



Anahat wins maiden PSA Bronze-level title
Teenage sensation and seventh seed Anahat Singh defeated top seed and World No 10. Georgina Kennedy of England with scores of 12-10, 11-5, 11-7 in the Squash on Fire Open final, earning her first PSA Bronze-level title. **P10**

Bad governance leading to erosion of lakes and water bodies
Years back, every village and settlement had a lake—protected by a raised embankment, a katta. The lake was not merely a water body but a living institution. Its embankment was guarded by local deities—Katta Maisamma, Gandhi Katta Maisamma. **P6**

Markets rise over 1% as value buying spurs rebound on D-St
Stock markets rebounded on Monday with benchmark Sensex jumping by 943 points on value buying in blue-chip oil & gas, banking and auto shares after facing a massive drubbing on the Budget day. **P11**

Pan-India 'Nagabandham' teaser announced
Abhishek Nama's much-anticipated mythological action drama 'Nagabandham', starring Virat Karra, is generating strong buzz, with the first-look posters receiving an immense response. The makers have now locked the teaser release for February 15. **P12**

WINDOWS

Hate Speech Bill brought to silence Oppn: BJP

SHIVAMOGGA: Alleging that the Congress-led government hurriedly passed the Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2025, during the Belagavi Winter Session without allowing proper discussion, BJP state president and MLA B.Y. Vijayendra said the Bill was brought with the sole intention of silencing the Opposition. Speaking to the media on Monday, Vijayendra responded to a question on the Governor not giving assent to the Bill. He said the legislation is harmful to democracy. "As a result of this law, our Hindu activist Vikas Puttur in Tarikere had not even begun his speech when police officials served him a notice and threatened to arrest him if he spoke," he alleged. He further claimed that Bajrang Dal activist Sharan Pumpwell has been prevented from crossing district limits in Dakshina Kannada. In Bengaluru, Puneeth Kerehalli was arrested even though he had allegedly identified illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and did the work that the police should have done, Vijayendra said. He alleged that earlier, those involved in illegal cattle transportation were booked under existing laws, vehicles were seized and offenders were jailed. "The Siddaramaiah government even attempted to bring a Bill to grant station bail to those arrested in such cases," he charged. Vijayendra said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had earlier tried to divide society by raising the issue of a separate Veerashaiva-Lingayat identity. "Now, to cover up his failures, he is trying to pit the state against the Centre by claiming that the Union government has done injustice to Karnataka and to southern states. He is attempting to project himself as a leader of South India," he criticised. He said such a divisive mindset is not good for Siddaramaiah himself, for Karnataka, or for the development of the country. Referring to the Congress-led government's protest in Delhi under the slogan "Our tax, our right," Vijayendra questioned the Karnataka government's financial management. He said Siddaramaiah, as Finance Minister, has failed to mobilise funds for the government's guarantee schemes and has increased the excise department's revenue target to Rs 40,000 crore, which would lead to a rise in the number of liquor consumers.

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THE Hans India



'MODI LEFT DECISIONS ON CHINA ON OTHER'S SHOULDERS'

Row in LS as Rahul cites Gen Naravane's unpublished memoir

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A row erupted in the Lok Sabha on Monday after Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi sought to quote from the unpublished "memoir" of former Army chief Gen M M Naravane (ret'd), but Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, along with other BJP members, strongly opposed it and accused the Congress leader of "misleading" the House. As Gandhi rose to speak on the Motion of Thanks to the president's address, he said he would first like to respond to the charges made by the previous speaker, BJP MP Tejasvi Surya, against the Congress

on nationalism and began quoting from what he stated was the "memoir" of Gen. Naravane talking about the India-China conflict of 2020. However, Singh strongly protested this and asked Gandhi to clarify whether the book had been published or not. The uproar went on for about 50 minutes with Speaker Om Birla repeatedly stating that no book or newspaper clipping can be quoted on a matter not related to the proceedings of the House, and Gandhi insisting that the document was authenticated and he could quote from it. Quoting former army chief General MM Naravane's book: "I am not being allowed to speak. I just

- General MM Naravane's book: "I am not being allowed to speak. I just have to speak 2-3 lines. It is a matter of national security. These are the words of the Army Chief (former), and it is a conversation that he has had with Rajnath Singh ji and PM Modi"
- The leader of the country is not supposed to run away from decisions and leave decisions to other people's shoulders. That is what the PM has done...I want to speak in the House. I don't know why they are scared. The point here is exactly what the PM said

have to speak 2-3 lines. It is a matter of national security. These are the words of the Army Chief (former), and it is a conversation that he has had with Rajnath Singh ji and PM Modi. All I am saying is that I want to say in the House what the Army Chief (former) has written and what orders did Rajnath Singh and PM

Modi give him..." "I want to speak in the House. I don't know why they are scared. The point here is exactly what the Prime Minister said and what Rajnath Singh Ji said. Whether the land was taken or not, that's a different question. We'll come to that. But before we come to that, the leader of the country is



supposed to give direction. The leader of the country is not supposed to run away from decisions and leave decisions to other people's shoulders. That is what the Prime Minister has done..." Government sources said Gandhi was speaking "concocted things" on China. They said there was ample material in the public domain on the decisions taken by India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, on China, and alleged that he "surrendered thousands

of acres of land just to further his own statesmanship." Gandhi said he never wanted to speak on the particular issue, but decided to do so after BJP's Surya questioned the patriotism of the Congress party. Singh maintained that the book had not been published. Gandhi then said he was quoting from a magazine article to put forth his views. Birla again disallowed it and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju called for

the Speaker's ruling to be adhered to. Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav supported Gandhi and urged the Speaker to allow the Congress leader to speak. With both the treasury and opposition MPs unrelenting, the Speaker adjourned the House till 3 pm. Several opposition leaders, including TMC's Mahua Moitra and Kalyan Banerjee, RJD's Manoj Jha, and SP chief Yadav, rallied behind Gandhi over the issue.

IBC Amendment Bill in 2nd half of Budget session: FM

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said the government intends to introduce the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2025 in the second half of the Budget session beginning March 9 as the parliamentary committee has already submitted its report. The proposed amendments to insolvency law would help further enhancement in the timelines and effectiveness of proceedings as well as alignment of India's insolvency regime more closely with the global best practices. The parliamentary committee has submitted its report as far as proposed legislation with respect to Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) is concerned, she said during an interaction with the media a day after presenting Budget 2026-27 in the Lok Sabha. "I expect, subject to conditions, to table the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill in the second half of the Budget session starting March 9 incorporating suggestions of the committee," the Finance Minister, who also holds the Corporate Affairs

- STT hike to secure household savings from speculative bets: CEA Anantha Nageswaran
- 'Purpose is to ensure hard-earned savings are used to maximise wealth in households'



Ministry portfolio, said. This is going to be the seventh amendment to the IBC Act implemented in 2016. So far, it has undergone six legislative interventions since its enactment and the last amendment was in 2021. Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran said on Monday that the increase in Securities Transaction Tax on derivatives trading announced in the Union Budget 2026-27 is aimed at securing household savings from highly speculative bets rather than generating revenue for the government. "The purpose (of STT

hike) is not revenue generation... the purpose is to ensure hard-earned savings are used to maximise wealth in households. The SEBI has pointed out how people lose money through F&O," the CEA told journalists. The Union Budget 2026-27, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday, proposed raising STT on futures to 0.05 per cent from the present 0.02 per cent and on options premium and exercise of options to be raised to 0.15 per cent from the present rate of 0.1 per cent and 0.125 per cent, respectively.

