



31-01-2026  
Total pilgrims: 76,935  
Tonsures: 25,770  
Hundi Kanukulu: 320 CR  
Waiting Compartments: 11

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam  
(with our SSD Tokens): 8 H



## NATION | NEWS

IndiGo aircraft makes emergency landing in Varanasi after information of bomb on board



## WORLD | NEWS

EPSTEIN SENT \$75,000 TO ACCOUNTS LINKED TO MANDELSON



## SPORTS | NEWS

HAPPY TENNIS,  
SERIOUS NAME - THE  
MAKING OF CARLOS  
ALCARAZ

## Trump says Iran negotiating with US

Washington, Feb 1 : US President Donald Trump said that Iran is negotiating with the United States. "The plan is that (Iran is) talking to us, and we'll see if we can do something. Otherwise, we'll see what happens," Trump told a Fox News correspondent. He added that "the last time they negotiated, we had to



take out their nuclear. It didn't work, you know. Then we took it out a different way, and we'll see what happens. " "We have a big fleet heading out there, bigger than we had -- and still have, actually -- in Venezuela," Trump said. Trump also said the United States could not share military plans with Gulf allies while negotiating with Iran. "We can't tell them the plan, if I told them the plan, it would be almost as bad as telling you the plan -- it could be worse, actually," Trump said, responding to reports that Gulf allies remain in the dark about potential US intervention plans involving Iran.

## Telangana Neglected in Union Budget, Says Bhatti



Hyderabad (TSIT): Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu on Sunday alleged that Telangana has been treated unfairly in the Union Budget presented in Parliament, stating that the state received no significant allocations despite repeated representations by the state government.

Addressing a media conference at Praja Bhavan, he said the 53.47 lakh crore Union Budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman failed to provide support for several priority projects proposed by the Telangana government.

Bhatti Vikramarka said Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, ministers and MPs had met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Finance Minister multiple times seeking funds for projects such as Musi River rejuvenation, Regional Ring Road, Hyderabad Metro Rail expansion, and major city infrastructure, but these were not reflected in the budget.

He expressed disappointment that Telangana was not considered in key national initiatives relating to bio-pharma, electronics, semiconductors and medical value hubs. Stating that Hyderabad has global recognition as a pharma hub and a strong electronics ecosystem, he said the Centre should have prioritized Telangana in these sectors.

Deputy CM also objected to

Hyderabad-centric Orange Economy initiatives being shifted to Mumbai, noting that Hyderabad is a major center for audio-visual media, gaming and creative industries.

He further said Telangana was overlooked in tourism promotion despite having UNESCO-recognized heritage sites, major forest reserves and internationally known tribal festivals. He added that the state was also not included in rare earth mineral and advanced manufacturing initiatives even though Sangareni regions are undertaking related processing activities.

Raising welfare concerns, Bhatti Vikramarka said the

budget did not adequately address the needs of SCs, STs and minorities and warned that weakening of the rural employment guarantee scheme would hurt the rural poor.

He appealed to all Telangana MPs to rise above political differences and jointly submit representations to the Prime Minister and Union Finance Minister seeking fair allocations for the state. He reiterated that the state government believes in democratic governance and not vendetta politics, and expressed hope that future budgets would better support Telangana's development goals.

NEW DELHI (TSIT): Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said that the Union Budget 2026-27 is designed to accelerate economic growth and create more jobs across sectors. Addressing journalists after the presentation of the budget, the Finance Minister said: "The Budget focuses on building an ecosystem with structural reforms to improve productivity and create an environment that ensures employment generation across sectors. It is designed to maintain growth momentum through sustained economic expansion."

The emphasis on growth, reforms and job creation reflects the government's push for a tech-driven and inclusive economic framework, she said. Explaining the fine print of her key proposals, the Finance Minister highlighted that the Rs 10,000 crore outlay earmarked in the Budget for the biopharma sector is aimed at ensuring India maintains its leadership in the global biopharma industry.

"Budget proposing Rs 10,000 crore investment in biopharma sector over next five years ensures India maintains lead in the sector," she remarked.

The Finance Minister also highlighted that in this year's budget, health has been given equal importance, with special emphasis on mental health. The Budget marks a significant milestone in the government's ongoing efforts to strengthen

## UNION BUDGET 2026

Budget focuses on pushing growth, reforms, and jobs across sectors: FM Nirmala



India's healthcare system, with a substantial enhancement in the allocation for the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare to Rs 1,06,530.42 crores, reflecting an increase of nearly 10 per cent over the Revised Estimates of FY 2025-26.

Her budget proposals include the creation of 1 lakh Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) in 10 disciplines, like optometry, radiology, anaesthesia, over the next five years as part of the Budget proposals. Besides, more emergency and trauma centres, as well as mental health institutions like NIMHANS, are to be set up. Sitharaman also announced that as many as 1.5 lakh caregivers would be created for geriatric and NSQF-aligned programmes in the country.

She also expressed optimism about India's new rare earth corridors proposed in the budget. She cited the example of the success achieved in the development of the existing defence corridors to illustrate her point. She further stated that this budget is the first one in the second quarter of the century, leading towards the vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047, along with "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas". Asked why the Union Budget 2026-27 did not give special emphasis to states with upcoming elections like West Bengal, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, Finance Minister Sitharaman quipped: "The government faces criticism either way."



The Budget 2026-27 has simplified the customs regime by rationalising exemptions, waiving customs duty on 17 cancer drugs, while easing baggage rules and reducing duty to 10 per cent on goods imported for personal use...

## SIT examines KCR for nearly five hours in phone-tapping case



Hyderabad, Feb 1 : The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the telephone-tapping case examined Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) president and former chief minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao for nearly five hours at his residence here on Sunday.

The SIT team left KCR's Nandi Nagar residence around 8 p.m. after examining him based on the statements given by the accused, including the main accused T. Prabhakar Rao, former

chief of Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB). The team, comprising six officials, made an audio and video recording of the examination. The case, registered in 2024, relates to the alleged tapping of phones of several people, including political opponents, businessmen, journalists and even judges during the BRS rule.

The former chief minister was believed to have been questioned about the appointment of Prabhakar

## Pakistan to boycott T20 WC game against India after granted conditional approval to participate



New Delhi (TIST): Pakistan will not play India in their scheduled Men's T20 World Cup match at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on February 15, after the government granted the team conditional approval to take part in the tournament.

The statement did not specify a reason for that decision, though it is believed that Pakistan will boycott the match against India to show solidarity with Bangladesh, who were pulled out of Men's T20 World Cup for seeking relocation of their matches out of India, citing security issues and were replaced by Scotland in Group C.

"The Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan grants approval to the Pakistan Cricket Team to participate in

the ICC World T20 2026, however, the Pakistan Cricket Team shall not take the field in the match scheduled on 15th February 2026 against India," said the government's official account on X account. Earlier this week, PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi met with Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, and it was then that he announced

that the final decision on Pakistan's participation would be taken on either January 30 or February 2. However, the final verdict was announced a day earlier, which now leaves the tournament on the edge of a fresh problem, considering the revenue coming from the marquee clash.

SEE MORE ON SPORTS PAGE

## 'BLIND TO INDIA'S REAL CRISSES': RAHUL GANDHI SLAMS UNION BUDGET OVER JOBS AND SLOWDOWN



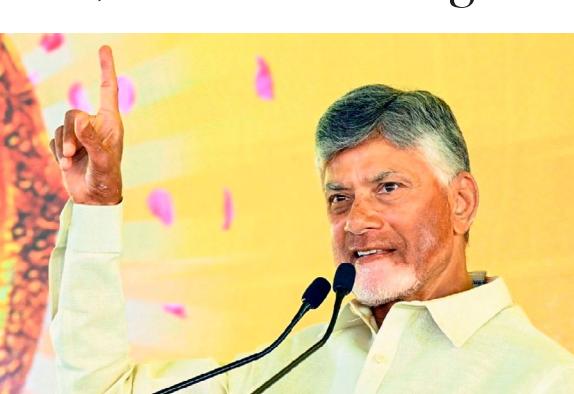
New Delhi (TSIT) : Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Sunday criticised the Union Budget 2026-27, accusing the government of being disconnected from the country's pressing economic and social challenges.

In the response to the Budget, Gandhi said it had failed to address key issues confronting the nation, including unemployment, slowing manufacturing growth, capital outflows, declining household savings, and agrarian distress.

"Youth without jobs.

Falling manufacturing. Investors pulling out capital. Household savings plummeting. Farmers in distress. Looming global shocks - all ignored. A Budget that refuses course correction, blind to India's real crises," Gandhi said in a post on X. Other opposition leaders have also criticised the Budget, saying it lacks structural reforms and meaningful interventions to revive growth.

## Well-balanced, forward-looking Budget: Chandrababu Naidu



Amaravati (TSIT): Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has welcomed the Union Budget, terming it 'well-balanced' and 'forward-looking'. He said that the Budget 2026-27, presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Parliament, reflects the aspirations of people for a fast-growing economy.

Chandrababu Naidu, whose Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is a key partner in the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre, congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Sitharaman. Addressing the media at Kuppam, he

exuded confidence that the Budget will help India become a developed economy by 2047.

The TDP president believes that the Budget will help achieve the goal of self-reliance and

ly on the issues it is focusing on. "This budget will further support the Ease of Doing Business policy being implemented by the State. The state government has already focused heavily on MSMEs, and there is an opportunity to further strengthen them," he said.

Stating that the Budget provides direction and momentum, he hoped that it would give a necessary boost to various technologies, including AI, and the next level of reforms. He also noted that the Budget focuses on renewable energy and a one-grid nation. "It has been designed in line with short, medium, and long-term goals. It will contribute to improved

living standards and ease of living," said Chandrababu Naidu. The Chief Minister said the state will benefit from the Hyderabad-Bengaluru and Hyderabad-Chennai high-speed rail corridors. Tirupati and Amaravati will be covered by high-speed corridors.

The Bengaluru-Chennai high-speed rail corridor will cover areas like Palamuru, Chittoor, and others. These three high-speed rail corridors will cover various regions of Andhra Pradesh and connect cities like Hyderabad, Amaravati, Bengaluru, and Chennai. He pointed out that Andhra Pradesh is also included in the dedicated rare earth corridors.

## India zeroes out Chabahar port outlay, slashes Bangladesh aid in 2026-27 Budget



New Delhi (TSIT) India has not allocated funds for the Chabahar port project in Iran in the Union Budget for 2026-27 and has halved the development assistance for

Bangladesh to Rs 60 crore in reflection of frosty bilateral ties. Bhutan has been allocated the largest share — Rs 2,288 crore — as development aid, followed by Rs 800 crore to Nepal and Rs 550 crore each to the Maldives and Mauritius. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has been given a total of Rs 22,118 crore as against the current fiscal's budget estimate of Rs 20,516 crore and revised estimate of Rs 21,742 crore. For the next fiscal, the allocation for Bangladesh has been pegged at Rs 60 crore.

strengthen MSMEs. He noted that women, farmer and youth have been given top priority in the Budget. The Chief Minister hoped that the Budget would help the state government to move more aggressive

**Sanitation staff played crucial role in Medaram Jatara success: Minister Seethakka**

Mulugu, February 1 (TSIT): State Panchayat Raj, Rural Development, Rural Water Supply, Women and Child Welfare Minister Dhanasari Anasuya Seethakka has said that the services of sanitation staff were invaluable to the successful and orderly conduct of the world-famous Medaram Samakkasaralamma Maha Jatara.

The Minister held a review meeting at Medaram along with District Collector Divakara TS to assess the sanitation management undertaken during the mega tribal fair, which witnessed the participation of crores of devotees. Addressing the gathering,

Minister Seethakka lauded the dedication of the Panchayat Raj and Sanitation Department staff for working continuously on the ground and ensuring cleanliness and safety throughout the fair. She thanked the sanitation workers for maintaining the Medaram meadow, roads leading to the fair, surrounding areas, courtyards, and accommodation zones of devotees in a clean condition. Emphasising that sanitation work remains equally important even after the conclusion of the Jatara, the Minister directed officials and staff to continue their duties until complete cleanliness is achieved.

**EO Ramadevi reviewed Mahashivratri fair arrangements**



Karimnagar, February 1, TSIT : On the arrangements for the upcoming Mahashivratri fair at Sri Rajarajeswara Swamy Devasthanam in Vemulawada, Rajanna Sircilla district. Temple

EO L Ramadevi held a meeting with the employees of temple in view of the possibility of lakhs of devotees flocking to the Mahashivratri fair to be held this month from

February 14 to 16, 2026. She advised the temple staff to make advance arrangements so that the devotees do not face any difficulties.

During the recently organized Sammakasaralamma fair, the temple employees performed their duties in coordination. She congratulated the EO staff for successfully conducting the fair without causing any trouble to the devotees who came in large numbers.

To organize the Mahashivratri fair more efficiently and properly, the facilities of the devotees are the main objective. EO L Ramadevi called for the success of the Mahashivratri fair.

**Minister Komatireddy Sets 48/48 Target for Nalgonda Civic Polls**



Hyderabad: State Roads & Buildings and Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy held a Zoom meeting with Congress candidates contesting the Nalgonda Municipal Corporation elections and directed them to work with a clear goal of winning all 48 divisions.

Describing the polls as historic, the Minister said the elections are being held for the first time after Nalgonda was upgraded to a Municipal Corporation. He noted that candidate selection was carried out with social balance, with more than 70 percent of

public even after the elections.

"If you win, it is my victory," he told the candidates, assuring that development works would be taken up on priority in divisions that elect Congress corporators. He said required funds would be arranged in coordination with Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy. Referring to a recent suicide incident reported in the media, the Minister said such events were painful and highlighted the need for elected representatives to stay closely connected with citizens. Expressing confidence of a clean sweep, he wished all candidates success in the polls.

**Immunity Kits and Knee Pain Medicines Distributed to Press Club Members**



Hyderabad: Free immunity kits and medicines for knee pain relief were distributed to members of the Press Club at a special health awareness programme organised for journalists. The event was conducted under the aegis of the Press Club with support from Radhas Ayurveda Hospital and Ojasca. Integrated cancer specialist and Ayurveda doctor Dr Sharath Addanki participated and addressed the gathering.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Sharath Addanki said stress has become an unavoidable part of modern life and improper food habits are significantly affecting health. He noted that many illnesses — from minor digestive

issues to serious diseases — are rooted in gut health.

He explained that while treatments such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy are necessary in cancer care, their side effects often create fear among patients. He said integrated cancer care approaches — combining Ayurveda, guided imagery, aroma therapy, sound therapy,

yoga, and structured diet practices — can help reduce side effects and improve recovery outcomes.

He advised that common problems such as acidity and bloating are often misunderstood and overtreated with antacid tablets, which may worsen symptoms. Simple home remedies using ingredi-

ents like ginger and asafoetida can provide relief in many cases, he said.

Dr. Addanki shared that he entered the field of integrated cancer therapy research after losing his mother to breast cancer, with the aim of reducing treatment side effects.

During the COVID period, he spent significant funds to support Sangareni workers and distributed immunity kits free of cost.

Through the Srinivasan Munuswamy Radha Addanki Trust, assistance is also being extended for student education and healthcare support. As part of the latest initiative, immunity kits and knee pain relief medicines were distributed free to Press Club members.

Hyderabad, Feb 1: Social scientist and former Telangana Backward Classes Commission Chairman Vakulabharanam Krishna Mohan Rao described the Union Budget 2026-27 as a major milestone in India's social justice journey and a gateway towards Viksit Bharat, stating that it reflects an integrated, reform-driven and inclusion-focused development framework.

In a press note issued on Saturday, Dr. Rao said the Budget presented in the Lok Sabha by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman marks a shift from fragmented welfare measures to structural reforms where social inclusion is embedded within



core economic policy. He noted that the Budget places social justice at the center of national development by prioritizing farmers, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, youth, backward classes, nomadic communities and the poor, ensuring that growth dividends reach all

sections.

Dr. Rao said the Budget treats education, employment, skills, health and enterprise creation as instruments of social equity. He welcomed the decision to establish girls' hostels in every district for higher education — particularly in STEM institutions — calling it a structural intervention that removes long-standing socio-economic barriers and expands access to opportunity.

Highlighting employment-linked growth, he said the focus on small enterprises, self-employment, traditional occupations, livestock, fisheries, services and local entrepreneurship strengthens inclusive participation in

the economy and promotes shared prosperity.

He also appreciated the expansion of mental health services, the strengthening of trauma and emergency care at district hospitals, and the emphasis on human security, describing them as part of a dignity-centered welfare framework.

Stressing the importance of fiscal discipline, Dr. Rao said adherence to prudence protects welfare spending from long-term instability and inflationary pressures, thereby reinforcing social justice outcomes. He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, social justice and national development are being pursued as a unified mission.

