subtle biological shifts can create conditions where previously eliminated cancer pathways may quietly reactivate.

XPLAINER

It's not just about diet or exercise, but how daily habits interact with the body's internal clock, potentially influencing cancer's return. Additionally, the microbiome — the trillions of bacteria living in our gut — is gaining attention as a hidden player in cancer recurrence, he added.

"A disturbed or imbalanced microbiome can interfere with how the body processes drugs, metabolises nutrients, and regulates inflammation. Some studies have shown that patients with a more 'diverse gut microbiota' respond better to treatment and have lower recurrence rates. This opens up a new frontier where managing gut health might one day become a key part of preventing cancer from coming back," Dr Patil explained.

Dr Rahul S Kanaka, surgical oncology consultant at Manipal Hospitals, emphasised that while most people think cancer recurrence is just a return of the disease in the same area after treatment, what's less known is that some recurrences happen because tiny clusters of cancer cells, too small to be detected during scans, remain hidden in the body. These "sleeper" cells can stay inactive for years, surviving treatment by entering a dormant state, he said.

When the environment inside the body changes — due to stress, inflammation, or hormonal shifts — these cells can "wake up" and start growing again, leading to a recurrence.

Another lesser-known factor is the role of the immune system. After initial treatment, a person's immune response might weaken due to aging or other illnesses.

This reduced immune surveillance means that previously controlled cancer cells can slip past unnoticed and begin multiplying. In some cases, the very treatment used to kill cancer cells — such as chemotherapy or radiation — might cause changes in healthy cells that make them more vulnerable to becoming cancerous in the future, contributing to a second round of the disease, Dr Kanaka explained.

Apart from tests, changes in how a person feels can also signal early warning signs — though these can sometimes be vague. Experts highlight that unexplained fatigue, weight loss, persistent pain in a specific area, or unusual symptoms similar to those experienced before the first diagnosis should be checked out.



Regular follow-ups and honest conversations with doctors about new symptoms or concerns are crucial. Doctors also use tumour markers, imaging scans, and personalised risk profiles based on the cancer's type, grade, and genetics to keep an eye on any possible return, they said.