Ex-ICC official blames BCCI for the turmoil

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

CRITICAL of the BCCI's handling of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman's ouster from the IPL, former ICC Head of Communications Sami-ul-Hasan Burney on Monday said the Indian Board could have saved the T20 World Cup from the current turmoil by being more tactful. Rahman's release from a contract with the Kolkata



Sami-ul-Hasan Burney

Knight Riders triggered a chain of events that led to Bangladesh's exit from the event starting February 7 after refusing to play in India due to "security concerns".

In an apparent show of solidarity, Pakistan has now decided to forfeit the match against India on February 15 on government instructions. Burney, who also worked as Media Director of Pakistan Cricket Board after the end of his ICC tenure, said the BCCI could have avoided public statements announcing Rahman's ouster without actually specifying the reasons. "I mean, things could have been easily avoided if the cricket administrators or

people responsible for the game had been a little bit more careful and avoided public statements, like a Bangladesh player (Mustafizur) has to be removed from the franchise," Sami told PTL. "I mean they (the BCCI) didn't have to say it publicly. They could have easily privately told the franchise (KKR) to release the player and nobody would have known what happened and life would have moved on.

Govt announces Bengaluru GAFX 2026

BENGALURU

THE government, in association with the Association of Bangalore Animation Industry (ABAI) and Startup Karnataka, on Monday announced the 7th edition of Bengaluru GAFX 2026, Asia's largest annual conference and exhibition for animation, visual effects, gaming, comics, XR, and immersive and interactive content. Scheduled to be held from February 27 to March 1 at Hotel Lalit Ashok in Bengaluru, the event will bring together creators, studios, technologists, investors, and industry leaders from across the global media and entertainment ecosystem. In his remarks at the

curtain raiser event, state Information Technology, Biotechnology and Science and Technology Minister Priyank Karge said: "For over a decade, Bengaluru GAFX has been a key catalyst for India's AVGC sector—bringing together talent, technology, policy and global opportunity on a single platform." "Evolution Reloaded" reflects Karnataka's belief that the next phase of AVGC growth will be driven by the convergence of deep technology and human creativity. GAFX embodies our ambition to position Karnataka as a global hub for creative technology and next-generation storytelling," he added.

DALAI LAMA WINS GRAMMY

LOS ANGELES: The Dalai Lama has won a Grammy for his spoken word album "Meditations: The Reflections of His Holiness the Dalai Lama" at a glittering and politically charged music gala, the first golden gramophone for the 90-year-old Tibetan spiritual leader. The 68th Grammy Awards, hosted by Trevor Noah and held at the Crypto.com Arena here on Sunday night, recognised winners in over 90 categories. While the Dalai Lama's followers in the Himachal Pradesh town of Dharamshala and elsewhere celebrated, Indian and Indian origin artists, including Anoushka Shankar, fusion band Shakti and Siddhant Bhatia, were nominated but didn't manage a win. Singer Rufus Wainwright accepted the award in the category for 'audio books, narration and storytelling' on behalf of the Dalai Lama.



Better to sell egg rice than be a cop, says constable on WhatsApp status

KOPPAL

THE Karnataka Police department has ordered a probe in connection with a WhatsApp status posted by a Constable saying that it is "better to sell egg rice than be a cop." The development was reported from Koppal district in Karnataka on Monday. According to police, the Constable, identified as Bramhanand, reportedly vented his anger over the functioning of the police department through WhatsApp status messages. The social media status was posted in response to a statement made by Direc-

PROBE ORDERED

tor General and Inspector General of Police (DG & IGP) M.A. Saleem regarding the recruitment of 8,300 police personnel. In his WhatsApp status, Constable Bramhanand wrote, "We have to be on duty 365 days a year, with not even a single day of leave. Selling egg rice is better than police duty." He is also said to have posted another status stating, "Think a hundred times before joining the police department, and if possible, it is better to join

some other department." These status messages went viral on social media and have triggered discussions within the police department. In view of the seriousness of the matter, Koppal District Superintendent of Police Ram L. Arasiddi has ordered an enquiry against Constable Bramhanand. Further investigation into the incident is underway, and police sources said that appropriate action will be taken based on the findings of the enquiry

report. It can be recalled that an enraged Constable shot dead a Sub-Inspector in their police station near Bengaluru when he was denied leave after working for over 30 hours in 2013. Police Constable Anand Kumar, 45, was arrested for fatally shooting police SI Vijay Kumar, 38, in the Rajanukunte police station. The incident had taken place after a heated argument on being denied leave and change of duty. It can also be recalled that a Sub-Inspector in

Bengaluru Rural district was previously suspended for abusing a senior officer in public after a heated argument over a vehicle permit. In the 2018 incident, Sub-Inspector M. Srinivas, attached to the Vishwanathapura police station, was suspended after a video of him abusing the jurisdictional inspector went viral on social media. The Bengaluru Rural Superintendent of Police at the time stated that the junior officer had violated the code of conduct and should have escalated the matter through proper channels. An enquiry was initiated following the suspension.





IN BRIEF

Notices issued to over 500 PG accommodations

BENGALURU: With a growing number of people migrating to Bengaluru from different states for employment, education, and other reasons, the number of Paying Guest (PG) accommodations in the city has increased significantly. However, concerns have emerged over several PGs operating in violation of basic safety and hygiene norms. In response, officials of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) have launched a strict enforcement drive against unsafe PG accommodations.

During inspections conducted in January, health officials carried out checks across multiple Assembly constituencies, including Shanthinagar, C.V. Raman Nagar, Gandhinagar, Shivajinagar, Chamaraipet, and Chickpet. As a result, notices were issued to 574 PG accommodations for various violations.

Officials found lapses related to kitchen hygiene, availability of safe drinking water, and failure to follow safety measures. As part of the action, eight PGs were sealed, and a total fine of Rs 3.09 lakh was imposed for multiple rule violations.

Reacting to the sudden enforcement drive, PG Owners' Association President Arun Kumar said that PG owners are anxious due to the abrupt inspections. Meanwhile, Sharaneesh, a PG owner from Wilson Garden, stated that it is the responsibility of owners to comply with regulations and cooperate with authorities.

Authorities have issued warnings to all inspected PGs and have made it clear that more PG accommodations may be sealed in the coming days if deficiencies are not rectified. The GBA has reiterated that the drive aims to ensure safety, hygiene, and basic living standards for residents staying in PG facilities across Bengaluru.

Tattoo artist tied up, assaulted and shot with air gun

UDUPI: A 30-year-old tattoo artist was allegedly assaulted, restrained and shot with an air gun following a dispute over a tattoo at a rented house in Senapura village of Karnataka's Udupi district, police said.

According to police, the victim, identified as Vivek U., a resident of Dashartha Nagar in Manipal, works as a tattoo artist. On January 29, he had partially completed a tattoo for an acquaintance, Sagar, at his residence. He was later taken to Sagar's rented accommodation in Kundapur taluk on January 30 to complete the work.

Police said that in the early hours of January 31, while the complainant was sleeping at the house, Sagar allegedly woke him by splashing water on his face and began arguing, claiming the tattoo was not done properly. The accused allegedly abused the victim verbally during the altercation.

Investigators said Sagar's associates, identified as Sumanth and Aditya, allegedly joined him in the assault. The trio reportedly tied the victim with a rope and assaulted him with hands and legs, subjecting him to prolonged harassment.

When the victim cried out in pain around 3.15 p.m., Sagar allegedly threatened him with death and fired an air gun at his chest, causing injuries, police said. The injured man was admitted to Kasturba Medical College (KMC) Hospital in Manipal, where he is undergoing treatment.

Gangolli police have registered a case under Sections 352, 127(2), 115(2) and 109 read with Section 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, along with Sections 3 and 25 of the Indian Arms Act. Police said further investigation is in progress and action will be taken based on the findings.