**Medicover Cancer Institute Organizes All-Women Bike Rally to Promote Cancer Awareness**

Hyderabad, February 1, 2026: Under the powerful slogan, "Don't Fear Cancer; With Awareness, Victory is Ours," Medicover Cancer Institute successfully organized a high-energy, all-women bike rally this Sunday in HITEC City, aimed at spreading awareness about cancer prevention and the critical importance of early screenings. Approximately 100 women riders participated in the rally, demonstrating their enthusiasm and commitment to promoting health consciousness among women. The event was inaugurated by Mr. T. Sai Manohar (DCP, Madhupur Traffic) and Ms. Mitali Agrawal (Mrs. India Global Ambassador), who led the rally through the bustling streets of the city, sending a strong message about women's health. Participation of Eminent Specialists: The rally also saw the presence of leading experts from Medicover Cancer Institute, including Dr. Ravi Chandra, Robotic Surgical Oncologist Dr. Saritha & Dr. Venugopal Medical Oncologists, Dr. Kavitha & Dr. Prashanth Reddy, Radiation Oncologists Mr. T. Sai Manohar: "Just as wearing a helmet on the road protects your life, regular cancer screenings protect your future. Do not be afraid; with the right awareness, cancer can be detected and defeated in its



earliest stages." Ms. Mitali Agrawal: "Women often prioritize the health of their entire family while neglecting their own. These 100 bikers are an inspiration, reminding every woman that her health is the foundation of her family's well-being." Dr. Ravi Chandra, Robotic Surgical Oncologist: "The days of fearing cancer treatment are over. Through advanced robotic surgery, patients experience minimal pain and faster recovery. Early screening allows us to successfully save 70% of patients with ease." Dr. Venugopal Medical Oncologist: "Timely diagnosis is the ultimate key to victory. We urge every individual to take their health seriously and undergo periodic check-ups to stay ahead of the disease." Dr. Prashanth Reddy Radiation Oncologist: "With state-of-the-art technology, we can now target tumors with extreme precision. Cancer is conquerable if you consult a doctor at the right time." The rally received an overwhelming response from the public, standing as a beacon of hope and an call to action for women's health. By bringing together 100 female riders, Medicover Cancer Institute reinforced the vital message that awareness is the first and most crucial step in the fight against cancer. About Medicover Cancer Institute: Medicover Cancer Institute is a leading healthcare organization dedicated to providing world-class cancer care through advanced diagnostics, innovative treatment methods, and community-driven awareness initiatives.

**Community Pure Water Annual Fundraiser 2026 unites changemakers at Chowmahalla Palace**



water infrastructure as a preventive public health intervention and a catalyst for community development. The Annual Fundraiser 2026 was organised under the leadership of Mrs. Pratiksha Prashant, Board Member and Chairperson of the Fundraising Committee, whose vision brought together diverse stakeholders who, understanding the critical role of safe water as a foundational public health intervention, generously enabled Community Pure Water to meet the fundraiser goal to bring safe water to 25 more rural schools. The fundraiser was envisioned as an intimate charity dinner featuring a six-course gourmet menu curated by three of India's leading chefs: Avinash Martins, Mythraye Iyer, and Vinesh

Johny Setbene. Chowmahalla Palace's grand chandeliers and within its open courtyards, the evening offered guests an immersive experience that blended culture, cuisine, and purpose.

The event was graced by eminent Guests of Honour, including Mrs. Pinky Reddy, philanthropist and producer, as Chief Guest, and Ms. Nandita Das, acclaimed actor, filmmaker, and social advocate, as Special Guest Speaker. The presence of Mr. Ravi Reddy, Founder of Community Pure Water, reaffirmed the organisation's mission-driven roots and long-term commitment to socio-economic development by securing safe water for life. Also in attendance were distinguished leaders from defence, government, culture, and civil

society, including Major General Ajay Misra, General Officer Commanding of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, Indian Army; Mr. Shrivardhan Reddy, Director General of Police, Telangana; Mr. Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary, Tourism, Culture and Youth Advancement, Government of Telangana; and Ms. Laura Williams, Consul General, US Consulate General, Hyderabad.

The evening was further enhanced with the participation of Ms. Regena Cassandra, actor and Co-Founder of Democratic Sangha; Mr. Gopi Rao, Founder of Race2Win Foundation and Title Sponsor of the fundraiser; Mr. Kishore Kothapalli, Board Member, Community Pure Water; Addinath Kothare, actor and director of the award-win-

ning film Paani; and Ms. Sumeet Rawla, Chief Philanthropy Officer, Community Pure Water. As India continues to face growing water safety challenges, the Community Pure Water Annual Fundraiser 2026 underscored a clear truth: safe drinking water is the foundation for good health and an imperative for lasting development. By securing clean water first, communities restore good health, unlock better nutrition, strengthen livelihoods, and more resilient local economies.

Through strategic partnerships and community-centric solutions, Community Pure Water continues to work towards a future where water security is strengthened, public health is safeguarded, and communities are empowered to thrive.

## KCR Key Figure in Phone Tapping Case Says Congress Leader Indira Shobhan

Hyderabad: Congress senior leader Indira Shobhan alleged that BRS chief and former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao is a key figure in the phone tapping case and said the investigation has reached a decisive stage with his questioning.

Addressing the media, she said such a large-scale phone tapping operation could not have been carried out by officials without the knowledge and approval of the then Chief Minister. She questioned how surveillance equipment could have been procured from Israel without top-level authorization when KCR was in office.

Indira Shobhan asked why the former Intelligence Chief



reportedly left for the United States soon after the Congress came to power, and demanded that BRS leaders clarify the circumstances. She further alleged that CCTV cameras in the Special Intelligence Branch were switched off and evidence related to phone tapping was destroyed.

She criticized BRS leaders for invoking "Telangana self-respect" now, while remaining silent during past incidents involving martyrs' families, unemployed youth suicides, farmer distress, crimes against women, and alleged atrocities against Dalits. Referring to allegations reportedly made by KCR's daughter that her phone and her husband's phone were tapped and that authoritarian governance prevailed for a decade, Indira Shobhan questioned why the Kalvakuntla family had not responded or denied those claims so far.

She accused the BRS leadership of misleading people in the name of water, funds, and jobs, and alleged that phone tapping was used to suppress opposition voices and officials. She said leaders including K. T. Rama Rao, T. Harish Rao, and Santosh Rao would be held accountable for their actions.

Referring to the US tour, she said the Chief Minister held extensive interactions with global investors, technology firms, venture capital funds, and members of the Telangana diaspora. The discussions focused on attracting foreign direct investment into priority sectors including IT, artificial intelligence, life sciences, clean energy, advanced manufac-

## CM Revanth Reddy's Harvard Programme and US Visit to Boost Telangana's Global Economic Outreach Dr Rekha Boyalapalli

Hyderabad: Telangana Pradesh Mahila Congress Vice President Dr Rekha Boyalapalli on Sunday said that Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy completing a leadership and governance programme at Harvard University along with his official visit to the United States would significantly strengthen Telangana's global economic outreach and investment prospects.

In a statement, she said the Chief Minister's participation in the prestigious Harvard programme was not merely academic, but reflects Telangana's effort to align governance and economic planning with globally tested models in public finance, innovation, infrastructure development, and job creation.

Dr Boyalapalli said the programme provided exposure to international best practices in managing fast-growing economies and urban regions, which would be useful for Telangana's next phase of development.

Referring to the US tour, she said the Chief Minister held extensive interactions with global investors, technology firms, venture capital funds, and members of the Telangana diaspora. The discussions focused on attracting foreign direct investment into priority sectors including IT, artificial intelligence, life sciences, clean energy, advanced manufac-



ting, and startups.

According to her, the meetings generated strong investor interest and laid the foundation for future collaborations. She said the outreach reinforced global confidence in Telangana as a stable and investor-friendly destination with a clear policy direction.

Dr Boyalapalli said the outcomes of the visit would contribute to employment generation and skill development in the state. Increased investments and global partnerships would lead to new jobs, technology transfer, and sustainable economic growth, she noted.

Welcoming the Chief Minister back, she said the Harvard engagement and US outreach demonstrated leadership that combines local priorities with a global outlook and focuses on long-term prosperity for Telangana.

for appropriate care and rehabilitation.

During Operation Smile-XII, a total of 161 children, including 158 boys and 3 girls, were rescued from the Nizamabad, Armoor, and Bodhan divisions. Of these, 58 children were identified in Nizamabad subdivision, 54 in Bodhan, and 49 in Armoor.

The Commissioner informed that 52 FIRs were registered during the operation, including 15 FIRs in Nizamabad division, 23 in Armoor, and 14 in Bodhan. Details of missing children were uploaded on the Darpan app to help trace their addresses and reunite them with their families.

He reiterated the Police Department's commitment to protecting children's rights and ensuring a child-labour-free society through sustained enforcement and awareness efforts.

## 161 children rescued in Nizamabad under Operation Smile-XII: Police Commissioner

Nizamabad, February 1 (TSIT): Nizamabad Police Commissioner Sri P. Sai Chaitanya, IPS, on Saturday revealed the details of Operation Smile-XII, which was conducted across the Nizamabad Police Commissionerate limits from January 1 to January 31, 2026.

The Commissioner stated that the primary objective of Operation Smile is to trace and rescue missing, abandoned, and vulnerable children below 18 years of age, including those engaged in child labour. As part of the operation, cases are registered against employers who engage child labour, parents are counselled and children are reunited with them, while children without parental support are produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC).

### MLA Veerlapalli Shankar Assures Development of Rameshwaram Village



RANGAREDDYShadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar has assured that all efforts will be made for the development of Rameshwaram village in Faroognagar mandal of Rangareddy district. On Tuesday, the MLA participated in a special abhishekam at the Rameshwaram temple and later laid the foundation stone for underground drainage works in the village.

Addressing the gathering, Veerlapalli Shankar said steps would be taken to resolve local issues and improve basic infrastructure in Rameshwaram. He emphasized the importance of sanitation and civic facilities for the overall development of the village.

The programme was attended by Rameshwaram Sarpanch K. Manasa Suresh, Raikal Sarpanch Jyothi Srinivas, former sarpanches Ashanna Goud, Pandu Naik and Diddala Krishnaiah, Deputy Sarpanch Krishnamoorthy, ward members Janamma, Kavitha, Sumathamma, Jangaiah, Mahesh, Ratan Singh, Tirupathamma, Srinivas, and others.

## Prajavani programme cancelled in Warangal due to municipal elections



municipal election schedule. With officials and staff being deployed for election-related duties, it has been decided to temporarily cancel the Prajavani programme.

The District Collector advised the people of the district to take note of this development and cooperate with the administration during the election period. She clarified that the Prajavani public grievance redressal programme will be resumed and continue as usual after the completion of the municipal elections.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the Collector said the decision was taken in view of the release of the

## Nizamabad residents urged to strictly follow regulations from Feb 1 to 15: Police Commissioner



Nizamabad, February 1 (TSS): Nizamabad Police Commissioner Sri P. Sai Chaitanya, IPS, has issued a set of strict regulations to be followed by residents to ensure public safety, law and order, and peaceful civic life in the district. The orders will remain in force from February 1 to February 15, 2026, across the Nizamabad, Armoor, and Bodhan divisions under the Police Commissionerate.

The Commissioner said that the installation of idols should not cause inconvenience to the public and is prohibited in crowded areas, parks, traffic islands, and government premises. Prior permission from the concerned Assistant Police Commissioner is mandatory for meetings involving up to 500 people, while gatherings exceeding 500 require Police Commissioner's approval at least 72 hours in advance. Strict security rules must be followed in public places such as malls, cinemas, hotels, exhibitions, and commercial establishments, with adherence to the queue system. The use of drones has also been restricted, and prior clearance from government, police, and aviation authorities is mandatory.

He cautioned the public against fake Gulf agents operating illegally in the district and advised residents to inform the police before renting houses to such individuals. The Commissioner also reminded theatre managements that minors are not allowed to watch "A" certificate films.

## Ban on consumption of alcohol in public places extended till Feb 28 in Karimnagar



Karimnagar, February 1 (TSIT): Karimnagar Police Commissioner Goush Alam has announced that the existing prohibition on the consumption of alcohol in public places within the Karimnagar Police Commissionerate limits has been extended till February 28, keeping in view the difficulties faced by common citizens, especially women.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the Police Commissioner said the decision was taken following numerous complaints against individuals consuming alcohol in public places and creating nuisance. He noted that people

drinking alcohol on streets and roads, using obscene language, and engaging in disorderly behaviour have become a

serious disturbance to law-abiding citizens.

The Commissioner said the extension of the ban is aimed at ensuring the

safety and protection of the public, while also addressing issues arising from uncontrolled public drinking. He added that the duration of the prohibitory orders may be further extended depending on the prevailing law and order situation.

Goush Alam warned that strict legal action will be initiated against those violating the prohibitory orders under Section 188 of the IPC and relevant provisions of the Hyderabad City Police Act, Fasali. He appealed to the public to cooperate with the police in maintaining peace, safety, and a healthy environment in the city.

## MLA Dhanpal Suryanarayana mourns death of Excise Constable Soumya, seeks strict action against ganja mafia



Nizamabad, February 1 (TSS): Nizamabad Urban MLA Shri Dhanpal Suryanarayana expressed deep shock and grief over the death of Excise Constable Soumya, who succumbed to her injuries on Saturday night after battling for life for nine days. She was grievously injured during an attack by a ganja smuggling gang while on duty.

The MLA strongly condemned the brutal assault and said the BJP party denounces such inhuman attacks on offi-

cials who are working relentlessly to eradicate prohibited ganja. He stressed that authorities must take strict and decisive action against illegal ganja trafficking to ensure that Nizamabad urban constituency is made ganja-free. Recalling the incident, Dhanpal Suryanarayana said he was deeply saddened that Constable Soumya lost her life at a very young age, just after securing her job and nurturing many dreams for her future. He conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for strength and courage for them to overcome the irreparable loss.

## New Faces Emerge as Veteran Leaders Step Aside in Shadnagar Municipal Polls



RANGAREDDY : The upcoming Shadnagar municipal elections are set to change the town's political landscape, with new leaders emerging in the chairman's race while veteran figures have stepped aside. For the first time since Shadnagar became a municipality, former sarpanches and municipal chairmen who once dominated local politics are not contesting.

Earlier, two prominent leaders both former Sarpanch's had played a key role in securing the chairman's post after Shadnagar attained municipal status. However, in the present elections, both have withdrawn from the race. The Congress and BRS leaderships have this time decided to promote fresh faces, resulting in

senior Congress leader Aganoor Vishwam and former BRS leader K. Narendar being left out of the chairman's contest.

Shadnagar Municipality has 28 wards, and the elections are witnessing a three-cornered contest among Congress, BRS, and BJP. Aganoor Vishwam's family

which held significant influence for nearly three decades during Shadnagar's tenure as a major gram panchayat and later as a municipality, has taken a back seat this time. Likewise, K. Narendar, who earlier served as both sarpanch and municipal chairman and played a crucial role in town administration, is also not in the race.

While both leaders had a strong political presence and left a mark on Shadnagar's development, their absence has become a point of discussion among the public. With party high commands favouring new leadership, several aspirants have now entered the fray, signalling a shift in Shadnagar's political face.

MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE LIMITED			
Regd Office: 8/59 A, Padmaprabha Building, Near Sri Swami Temple, Cherupuram, Thirupravur, Tamilnadu, India, Pincode: 602019, Phone No: 044-3520504, Website: www.manappuramhomefinance.com			
POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immoveable Property)			
Sc. No.	Description of Secured Asset in Respect of Which Interest Has Been Created	Date of Demand Notice sent & Date of Possession	
1	Manala Rajeshwari, Manala Chandramouli, <a href="#">M/ALD/0110945249/ Karim Nagar</a>	All That The House Bearing Door No: 5-2-101 A Area Measuring 242 Sq Yds Situated At <a href="#">Mandalam 2, New Portapally Main Road, Nalgonda District, Nalgonda, Andhra Pradesh, India, Pincode: 502324</a> , East-Road, West-Open Land of Party No: 1, South-Open Land of Bheemala, North-Limit of Rangareddy Mandal, Nalgonda District, Nalgonda, Andhra Pradesh, India, Pincode: 502324, East-Road, West-Open Land of Party No: 2	21-10-2025 & Rs.524562/- 29-01-2026
2	Yadagiripeta Alapana, Talarai Vayash, Talarai Vayash, <a href="#">V/ALD/0110951108/ Thirumalai Talles X Road</a>	All That The Property Under Construction House Building Door No: 2-2 And Measuring 279-71 Sq Yds Situated At <a href="#">Kakrapuram Mandal, District Nizamabad, Telangana - 503224, East-Tin Sheel of Gouda Sangam, West-H. No. 1-2 (Part) of Parameeshwaram, South-Road, North-Open Place of Bheemala, North-Limit of Rangareddy Mandal, Nalgonda District, Nalgonda, Andhra Pradesh, India, Pincode: 502324</a>	24-10-2025 & Rs.303935/- 29-01-2026
3	Gudugotla Alapana, Bhukya Ravi Nayak, Katherla Malliah, <a href="#">V/ALD/0110911999/ Thirumalai Talles X Road</a>	All Excluding Plot No: 33-1, Survey Number: 189/2, H. No: 1-110A, Borigudem Village, Mahabubnagar Mandal, Jayashankar Bhupadpal, Near Bus Stand, Kamgar, Karim Nagar, Telangana, Pincode: 505503, East-House of Ramsing Nak, West-House of Hafkar Dasthar, Mandal, Mulugu District, Telangana-505352, East-10, Feet Road, South-Gp Road, North-Open Place of Gaddam Ashok, Warangal	24-10-2025 & Rs.28837/- 29-01-2026
4	Kanchala Krishna Rao, Gaddammedi Vidyasagar, <a href="#">V/ALD/0720038768/ Warangal</a>	Identical Plot No: 2- 45, Admeasuring To Extent Of 130.56 Sq Yds, Located At <a href="#">Kanchala Krishna Rao, Gaddammedi Sambhali, Warangal, Andhra Pradesh, India, Pincode: 506007</a>	27-10-2025 & Rs.600497/- 29-01-2026

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026 | Place: TELANGANA | Sd/- Authorised Officer Manappuram Home Finance Ltd

APPENDIX IV [RULE 8(1)] POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immoveable Property)		
Whereas The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the IDBI Bank Limited under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (4 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(1) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand notice upon the borrowers and co-borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the notice and interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the notice and interest by the borrowers and co-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 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand notice upon the borrowers and co-borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the notice and interest by the borrowers and co-borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of IDBI Bank Limited for an amount of Rs.11,43,497 (Rupees Eleven Lakh Forty Three Thousand Four hundred Ninety Seven only) as on 27.01.2026 plus applicable interest, incidental expenses, charges and costs thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.		
DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVEABLE PROPERTY		
Particulars of the Secured Assets intended to be enforced Kanchala Krishna Rao & Kanchala Swarupa All that the Residential House Bearing G. P. H No 8-56, admeasuring 116.55 sq Yards or 97.45 sq Mtrs (Out of 233 Sq Yards) within Survey Number 220/2, Situated in Block No 9, Nalgonda X Road to Poultry Area at Karketpally (V) & (M), Nalgonda District, Telangana East-Plot of Avalu Shambulingam, West-Plot of Avalu Sreeramavaslu, South-Plot of Avalu Kankurthy Sreeramavaslu, East-Plot of Avalu Kankurthy Sreeramavaslu, West-Plot of Avalu Kankurthy Sreeramavaslu, North-Plot of Avalu Kankurthy Sreeramavaslu.		
Date: 30-01-2026 Place: Madhavayadavally Sd/- Authorised Officer IDBI Bank Ltd.		

# Andhra Pradesh to gain significantly from Union Budget: Lokesh

Amaravati, Feb 1 : Andhra Pradesh's Minister for Information Technology and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, has hailed the Union Budget, saying Andhra Pradesh will gain significantly from it. Lokesh thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for a well-balanced Union Budget that, he said, is firmly aligned with India's rapid growth and long-term aspirations.

"Andhra Pradesh stands to gain significantly - from the Critical Minerals Corridor and high-speed rail connectivity to tax incentives for data centres, a stronger push for electronics manufacturing, and renewed focus on tourism. We are excited to leverage this Budget to accelerate



investments, create jobs, and power Andhra Pradesh's next phase of growth," Lokesh posted on X. Lokesh, son of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, is also the general secretary of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP),

which is heading the NDA government in the state and is a key partner in the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre.

Minister of Health, Family Welfare & Medical Education Satya Kumar Yadav has also lauded the

Union Budget. In a statement, the minister described the Budget as one with clarity of thought, compassion, conviction and courage to make the country 'Aatmanirbhar' so that it can become 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047. He further said it is the best possible in the context of global political turbulence and other challenges. The Budget seeks to deliver three 'Kartavyas', including acceleration of economic growth, fulfilling aspirations of people and realising the inclusive mission of 'Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas', said Satya Kumar Yadav.

The minister welcomed the measures to support MSMEs, Handlooms and Textiles, Bio-pharma, Rare Earth Minerals, Infrastructure, Manufacturing, Special

Economic Zones, etc., as they result in job creation.

Satya Kumar welcomed the measures announced to empower the vulnerable sections of people to access mental health and trauma care services, import duty reliefs on 17 drugs, including cancer, besides listing seven rare diseases for similar relief.

The minister noted that the compassionate dimension of the Budget has been revealed in the measures announced for farmers, fishermen, weavers, divyangs, women and the youth. The Budget reflects the continuing run of 'Reform Express' set in motion by PM Modi earlier, as reflected in tax reforms and commitment to fiscal prudence outlined in the Budget, noted the BJP leader.

# Ambati Rambabu was arrested by police in Guntur

Senior YSRCP leader and former minister Ambati Rambabu was arrested by police in Guntur on Saturday amid high tension, following allegations that he made obscene and derogatory remarks against Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu.

The arrest stemmed from comments made by Rambabu in response to TDP-installed flex banners in Guntur alleging ghee adulteration in Tirumala laddus during the previous YSRCP regime. Sources indicate that Rambabu responded with highly objectionable and abusive language directed at the Chief Minister, prompting outrage among TDP leaders and workers.

Hundreds of TDP activists and supporters gathered outside Rambabu's residence in Navabharat Nagar, Guntur, staging a prolonged protest that lasted over six hours. The demonstration turned violent, with reports of stones being pelted at the house and vehicles, including cars,



being damaged and vandalized. Clashes erupted between the protesters and YSRCP supporters, leading to a charged atmosphere. A complaint was filed by TDP state secretary Baji Chowdary, leading to the registration of a case by Nallapadu police. Guntur district TDP president Pilli Manikyala Rao also lodged a complaint with the Superintendent of Police, demanding action against Rambabu. Amid intense tension and heavy security,

police arrested Rambabu from his home and escorted him away in a special police vehicle to prevent further escalation. Several ruling alliance leaders strongly condemned Rambabu's remarks. Ministers including Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, Nimmala Ramanaidu, Home Minister Anitha, and Union Minister Pemmasani Chandrasekhar described the comments as "outrageous," "vile," and "shameful," urging him to issue an unconditional public apology immediately.



SRI MUDDADA RAVICHANDRA, SENIOR IAS OFFICER. HE WILL CONTINUE AS SPECIAL CHIEF SECRETARY TO CHIEF MINISTER CHANDRABABU NAIDU AND WILL HOLD THE FULL ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF TTD EO.



SRI RAMAKRISHNA TEERTHA MUKKOTI HELD WITH GRANDEUR...

## Take welfare schemes to every doorstep: Konda Surekha



Khammam (TSIT): Congress cadres should move like disciplined soldiers in the municipal election battle and take government welfare schemes as campaign weapons to every household, State Endowments and Forests Minister Konda Surekha said on Sunday. She was addressing a municipal election preparatory meeting at TCV Reddy Function Hall in Satyanarayanaapuram of Edulapuram municipality. The Minister stressed the need for unity in the party, saying internal differences would only benefit rivals. Referring to multiple aspirants for the 32 wards, she said the party decision of fielding one candidate per ward must be respected. Releasing a pamphlet on development works, Surekha said welfare schemes such as free power up to 200 units, Mahalakshmi free bus travel, farm loan waiver and enhanced Arogyasri had strengthened public confidence. She added that Palair constituency was progressing under Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy and called upon cadres to win the municipal body.

## BRS Protests in Shadnagar Against SIT Notices to KCR



ers through politically motivated actions.

He said K. Chandrashekhar Rao played a key role in the formation of Telangana and, during his decade-long tenure, implemented welfare schemes benefiting all sections of society. He alleged that the Congress government is making baseless allegations against KCR while ignoring public welfare and indulging in political vendetta.

The former MLA criticised the harassment of senior leaders without regard for age or dignity and warned that continued targeting of BRS leaders would invite strong public backlash. He alleged that the SIT has been used for the past two years to trouble BRS leaders and said the people of Telangana are closely watching the Congress government's actions.

He urged the govern-

ment to abandon conspiratorial politics and focus on providing effective governance. The protest saw the participation of Municipal Coordinator Baikani Srinivas Yadav, senior leaders Vankayala Narayana Reddy, Ravinder Yadav, Kadempalli Srinivas Goud, former Zilla Parishad Vice-Chairman Eta Ganesh, former Municipal Chairman Narendra, party presidents Natarajan and Lakshman Naik, Muraleedhar Reddy, Kosgi Srinivas, former Market Chairman Manne Kavitha Narayana, former Library Chairman Lakshminarasimha Reddy, former Market Vice-Chairman Lakshminarayana Goud and Venkat Reddy, along with sarpanches, former public representatives, and BRS cadres.

## Over 5000 devotees take sacred bath



Tirumala, 01 February 2026: Sri Ramakrishna Teertha Mukkoti, one of the sacred torrents in the Tirumala Seshachalam forests, was celebrated in a grand manner on Sunday. It is a tradition to celebrate Sri Ramakrishna Teertham at around 11 AM. The temple priests and staff, chanting mantras, proceeded in a procession from the Srivari temple and reached Sri Ramakrishna Teertham at around 11 AM.

There, they performed special abhishekam to the idols of Sri Ramachandra Murthy and Sri Krishna Swamy with milk, curd, sandalwood paste, and other fragrant substances.

At the Papavinasanam dam, Srivari Sevaks distributed pongal, upma, sambar rice, curd rice, pulihora packets, drinking water, and buttermilk packets to the devotees trekking Sri Ramakrishna Teertham.

A medical camp was also set up at the site by the TTD medical department, and medicines were distributed to the devotees.

The TTD Engineering and Forest department staff constructed walking paths at several places along the route for the convenience of the devotees.

A large number of devotees participated in this program. While over 2000 devotees visited last year, this year more than 5000 devotees took a holy dip in Sri Ramakrishna Teertha Mukkoti. All the concerned officials hailing from various departments supervised the arrangements.

## Political heat intensifies in Mancherial ahead of municipal polls



representatives, TBGKS leaders, party cadres, and workers in large numbers.

Meanwhile, the Congress party reported major political gains through defections. Around 70

leaders and workers from the BRS, belonging to the 57th Division of the Mancherial

Municipal Corporation, joined the Congress, citing development works undertaken by Mancherial MLA Kokkirala Prem Sagar Rao. In another development, about 50 youth leaders and activists from the BRS and BJP from the 55th Division also switched allegiance to the Congress.

The new entrants were welcomed by former DCC president Kokkirala Surekha, who also took part in election canvassing in the 52nd and 3rd Divisions, urging voters to support Congress-backed corporator candidates. The combination of BRS protest activities and steady defections to the Congress has significantly raised the political temperature in the district, with observers expecting a more intense campaign in the days ahead.

## Sunetra Pawar takes oath as 1st woman Dy CM of Maharashtra

**MUMBAI:** Sunetra Pawar on Saturday became the first woman Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra and was allotted excise, sports, minority development and Aukaf departments, but not finance and planning which her late husband Ajit Pawar held.

The brief swearing-in ceremony at the Lok Bhawan here took place three days after Ajit Pawar, NCP president and a deputy chief minister in the BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP 'Mahayuti' government, died in an air crash in Baramati on January 28.

Finance and planning department was not allocated to her, indicating that Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis will hold the charge of the crucial portfolio and present the Budget next month.

Sunetra Pawar, 62, has resigned her Rajya Sabha membership. She is not a member of either house of the state



legislature at present, and is expected to contest the byelection to the Baramati assembly constituency represented by her late husband. Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended his best wishes to Sunetra Pawar, expressing confidence that she will work tirelessly for welfare of the people and carry forward her late husband's dream. After taking the oath of office, Sunetra, a commerce

would remain her guiding strength, she added.

Besides Sunetra Pawar's younger son Jay Pawar and his wife, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, and NCP leaders Praful Patel, Sunil Tatkare and Chhagan Bhujbal were present at the ceremony where she was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Governor Acharya Devvrat.

Nobody from party patriarch and NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar's family were present.

The Nationalist Congress Party, which elected her as the new leader of its legislature wing earlier in the day, remained tight-lipped about the proposed merger of the two factions.

Speaking to reporters in Baramati in the morning, Sharad Pawar said he learnt about the swearing-in from the news, and he had not been consulted about Sunetra

Pawar's decision to join the state cabinet.

It was his late nephew Ajit's wish to unite the two factions, and "now it is our wish that his wish should be fulfilled," Pawar said, while admitting that the process might hit a roadblock due to his sudden death.

Ajit Pawar and NCP (SP) leader Jayant Patil had been holding talks on the merger roadmap, Sharad Pawar revealed.

But while NCP leaders Praful Patel and Sunil Tatkare maintained silence on the issue, Union minister Piyush Goyal in an interview to PTI said he did not expect the merger of the two NCPs to take place.

The leadership of the NCP has passed on to Sunetra Pawar and Praful Patel has been appointed its national president, Goyal said, adding that Sharad Pawar had lost the people's trust and vote.

## Govt recommends CBI probe into death of NEET aspirant in Patna

**PATNA:** The Bihar government recommended a CBI probe into the recent death of a female NEET aspirant in Patna, Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary said on Saturday.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Bihar police is investigating the case.

The NEET aspirant, hailing from Jehanabad, was found unconscious in Shambhu Girls' hostel in Patna's Chiragupt Nagar earlier this month. She died at a private hospital

on January 11 after remaining in a coma for several days. Her family had alleged that she was sexually assaulted, accusing authorities of attempting a cover-up.

"Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Jee has urged the Government of India to hand over the investigation of the NEET student's murder case in Patna (Case No. 14/26) to the CBI. The in-

cident must be thoroughly uncovered in a transparent and just manner," Choudhary said in a post on X.

The deputy CM also holds the home portfolio.

The state home department also issued a notification recommending a CBI probe into the case under the provisions of the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, which governs the functioning of the country's premier investigation agency.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) of the central government will issue a notification,

which is a mandatory requirement for initiating a CBI probe in a state-related case, in this regard. As per the rules, prior approval of the state and the DoPT is required to investigate a crime outside the agency's jurisdiction, as law and order is a state subject.

The parents of the NEET aspirant in Bihar on Saturday alleged that the state police was trying to hush up the matter by denying sexual assault and claiming that it was a case of suicide. Her post-mortem report did not exclude the possibility of sexual violence, and this finding contrasts with the police's initial claim that medical reports and CCTV footage had ruled out sexual assault. One person, an employee of her hostel, was arrested in connection with the case. "The CBI may now register a separate case on the basis of the FIR registered by Patna Police. The agency sleuths will collect all evidence obtained by the state police and will also record the statements of suspects, the arrested person, hospital staff, family members and policemen, who had initially investigated the case and concluded it a case of suicide," according to an official.

## Rs 500 Cr scam: EOW arrests 3, over 11K investors cheated in Maharashtra

**THANE:** The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) has arrested a couple and their associate, who allegedly swindled more than 11,000 investors, including police officials, from across Maharashtra of over Rs 500 crore, police said on Saturday.

In a coordinated action, the Thane police's EOW tracked down the accused, Sameer Narvekar, his wife Neha, and their associate Amit Palaw, in neighbouring Gujarat on Thursday, an official said.

According to police, the accused established an investment company, Trade with Jazz, with its headquarters in Pune in 2019, offering a scheme

that allegedly drew in more than 11,000 people, including 1,500 police personnel, from across Maharashtra. The trio allegedly lured victims with promises of a 4 per cent monthly return on stock market trading and allied ventures, the official said, adding that the firm projected monthly earnings of nearly 10 per cent to build credibility.

The company abruptly shut its offices and stopped responding to investors, prompting a flood of police complaints, he said.

According to the initial probe, investors have been defrauded of around Rs 500 crore.

The official said that the EOW has also gathered information suggesting that several government officials and bureaucrats, some of them retired from service, had invested in the scheme. The trio have been booked under the Maharashtra Protection of Interest of Depositors (MPID) Act, 1999, and sections 61(2)(criminal conspiracy) and 316(5) (criminal breach of trust) of the Bharatiya Nyaya, Sanhita, 2023, he said.

The Thane EOW is examining bank accounts, financial documents and money flows linked to the accused, and further arrests are likely, the official said.

According to the initial probe, investors have been defrauded of around Rs 500 crore.

## Target 50 pc votes at every booth in 2027 polls: Nitin Nabin to Goa BJP workers

**PANAJI:** BJP president Nitin Nabin on Saturday called upon party workers in Goa to strengthen the organisation from booth to state level and set a target of securing at least 50 per cent votes at every polling booth in the 2027 assembly elections. Addressing a workers' convention near Panaji, Nabin said the 2027 polls would be a crucial step towards achieving the vision of a "Viksit Goa", stressing that a stable government was necessary to continue the state's development journey.

Booth chiefs are the most important persons in the party structure, he said, urging workers to try to secure at least 50 per cent of votes at every polling booth in the 2027 elections.

"Sovereignty lies with the people and their support strengthens the party. Con-



tinuous organisational work helps the BJP expand. Prime Minister Narendra Modi believes that when the poor and villages grow stronger, the BJP becomes stronger,

ultimately strengthening the nation and the state," he said.

Nabin noted that Goa's per capita income had increased from Rs 1.12 lakh in

2014 to around Rs 3 lakh in 2023-24.

He also cited infrastructure development, including two airports, expanding expressways and national highways, and flyovers, and urged workers to communicate the "transformed image" of Goa to the people. Initiatives such as the Mhajji Ghar Yojana reflected the state government's commitment to development, Nabin said, adding that more work was needed to realise the goal of a developed Goa before 2047.

He said that the BJP is a cadre-based party, and even a booth-level president could rise to occupy top leadership positions, including chief minister or prime minister.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who also addressed the convention, asserted

that the BJP would return to power in Goa in 2027 and assured the national president that every party worker would strive to ensure the saffron party's victory.