BJP MPs accuse state of negligence as it grapples with synthetic drug surge

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MANGALURU

AMID a worrying uptick in synthetic narcotics production within its borders, Karnataka finds itself at the centre of a heated political storm. Recent operations by federal and neighbouring state authorities have exposed hidden manufacturing facilities, prompting sharp accusations from opposition figures that the ruling Congress administration is turning a blind eye to a burgeoning threat.

This comes as interstate networks exploit perceived gaps in local surveillance to set up shop in the southern state. The controversy ignited last month with a high-stakes intervention by Maharashtra's Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) in December 2025. Acting on leads from a seizure in Navi Mumbai, ANTF teams descended on three suspected sites in Bengaluru, including areas like Spandana Layout Colony and Yerappanahalli.

Authorities reported nabbing four individuals hailing from Rajasthan, confiscating 21.4 kg of mephedrone in solid and liquid forms, alongside equipment and precursors valued at an estimated Rs. 55.88 crore. The operation dismantled what was described as a nationwide distribution chain peddling the stimulant, commonly dubbed "MD".

However, the narrative quickly fractured along political lines. Karnataka's Home Minister Dr. G Paramesh-



wara contested the Maharashtra claims, asserting that the raid was a collaborative effort involving local police and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB). He reportedly downplayed the haul's worth to just Rs. 1.2 crore from a single location, accusing the ANTF of inflating figures for sensationalism.

Critics, including BJP leaders, seized on the discrepancy to highlight what they call a "law enforcement vacuum" under Congress stewardship.

Barely a month later, on January 28, 2026, the NCB struck again, this time in Mysuru, the political stronghold of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Intervening an

SUV, agents uncovered 35 kg of mephedrone with a street value pegged at Rs. 10 crore.

The trail led to a covert lab in Mysuru's Hebbal Industrial Area, masquerading as a chemical cleaning plant. Equipped with advanced machinery, the facility yielded over 500 kg of raw materials, Rs. 25.6 lakh in cash, and additional contraband. The ringleader, Mahindra Kumar Vishnoi from Surat, reportedly honed his craft during prior imprisonment, establishing the operation post-bail.

Home Minister Parameshwara initially labelled the site a mere "phenyl factory," a stance contradicted by suspect confessions and NCB

findings.

This minimisation has drawn ire, with observers questioning the state's proactive measures against such threats. BJP MP Captain Brijesh Chowta from Dakshina Kannada, unleashed a blistering critique via social media platform X. Labelling Karnataka as "slipping down a dangerous zone," Capt. Chowta lambasted the Congress regime for harbouring illicit operations and failing to act decisively.

He pointed to the Mysuru incident as emblematic of systemic rot, especially occurring in the CM's home turf, and linked it to the earlier Bengaluru revelations. Accusing Parameshwara of issuing a "clean chit" to culprits despite admissions, Capt. Chowta warned of risks to youth and societal fabric.

Echoing these sentiments, fellow BJP MP Yaduveer Wadiyar from Mysore-Kodagu suggested potential police complicity in the Mysuru case, decrying the government's rush to downplay the lab as a benign chemical unit.

These back-to-back exposures have thrust Karnataka's anti-drug strategy into the spotlight, with syndicates increasingly viewing the state as fertile ground. Despite vows to eradicate narcotics, the Congress-led government faces mounting scrutiny over enforcement lapses, particularly when contrasted with proactive interventions from Maharashtra and central bodies.

'Akka Pade' squad empowers girls, conducts awareness campaign



HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHIKKAMAGALURU

LOCAL authorities in Chikkamagaluru took a significant initiative to bolster safety awareness among young female students, hosting a dedicated session through the 'Akka Pade' program at the PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya.

Guided by members of the 'Akka Pade' unit, the workshop aimed to equip female pupils with essential knowledge on protective resources and protocols. Students learned about vital contacts, such as the specialised women's support line at 118 and the all-purpose emergency service at 112, designed for quick aid during urgent scenarios.

Key discussions revolved around digital security prac-

tices, potential hazards in virtual environments, and the necessity of following road safety guidelines. Officers engaged personally with the attendees, encouraging them to feel empowered in recognising and reporting issues.

Translating to "Elder Sister Squad" in Kannada, 'Akka Pade' represents a comprehensive effort by the Karnataka State Police, involving female law enforcers, auxiliary guards, and occasionally National Cadet Corps members. Rolled out progressively in districts starting from the end of 2025 and gaining momentum this year, the squad prioritises swift intervention for females and youngsters at risk, alongside awareness campaigns in educational institutions, higher learning

centers, and public areas.

During the gathering at Kendriya Vidyalaya, law enforcement personnel spoke to clusters of schoolgirls in an outdoor school environment, highlighting approaches to policing that prioritise community involvement and tailored protections for vulnerable groups.

Such efforts reflect the core mission of 'Akka Pade' by cultivating secure communities, deterring offenses targeting females and youth, and instilling self-assurance in adolescents via informed guidance and reliable aid networks. Authorities in Chikkamagaluru are encouraging residents to make active use of these emergency contacts and stay alert to contribute to collective well-being.

NSUI leader survives sword attack

HANS NEWS SERVICE
UDUPI

A young Congress leader in Udupi district had a narrow escape from death following a vicious late-night attack involving swords and iron chairs. Sharath Kundar, aged 25 and serving as vice-president of the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) in Udupi district, sustained severe injuries to his palm and fingers during the assault near PPC Cross on Friday night.

The incident originated from a seemingly insignificant argument at a hotel in Manipal earlier that evening. While Sharath was having dinner with friends, a verbal exchange reportedly took place with one Ramanand Pai over a small issue. The matter appeared settled, and Sharath returned home afterward. Another Akshat Pai allegedly called Sharath later, saying he wanted to resolve the earlier misunderstanding and asked him to meet at PPC Cross. Sharath arrived there along with friends Dhruv, Silan Gagan, and Rohit, and waited by the roadside.

At 11:30 pm, two SUVs arrived at the scene carrying 6-7 assailants armed with swords and iron chairs. The group immediately targeted Sharath with lethal intent.

Investigators said Sagar's associates, identified as Sumanth and Aditya, allegedly joined him in the assault. The trio reportedly tied the victim with a rope and assaulted him with hands and legs, subjecting him to prolonged harassment.

When the victim cried out in pain around 3.15 p.m., Sagar allegedly threatened him with death and fired an air gun at his chest, causing injuries, police said. The injured man was admitted to Kasturba Medical College (KMC) Hospital in Manipal, where he is undergoing treatment.

Gangolli police have registered a case under Sections 352, 127(2), 115(2) and 109 read with Section 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, along with Sections 3 and 25 of the Indian Arms Act. Police said further investigation is in progress and action will be taken based on the findings.

Highlighting that Beary language lacks its own



Ramanand Pai is said to have swung a sword, striking Sharath's hand and causing deep lacerations to his palm and fingers.

The attack was halted only when Sharath's friends raised an alarm and shouted for help. Before fleeing, the assailants reportedly hurled death threats at the group. Sharath was rushed to a nearby hospital where he received emergency treatment. Doctors report his condition as stable, though the hand injuries are described as serious and may require prolonged care.

Udupi City Police have registered a case and constituted a special team to identify and apprehend all those involved. Officers are examining CCTV footage, recording statements from eyewitnesses, and probing the rapid escalation from a minor verbal disagreement to an attempted murder. The motive and full chain of events remain under active scrutiny.

Deal with issue of illegal Bangladeshis in state with an iron hand: Ashoka

BENGALURU

THE Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Assembly, R. Ashoka, on Monday stated that the Karnataka government should not treat the issue of illegal Bangladeshis in the state as a matter of prestige and deal with it with an iron hand.