"Politics is not a 100 metres race, it is a marathon. It is not your speed but your stamina that is tested," he said.

Sawant said that the status for the Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Scheduled Castes (SC) in the state was granted during the tenure of former Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar and that the Opposition "need not lecture" the BJP on the issue. Prime Minister Modi has been working for the welfare of STs, SCs and weaker sections of society, he said. BJP MLAs, office-bearers, and karyakartas from across Goa attended the convention.

## Ram temple construction expected to end by April 30; overall estimated cost Rs 1,900 crore

**AYODHYA:** All construction work related to the Ram temple in Ayodhya is expected to be completed by April 30, with the overall cost of the project estimated at around Rs 1,900 crore, Ram Temple Construction Committee chairman Nripendra Mishra said on Saturday.

Addressing reporters after the conclusion of a two-day meeting of the Ram Temple Construction Committee here, Mishra said that Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and Tata Consultancy, which are executing key works at the site, will exit the temple complex by April 30 once construction is over.

Mishra further informed



that directions have been issued to complete all paperwork and bill payment procedures by the same date.

"L&T and Tata Consultancy have offered a three-year warranty

for all the work carried out by them. For maintenance and upkeep, a small team from both organisations will remain deployed inside the temple complex," he said.

The meeting reviewed the progress of construction and associated works, and discussed the final timelines for completion and transition of responsibilities, officials said.

He added that after April 30, all agreements with L&T, Tata Consultancy and the State Construction Corporation will be taken over by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust. Providing details of expenditure, Mishra said the total spending on the Ram temple project is estimated at approximately Rs 1,900 crore, of which around Rs 1,600 crore, including GST, has already been paid.

The operation was carried out following intelligence-driven surveillance aimed at tracking drug peddlers active in the NCR. Acting on specific inputs, the team ar-

rested two accused near Nand Nagri Bus Depot while they were travelling in a car bearing an Uttar Pradesh registration number. The arrested individuals have been identified as Shamim, a resident of Badaun in Uttar Pradesh, Rajeev Sharma and Mohit Gupta, both from Bulandshahr. During the search, police recovered 31 kilograms of Alprazolam tablets -- estimated to be around three lakh tablets -- which falls under commercial quantity as defined in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. The commercial quantity threshold for Alprazolam is 100 grams, officials said. Apart from the tablets, the team seized 11

kg of aluminium foil with "Alprazolam" printed on it, 25 kg of PVC sheet rolls used for tablet packaging, 20 rubber stamps bearing batch numbers, manufacturing and expiry dates and the car used in transportation. The recovery of packaging material and printing tools indicated a large-scale illegal pharmaceutical manufacturing setup, police said.

An FIR under the relevant sections of the NDPS Act was registered on January 29. During the investigation, the vehicle was found to be registered in the name of Mohit Gupta, who was subsequently apprehended at the instance of the other accused.

During interrogation, Sharma allegedly told po-

lice that he used to collect Alprazolam tablets from Shamim and his associate Ranjeet in Himachal Pradesh on the directions of Gupta, and supply them to local pharmacies in Bulandshahr.

Shamim allegedly disclosed that he and his partner were running an illegal manufacturing unit in Parwanoo, Himachal Pradesh, where the tablets were produced and supplied to distributors in Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Gupta, who allegedly runs a medical firm in Bulandshahr, told investigators that he procured the illegal tablets through his firm and distributed them to pharmacies in Agra and Bulandshahr, police said.

## Tribal festival 'Medaram Maha Jathara' concludes in Telangana, lakhs offer prayers

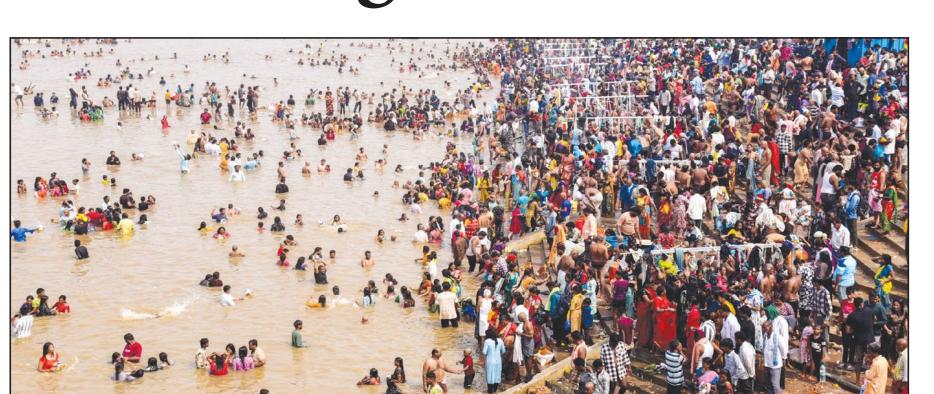
**MULUGU:** The four-day 'Maha Jathara' (Grand festival) of tribal goddesses Sammakka and Saralamma in this district, attended by lakhs of devotees, concluded on Saturday.

Devotees from Telangana and neighbouring Chattilgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha offered prayers during the biennial mega tribal festival held at Medaram, officials said.

Tribal goddesses Sammakka and Saralamma "returned to the forests" as per the custom at 7.55 PM on Saturday marking the end of the 'Maha Jathara', amid religious chants of thousands of devotees.

The Adivasi priests also took other deities, Pagididharaju and Govindaraju, to their respective abodes as per the customs.

The 'Maha Jathara', often hailed as the largest tribal festival in Asia, began on January 28 with the deities being installed at the 'gud-



del' (altar) at Medaram. An estimated 80 lakh devotees visited the 'Maha Jathara' on January 28 and 29, state Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy had said. Thousands of devotees took holy dip in the rivulet Jampa Vagu at Medaram. They offered jaggery equal to their weight to the goddesses as per tradition. Telangana Governor T.S. Venk

of about Rs 101 crore. Additional development works worth Rs 150 crore were undertaken to improve facilities for devotees attending the 2026 festival. About 21 government departments and 42,000 personnel were involved in managing the event by way of crowd control, security, cleanliness, medical services, and other arrangements.

Medical camps, ambulances, and bike ambulances were deployed to handle emergencies. The 'Maha Jathara' is celebrated in Medaram, located in the remote Etturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary, part of the Dandakaranya forest belt. The festival commemorates the revolt led by the mother-daughter duo, Sammakka and Saralamma, against the imposition of taxes on the tribal populace during a drought by the Kakatiya rulers in the 10th century.

## Working towards first uncrewed mission for Gaganyaan programme: ISRO Chairman

**CHENNAI:** ISRO is working towards the first uncrewed mission of its ambitious Gaganyaan Mission, scheduled for 2027, Chairman V Narayanan has said.

The Gaganyaan mission is India's first human spaceflight programme currently under development. It aims to send a three-member crew on a three-day mission to space and bring them back safely to Earth.

"Gaganyaan programme is planned for 2027. Before that, three uncrewed missions are planned. We are working towards the first uncrewed mission," he told reporters late Friday. To a query, he said, currently scientists were engaged in conducting a lot of tests for the mission to achieve success.

"There are lots of tests happening. You know safety of the Gaganyaan is very, very important. So, we have to be very careful. We have to qualify every system. In the rocket system, we have to score one hundred out of one hundred," he said. "Our aim is that (success of Gaganyaan). We have to do a perfect job. We are working towards that," he said. On the PSLV-C62 mission, which suffered an anomaly in the third stage of the rocket after lift-off on January 12, he said scientists were studying everything on the mission to put things in order.

The PSLV-C62/EOS N1 suffered a setback after an anomaly was encountered on the third stage of the rocket and scientists have initiated a detailed analysis on the mission.



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# EDITORIAL

## BUDGET 2026-27: THE MATH ISN'T MATHING

Once the accounting exercises are concluded, the platitudes repeated and campaign slogans masterfully plugged in, we must judge the Union budget on whether it promises to bring any positive change in people's lives. Keeping in mind the government's track record, the answer is a resounding no. For the household sector, this is a budget that is heavy on credit and low on income growth. Since last year, measures such as the enhanced limits under the Kisan Credit Card and PM SVANidhi schemes focus primarily on facilitating loans rather than addressing the more fundamental issue of income generation. This approach risks deepening the debt burden of an already over-leveraged population.

Fifty-two percent of agricultural households are indebted, with the incidence of debt likely highest among small and marginal farmers. Yet the budget offers very few concrete measures to raise real incomes; instead, it largely equates economic relief with the ability to borrow more.

Budgets for the PM KISAN and crop insurance schemes have been kept stagnant, despite inflation. Urea and nutrient-based subsidies have been reduced, which will result in increased cost of production for farmers.

Considerable emphasis has been placed on promoting agricultural output. However, translating this intent into reality will be extremely difficult. Many state governments – particularly those run by the BJP – have cornered themselves through pre-election promises, such as procuring paddy at the minimum support price. Once in power, these governments often realise that they lack either the fiscal capacity or the political will to honour such commitments. Under such circumstances, farmers have little incentive to increase production, since higher output only means higher costs with minimal assurance of even recovering their investments.

The announcement last year of an extension of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) to 2028 is another example of inadequate accountability. In the last budget, the JJM was allotted Rs 67,000 crore, which was later revised downward to Rs 17,000 crore. Why did the government not spend the money? No explanation was offered as to why the scheme could not be completed within its original timeframe. While the mission was commendable in intent and innovative in design, its execution has been deeply flawed.

There is nothing concrete for education and healthcare. Last year's announcement of adding 75,000 seats to medical colleges also appears encouraging at first glance, but the expansion is largely meaningless unless accompanied by parallel investments in high-quality infrastructure and, more importantly, well-qualified teaching faculty.

Medical education cannot be strengthened without making careers as medical teachers, specialist physicians and surgeons genuinely attractive. This requires substantial financial commitment and improved service conditions, neither of which find mention in the budget. Finally, the repeated invocation of 'Make in India' and the array of schemes proposed to boost manufacturing will succeed only if supported by a conducive social climate and stable institutional environment. Unfortunately, the budget speech is silent on these essential preconditions.

In sum, the budget reflects a preference for credit-driven solutions over income-based empowerment, offering piecemeal initiatives while sidestepping deeper structural reforms. From every perspective, the budget lacks substance. Let's take a look at the macro-economic indicators.

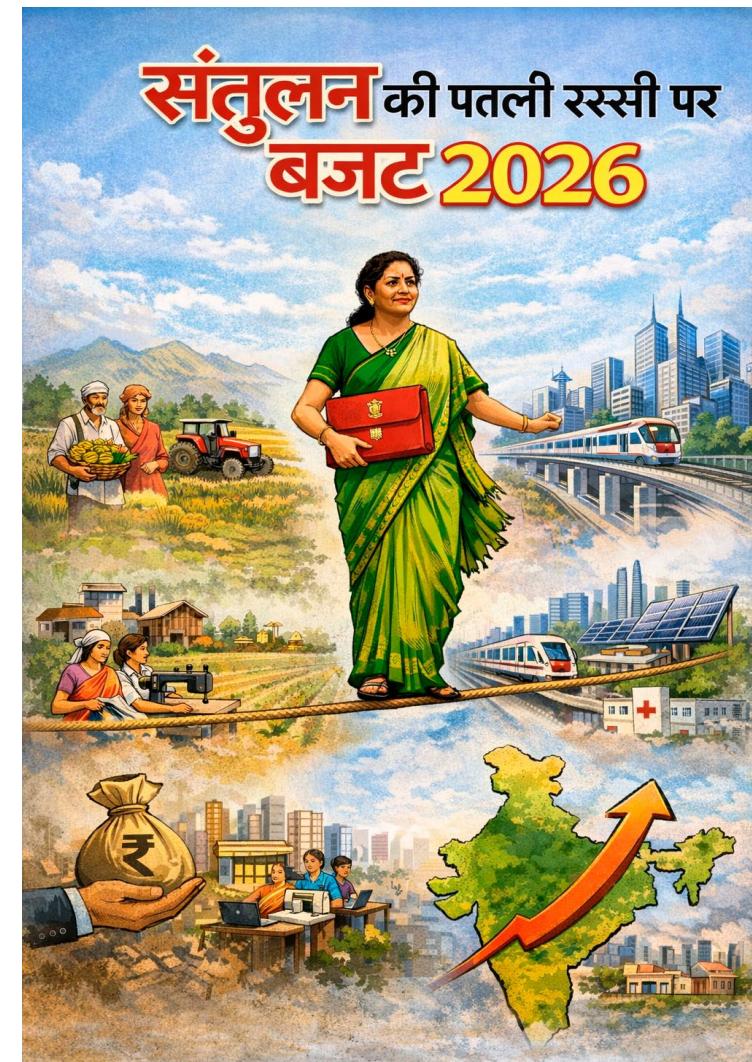
On paper, the Indian economy is thriving. The first advance estimates peg GDP growth for FY26 at 7.4%. If true, this should translate to lakhs of new jobs and investments. But that has clearly not been the case.

# Budget 2026 on a tightrope



PRIYANKA  
SAURABH

The Union Budget 2026, presented in Parliament today, February 1, 2026, once again demonstrated the government's narrow path between economic discipline and public aspirations. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman began her speech with a vision of stability, continuity, and long-term growth. There were no unexpected populist announcements; instead, the budget adopted a realistic approach. The fiscal deficit was kept at 4.4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) for fiscal year 2026, below the previously set target of 4.5 percent. This move sets a strong example of fiscal discipline. Capital expenditure was increased from 11.2 lakh crore last year to 12.5 lakh crore, representing an increase of nearly 12 percent. This increase is focused on infrastructure, urban development projects, and the digital technology sector. A target of raising 10 lakh crore has been set under the asset monetization scheme to encourage private sector investment. The Indian economy achieved 6.8 percent growth in the last fiscal year, but challenges such as the global economic slowdown, US-China trade tensions, and domestic inflation persist. The budget tightly controlled the fiscal deficit at 4.4 percent, while the effective revenue deficit was limited to 96,654 crore, a mere 0.3 percent of GDP. A provision of 12.5 lakh crore for capital expenditure will give new impetus to the national infrastructure pipeline. The target of an additional 50,000 kilometers for highway construction and an allocation of 2.5 lakh crore for railway electrification and modernization demonstrate the commitment to laying the foundation for the future. States will be provided with 1.5 lakh crore in 50-year interest-free loans, strengthening the federal structure. Measures such as tax exemptions, a single-window system, and faster approval processes have been implemented to promote the public-private



partnership (PPP) model. The government has sent a clear message: investors, come, we are fully prepared. But the big question is whether these huge investments will create jobs in rural and semi-urban areas, or will they remain confined to the glitz of the metropolises. The middle class, which contributes approximately 40 percent to the country's GDP, received substantial tax relief in this budget. The standard deduction in the old tax system was doubled from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh, while it is more generous for senior citizens. The new tax system simplified the tax slabs—zero tax on income up to Rs 5 lakh. TCS on education loans was removed (up to Rs 10 lakh), while the rent TDS threshold was raised from Rs 2.4 lakh to Rs 6 lakh. Tax relief was provided on two self-occupied residential properties, and the deadline for filing income tax returns was extended from two years to four years. The promise to simplify the tax code from 819 sections to 536 is commendable.

These steps are aimed at transforming taxpayers from a mere source of revenue to a trusted partner. However, compliance processes must be further simplified at the ground level, otherwise these reliefs may remain limited to mere paperwork. The budget focused on the agricultural sector, which still accounts for 18 percent of GDP and 65 percent of the rural population. The Pradhan Mantri Dhan Dhanya Yojana was expanded to 100 districts, encouraging crop diversification and increasing irrigation and storage capacity. The PM Kisan Samman Nidhi was increased, and the Kisan Credit Card limit was raised. Economic zones were declared in the Andaman and Lakshadweep for fisheries development, with provisions to strengthen the fruit and vegetable supply chain. The MNREGA budget was increased, and the rural credit scoring system facilitated loans to self-help groups (SHGs). The leather, footwear, and toy industries are projected to generate 2.2 million new jobs. These provisions will boost the rural economy, but the real test will be whether these schemes will move beyond paper and reach farms and markets. Small and marginal farmers should benefit, not be limited to large landowners. Prioritizing women's empowerment, the Lakshmi Vandana Yojana has been expanded, and guarantees on self-employment loans (up to 20 lakh) have been removed. Home-based work for urban women will benefit from tax exemptions. A special provision of 10,000 crore for Panchayati Raj institutions will promote real leadership in states like Haryana, where women's reservation is 50 percent. These steps are important towards gender equality, but effective implementation at the Panchayat level will be essential. To empower 60 percent of the country's youth population (under 35 years), a budget of over 1.35 lakh crore has been allocated for the education sector, including the establishment of 50 new IITs and medical colleges. 2 lakh crore has been allocated for the Skill India program, and an internship scheme will provide 1 lakh monthly stipends to 50 million youth. Support for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and an employment-focused development model. There is a strong determination to bring the unemployment rate below 8 percent. An allocation of 50,000 crore to the Startup India Fund will encourage youth entrepreneurship. But the question remains: will these efforts lead to job creation, or will the younger generation continue to wander aimlessly in search of jobs. In the areas of technology and innovation, the establishment of an artificial intelligence (AI) center, a revenue target of 2 lakh crore rupees from the 5G spectrum auction, and 1 lakh crore rupees for Digital India. 5 lakh crore rupees for clean energy—solar parks and green hydrogen production. 100 percent insurance on foreign direct investment (FDI). The Public Trust Bill 2.0 simplifies over 100 outdated laws. These steps are part of a strategy to make India a developed nation by 2047, but the digital divide must be bridged so that rural areas are not deprived of technology. Finally, the challenges are not insignificant. Keeping inflation under control at 5.5 percent and curbing food inflation. Strengthening border security with a defense budget of 6.5 lakh crore. 1 lakh crore for environmental protection, export promotion, and innovation.