He made the statement while speaking on the motion of thanks to the Governor's speech in the Legislative Assembly on Monday. "Illegal immigrants are now daring to carry out business in village fairs, some of them were arrested also. This is the beginning, if this is not dealt with firmly, the days are not far when these illegal immigrants will become terrorists," he claimed.

"The government should form special operation to deport illegal Bangladeshis and a separate team led by the police officer of the rank of DIG should be formed and the team should be given a free hand. In a few places the politicians are making illegal immigrants their vote bank," he stated.

"The issue should not be viewed by the government as a matter of prestige or from a political standpoint. It must be treated as a priority issue concerning future safety and security. According to the



information available to me, more than 15 lakh migrants have settled in the state. Of these, over six lakh migrants are residing in and around Bengaluru city. As a result, they have been successful in taking away employment opportunities from workers who have migrated to Bengaluru from various rural parts of our own state," Ashoka claimed. Some of those who have been settled here for decades are also involved in criminal activities in the state. There are reports that the High Court has denied bail to an accused who was caught after creating fake documents. What is even more serious and unfortunate is that police are registering case after case against those who are identifying and pointing out the locations of camps where illegal Bangladeshi nationals are staying, Ashoka noted.

"There are reports of an incident in which a woman

shouted slogans of "Jai Bangla" during an operation to evict illegal settlers, following which she was arrested by the police. Questions are also being raised about how these migrants have settled in the Malnad district of the state. Despite all this, instead of taking action to evict the illegal settlers, the police have allegedly detained and harassed individuals such as Puneeth Kerehalli, Dr Nagendraappa and others who were showing the locations where Bangladeshi nationals were staying," Ashoka slammed.

"As per the information available to me, police are allegedly collecting monthly bribes from infiltration camps. They are also reportedly taking monthly bribes from landowners who have provided shelter to these illegal settlers. Illegal electricity connections have also been provided to these settlements," Ashoka said.

Union Budget reflects vision of 'Amrit Kaal': Kateel



HANS NEWS SERVICE
MANGALURU

FORMER Karnataka BJP president and former MP Nalin Kumar Kateel on Sunday said the NDA government's Union Budget reflects a development-oriented vision aimed at achieving a "Viksit Bharat" by 2047.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP office here, Kateel praised Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, stating that the Rs 53 lakh crore budget prioritises employment generation, agriculture and economic growth. He said poverty levels had declined due to central schemes and highlighted GST simplification, increased allocation for self-reliant India initiatives, and the announcement of medical hubs to boost medical tourism.

Kateel criticised the Siddaramaiah-led Karnataka government, alleging that despite adequate central grants, state finances had weakened due to excessive spending on guarantee schemes. He also ques-

tioned the Chief Minister's participation in GST Council meetings. He said Karnataka would benefit from central budget allocations across sectors such as agriculture, railways, fisheries, women's self-help groups, logistics hubs and inland water transport. Bengaluru has been included in the Urban Economic Zone programme, under which the city will receive Rs5,000 crore over five years for development.

Highlighting the fisheries sector, Kateel said the Union Budget 2026-27 earmarked a record Rs2,761.80 crore, including Rs2,530 crore for scheme-based initiatives and Rs2,500 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana. Measures include integrated development of 500 reservoirs and Amrit Sarovars to strengthen the fisheries value chain.

He added that Karnataka ranks first in coconut, sandalwood and silk production, and is among the top five states in cashew production.

Uphold unity and identity, shun divisiveness, CM tells Beary community

Focusing on education as a tool for empowerment, Siddaramaiah praised the community for increasingly educating their daughters

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah urged members of the Beary community to safeguard their identity and unity against all odds, emphasising secularism, education, and cultural preservation as their guiding values.

Speaking after inaugurating the Beary Central Committee's Grand Beary Convention - 2026 at the Palace Grounds in Bengaluru, Siddaramaiah lauded the community's commitment to harmony and progress despite geographical and cultural diversities.

Highlighting that Beary language lacks its own

script, the Chief Minister noted the importance of retaining the identity through the Kannada language. "It is commendable that the Beary community has preserved its essence and culture through Kannada. This cultural connectedness reinforces Karnataka's linguistic unity," he said. Describing the Bearys as a secular and peace-loving community, Siddaramaiah pointed out their presence across regions within India and abroad. "Bearys are traders by origin. They have harmoniously worked with people of all communities and preserved their distinct culture while contributing to the economic and social fabric of society.



They do not entertain caste or religious fanaticism. They embody true secular values," he observed. Focusing on

education as a tool for empowerment, Siddaramaiah praised the Beary community for increasingly educating

their daughters. "In earlier times, women were denied education. Now, the growing literacy among girls is a

positive development. Education is key to eliminating gender discrimination," he remarked.

The Chief Minister also stressed that religion should not be interpreted for convenience, saying, "Every religion teaches love, compassion, and humanity. True spirituality lies in living as humane, secular beings rather than exploiting religion for personal or political ends."

Reaffirming the state government's support, Siddaramaiah recalled the Rs. 5 crore grant for the construction of the Beary Bhavan. He further announced that the government would extend additional assistance for the

preservation of the Beary language and arts, including Rs. 3 crore for the Mangaluru Beary Academy and Rs. 10 crore for the Haj Bhavan.

Applauding Legislative Assembly Speaker U T Khader, a prominent member of the Beary community, Siddaramaiah noted that Khader has been performing his duties with integrity and impartiality, earning respect across party lines.

With these assurances, the Chief Minister reaffirmed his government's commitment to inclusive growth, linguistic diversity, and communal harmony, calling the Beary community "a beacon of secular values and cultural coexistence."



IN BRIEF

Issues faced by Gruha Lakshmi beneficiaries will be taken up: Minister

BENGALURU: Women and Child Development Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar has said that steps are being taken to resolve issues faced by beneficiaries of the Gruha Lakshmi scheme, under which nearly 52,000 women are currently not receiving financial assistance due to discrepancies related to GST and Income Tax records.

Replying to a question raised by Legislative Council member P.H. Pujar during the special session of the Legislative Council, the Minister explained that as per records of the GST and Income Tax Departments, these beneficiaries are shown as taxpayers, which has resulted in the withholding of scheme benefits. She stated that out of the 52,000 affected beneficiaries, issues faced by around 20,000 women have already been resolved, and efforts are ongoing to address the remaining cases.

Lakshmi Hebbalkar clarified that there is no fault on the part of the State Government or the Women and Child Development Department. She noted that the same details are reflected in the databases of the GST and Income Tax departments, making it a complex issue to rectify immediately.

The Minister further informed that the state has approximately 1.26 crore beneficiaries under the Gruha Lakshmi scheme.

Towing to resume in Bengaluru

BENGALURU: With the number of vehicles in Bengaluru far exceeding its population, traffic congestion has become a major concern across the city. Unauthorised and indiscriminate parking in several areas has further worsened the situation, severely affecting smooth traffic movement. In response, the BBMP and Bengaluru Traffic Police have decided to reintroduce the towing system across the city.

The illegal parking has exposed the scale of the problem. In Shivajinagar, Rajajinagar West of Chord Road, several streets have virtually turned into permanent parking zones. Vehicles abandoned years ago remain parked without owners checking on them, many now covered in dust and rust.

Similarly, residential areas such as 8th Main Road in Malleshwaram have become parking spots for unidentified vehicles. One vehicle reportedly parked in 2019 has not moved since, while even scrapped vehicles have been left occupying public space. Local residents say that despite repeatedly bringing the issue to the attention of police and civic authorities, no effective action has been taken.

I stand by Siddaramaiah and he stands by me: Shivakumar

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

SAYING that politics was the art of the possible, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Monday said that one man with courage could achieve the impossible. "Politics is the art of the possible.