## Reflections on the Murder of Gandhi and the State of India

Seventy-seven years ago, on January 30, 1948, three bullets struck down Mahatma Gandhi at a prayer meeting in Birla House. The gunman, Nathuram Godse, was a Chittavani Brahmin from Pune. It was however no simple act of homicide. It was the Brahminical ideology that sought to exterminate Gandhi's plural, inclusive vision of India as an obstacle to a project of Hindu supremacy and a nostalgic yearning for a restored Peshwari order. The assassin did not act in isolation. He was backed by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Hindu Mahasabha, and blessed by V. D. Savarkar the father of Hindutva. After the assassination, the RSS sought to distance itself from Godse. But historians like D.N. Jha demolished that claim. In his memoir, Godse's brother Gopal Godse himself confessed that all the Godse brothers had been associated with the RSS at the time of the murder. Public anger followed reports that RSS members had celebrated the murder by distributing sweets in parts of Maharashtra provoked public attacks on Brahmin houses at many places. Ideological disposition. The historical disposition of Brahminical ideology has been to secure and preserve supremacy over the religio-social and cultural order, rather than to exercise political power directly. Within the varna hierarchy, rulers who wielded temporal authority were placed below Brahmins, their legitimacy dependent on rituals, codes, and moral sanction controlled by them. This deeply entrenched hierarchy shaped Brahminical attitudes towards political power, particularly when external forces entered the subcontinent. As a social group, Brahmins were rarely opposed to being ruled by outsiders; instead, they tended to accommodate and even support the dominant power, provided it guaranteed the preservation of their social hegemony. There is no sustained historical instance of Brahmins as a community organising resistance to an external ruling power merely on the grounds of foreignness. Even under Muslim rule – so relentless

ly vilified in contemporary Hindutva discourse – Brahmin elites adapted, served as advisers, administrators, and intellectual intermediaries, and secured their privileged position within the social order. This pattern repeated itself under British rule. The only moment of collective Brahminical rage was provoked not by colonial domination per se, but by the defeat of the Peshwai in Pune – the singular historical instance of direct Brahmin political sovereignty. The subsequent rebellions, including participation in the events of 1857 (later romanticised by Savarkar as the "First War of Independence"), were driven less by a universal anti-colonial vision than by the desire to restore lost Brahmin rule. Even here, the acceptance of Bahadur Shah Zafar's nominal leadership illustrates a familiar strategic flexibility: political alliances were negotiable, so long as the deeper structure of social dominance could ultimately be reclaimed. Birth of Hindu consolidation In Indian history, most external groups that entered the subcontinent eventually settled, assimilated, and made India their home. The British – and other Europeans – were different. They arrived as merchant capitalists, captured political power to secure commercial interests, and never intended permanent cultural integration. This distinction mattered. For Brahminical elites, the real historical disruption had come earlier from large-scale conversions of marginalised castes to Islam, which weakened their demographic and cultural monopoly. Islamic civilisation posed a sustained challenge to their authority, creating a deep, if often tacit, resentment toward Muslim rule. When the British defeated the Muslim powers, they were naturally happy. The British, unlike earlier rulers, were expected eventually to depart. By the mid-nineteenth century, it became clear that preparations had to begin for reclaiming political authority by exterminating Muslims as the competitors. This shift is traceable to eastern Bengal, where Brahminical elites felt threatened by Muslim numerical strength and by colo-

## Union Budget 2026-27: Don't Look For Fireworks Here. Continuity Is The Goal



Union Budgets are often assessed by headline announcements. Budget 2026-27 should instead be read as a statement of macroeconomic restraint under external stress. Its defining feature is calibration. It has anchored fiscal policy, preserved financial stability, and extended an existing reform and investment trajectory rather than altering it. While presenting the Budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated, "India's economic trajectory has been marked by stability, fiscal discipline, sustained growth and moderate inflation", adding that the government has chosen "reform over rhetoric". The numbers that follow are consistent with that claim. The Budget pegs the fiscal deficit at 4.3% of GDP for FY2026-27, following 4.4% in FY2025-26 (RE). This meets the commitment made earlier to bring the deficit below 4.5% by FY2025-26 and signals a steady, rather than accelerated, consolidation path. Public debt is projected to decline from 56.1% of GDP (RE FY2025-26) to 55.6% in FY2026-27, consistent with the medium-term target of 50±1% by FY2030-31. The Budget Estimates imply non-debt receipts of Rs 36.5 lakh crore and total expenditure of Rs 53.5 lakh crore, with net tax receipts of Rs 28.7 lakh crore. Net market borrowing is budgeted at Rs 11.7 lakh crore, with gross borrowing at Rs 17.2 lakh crore, indicating no attempt to compress borrowing artificially. A Credibility-Preserving Step A declining debt ratio is intended to

reduce interest outgo over time, thereby creating fiscal space without raising taxes or cutting expenditure. In an environment of volatile capital flows and weak global nominal growth, this is a credibility-preserving stance. Reform measures in this Budget are largely microeconomic and administrative, but cumulatively significant. The Finance Minister cited that over 350 reforms since 2025 have been implemented, with emphasis on compliance reduction, dispute resolution, and process simplification. On taxation, the new Income Tax Act coming into effect from April 2026 consolidates assessment and penalty proceedings, reduces pre-deposit requirements from 20% to 10%, converts several penalties into fees, and decriminalises minor offences. These changes target litigation volume and compliance cost. Sustaining the momentum in financial markets, the introduction of market-making frameworks and derivatives on corporate bond indices addresses a long-standing gap in secondary market liquidity. Combined with proposals for municipal bonds, the Budget attempts to deepen non-bank financing channels without direct fiscal support. For MSMEs, the emphasis is on liquidity architecture rather than subsidies. TReDS transactions have already facilitated over Rs 7 lakh crore in financing. Mandating its use for CPSE purchases, adding credit guarantees for invoice discounting, and enabling securitisation of receivables aim to reduce working-capital stress. Export promotion measures are important. The Budget increases the duty-free input limit for seafood exports from 1% to 3% of FOB (on board) value and extends export timelines for leather and textile products from six months to twelve months. The removal of the ₹10 lakh per consignment cap on courier exports directly targets small exporters and e-commerce channels. More consequential are customs reforms. Duty deferral for authorised operators is extended from 15 to 30 days, advance rulings are made valid for five years, and risk-based clearances are expanded. A single digital window is expected to cover approvals for agencies accounting for roughly 70% of interdicted cargo by April 2026. The implicit assumption is that reductions in dwell time, uncertainty, and discretionary intervention yield competitiveness gains comparable to explicit fiscal incentives, particularly when global trade is increasingly shaped by non-tariff barriers. Capex Still The Most Important Growth Instrument Public capital expenditure is budgeted at Rs 12.2 lakh crore in FY2026-27, up from Rs 11.2 lakh crore in BE FY2025-26 and Rs 2 lakh crore in FY2014-15. At roughly 3.3-3.4% of GDP, capex remains the principal growth-supporting instrument within a tight fiscal envelope. The proposed Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund marks a shift from direct spending to risk-sharing. Partial credit guarantees during the construction phase are intended to lower financing costs and crowd in private investment. Asset recycling through REITs, freight corridor expansion, 20 new national waterways, and a target to raise the share of inland and coastal shipping from 6% to 12% by 2047 reinforce the productivity orientation of the capex programme. If one came looking for fireworks, this Budget will disappoint. But if one came looking for a macro strategy under external pressure, it is coherent, i.e., Consolidate to preserve credibility and policy room.

**A Progressive Model Budget that Builds a Developed India: MP Basavaraj Bommai**  
**"An Inclusive Budget that Reaches Everyone through Economic Growth"**

Bengaluru: Former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai said that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has presented a progressive, model budget aimed at building a Developed India and taking the country towards becoming the world's third-largest economic power.

Reacting to the Union Budget, he said that at a time when countries across the world are facing a global economic slowdown, India has continued its growth momentum, and the Finance Minister has presented a development-oriented budget that sustains this progress. The budget announces several policies and schemes to integrate citizens' capabilities into the country's economic activity, he said.

He noted that a scheme has been introduced to provide financial assistance of around 10,000 crore for future champions. Along with ensuring economic stability and inflation control, the budget addresses the aspirations of the people, sustains 7.4% economic growth, and promotes inclusive economic development that reaches all sections of society, he stated.

Special emphasis has been given to small industries, with strong support for the textile sector, leather products, IT-BT, and data centres. He said urban infrastructure has been accorded high priority, with significant focus on second- and third-tier cities. The Central Government is investing around 12.5 lakh crore across various schemes, he added.

Controlling the fiscal deficit at 4.3% is a major achievement, he said. In the infrastructure sector, emphasis on roads, high-speed rail, and 20 inland water transport projects has opened new dimensions in transportation. Overall, the Finance Minister has presented a progressive, model budget that will take India on the path of development and elevate it to the third position in the global economy, he said.

He further stated that imports from foreign countries have been made fully duty-free. Referring to the four pillars of the budget, he said the first is economic growth, and the second is the principle of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas", under which women, youth, farmers, and all sections of society are included, making this a truly inclusive budget.

**Tax Exemptions Provided in People-Friendly Budget, No New Taxes Imposed Like Congress Government: Opposition Leader R. Ashok**

**High-Speed Rail Project for Economic Development, Measures to Increase Farmers' Income**

Bengaluru: opposition leader R. Ashok said, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's central government has presented a people-friendly budget by providing tax exemptions to the people. It has not imposed any new taxes anywhere like the Congress government. Speaking at a press conference, he said that the 9th budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is more of a people-friendly budget than a popular one. She has responded to the everyday problems in people's lives. Building hostels for girls in every district by the central government is a first-time initiative, which will emphasize women's education. Previous governments had not mentioned the sandalwood land of Karnataka. This budget will encourage the cultivation of sandalwood. More coconuts are grown in areas like Kolar, Tumakuru, Mysuru, and Malenadu regions. This crop will receive international-level encouragement. In recent years, farmers' income has been declining. Several measures have been taken to increase their income. For this, I congratulate Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, he said. Bus travel from Bengaluru to Hyderabad takes more time. For that, a high-speed rail project has been provided. Under this project, high-speed rail corridors will be developed between Hyderabad-Bengaluru and Chennai-Bengaluru. The high-speed railway corridor will accelerate economic activities. It will create employment opportunities. This is the true brand Bengaluru, he said.

The tourism sector has been neglected for a long time. For that, a school for tourist guides is being started. Tax on compensation for vehicle accident insurance has been removed. The number of cancer patients has increased, and tax exemptions have been given to cancer medicines as well. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has imposed taxes in the budget on items for which the central government had reduced taxes. He has imposed new taxes worth 56,000 crore rupees. He will do the same in the upcoming budget he is going to present. The government has not provided 5,000 crore rupees for the Gruha Lakshmi scheme. It has not provided food worth 954 crore rupees to anganwadis. 900 crore rupees are pending for the transport department. 36,000 crore rupees are pending for contractors. The state budget is already at risk of exceeding the expenditure limit. Until now, Karnataka had maintained fiscal discipline, but CM Siddaramaiah has spoiled the fiscal discipline, he said. The Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Yojana has been announced to promote khadi products. This scheme will encourage khadi and cotton cultivation. The Corporate Mitra Yojana has been announced for MSMEs in tier 2 and 3 cities. 40,000 crore rupees have been reserved for the semiconductor sector. A new IT law is being brought, and taxpayers will get the benefit of simplification of laws. Through the 16th Finance Commission, states will receive 1.43 lakh crore rupees, he said.

**Bommai hails Union Budget as progressive roadmap to a developed India**

Bengaluru: Former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai has described the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as a progressive and model budget that lays a strong foundation for building a developed India and positioning the country as the world's third-largest economic power.

Reacting to the Budget, Bommai said that at a time when many countries are grappling with a global economic slowdown, India has successfully maintained its growth momentum. He noted that the development-oriented Budget focuses on sustaining this



progress by integrating citizens' capabilities into the nation's economic activity through various policies and schemes.

He highlighted the introduction of a 10,000 crore financial assistance scheme aimed at nurturing future champions, while also ensuring economic

## Bengaluru-Hyderabad rail route to strengthen South India as key economic hub: K'taka BJP on Union Budget



Bengaluru, Feb 1 : Karnataka Leader of the Opposition R. Ashoka said on Sunday that the Union Budget 2026-27 is another significant step towards a developed India, and stressed that the Bengaluru-Hyderabad high-speed rail route will further strengthen Bengaluru's position as a key economic hub of South India. "The announcement of seven high-speed rail corridors in the budget will inject fresh momentum into economic activity by rapidly connecting major cities across the country. The Bengaluru-Chennai and Bengaluru-Hyderabad high-speed rail routes will further strengthen Bengaluru's position as a key economic hub of South India," he said.

He noted that this will, in turn, boost employment generation, industrial expansion, trade, and the logistics sector.

Ashoka claimed that under the decisive leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Union Budget 2026-27 presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is a visionary and balanced budget that steers the country towards the goal of "Viksit Bharat by 2047".

He said that economic discipline, people-centric policies, and a development-oriented approach form the core philosophy of this budget. He pointed out that the budget clearly outlines three major national priorities, adding that first, accelerating economic growth by enhancing productivity, and sec-

ond, achieving inclusive development by directly responding to the aspirations of the people.

"Third, ensuring opportunities for every citizen through the principle of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas. This vision distinctly reflects the governance approach of the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he claimed.

Special emphasis has been laid on the agriculture sector in this budget. Initiatives such as the Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Scheme to promote khadi and handloom products, special packages for coconut, sandalwood, and cashew cultivation, and the target to establish

cashew and cocoa as global export products by 2030 are significant steps towards increasing farmers' incomes. These measures will create new markets and economic opportunities for farmers across the country, including Karnataka, Ashoka stated.

"The announcement of support for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), along with an allocation of Rs 40,000 crore for the semiconductor sector, will provide a major boost to the industrial sector. This will strengthen the industrial ecosystem of Bengaluru and Karnataka and generate greater employment opportunities for the nation's future," he stated.

He said that with the interests of the middle class in mind, several important simplifications have been introduced in the tax system.

"A penalty of only 10 per cent for delayed income tax filing without any criminal liability, reduction of the Tax Collected at Source (TCS) on health and education services from 5 per cent to 2 per cent, and the introduction of a new Income Tax Act aimed at creating a simple and transparent tax regime are all people-friendly measures," he said. Ashoka said that the reduction in prices of 17 essential medicines and medicines for six rare diseases, along with tax exemption on accident compensation, are compassionate, people-oriented decisions that ease the financial burden on ordinary citizens.

"These steps reflect a human approach towards strengthening the health-care sector," he said.

Ashoka said that overall, this budget serves as a balanced blueprint of economic discipline, social justice, and inclusive development, and possesses the strength to propel India into the league of leading nations of the world.

"Heartfelt congratulations and gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for presenting this people-centric and development-driven budget that charts a clear course for the nation's future," he said.

## Budget reaction from Ashish Puravankara, MD, Puravankara Ltd.



"The budget strengthens the case for infrastructure-led urban expansion, particularly around large magnet cities which is very welcoming. Improved regional connectivity is enabling Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities attached to these metros to grow horizontally, easing pressure on core urban areas while expanding the effective city footprint. This creates a powerful opportunity for real estate development in well-connected peripheral locations, where land remains relatively affordable and projects can be planned at scale rather than being constrained by dense inner-city limitations."

This shift also addresses one of the sector's core challenges—affordability. As connectivity improves, developers can access larger land parcels at more rational prices, making it viable to build integrated communities with housing, social infrastructure and open spaces. While the industry would have welcomed stronger supply-side reforms such as GST rationalisation, the direction is clear: developers who align with this horizontal, infrastructure anchored growth and focus on capital efficiency and execution will be best positioned to create long-term value in this cycle."

## Special Yeshwantpur-Madgaon train via Mangaluru for Maha Shivaratri

Bengaluru, Feb 1: To clear the extra rush of passengers during Maha Shivaratri, South Western Railway will operate a special train service between Yeshwantpur and Madgaon via Mangaluru.

Train No 06507 Yeshwantpur-Madgaon Special Express will depart Yeshwantpur at 12.30 pm on February 13 and reach Madgaon at 6.45 am the next day. In the return direction, Train No 06508 Madgaon-Yeshwantpur Special Express will leave Madgaon at 11 am on February 16 and arrive at Yeshwantpur at 4.45 am the following day. The

special train will have stops at Chikkabanavara, Channarayapatna, Hassan, Sakleshpur, Subrahmanyam, Bantwal, Surathkal, Mulki, Udupi, Barkur, Brahmavara, Kundapur, Mookambika Road, Byndoor, Bhatkal, Murdeshwar, Honavar, Kumta, Gokarna Road, Ankola and Karwar stations.