Everything is possible here. I believe that one man with courage makes a majority. With conviction and determination, one can have 140 people and even more. Let's see what happens in 2028," the DCM said replying to Leader of the Opposition R Ashok during Motion of Thanks to Governor's address in the Assembly.

During the discussion, R Ashok said that everyone was confused as the comments of DCM D K Shivakumar have a hundred meanings to them. Replying to R Ashok, the DCM said, "I have come up as a student leader and I have my own values. I entered politics at an early age as

the party gave me ticket. Highs and lows are common in politics. I have seen and survived many highs and lows in politics including time in jail. I will complete six years as KPCC President next month."

"All 149 MLAs including Siddaramaiah are my strength. Siddaramaiah is with me 100%, there is no question about it. We are working together and we will continue to do so in the future.

We have given our word to the people of Karnataka and we are working towards fulfilling them. I have stood by him in his tough times and will continue to do so.

He will stand by me during my tough times. Let there not be any doubt about it," he said.

When Ashok intervened and asked what his tweet meant, the DCM said, "It is left to you how you understand the tweet."

Asked in what context he spoke about patience, the DCM said, "I am not answerable to everyone.



In both our parties, the party decides more than the strength of the support. Many CMs and Cabi-

nets were changed in your party (BJP), hence I won't bother responding to your question."

Congress govt sensitive, BJP insensitive: Siddaramaiah

BENGALURU

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday rejected the Opposition's allegation that the Congress government in the state lacked sensitivity towards farmers and the common people and he accused BJP governments of insensitivity.

Replying to the opposition's allegations in Assembly, Siddaramaiah made a comparison between the policies of the present government and those of the previous BJP regimes, accusing the latter of being insensitive and anti-farmer.

"Our government is sensitive. The earlier BJP government was insensitive. Yediyurappa reduced the rice given under the Anna Bhagya scheme and even resorted to firing when farmers demanded fertilisers," Siddaramaiah said.

The previous BJP government had also discontinued welfare-oriented schemes such as Anugraha and Krushi Bhagya, the CM alleged. "Those schemes were stopped by the BJP, but our government has followed a humane and sensitive approach," he said.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, 36 people died due to lack of oxygen in Chamarajanagar but your government said only three



died. Was that your sensitivity?" he asked.

Referring to sugarcane farmers, the chief minister said that while the Centre had fixed the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP), the State government held negotiations with protesting farmers and fixed a price of Rs 3,300 per tonne, Siddaramaiah said.

"Even though this decision imposed an additional burden of Rs 300 crore on the State, the government responded to the farmers' demands," he said. On support to maize growers, Siddaramaiah said the Centre had fixed the Minimum Support Price (MSP) at Rs 2,400. "After discussions with farmers and factory owners, the State government made arrangements to purchase 40 lakh metric tonnes of maize and fixed an

additional Rs 250 per quintal, thereby addressing the farmers' problem," he said.

Comparing Union budget sizes, Siddaramaiah told the House, "During the UPA government's ten-year tenure from 2003-04 to 2013-14, the total Union Budget size was Rs 95,21,493 crore. Under the NDA government, from 2014-15 till now, it has risen to Rs 3,80,95,527 crore."

Responding to criticism that his government had burdened people through price hikes, the chief minister said the allegation was misleading. "Even though there have been price revisions in the budget over the last three years, compared to other states, the increase is significantly lower. The allegation of excessive taxation is far from the truth," he said.

GOVT CHANGES TIMING OF URDU SCHOOLS DURING RAMZAN

BENGALURU

THE Karnataka government has decided to change the school working hours for Urdu-medium primary, upper primary and high schools across the state during the month of Ramzan in the academic year 2025-26. State Home Minister G Parameshwara on Monday said calling the government's move as appeasement of minorities was not right.

The decision applies to all government, aided and unaided Urdu-medium schools and follows a review of existing orders and a representation submitted by the Karnataka State Primary School Education Association (R), Bengaluru, a government circular said.

In its January 30 circular, which became public on

Monday, the government noted, "Earlier, through a Standing Order issued on October 31, 2002, Urdu-medium lower primary, higher primary and high schools in the state were permitted to conduct classes only from 8 am to 12.45 pm, and the said Standing Order has been directed to be examined as per rules and necessary action taken."

The government referred to its March 8, 2023, under which an Activity Action Plan for the academic year 2023-24 was implemented for schools following the state syllabus.

As per that circular, an advisory timetable had fixed regular school working hours from 10 am to 4.20 pm for daily academic activities.

However, taking into ac-

count the observance of Ramzan and the long-standing special provisions for Urdu-medium institutions, the government examined the matter afresh following a representation dated January 17, 2026, submitted by the association's president.

Accordingly, the order stated, "In the academic year 2025-26, for all government, aided and unaided Urdu-medium lower primary, higher primary and high schools in the state, the change in school working hours shall be applicable from the date of commencement of the month of Ramzan up to March 20, 2026."

The detailed schedule of the revised school working hours during this period will be followed by all concerned institutions, the

order added. Justifying the move, Parameshwara said these were aimed at bringing Urdu medium children equal to others. "If somebody is not equal to you in all terms, like SC/ST why do you think a reservation was given to SC/STs in the Constitution from the beginning? Why do you think backward classes are considered in the Constitution itself? These are the people neglected for thousands of years. Don't you want them to become equal to others and build an equal society?"

He said the change in timing was a little encouragement given by the government in terms of programmes.

"If that is not tolerated, it means you are against people being treated equally," the minister said.

Minister slams Centre, calls Budget 'weakest' one

BENGALURU

HOME Minister G Parameshwara on Monday termed the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as the "weakest" one among the nine budgets tabled by her so far.

He also accused the Centre of failing to address the expectations of the common people, particularly Karnataka. Speaking to reporters here, Parameshwara said that the people had placed

several hopes on the Budget for the country's development, but all of them had been belied. He alleged that the Union government had completely ignored critical sectors such as agriculture, industry, education and basic infrastructure. "This is the weakest budget among the nine budgets presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman," Parameshwara said. Earlier budgets had given importance to agriculture and the industrial sector and had introduced

several programmes aimed at poverty alleviation, he added.

Recalling landmark welfare initiatives of previous Congress governments, the home minister said former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had introduced the National Employment Guarantee Scheme, a programme that had no parallel anywhere in the world. "All that has been thrown to the winds, and the entire country has been disappointed," he remarked.

Pinarayi Vijayan seeks independent inquiry into businessman's suicide

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

KERALA Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has appealed to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to order a judicial investigation into the death of Confident Group founder C.J. Roy in Bengaluru. In a detailed letter, Vijayan expressed serious concern over the circumstances that led to the businessman's suicide during an income tax search operation.

The state government has already formed a Special Investigation Team headed by Joint Commissioner of Police Vamsi Krishna to look into the matter. Despite this, the Kerala Chief Minister has argued that only an impartial judicial probe can ensure complete transparency and public trust in the investigation.

In his communication to the Union Minister, Vijayan said the people of Kerala are deeply saddened by the tragic death of Roy, who hailed from the state. The incident has left the entire business fraternity in shock and has raised

troubling questions about the functioning of tax enforcement agencies, he noted. The Chief Minister highlighted that it is extremely unusual for a person to end his life while officials are carrying out a search operation. During such raids, the premises are expected to remain under the strict supervision of authorities, and necessary security protocols must be followed. As per established norms, the individual concerned should remain in the presence of officials throughout the search, and independent witnesses must be present.