The train will consist of 20 coaches, including one first AC cum AC 2-tier coach, two AC 2-tier coaches, two AC 3-tier coaches, nine sleeper class coaches, four general second class coaches and two SLR/D coaches.

## Open Driveways in Single-Unit Complexes for Public Traffic- D. S. Ramesh



Bengaluru : Dr. Anand Kumar, National Coordinator of the AICC SC Department and in-charge of Maharashtra said, The Union Budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who hails from Karnataka, is not only anti-people but is also part of a conspiracy to destabilize the federal system.

Reacting to the Budget, he said that the relationship between the Union and State governments is like a chain—if even one link breaks, the federal system becomes unstable.

Unity will erode, the country's sovereignty will be threatened, and the autonomy of states will be undermined. This is exactly what the Union government has done in this year's Budget. The Centre has been consistently weakening the federal structure, and this Budget continues that trend. Delays in fund releases and increased control over centrally sponsored schemes are destabilizing the federal system. There is a serious risk that the development of states will be hampered. Since funds have not been provided under central schemes, Karnataka has been burdened with an additional load of 23,402 crore, he said.

"We are asking only for our rightful share, not alms. There are no special projects from the Centre for Karnataka, and by not providing matching grants for central schemes, Kannadigas are being virtually deprived. Even within central schemes, adequate funds are not being released. For the past five years, Nirmala Sitharaman has continued to betray Karnataka. This time

too, expectations have been dashed. Instead of responding to the aspirations of ordinary people, the Budget shows greater inclination toward the corporate sector and the wealthy class. The poor, farmers, workers, the middle class, and youth have been deeply disappointed by this Budget. Prices of essential commodities, fuel, cooking gas, electricity, and transport charges have risen sharply. No concrete measures to control price rise are visible. The burden of indirect taxes continues, making life even more expensive," he said. The promise of doubling farmers' income has remained only a slogan. The allocation for the agriculture sector is disappointing when compared to actual needs. The Budget does not provide clear answers regarding

legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP), loan waivers, crop loss compensation, or adequate investment in agricultural infrastructure. As a result, there is a fear that the hardships of the farming community will continue, Dr. Anand Kumar expressed concern.

At a time when unemployment in the country is rising, the Budget does not outline any major plans to create large-scale employment. Instead of providing permanent jobs, policies promoting unstable and contract-based employment are being continued. An employment system without future security is being strengthened. Policies pushing privatization are also creating anxiety that education and healthcare will become even more expensive for the poor and middle classes, he said. While the Budget continues tax concessions, incentive packages, and relaxations for big industries, it has failed to reduce the tax burden on ordinary people. Despite granting tax waivers worth lakhs of crores of rupees to corporates, there has been no significant improvement in job creation or in the living standards of the common people. The Budget is neither people-centric nor based on social justice. It offers no proper solutions to the hardships of ordinary citizens. National development should not be limited to statistics; it must be reflected in people's lives. However, this Budget has failed to meet that expectation and is therefore a people-anti Budget, said Anand Kumar.

## R. Parameshwar facilitated by Indian Icon Award 2026



Bengaluru: In recognition of his social work and service to shaping the future of disadvantaged and underprivileged children, R. Parameshwar, founder and president of Punarjanma Charitable Trust, has been awarded the Indian Icon Award 2026.

Receiving the award at a program organized by Bharat Foundation at Kannada Sahitya Parishad, Parameshwar said that it is a moment of pride and fulfillment for Punarjanma Charitable Trust to

receive the award from Captain Naveen Nagappa, a Kargil War Captain.

Parameshwar has been selected for development programs of government schools and development programs of backward communities and children of the community. International athletics coach Bindu Rani, journalist Sukhanya Sampath, film star Aditi Roy and Swarna Bharat Foundation CEO Dr. Rajini Santosh were present at the event, along with many others.

## TN leather industry looks to enjoy fruits of India-EU FTA

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu has attracted over Rs 9,800 crore in leather and non-leather footwear investments in the last three years, generating more than 1.25 lakh jobs, R Selvam, executive director of the Council for Leather Exports (CLE), said on Friday.

Detailing the investment flow, Selvam said projects are spread across Panapakkam, Kallakurichi, Ariyalur, Perambalur and Tindivanam, covering both leather and non-leather footwear manufacturing. While some units have already commenced production, others are scheduled to begin production in 2026.

Addressing concerns over factory closures, he said the Ambur-Vellore belt continues to function well. "Ambur and Vellore region continues to be functioning well when it comes to leather and non-leather factories," he said, adding that the region remains a key base for the sector. Speaking at a press conference to announce the 39th India International Leather Fair (IILF) 2026, CLE chairman Ramesh Juneja said the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA) would strengthen export prospects for the sector. The agreement is likely to come into effect within eight to ten months, subject to ratification by the UK and the European Parliament. The EU currently accounts for around 43 per cent of India's leather and footwear exports, and the FTA is expected to improve market access and investment sentiment. The CLE says that India's leather and footwear exports stood at \$4.83 billion in 2024-25, excluding certain non-leather footwear



segments, and about \$5.5 billion when non-leather footwear is included. Exports in the current financial year are expected to remain in the \$5.25 billion range, with limited impact from US tariffs as only about 22 per cent of exports are US-bound.

They have sought further simplification of import procedures for crust and finished leather, requesting a return to the pre-2021 zero-duty import regime. Juneja said that while the Centre has already removed export duty on crust leather and import duty on wet blue leather, the industry is seeking similar relief for crust and finished leather, which would reduce input costs, ease compliance and support value-added exports. The council said the proposed changes are critical for sustaining export growth and attracting further investments. The CLE also announced the 39th India International Leather Fair (IILF) 2026, scheduled to be held at the Chennai Trade Centre from February 1 to 3. CLE regional chairman (South) M Abdul Wahab said the event will also feature a concurrent Designer Fair, offering Indian manufacturers opportunities for design collaborations.

## Deadline for updation of SIR ends: 22.83L seek inclusion in rolls

CHENNAI: As the claims and objections period under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) ended on January 30, as many as 22.83 lakh voters applied for the inclusion of their names after the draft electoral roll released on December 19 showed the deletion of nearly 97 lakh voters.

During the claims and objections period, a total of 34.75 lakh applications were received under four categories through both online and offline modes, according to Chief Electoral Officer Archana Patnaik.

Of these, 22.83 lakh applications were for inclusion of names in the voter list.

Officials said 17.10 lakh of the inclusion applications were received through the offline mode and 5.73 lakh online. The next most common request was for change of address, accounting for 9.90 lakh applications.

The draft electoral roll showed a sharp decline in the electorate, with the total number of voters in the State dropping from 6.41 crore to 5.43 crore. Voters whose names were removed and those who wanted to enrol were given an opportunity to submit claims and objections from December 19. The



Election Commission had organised six rounds of special camps across the State over the past 40 days for claims and objections. A senior election official said the applications received are now being scrutinised. Each application will be verified to determine eligibility, and the final voter list will be published on February 17, with which the SIR exercise will formally conclude. Officials said eligible citizens whose names do not appear in the final list can still apply for inclusion up to 10 days before the last date for filing nominations for the ensuing election. Such applicants will be included only in the supplementary voter list and may not receive an Electoral Photo Identity Card immediately. They will, however, be allowed to vote using any of the 13 alternative identity documents prescribed by the Election Commission.

## Stalin seeks concrete allocations for TN in Union Budget, flags pending funds and infra projects

CHENNAI: With the Union Budget for 2026 set to be presented in Parliament, Chief Minister and DMK president MK Stalin on Sunday urged the Centre to move beyond rhetoric and ensure tangible financial commitments for the State, particularly in sectors where allocations have either been delayed or remain inadequate. In a social media post, ahead of the Budget, Stalin said Tamil Nadu expected the Union government to announce long-pending measures even if only with the elections in mind, and stressed that these should be backed by firm funding and implemented within a defined timeframe.

He flagged the non-release of Rs 3,548 crore in education funds meant for students, sought budgetary support for the Coimbatore and Madurai Metro Rail projects, and demanded the release of Rs 3,112 crore due to Tamil Nadu



under the Jal Jeevan Mission, a programme the State has implemented efficiently.

The Chief Minister also called for new railway projects and reiterated the long-standing demand that States receive a 50 per cent share of the Union government's tax revenues, as recommended by the Finance Commission.

"There are more demands on the list. At

the very least this time, announcements for Tamil Nadu should not stop at mere declarations, like the Madurai AIIMS," Stalin said, insisting that projects must be supported by adequate allocations and completed on schedule. The appeal was tagged to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

## Centre repackaging old scheme, ignoring genuine demands: Association

TIRUCHY: Alleging that the Union budget is casting old schemes, East Coast Coconut Farmers Association president EV Gandhi said that the newly announced Coconut promotion initiative was already under practice through the Coconut Development Board (CDB).

On the contrary, many genuine demands of the coconut farmers are not met in the budget, he said.

According to Gandhi, the Union Finance



Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement of the Coconut Promotion Scheme, aimed at increasing coconut production, is nothing new. "The announcement of replacing old and non-producing trees with high-yielding saplings already exists with the Coconut Development Board. The practice of replacing non-productive trees with high-yielding saplings and distribution of seedlings has been there for a long time," Gandhi said.



Honble Minister for Public Works inspected the statues of Thiru N.S Krishnan at Kalaiyan Arangam and Thiru Karl Marx in the campus of Government Museum, Egmore, Chennai which are to be erected shortly

## Uplifting: Migratory birds are arriving in larger numbers in Punjab's wetlands



and Tarn Taran districts; Kanjli in Kapurthala district; and Ropar. To the list were added the Keshopur community reserve, Beas conservation reserve and Nangal wildlife sanctuary, taking the number to six.

Dharminder Sharma, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and head of the Forest Force, says spotting raptors like the Red-headed Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, Eurasian Hobby and Eastern Imperial Eagle at Harike and Keshopur-Miani shows that the Punjab wetlands continue to attract birds from far-off areas. "It indicates that our wetlands have a good prey base for these raptors. The preservation of wildlife, especially migratory birds, remains the top priority of the department," he adds. "Birds from as far away as Siberia have turned up, which is a rare phenomenon."

Gitanjali Kanwar, Senior Coordinator, Aquatic Biodiversity, World Wildlife Fund-India, says the turnout of water birds in Punjab's wetlands continues to be "decently good" despite challenges at the global level. "Flocks of rare birds like Northern Lapwing and Black-tailed Godwit were sighted at Harike. Species like Jerdon's Babler, Rufous-vented Prinia and Short-eared Owls have also been spotted," she adds.

ed-headed Falcon mostly preys on small birds and usually hunts

in pairs. Photo by the writer

"There's been a marginal increase in the number of water birds (resident and migratory) in Punjab's wetlands. The winter season has been very brief this year and rare waterbirds and species of high conservation significance have been spotted. These include the flamingos in Harike, flocks of Northern Lapwing and raptors like Steppe and Eastern Imperial Eagle in Keshopur-Miani and Shalapattan wetlands. The Nangal wetland, like every year, had Black-necked Grebes," says Kanwar.

Punjab Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Satender Sagar claims the recent sighting of the Bar-headed Goose is a welcome sign for the state's wetlands as this goose species breeds in Central Asia in colonies of thousands near mountain lakes and during winter in South Asia. "The unique thing about this bird is that it flies very high, and even crosses the Himalayas to visit Punjab, flying over difficult terrains and extreme altitudes," says Sagar, excited about the frequent sightings at Punjab wetlands. Amid the positive news, a note of caution comes from Jaskaran Sandhu, former member of the Punjab State Board for Wildlife.

"Global warming is changing weather patterns and affecting bird migration. Delayed winter, pollution and shrinking water bodies are all affecting migration of birds across the globe. It's a challenge we must never lose sight of," he says.

Many bird species migrate in order to survive. However, migration is a perilous journey. Only a small number of birds are actually threatened by natural events while human activities are the source for most dangers," says Maj AP Singh (retd), another former member of the Punjab State Board for Wildlife. An avid bird-watcher, with an experience of more than 40 years, he

adds that the loss of habitats due to pollution or encroachment for settlement, agriculture, grazing, etc, is the main threat migratory birds face. "They are dependent on finding suitable breeding and wintering grounds as well as stopover sites, along their flyways, where they can rest and feed. The loss of any of these sites during their annual cycle could have a dramatic impact on the birds' chances of survival. Poaching remains another threat." Pallas's Gull in flight. The pale, deep-chested, long-winged gull chiefly feeds on fish (particularly dead), insects and small mammals.

As per the initial sightings by the Wildlife Department and the World Wildlife Fund, the migratory birds that have been spotted include the Spot-billed Duck, Ruddy Shelduck, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Comb Duck, Coot, Dabchick, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Whistling Duck, Domicile Crane, Greater Flamingo, Ferruginous Pochard, Peregrine Falcon, Long-eared Owl, Common Pochard, Woolly-necked Stork, Eurasian Coot, Gadwal, Greylag Geese, Little Cormorant, Pied Avocet, Great Cormorant, Common Teal, Black-tailed Godwit, Steppe Gull and Brown-headed Gull.

Records from Harike show sightings of Bonelli's Eagle, Hen Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Red-headed Falcon, Cotton Pygmy Goose, Northern Lapwing and Greater-crested Grebe.

May 10 is World Migratory Bird Day, but it's a good time to remember UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' message: "As they travel the globe, migratory birds lift our spirits and remind us of nature, connecting people, ecosystems and nations." And his terse reminder: "Our continued encroachment on nature and the destruction of vital habitats are putting many migratory birds at risk of extinction." Any positive development thus is a moment to cherish.

## How stage was set for designers

WHEN the Lakme Fashion Week starts in Mumbai on March 26, it will mark the silver jubilee of India's first marquee fashion event, a trendsetter. In these 25 years, the fashion industry has stitched a mega success story. According to an industry report by Statista, the revenue in the apparel market in India is projected to reach \$109.45 billion (over Rs 10 trillion) in 2025. Women's apparel holds the largest share, with a market volume of \$53.13 billion (over Rs 5 trillion).

However, in the early 1990s, the established names today were just starting out. "JJ Valaya, Ashish Soni, Rajesh Pratap Singh, Ritu Beri, Rina Dhaka, Rohit Bal, Rohit Khosla, Tarun Tahiliani and many others were just about beginning their careers. There was a great momentum and more designers were coming out of the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT). But there was no one platform for designers to showcase their vision," recalls designer Narendra Ahmed, who graduated from NIFT in 1990 and was ELLE India's first fashion editor.

The Apparel Export Promotion Council (APEC) had facilitated some designers to present their work at fashion shows in New York, London and Paris. With that in mind, most designers were feeling the need for a fashion week in India, says Rajesh Pratap Singh, who was one of the designers to showcase his collection in the first fashion week. The Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) had been set up in 1998, in response to an urgent requirement to organise the Indian fashion industry under a formal structure. Sumeet Nair was appointed the executive director of the FDCI. "Most designers felt that an Indian fashion week will provide the right platform to bring all designers together. Most of them were already holding individual shows but such an event could provide a collective platform for both the designers and the buyers," says Ahmed.

While most industry stakeholders felt the need for such an event, two persons came together to conceptualise and create India's first-ever Fashion Week in 2000 — FDCI's Nair and Zubin Sarkari, fashion director at IMG (International Management Group), India, a global sports and culture company (now known as RISE Worldwide Limited, a subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited).

"It was all very exciting. Some of the



nitty-gritty of the first fashion week was thrashed out in our office where Nair and Sarkari would hold meetings with us, my partner Asha Kochhar and I, seeking inputs on various logistics — from the size of the ramp to the number of green rooms for models to the music to be played, and much more," remembers Vidyun Singh, co-founder, Media Makers. Vidyun, part of the journey of Indian fashion since its first hesitant steps in the 1980s, and Asha had already been working with designers in creating individual fashion shows. The FDCI and IMG then approached Lakme for the title sponsorship, convincing its then CEO Anil Chopra to steer the fashion week. "The initial years were really wonderful. We were doing everything ourselves, whether it was designing the sets or sourcing the music. I used to create music sequences while editing on spool tapes. I remember a crazy incident from one of the early fashion weeks. It was a Rohit Bal finale, and set designer Sumanth Jayakrishnan had crushed mica and mixed it with sand to create a sparkly set. We felt proud at our innovation but when the models walked on the ramp, the hem of their long lehengas blew the mica-sand mix right into the eyes of people sitting in the first row! Those were challenging but fun times. The best part was that the event literally put India on the global fashion map. Though it is still not as big as other international weeks in Paris or London, designers got access to both international and Indian buyers," says Vidyun.