However, reports suggest that Roy was able to enter another room and shoot himself with a licensed pistol. If these reports are accurate, it amounts to a major procedural failure, Vijayan pointed out. He also referred to allegations made by Roy's relatives that the businessman had been facing severe pressure from investigative agencies. While the Income Tax Department may provide its explanation, Vijayan stressed that an objective and neutral investigation



The Kerala Chief Minister highlighted that it is extremely unusual for a person to end his life while officials are carrying out a search operation. During such raids, the premises are expected to remain under the strict supervision of authorities, and necessary security protocols must be followed. As per established norms, the individual concerned should remain in the presence of officials throughout the search, and independent witnesses must be present

is required to determine the real facts. According to the Chief Minister, the tragedy has raised serious doubts in the minds of the public regarding the methods adopted by enforcement authorities. He said that unless a credible and independent inquiry is conducted, such incidents could

repeat in the future.

Vijayan urged the Union government to consider ordering a judicial probe without any delay. He emphasized that a time-bound investigation conducted by a judicial authority would help uncover the truth and ensure accountability. The Kerala Chief Min-

ister concluded his letter by stating that protecting citizens' rights and ensuring fair administrative practices is the responsibility of the government. He expressed hope that the central government would take immediate steps to order an independent inquiry into the incident.

SIT probe underway in Roy suicide case: HM

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

HOME Minister Dr. G. Parameshwara on Monday said that the government would wait for the findings of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) before drawing any conclusions in the suicide case of noted businessman C.J. Roy.

Responding to allegations made by Roy's close associates that he was under pressure and harassment from the Income Tax Department and the Enforcement Directorate, the Home Minister said unnecessary speculation should be avoided. "To ensure that there are no rumours or doubts, we immediately constituted an SIT. We will wait for its report to understand what exactly happened and who was responsible," he said while speaking to reporters near Vidhana Soudha. Meanwhile, the SIT investigation into Roy's death has gathered pace. Officers have begun recording statements from his family members and close associates. Investigators have also seized a personal diary maintained by Roy, in which he reportedly recorded details about his daily activities, meetings and business decisions. However, SIT officials



clarified that the diary cannot be treated as a suicide note. "There is no specific reference to any reason for his death in the diary, nor is there any final message. It appears to be a routine personal journal," an official said.

Police have also recovered the pistol used by Roy. Preliminary investigation has revealed that it was a Belgium-made mini soundless pistol and that it was likely a licensed weapon. The firearm and bullets have been sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory for further examination.

The SIT has been formed under the leadership of Joint Commissioner of Police (West) C. Vamshikrishna. DCP Lokesh Jagalasar has been appointed as the investigating officer. The case registered at Ashoknagar Police Station has now been officially transferred to the SIT for detailed probe.

Cong govt brought perceptible change in two years: Ponguleti



HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

STATE Revenue, Housing, and Information & Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy on Monday said the Telangana government has demonstrated the change the people desired and upheld public trust in just two years.

Addressing the launch of the modernized I&PR Department website at the Secretariat, he said the state was in crisis when their government took office, particularly in the economic sector. "Under Chief Minister Revanth

Reddy's leadership, we are overcoming challenges step by step and accelerating development and welfare programs," he said.

Highlighting reforms across agriculture, education, healthcare, housing, ration distribution, and employment generation, the Minister said Telangana has become a role model for the country. He stressed that the Information Department plays a key role in communicating these achievements effectively to the public and instructed officials to leverage technology for quick dissemination of govern-

ment schemes. "Two years is a short period, but the government's achievements are remarkable. We have implemented several welfare schemes, promoted economic growth, and are moving forward with the Telangana Rising - 2047 vision. Our approach combines global competitiveness with welfare for the poor," he said.

I&PR Commissioner Ch. Priyanka, Chief Minister's CPRO G. Malsur, Information Department Additional Director D.S. Jagan, Joint Director Ramana, and other officials participated in the program.

Harish questions Sajjanar's derogatory remarks on phone-tapping case

HYDERABAD

FORMER minister and BRS legislature party deputy floor leader Harish Rao has expressed strong dissent regarding the statements made by Hyderabad police commission and SIT chief VC Sajjanar, who referred to the alleged phone-tapping case as "illegal." He contended that this characterisation lacks legal validity pending a judicial resolution.

The BRS MLA also raised a serious question being asked by the people of Telangana. "Why does the SIT chief repeatedly avoid recognising K. Chandrasekhar Rao, as the Leader of the Opposition?" Harish Rao asked.

In a statement on Monday, Harish Rao said it was deeply disturbing that the head of an investigating agency would



publicly use language that presumes the outcome of an ongoing probe. He stressed that in a constitutional democracy, until a competent court records a finding, no allegation can be treated as an offence.

Harish Rao pointed out that the role of the police is strictly limited to investigation. Police officers are not judges or adjudicators, and

they have no authority to declare any act as "illegal" at the stage of enquiry.

Harish Rao explained that whether any phone interception was legal or illegal depends entirely on strict compliance with Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, the Information Technology Act, and the safeguards laid down by the Supreme Court in PUCL vs Union of India. Any

deviation or violation can be determined only through judicial scrutiny, not through official police communications. By using the expression "illegal phone tapping" in an official message, the SIT Chief has displayed a preconceived notion about the outcome of the investigation.

Harish Rao said this conduct is unbecoming of the office held by a senior IPS officer and runs contrary to the standards of neutrality, restraint, and impartiality mandated under the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968.

He warned that such premature conclusions, particularly in a politically sensitive matter involving a former Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, create a reasonable apprehension of bias and political motivation in the investigation.

PHONE-TAPPING CASE

Kavitha slams KTR for finding fault with SIT grilling KCR

Says BRS should reflect upon this internally as to why such a situation emerged

HYDERABAD

SUSPENDED BRS leader K Kavitha on Monday criticised party working president and her brother K T Rama Rao for finding fault with SIT questioning party supremo K Chandrasekhar Rao in connection with the phone-tapping case.

Rama Rao spoke as if it's a crime to summon KCR for examination but nobody is exempted from law, she observed. Speaking to reporters here, she said "KCR was called (for questioning) in phone-tapping yesterday. (BRS) working president K T Rama Rao said many things. He spoke as if summoning for examination is a crime and atrocious. When you are in public life, there will be many issues and you have to face



their consequences," she said.

It would be better if leaders cooperate for investigation to take place transparently and help in bringing it to a closure, said Kavitha, daughter of KCR. Observing that KCR has not been summoned for examination all

these days, she said the BRS should reflect upon this internally as to why such a situation emerged. She said she had appeared before the ED and the CBI in the case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, though she did not do anything wrong.

"All have to cooperate with the law. We have to appear for the examination when we are summoned. None can salvage BRS unless there is a change in their way of thinking," she said.

In an apparent reference to her cousin and BRS MLA

T Harish Rao, she claimed that truth may not come out in the phone-tapping case as there is a match-fixing between Congress government and the former. She suspected that the Congress government would only make some noise in the phone-tapping case in view of the municipal elections (on February 11) and leave it at that and wouldn't finish the probe. Alleging that there has been no progress in the investigation into phone-tapping case during the last two years, Kavitha said the probe should go forward if the Congress government is transparent. Speaking to reporters on Sunday after KCR's examination, Rama Rao claimed that the phone-tapping case is a "frivolous" one and that there is "nothing" in it.

CM presents Ravi Narayana Reddy award to Justice Sudarshan Reddy

HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Monday presented the "Ravi Narayana Reddy National Award" to eminent jurist Justice B. Sudarshan Reddy at a city ceremony, hailing the awardee's commitment to democracy and constitutional values.

Recalling the legacy of freedom fighter Ravi Narayana Reddy, the Chief Minister said he fought feudalism and monarchical rule, donated 500 acres of land to the poor, and inspired generations by stepping away from power at the peak of his influence.

Ravi Narayana Reddy was elected to Parliament with a bigger majority than Jawaharlal Nehru and was chosen by Nehru himself to in-



augurate the first Parliament building, he noted.

Drawing parallels with the present, Revanth Reddy said some leaders today refuse to give up power despite public rejection. He said

leaders like Burgula Ramakrishna Rao, Ravi Narayana Reddy, Jaipal Reddy and Justice Sudarshan Reddy shaped Telangana's political consciousness across the generations.

Praising Justice Sudarshan Reddy, the CM said his democratic commitment led him to contest against 'single-party, single-person rule', making him a deserving recipient of the award.

CEF South-Creativity is the new economy

MSME Minister highlights AP's visionary growth model

- India's strong democratic framework offers an unparalleled platform for talent to flourish
- Kondapalli Srinivas lauds The Hans India for hosting CEF South
- Says that anything created in Visakhapatnam can now reach the world

VASU POTNURU
VISAKHAPATNAM

CREATIVITY today is not just an idea but a powerful economic driver capable of positioning regions on the global map, MSME Minister Kondapalli Srinivas underlined. Delivering his address at the concluding session of the first edition of Creative Economy Forum (CEF) South organised by The Hans India in collaboration with the CEF along with HMTV as the media partner in Visakhapatnam, the minister stressed the immense economic power of creativity and that innovative thinking has the potential to build strong and sustainable economies.

Underlining that India's strong democratic framework offers an



MSME Minister Kondapalli Srinivas along with Tamil Nadu BJP vice-president Khushbu Sundar, Creative Economy Forum South founder Supriya Suri, among others, at the first edition of the CEF South organised in Visakhapatnam

unparalleled platform for talent to flourish, the minister said, "The state government's progressive journey, the minister attributed credit to Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for his visionary leadership spanning over four decades. Between 1995 and 2004, the Chief Minister was among the top leaders in the country to foresee the future of Information Technology, laying a strong foundation through pioneering IT initiatives, modern agricultural practices, micro-education

reforms, and reliable power supply for farming."

Highlighting Andhra Pradesh's future-ready governance, he stated that the government has rolled out 23 progressive policies covering key sectors such as Artificial Intelligence, advanced equipment manufacturing, aeronautics and space technology. Despite challenging circumstances, these reforms have helped the state attract substantial investments, with nearly 25 percent of India's total investments in the past year flowing into

Andhra Pradesh, Kondapalli Srinivas stressed. Talking about Visakhapatnam's growing role as a global hub for innovation and enterprise, the minister said, "Anything created in Visakhapatnam can now reach the world." After spending 17 years in the IT sector, the Minister shared that he returned to his hometown to actively support government-led initiatives and contribute to educational institutions. The Minister further noted that the Chief Minister's commitment to transparent

and efficient administration led to the adoption of real-time governance.

Stressing the importance of ideas in entrepreneurship, the minister said that strong and original ideas naturally attract investment and sponsorship. With multiple funding mechanisms now available, he said, even innovators from remote areas have an opportunity to pitch their ideas. Appreciating The Hans India for organising the prestigious event in Visakhapatnam, the minister described the event as a true representation of South India's dynamic spirit, calling it highly inspiring and impactful.

Wow! Two-time kidney transplant recipient scripts Antarctica history

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

IN a landmark achievement, Sneha Raju has become the world's first two-time kidney transplant recipient to set foot on Antarctica, camp overnight there, and cross the Antarctic Circle.

The historic expedition took place from December 17 to 28 and was conducted in full compliance with established Antarctic expedition standards. This is the first time that an individual has successfully accomplished the typical Antarctic expedition, including interior landing, overnight camping, and Circle crossing, after undergoing two kidney transplant surgeries. This makes the triumph a first-of-its-kind in the world, eligible for global recognition.

The expedition began



from Ushuaia on December 17, 2025, crossing the notoriously challenging Drake Passage before reaching the Antarctic Peninsula.

On December 19, the first landing was made at Barrientos Island, followed by an official continental landing

at Portal Point.

Sneha Raju camped overnight on the Antarctic continent at Portal Point under continuous daylight, setting foot on Dettelle Island (66° 52' S, 66° 48' W) after crossing the Antarctic Circle. This marks one of her remarkable accomplishments under extreme climatic conditions. Sneha Raju was serving as the Deputy Head (Corporate Communications) at NCC Limited in Hyderabad.

Sneha Raju camped overnight on the Antarctic continent at Portal Point under continuous daylight and setting foot on Dettelle Island (66° 52' S, 66° 48' W) post crossing the circle marking one of the remarkable accomplishments under extreme climatic conditions. Sneha Raju was working with NCC Limited as Deputy Head (Corporate Communications) in Hyderabad.



APSRTC to introduce 2,500 electric, CNG buses in five yrs

● Corporation's new VC&MD Krishna Babu says they will procure 1,050 electric buses under PM e-Bus scheme; focus will be on green mobility and fuel savings

● 'Stree Shakti' boosted ridership as women commuters rise to 67%, occupancy nears 90%

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

ANDHRA Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) new vice-chairman and managing director M T Krishna Babu on Monday unveiled a comprehensive plan to introduce electric buses across the state over the next five years. Under the PM e-Bus scheme, he said 1,050 electric buses would be inducted, while plans are in place to introduce another 1,450 electric and CNG buses in the coming days.

Krishna Babu took charge as VC & MD at the RTC headquarters in RTC House here following retirement of Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao whose three months service



APSRTC vice-chairman and managing director M T Krishna Babu taking charge at the RTC headquarters in Vijayawada on Monday. He later chaired a review meeting with senior officials

extension expired on January 31. Krishna Babu later conducted a review meeting with executive directors, heads of departments, and district public transport officers to assess the corporation's financial position, bus maintenance, passenger services, bus station amenities, and employee welfare.

Addressing officials, he said the induction of electric and CNG buses would play a crucial role in reducing fuel consumption in urban and inter-urban transport, controlling pollution, improving road safety, and promoting sustainable mobility. He noted that over the next five years, the shift to electric buses would not only save energy and reduce fuel costs, but also provide modern and comfortable public transport facilities while strengthening APSRTC's financial position.

Directing officials to im-

prove operational efficiency and passenger services, he reviewed the 'Stree Shakti' scheme launched by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. He said 23-25 lakh women passengers are availing free travel daily, with women commuters accounting for 65-67 per cent of total ridership. He said that bus occupancy has reached nearly 90 per cent, significantly contributing to APSRTC's financial stability.

Referring to an IVRS survey, Krishna Babu said around 80 per cent of passengers expressed satisfaction with RTC services, while 20% pointed out issues related to toilets and drinking water facilities at bus stations. He instructed officials to address these shortcomings immediately. The VC & MD also discussed commercial utilisation of vacant RTC lands and the expansion of cargo services,

which currently generate about Rs 210 crore annually, to further strengthen non-fare revenue.

Highlighting employee welfare, he said there are nearly five lakh government employees in the State and their role in service delivery is vital. He clarified that all government welfare schemes and facilities would be extended equally to public transport department (PTD) employees. He assured that the government is giving special priority to job security, improved working conditions, and the phased resolution of pending employee grievances.

Orders have been issued to provide alternative employment or Additional Monetary Benefits (AMB) to 682 PTD employees declared medically unfit after January 1, 2020. He said the measure would provide significant financial relief to the affected families.