# Assumption of nominal GDP at 10 pc for FY27 realistic: FM

**New Delhi:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday, February 1, said that the estimate for nominal gross domestic product (GDP) at 10 per cent for the financial year beginning April 1, 2026, is realistic. As per the Budget document, India's GDP growth in absolute terms is estimated at Rs 393 lakh crore. "Inflation is down in India, and it is remaining there for some time. Inflation is just not the only one, which is a deflator. However, largely you depend on that. Therefore, the assumption of the nominal GDP is realistic," she said, replying to a query in post-Budget interaction. Besides, a 10 per cent nominal GDP growth figure has been arrived at on the basis of the existing GDP base year and the methodology. The government is set to revise the base year for many important macroeconomic indicators, including GDP and retail inflation measured through the Consumer Price Index (CPI), later this month. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) will release new statistical series with updated base years on February 27. National Accounts data will follow 2022-23 as the base year and will be released on February 12, and the CPI revision will take place at the end of February. Once these new series are introduced, historical data will be recalculated, altering growth rates, inflation trends and nominal values that form the backbone of fiscal projections. The Centre proposed sever-



al measures in the Union Budget 2026 for the tourism sector, with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighting its importance in generating employment, earning foreign exchange and boosting local economies. Niche tourism and eco-trails Presenting the Union Budget, Sitharaman proposed the development of "ecologically sustainable" mountain trails in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir, and setting up the "National Institute of Hospitality." "The tourism sector has a large role to play in employment generation, forex earnings and expanding the local economy. I propose to set up a National Institute of Hospitality by upgrading the existing National

Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology," she said. India will host the first-ever Global Big Cat Summit to deliberate on conservation strategies with 95 countries. Heritage and regional tourism In her speech, the Finance Minister proposed to "develop 15 archeological sites," including Lothal, Dholavira, Rakshigarhi, Sarnath, Hastinapur and Leh Palace into "vibrant experiential cultural destinations." "Excavated landscapes will be opened to the public through curated walkways and immersive storytelling skills and technologies will be introduced to help conservation labs, interpretation centres and guides," she said. A dedicated scheme will

develop Buddhist circuits in the North-East region, covering Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. Further, the government aims to create five tourism destinations specifically within the five Purvodaya (eastern) states. There is a renewed focus on providing modern infrastructure and basic amenities to temple towns through the mapping of City Economic Regions Infrastructure and connectivity. To promote tourism in remote areas, a Seaplane VGF (Viability Gap Funding) Scheme will be introduced to support operations and indigenise manufacturing. Seven High-Speed Rail corridors (such as Mumbai-Pune and Delhi-Varanasi) are planned to serve as "growth connectors" for passengers. Taxation and travel ease The Tax Collection at Source (TCS) on overseas tour program packages is reduced to a flat 2 per cent with the removal of the previous Rs 10 lakh threshold, although it also means this tax will apply to all tour packages. Provisions governing baggage clearance during international travel will be revised to increase duty-free allowances and provide better clarity to passengers. Institutional and talent development Upskilling guides: A pilot scheme will be launched to upskill 10,000 guides at 20 iconic tourist sites through a 12-week, high-quality training course developed in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Management (IIM).

# Textile stocks surge post Budget announcements

**New Delhi:** Textile sector stocks rallied on Sunday



after the government announced the setting up of Mega Textile Parks in a challenge mode with a focus on integrated infrastructure and value addition, among a raft of reforms. Shares of Gokaldas Exports surged 10.81 per cent, Arvind Ltd climbed 5.54 per cent, Vardhman Textiles jumped 4.61 per cent, Pearl Global Industries went up by 2.48 per cent, and K P R Mill advanced 2.38 per cent on the BSE. Rally in these stocks was in sharp contrast to the weak trend in equities. Reversing early gains, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 2,370.36 points or 2.88 per cent to slide below the 80,000-mark at 79,899.42 in the afternoon trade. The benchmark gauge ended at 80,722.94, down 1,546.84 points or 1.88 per cent.

The government on Sunday, February 1, announced the setting up of Mega Textile Parks in challenge mode with a focus on integrated infrastructure and value addition, among a raft of reforms, including a five-pronged integrated policy framework, to provide a shot in the arm to India's employment-intensive

textile sector. The proposed establishment of new Mega Textile Parks will attract investments, improve compliance and traceability, and create integrated hubs for scale, quality control and exports. It will also support growth in technical textiles, a high-potential segment critical for industrial, medical, defence and infrastructure applications. In a major boost to exports of textiles, leather and marine products, the Budget announced the extension of the export obligation period from 6 months to 12 months for exporters of textile garments, leather garments, leather or synthetic footwear and other leather products manufactured

using duty-free imported inputs. This measure will provide greater operational flexibility, ease of compliance and improved working capital management for textile exporters, currently grappling with 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods imposed by the US – India's largest export market. In her budget speech, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, "For the labour-intensive textile sector, I propose an integrated programme with 5 sub-parts". Under these five sub-parts, she announced a 'National Fibre Scheme' for self-reliance in natural fibres such as silk, wool and jute, man-made fibres, and new-age fibres.

## Futures STT hike rattles markets as Sensex, Nifty slide nearly 2 pc

**Mumbai:** Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty dived sharply by nearly 2 per cent on Sunday, February 1, logging their worst decline in years on a Budget day, after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed a hike in the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on derivatives. Reversing the early gains, the 30-share BSE Sensex plunged sharply by 2,370.36 points or 2.88 per cent to slide below the 80,000-mark at 79,899.42 in afternoon trade as the finance minister announced a hike in STT on futures contracts to 0.05 per cent from the current 0.02 per cent. The barometer settled at 80,722.94, down 1,546.84 points or 1.88 per cent. The 50-share NSE Nifty tanked 495.20 points or 1.96 per cent to settle at 24,825.45. During the day, it tumbled 748.9 points or 2.95 per cent to 24,571.75. Stock exchanges held a special Budget Day trading session on Sunday in view of the budget presentation by Sitharaman for the next financial year. Sensex



and Nifty logged their worst decline in years on a Budget day. Earlier on February 1, 2020, the 30-share BSE benchmark had ended 2.42 per cent lower, and the Nifty tanked 2.51 per cent. Investors' wealth eroded sharply by Rs 9.40 lakh crore on Sunday, tracking a sharp decline in equities. Market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies eroded by Rs 9,40,581.75 crore to Rs 45,61,658.60 crore (USD 4.90 trillion) in a single day. "Market unease, however, is centred on the increase in STT on F&O, particularly the sharper hike on futures. This comes on the back of higher capital gains taxes last year, raising overall

transaction costs for market participants," Pranav Haridasan, MD and CEO, Axis Securities, said. Futures are a margined, risk-managed product and not typically the primary source of retail excess, which raises questions on whether higher STT will deliver the desired outcome or instead weigh on liquidity, participation and India's market cost competitiveness, he noted. "These concerns are being voiced by foreign investors and domestic traders, and are reflected in the immediate market reaction," Haridasan added. From the 30 Sensex firms, State Bank of India tanked 5.61 per cent, while Adani Ports lost 5.53 per cent. Bharat Electronics, ITC, Tata Steel, UltraTech Cement and Reliance Industries were also among the laggards. Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Sun Pharma and Titan were the gainers. Among indices, BSE PSU Bank dived the most by 5.60 per cent, metal tanked 3.85 per cent, commodities (3.35 per cent), energy (3.14 per cent), capital goods (3.02 per cent), utilities (2.98 per cent), industrials (2.66 per cent) and power (2.52 per cent). IT and BSE Focused IT were the winners. A total of 2,375 stocks declined while 1,759 advanced and 175 remained unchanged on the BSE. "The increase in Securities Transaction Tax (STT), especially in futures and options, is likely to act as a marginal negative for foreign portfolio investor (FPI) flows in the near term, particularly for high-frequency and derivative-focused global funds," Aakash Shah, Technical Research Analyst at Choice Equity Broking, said.

## Andhra posts highest Jan GST collections, outpaces national growth

**Vijayawada:** Andhra Pradesh recorded its highest-ever January GST collections since the rollout of the tax in 2017, with net GST revenue rising 6.72 per cent year-on-year to Rs 3,073 crore in January 2026, even as tax rates were cut on several key goods and services. Total state revenues across taxes reached Rs 4,704 crore in January, up 7 per cent from a year earlier. The growth comes despite GST rate reductions on consumer essentials, durables, pharmaceuticals, automobiles and cement, withdrawal of GST on life and medical insurance, and the removal of compensation cess on most products from September 2025. The state's GST growth outpaced the national average of 5.8 per cent (excluding imports) and ranked second among southern states, behind Karnataka, while surpassing Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, according to official data. Net GST collections in Andhra Pradesh have exceeded year-ago levels for ten consecutive months from April to January, pointing to sustained economic activity and improved tax compliance.

In January, gross GST collections stood at Rs 3,479 crore, with SGST revenue at Rs 1,284 crore, up 8.37 per cent, while IGST settlement rose 5.57 per cent to Rs 1,789 crore. Petroleum VAT collections increased 7.09 per

cent from a year earlier. Cumulative collections till January 2026 rose 4.79 per cent to Rs 44,221 crore.

Despite a lower base and the absence of rate-driven gains, the state's revenue

performance has remained stable, reflecting a widening tax base and stronger compliance, officials said. Total state revenues across taxes reached Rs 4,704 crore in January, up 7 per cent from a year earlier.

## ICICI Pru Smart Insurance Plan Plus a plan for today's youth, designed for tomorrow's goals



India is at a turning point. The next ten years belong to our youth—the dreamers and doers who are driving the nation's economic future. As per Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), nearly 65% of Indians are below 35 years. Long-term disciplined financial planning and savings will be the key for them to turn their aspirations into reality, whether for buying the first home or retiring early. In this context, ICICI Pru Smart Insurance Plan Plus, a market-linked life insurance product is designed to help young earners to build long-term wealth while providing financial

security to the family. With premiums starting from just ₹1000 per month, this affordable product can enable young professionals and first-time investors to start early, stay invested and benefit from India's growth story. Mr. Vikas Gupta, Chief Product Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company Limited, said "ICICI Pru Smart Insurance Plan Plus is a cost-effective product, wherein the entire premium amount is invested per the asset allocation chosen by the customer. It offers customers 25 different funds and four portfolio strategies to choose from. It also provides partial withdrawals so that

any immediate financial needs can be met. Furthermore, it has a 'Waiver of Premium' add-on benefit, ensuring that even if life takes an unexpected turn, the financial goals of the family are safeguarded." The product structure of ULIPs is such that it promotes long-term investment behaviour and wealth creation. This is particularly advantageous for customers since India is slated to become the world's third largest economy by 2028, as per Morgan Stanley. ULIPs also provide customers with flexibility to choose the asset class and freely switch between them without any cost or tax implications.

## BUDGET 2026-27: OVER RS 1300 CRORE ALLOCATED FOR FORENSIC RELATED SCHEMES

**New Delhi:** The government has allocated over Rs 1471 crore in the Union Budget 2026-27 for the modernisation of forensic capabilities, with a number of other schemes aimed at making justice swift and accessible. In the Budget announced on Sunday, under the Police head of the Union Home Ministry, Rs 500 crore has been allocated for the modernisation of forensic capacities under the schemes for Safety of Women. Additionally, Rs 14 crore has been allocated for upgrading Central Forensic Science Laboratories, which includes the establishment of a National Forensic Data Centre. The Budget also includes Rs 130 crore for the National Forensic Infrastructure Enhancement Scheme, which aims to strengthen the national forensic infrastructure across the country by setting up various off-campus National Forensic Science Universities (NFSUs) and other Central Forensic Science Laboratories (CFSLs). The NFSUs have been

allocated Rs 145 crore to cover expenses related to academic, administrative, research, and infrastructural activities. The Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS), aimed to "integrate digital platforms enabling seamless data sharing among police, courts, prosecution, prisons, and forensic agencies", has been given Rs 550 crore. The Budget has also allocated Rs 132.89 crore under the Criminology and Forensic Science category, a hike of around 34 per cent from the Rs 99 crore provisioned in Revised Estimates for 2025-26. This expense covers "administrative expenditure on the

Directorate of Forensic Science and Central Forensic Science Laboratories. The provision is also for the modernisation of Central Forensic Science Laboratories with emphasis on human resources development and Research and Development Schemes, establishment of Regional Forensic Laboratories and DNA Centres," the Budget document said. Hospitality bridge: The government proposes to establish a National Institute of Hospitality by upgrading the existing National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology to serve as a

bridge between academia, industry and government. Digital documentation: A National Destination Digital Knowledge Grid will be created to digitally document cultural, spiritual and heritage sites of significance, fostering a new job ecosystem for researchers and content creators. Tourism companies hail the budget. Real estate player Brigade Hotel Ventures Ltd said that the Budget has given the "strategic recognition" to the tourism sector. City-headquartered Aarthi Scans and Labs also lauded the Budget, terming it as clear and strengthening healthcare capacity. Vineet Verma, Director of Brigade Hotel Ventures Ltd, said the Budget's emphasis on tourism goes beyond infrastructure and rightly addresses the sector's biggest gap, skilled human capital. "The emphasis on infrastructure-led development, experiential tourism and ease of doing business sends a strong signal to investors and operators

alike. This can accelerate asset creation, improve quality standards, and unlock the sector's true economic potential," he said in a statement.

The tourism industry has welcomed the government's focus on the travel and tourism sector as a long-term growth driver and strategic pillar of India's growth story. The rationalisation of Tax Collected at Source (TCS) on overseas tour packages and the focus on tier 2 and 3 cities, including temple-towns, through the city economic regions (CER) development budgetary allocation of Rs 5,000 crore, will act as a big boost for the tourism sector, top industry players said.

Rationalisation of TCS on overseas tour packages is a welcome step that addresses upfront liquidity impact on Indian outbound travellers, said Rajesh Magow, Chair, FICCI Tourism Committee and Co-founder and Group CEO, MakeMyTrip. "Continued focus on regional connectivity and destination development

Teenager dies from Swiss bar fire injuries, bringing death toll to 41

# IRAN'S SUPREME LEADER WARNS OF REGIONAL WAR IF US ATTACKS

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has warned that any attack would spark a regional conflict, as the US continues to build up its forces nearby. "The Americans should know that if they start a war, this time it will be a regional war," Khamenei was quoted as saying by the semi-official Tasnim news agency. Donald Trump earlier said Iran was in "serious discussions" and he hoped they would lead to something "acceptable", while Iran's top security official Ali Larijani also said a framework for negotiations was progressing. Trump has threatened to intervene in Iran over its nuclear ambitions and after its deadly crackdown on anti-government protests. As part of its build up of forces, the US has sent its aircraft carrier the USS Abraham Lincoln to the region and late last week US



Central Command said it was operating in the Arabian Sea. "[Trump] regularly says that he brought ships... The Iranian nation shall not be scared by these things," added Khamenei. Iran is expected to begin a

two-day live-fire naval exercise on Sunday in the Strait of Hormuz - one of the world's most important shipping lanes and a key route for energy supplies. Around a fifth of the world's traded oil passes through

the waterway, which is about 33km (21 miles) wide at its narrowest point between Iran and Oman. Iran has in the past threatened to close the strait if it were attacked. The US has warned Iran against any

"unsafe and unprofessional behaviour" near its forces in the area. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi responded by saying: "The US military is now attempting to dictate how our Powerful Armed Forces should conduct target practice in their own turf." On Saturday, two explosions in Iran heightened anxiety in the country. Local authorities said a blast that killed one and hurt 14 at a building in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas was caused by a gas leak. Tasnim denied social media reports that a Revolutionary Guards Corps navy commander had been targeted in the blast. In the southwestern city of Ahvaz, at least four people were killed in another explosion, with local authorities again blaming a gas leak, according to Iran's Tehran Times. On Thursday, Trump said he had told Iran that it had

to do two things to avoid US military action: "Number one, no nuclear. And number two, stop killing protesters." The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency says it has confirmed the killing of more than 6,300 people since the unrest began in late December, and is investigating another 17,000 reported deaths. Another group, the Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR), has warned the final toll could exceed 25,000. Protesters have told the BBC that the lethal crackdown by security forces was unlike anything they had witnessed before. In his remarks on Sunday, Khamenei accused protesters of attacking police, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and other facilities including banks and mosques. "The coup was suppressed," Tasnim quoted him as saying.



## Deadly gun and bomb attacks hit Pakistan's Balochistan province



A series of gun and bomb attacks across Pakistan's south-western Balochistan province have killed 31 civilians and 17 security service personnel, the region's Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti says. Security forces responding to the violence killed at least 145 attackers during a 40-hour gun battle, he said. The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) rebel group had earlier said it was behind the attacks, claiming dozens of soldiers were killed. It marks an escalation of violence in the impoverished but resource-rich province, where Pakistan's government has been battling an ethnic insurgency for decades. Pakistan accused India of supporting the BLA. Delhi has repeatedly denied such accusations. Grenade and gun attacks in the provincial capital Quetta and cities and towns across the province targeted hospitals, schools, banks and markets, Pakistan's junior interior minister

Talal Chaudhry said. "In each case, the attackers came in dressed as civilians and indiscriminately targeted ordinary people working in shops," he said, adding that the attackers had used civilians as human shields. Armed attackers also opened fire at security installations, attempted to carry out suicide bombings and briefly blocked roads in urban areas. Some key administrative buildings in Quetta and nearby roads were reported to have been sealed off during the day. Mobile phone services were jammed, and regional train services were suspended. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif later praised the military, pledging to "continue the war against terrorism until its complete eradication". The BLA said it had launched a coordinated operation dubbed Herof, or "black storm" against security forces, and claimed to have killed 84 members of the security forces and kidnapped a further 18.

## LA 2028 OLYMPICS CHIEF 'DEEPLY REGRETS' FLIRTY EMAILS WITH GHISLAINE MAXWELL



Maxwell: "I think of you all the time... So what do I have to do to see you in a tight leather outfit?" Maxwell is currently serving a 20-year prison sentence for recruiting and trafficking teenage girls to be sexually abused by the disgraced financier Epstein prior to his death in custody in 2019. "I deeply regret my correspondence with Ghislaine Maxwell which took place over two decades ago, long before her horrific crimes came to light," Wasserman said in a statement obtained by news agency AFP. He also emphasised that he had "never had a personal or business relationship with Epstein". As is well documented, I went on a humanitarian trip as part of a delegation with the Clinton Foundation in 2002 on the Epstein plane.

## Israel to ban MSF from working in Gaza over refusal to provide staff list



Israel says it will ban Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) from working in Gaza after the medical charity refused to hand over a list of its staff in the territory. The Israeli government had ordered 37 organisations to submit documents about their local and international workers in Gaza, claiming some in MSF had links to armed groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The charity has vehemently denied this. MSF announced on Friday that it would not share a list of its Palestinian and international staff with Israeli authorities as it had not secured "assurances to ensure the safety of our staff". In response, Israel said it was "moving to terminate the activities" of

MSF in Gaza. The Israeli Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism said the decision followed "MSF's failure to submit lists of local employees, a requirement applicable to all humanitarian organisations operating in the region". On 30 December, Israel announced that it was going to revoke the licences of 37 international non-governmental organisations working in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, saying they had failed to meet new registration requirements. At the time the diaspora ministry said the measure was needed to prevent "the infiltration of terrorist operatives into humanitarian structures". The groups - which include MSF, ActionAid and the Norwegian Refugee Council - were told their operations must end within 60 days. The move was condemned by 10 coun-

tries, including the UK, France and Canada, who said the rules would have a severe impact on access to essential services. MSF said in a statement on Friday that it had informed Israeli authorities that, as an "exceptional measure", it would share a list of names of its Palestinian and international staff, "subject to clear parameters, with our staff safety at its core". "However, despite repeated efforts, it became evident in recent days that we were unable to build engagement with Israeli authorities on the concrete assurances required," it said. "These included that any staff information would be used only for its stated administrative purpose and would not put colleagues at risk."

## FRENCH TECH GIANT CAPGEMINI TO SELL US SUBSIDIARY WORKING FOR ICE



French technology giant Capgemini has announced it will sell its US subsidiary after its work locating people for immigration enforcement agency ICE sparked outrage. Capgemini has come under pressure from French lawmakers over a contract its subsidiary signed with ICE, amid international scrutiny over the methods used by the agency's agents in Minnesota. The fatal shooting of US citizens Renee Nicole Good and Alex Petti by ICE agents in Minneapolis have sparked protests across the US and led to increased scrutiny of the agency. Capgemini Government Solutions is set to be paid more than \$4.8m (£3.5m) for

its work tracing people for ICE, which is due to continue until 15 March, US government listings show. It is one of 13 contracts the subsidiary holds with ICE. Capgemini, one of the largest listed companies in France, said in a statement that it had not been able "to exercise appropriate con-

trol over certain aspects of this subsidiary's operations in order to ensure alignment with the Group's objectives". It added that "the divestiture process of this business will be initiated immediately". Criticism of ICE practices has intensified in recent weeks since the shooting of 37-year-old Petti, the second fatal shooting of a US citizen since immigration agents began surging several cities across the US, acting on the Trump administration's drive to increase deportations of illegal immigrants. The killing of Petti involved Border Patrol, an immigration agency which works alongside ICE.

## Slovakia PM's national security adviser resigns over Epstein links



The national security adviser to Slovakia's prime minister has resigned after documents released by the US showed he exchanged messages about girls and diplomacy with the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Robert Fico announced he had accepted Miroslav Lajčák's departure in a video message on Saturday, describing the adviser as "an incredible source of experience in diplomacy and foreign policy". The resignation comes a day after three million files relating to the influential financier were released by the US Department of Justice. While the files do not show any wrongdoing on the part of those featured, including Lajčák, they have raised renewed questions for those who associated with Epstein. In a text exchange from October 2018 - when Lajčák was serving as Slovakia's foreign minister - Lajčák and Epstein could be seen lightheartedly discussing women and a forthcoming meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. After Epstein sent an image, which cannot be seen in the record, Lajčák replies: "Why don't you invite me

## Epstein sent \$75,000 to accounts linked to Mandelson



Epstein's JP Morgan bank accounts. The first, dated 14 May 2003, shows a payment was sent to a Barclays bank account where Reinaldo Avila da Silva - Lord Mandelson's partner at the time - is named as "A/C", typically an abbreviation for account. In that payment, a "Peter Mandelson" is named on the account as "BEN", which is often an abbreviation for beneficiary. The second and third payments of

to da Silva's loan, Lord Mandelson said he had been "very clear" about his relationship with Epstein in interviews with the BBC. "I have nothing more to add," he said. Lord Mandelson was later sent to Washington by Sir Keir Starmer in December 2024 as the UK's ambassador to the US, but was sacked the following September after further revelations emerged about his friendship with Epstein. The government was aware of Mandelson's alleged financial links to Epstein after the US financier's 2008 conviction, sending a string of supportive messages. Asked by Laura Kuenssberg that he was "kept separate" from Epstein's sex life because he is gay and denied seeing young girls at Epstein's properties. Days later, he offered a more direct apology to the victims of the disgraced financier, telling Newsnight he was "wrong" to continue associating with Epstein.



BUDGET 2026:

## Khelo India Mission Announced To Drive Decade Of Sporting Excellence

In a landmark announcement during the 2026 Union Budget session, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled an ambitious 10-year roadmap to transform India's sports sector. Central to this vision is the launch of the Khelo India Mission, a revitalised initiative designed to shift the country from being a participant to a global powerhouse in the sporting arena. Recognising that the sports sector is no longer just about podium finishes but is a significant engine for economic growth, the Minister highlighted its potential as a major provider of employment opportunities. "The Sports Sector provides multiple means of employment, skilling and job opportunities. Taking forward the systematic nurturing of



sports talent which is set in motion through the Khelo India programme, I propose to launch a Khelo India Mission to transform the

sports sector over the next decade," Sitharaman said. The core theme of this year's sports budget is the professionalisation of the industry. Sitharaman emphasised that the expansion of the Khelo India Mission would create a vast array of jobs beyond the field of play. These may include: Technical & Coaching Roles: A surge in demand for certified coaches, high-performance directors, and scouts. Sports Science & Medicine: New avenues for physiotherapists, sports psychologists, nutritionists, and researchers. Management & Logistics: Opportunities in sports management, event organisation, and facility maintenance. Manufacturing: Job creation in the design and production of high-quality, affordable sports gear under the "Make in India" banner. India Eye Pivotal Sporting Shift: This strategic shift comes as India prepares to host the 100th

Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad in 2030 and strengthens its bid for the 2036 Olympic Games. By committing to a 10-year build-out, the government is laying the groundwork for structural transformation, ensuring that the "Khelo India" spirit becomes a permanent fixture of India's national identity and economic fabric. The Khelo India programme was introduced by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to revive the sports culture in India at the grassroots level. It was conceptualised in 2016-17 and officially launched with the first Khelo India School Games in January 2018. Since its inception, it has evolved from a single event into a massive national movement. Here is a brief on its journey and achievements so far.

## HAPPY TENNIS, SERIOUS NAME - THE MAKING OF CARLOS ALCARAZ

With his Australian Open triumph, the name of Carlos Alcaraz is now engraved on all four Grand Slam trophies. There is just one thing you need to know. "I don't like being called Carlos," he said in 2022. "Honestly, Carlos seems too serious to me, like I've done something wrong. I like Carlitos or Charlie." Once a young prodigy who smashed racquets when things did not go his way, Alcaraz has secured a spot in the history books once again as the youngest man to complete the career Grand Slam. He is the world number one, has seven major titles to his name and is one half of a potentially era-defining rivalry. But before all that, he was



Carlitos from Murcia. Watching Alcaraz is, for the most part, like watching sunshine personified.

There is a carefree joy in his shot-making; the huge forehand that goes blasting through every surface, the

drop shots and volleys that few would dare try. Then there is Alcaraz himself. He runs around the court with a puppyish enthusiasm, a huge smile never far from his face. The sleeveless shirts, the cries of 'vamos!', the ill-advised buzzcut in New York all add to the theatre. Alcaraz plays by the motto passed down to him by his grandfather - cabeza, corazon, cojones. Head, heart, balls. A reminder to be brave in the big moments, to truly go for what you want. It has served him well throughout his career. Tennis, Alcaraz told Vogue, external in 2023, is in his blood. His great-uncle built the club in Murcia where generations of the family would play.

## Pakistan Star Usman Tariq Hits Back At Cameron Green's 'Chucking' Accusation



Green feels there's a lot more behind those impressive stats than pure skill. On his way back to the bench, Green gestured to his teammates that Tariq was 'chucking'. Later in the day, however, Tariq hit back at Green on Instagram. The Pakistan spinner shared an Instagram Story with the caption: "After getting out",

with the picture of a crying kid. This isn't the first time that Tariq has been accused of a suspected illegal action. The spinner has twice been reported while representing the Quetta Gladiators during the Pakistan Super League 2024 and 2025 seasons. On the first occasion, he was reported by umpires Asif Yaqoob and Richard Illingworth. Last year, he was reported again by match officials Ahsan Raza and Chris Brown. He has even undergone biomechanical testing at Lahore's National Cricket Academy twice. On both occasions, however, the officials cleared Tariq's action, and he was permitted to continue bowling in the T20 tournament.

## WWE Royal Rumble 2026 Results: Roman Reigns Books Ticket To WrestleMania 42



In a night defined by the amalgamation of eras, the 2026 Royal Rumble served as both a coronation for a modern underdog and the definitive return of a legendary bloodline. As the dust settled in Riyadh, the WWE Universe witnessed the heart-wrenching conclusion of a "Phenomenal" career and the rise of two superstars destined to headline WrestleMania 42. By eliminating the formidable Gunther in the final moments, Roman Reigns has officially forced a collision course with the reigning champions in Las Vegas. This victory provides the narrative fuel for Reigns to finally address the "unfinished business" lingering from his previous encounters with both Cody Rhodes and CM

## In-Form Rohtak Royals Look To Continue Winning Run Against Gurugram Gurus



8:00 PM onwards on 1st February (Sunday), 2026. Displaying grit and authority, the Royals transformed their previous encounter into a one-sided contest with a commanding second-half performance. Their ability to deliver under pressure in both raiding and defence has been the driving force

behind their impressive run. Rohtak will look to sustain that momentum and produce another dominant outing against Gurugram Gurus, who are still searching for their first points of the season. Leading from the front, skipper Sandeep Narwal produced a heroic defensive display in the last match despite

battling a severe fever. His High-5 and nine-point haul, the highest in the game, earned him the Best Defender of the Match award. Alongside him, Naveen, Himanshu, Sandeep Deswal, Aaryan and Rakesh will shoulder the responsibility of building a robust defensive wall. The raiding unit will once again be spearheaded by star raider Vijay Malik, who was named Best Raider of the Match in the last outing. Supporting him will be Milan Dahiya, who has been in tremendous form, along with local lad Ankit Rana, who could pose a significant threat to the opposition. Head Coach Surender Nada expressed confidence ahead of the upcoming clash.

## The most powerful woman in football - meet game's first female super agent



Rafaela Pimenta has never scored a goal or managed a team. But the 53-year-old is the only football entry in Forbes' '50 over 50' list for 2026. Every January, the global media company publishes the 50 women who have reached a position of status and influence that makes them beacons for others to follow. Oscar-winning actress Penelope Cruz is there, so too Dame Sarah Mullally - the first female Archbishop of Canterbury. As football's first female super agent, Brazilian Pimenta is hugely influential. Her impressive stable of clients includes Manchester City striker Erling Haaland, Liverpool manager Arne Slot and 17-year-old Mexican

wonderkid Gilberto Mora. She radiates warmth as she arrives on time to speak exclusively to BBC Sport. Once the cameras are rolling, Pimenta is deadly serious as she covers a range of topics, including the treatment of women in football. But, on the eve of deadline day, let's start with her con-

cerns about the present transfer system. "There needs to be a change," she explains. "There's too much power for clubs. 'Players are sometimes hostages of situations. I'm not fighting for chaos. We need the transfer system for the whole thing to work. But we need more balance. 'We are in a transfer

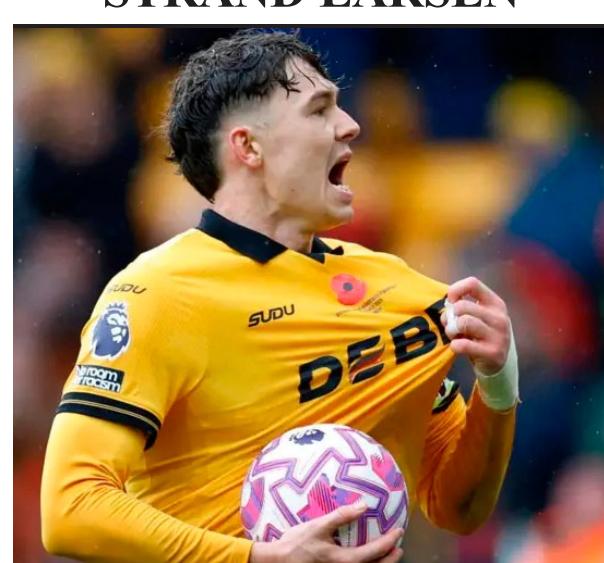
## PAKISTAN TO BOYCOTT T20 WORLD CUP 2026 MATCH AGAINST INDIA, BUT PLAY IN TOURNAMENT



Pakistan announced on Sunday that they will participate in the T20 World Cup 2026 but will boycott the match against India. Pakistan were scheduled to face India in a group stage match in Colombo on February 15. The decision was announced by the Government of Pakistan on their social media handle. The decision was taken by the government following the International Cricket Council's (ICC) removal of Bangladesh from the tournament. Bangladesh requested ICC to shift their matches from India citing 'security concerns' but their request was denied. "The Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan grants approval to the Pakistan Cricket Team to participate in the ICC World T20 2026, however, the Pakistan Cricket Team shall not take the field in the match scheduled on 15th February 2026 against India," the government posted on X (former

ly Twitter). The announcement brought an end to days of speculation over Pakistan's participation in the World Cup. Pakistan had also postponed the team's jersey reveal for the Men's T20 World Cup, and it was understood that the event would take place once the verdict on the team's participation in the

## WOLVES ACCEPT NEW £48M OFFER FOR STRAND LARSEN



Wolves have accepted a reduced offer worth £48m for striker Jorgen Strand Larsen from Crystal Palace. Last week, the two clubs reached an agreement in principle over a £50m deal for the Norway international to move to Selhurst Park. All that was left was for Palace to submit a written offer and provided the bid was of the value discussed, Wolves would have accepted. However, as BBC Sport revealed, the offer never arrived as Palace communicated their intention to walk away from the deal, which put the transfer in jeopardy. Sources claim that Palace's decision to pause final talks was down to reservations over the total cost of the deal, not concerns over the player. The impasse in recent days has placed further doubt on the deal. But with a little over 24 hours to go until the transfer window closes, Palace have now had a new offer

## Creators of "Joe" kick-start shooting of their next titled "Haiku" Starring Aegan today with Netflix securing Digital Streaming Rights

Netflix, one of the global OTT giants known for its selective curation, consistently champions content-driven stories alongside major star vehicles. The latest addition to their library is actor Aegan's 'Haiku', with makers proudly announcing that Netflix has acquired its digital streaming rights even before completion. In a rare move, bypassing the usual wait for theatrical results, the shoot kicked off this morning (February 1, 2026) with Netflix already on board. The shooting of the upcoming Tamil feature film Haiku commenced today with a formal pooja and first clap ceremony held at Eddiki. Celebrated filmmaker Director Ram, acclaimed for works like Peranbu and Taraman, gave the inaugural clap and extended his best wishes to the team, marking an auspicious beginning. Haiku is directed by Yuvaraj Chinmasamy and produced by Dr. D. Arulanandhu and Mathewo Arulanandhu under Vision Cinema

House. The film features additional screenplay by Hari Haran Ram, who previously directed the critically acclaimed Joe. The technical crew includes Priyesh

led by Aegan (known from Joe and Kozhi Pannai ChellaDurai), alongside Femina George (Minnal Murali, Sesham Mikelil

Mikeil

Pradeep, and others.

Netflix, one of the global OTT

giants known for its

selective curation, consistently champions content-driven stories alongside major star vehicles.

GuruSwamy as Director of Photography, Sakthi Pranesh as Editor, and Vijai Bulgani as Music Director, known for compositions in Court and Baby. The cast is

Fathima) and Sridevi Apalla (Court). With Netflix's early acquisition signaling strong content confidence, Haiku unites an experienced team and talented cast.

Photo: Netflix

Photo: Netflix