Ambati remanded to 14 days' judicial custody amid political row

- YSRCP leader handed over to Rajahmundry central jail after a Guntur court remands him
- Multiple cases filed citing threats, abusive language and obstruction of police; 16 cases registered statewide
- High Court orders police protection for Rambabu's family after alleged attacks by TDP activists on his residence and office

HANS NEWS SERVICE
GUNTUR

YSRCP leader Ambati Rambabu was remanded to 14 days of judicial custody by Guntur special mobile court on Monday. Rambabu was arrested on Saturday in connection with a case registered at the Nallapadu police station over his derogatory remarks against Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

Police booked him under Sections 126(2) and 132 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Another case was registered under Sections 126(2), 196(1), 352, 351(2) and 292, citing threats, abusive language and derogatory remarks.

Police said Rambabu was taken to Rajahmundry Central Jail late on Sunday night and formally handed over to jail authorities in the early hours thereafter. According to police, the cases relate to incidents reported on Saturday at Chillies Centre in Gorantla, where Rambabu allegedly obstructed police personnel on traffic duty and was involved in a confrontation linked to the removal of a TDP banner near the NTR statue.

A separate case was registered based on a complaint by a local TDP leader, accusing Rambabu of "issuing threats, using abusive language and making derogatory remarks" against the Chief Minister during a press conference and later at the site, police said.

Police informed the court that 16 cases had been registered against Rambabu



across the state in connection with his remarks against the Chief Minister. Officials said his statements had triggered political debate and public unrest, leading to law and order concerns.

During the hearing, Rambabu alleged that police officials had harassed him. He also told the court that no case was registered despite alleged attacks by TDP activists on his office and damage to furniture.

Separately, Rambabu's wife filed a petition in the High Court seeking police protection, alleging attacks by TDP activists on their residence and office in Guntur city. She claimed that activists had also set fire to a car belonging to the family.

Following the High Court's directions, police pickets were set up at Rambabu's residence and office in Navabharat Nagar, Guntur, on Monday, and security measures were put in place for his family.

On the other hand, the YSRCP alleged that Rambabu was being "politically targeted" and claimed there was "a serious threat" to his life following the incidents.

BACKLASH AGAINST YSRCP LEADERS

Jagan accuses Naidu govt of anarchy, warns of public rebellion

- YSRCP chief blames the TDP-led govt for fostering violence, citing attacks on the houses of former ministers Ambati Rambabu and Jogi Ramesh
- Links the incidents to the Tirumala laddu ghee controversy, claiming central labs like NDDB and NDRI had exposed the govt's 'false allegations'
- Calling it 'jungle raj' and 'barbaric rule,' the former CM warns that public anger is mounting and such intimidation would ultimately 'burn down' the govt

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP president Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday, accusing the government of encouraging violence and intimidation against opposition leaders.

Reacting to the recent attacks on the houses of former ministers Ambati Rambabu and Jogi Ramesh, Jagan alleged that the incidents reflected "anarchy and barbaric rule" in the state.

In a strongly worded post on social media platform X, Jagan said Naidu was under the illusion that such acts

would instil fear among political opponents. "You set fire to the houses of Ambati Rambabu and Jogi Ramesh and think you have created fear through these heinous acts. This is your delusion. Remember, Chandrababu, you have actually set fire to your own government," he said.

Jagan connected the incidents to the Tirumala laddu ghee controversy and recent reports by central agencies. He said laboratories such as the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and the National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) had exposed what he called the government's "false allegations".

"When Central govern-



ment laboratories proved your accusations wrong and people questioned your mistakes, you could not digest it. That frustration has now turned into violence," Jagan alleged. He claimed that instead of accepting facts, the ruling party was resorting to intimidation.

Describing the attacks as a dangerous sign for democracy, the YSRCP chief said the burning of opposition leaders' houses symbolised "jungle raj" in Andhra Pradesh. "The fire set to their houses reflects anarchy and barbaric governance. The flames lit against democracy will eventually burn down your own government," he warned. Jagan said public anger was steadily rising and

would soon erupt against the ruling dispensation. "In the coming days, the flames of people's anger will reduce your government to ashes," he said. Issuing a direct warning to Chief Minister Naidu, Jagan said history had repeatedly shown that governments which relied on force and intimidation never survived. "In a democracy, the hand that lights the fire of violence will inevitably get burned. Anarchic rule will come to an end. The jungle raj you created will be buried," he wrote. He also asserted that political power gained through fear would not last and that democratic resistance would ultimately prevail.

LADDU GHEE CASE

CBI chargesheet sparks fresh political row

- It finds Harsh Fresh Dairy supplied adulterated ghee to TTD as early as Fe 2019
- It's a proxy for Bhole Baba Dairy and the supply occurred during the TDP-led NDA government's tenure in the state
- Former TTD chairman Bhumana also accuses that dairies got repeated approvals under TDP rule

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI

THE CBI chargesheet in the Tirupati ghee adulteration case has triggered a political storm in the state, with both the ruling and opposition parties trading charges and selectively citing portions of the document to back their claims.

Amid the political sparring, the chargesheet brings out a crucial finding: the supply of adulterated ghee to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) began much earlier than previously believed. According to the investigation, Harsh Fresh Dairy — a proxy firm linked to Bhole Baba Dairy — supplied adulterated ghee to the Tirupati trust as early as February 2019, when the TDP-led NDA government was in power in the state.

This finding directly challenges the narrative that revisions to ghee procurement guidelines in February 2020 led to dubious dairies entering the TTD supply chain. The CBI investigation indicates that adulteration was taking place even when procurement norms were considered



stringent. As per the chargesheet filed by the CBI-led Special Investigation Team (SIT), Harsh Fresh Dairy Products Pvt Ltd was incorporated in 2012 and was run by Pomil Jain and Vipin Jain along with their spouses, who were also directors. Though based in Uttarakhand, the firm allegedly secured contracts by creating forged documents and fake inspection reports in collusion with external dairy experts and lower-level staff in the TTD procurement wing. Using this fabricated paper trail, the company obtained an FSSAI licence and won a ghee supply contract in February 2019 by emerging as the lowest bidder at Rs 291 per kg. The contract involved supplying 82,000 kg of ghee in tins. The investigation states that the company did not procure milk at all and instead supplied ghee adulterated with palm oil, palm kernel oil, and chemical additives.

The chargesheet also names Bareilly-based Premier Agri Foods Pvt Ltd, which allegedly supplied adulterated ghee to the TTD over several years. The firm is reported to have secured contracts since

2013, irrespective of changes in procurement guidelines or the government in power.

Even after Bhole Baba Dairy was disqualified during the YSRCP regime, the investigation found that adulterated ghee continued to be routed to the TTD through proxy firms. In 2023, despite tighter rules aimed at restricting supply to reputed companies, the dairy allegedly channelled ghee through Vyshnavi Dairy, AR Dairy, and Malganga by again manipulating inspections and internal processes.

The chargesheet further notes that four ghee tankers from AR Dairy, rejected by NDDB tests in mid-2024 for adulteration, were allegedly rerouted back to the TTD under a different company name and used in the preparation of Tirupati laddu prasadam. Meanwhile, speaking to the media on Monday, YSRCP leader and former TTD chairman Karunakar Reddy said the SIT report had clearly established that a few technical experts, continuing from the TDP government's tenure, colluded with ghee suppliers and indulged in corruption. He said Bhole Baba Dairy, earlier known as Harsh Fresh Dairy, supplied ghee to the TTD until 2018 and received technical approval for ghee supply during the tenure of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu at a rate of Rs 291 per kg. According to the SIT findings, Bhole Baba Dairy is the prime accused in the adulteration case and had supplied ghee to the TTD even during the TDP regime. Bhumana also alleged that Premier Dairy, another key accused, was repeatedly granted approval to supply ghee during the same period.

Primary focus should be on financial success: Khushbu

RANI DEVALLA
VISAKHAPATNAM

THE primary focus should be on financial success to enable philanthropy and contribute to a sustainable India, alleviating poverty and improving lives, actress and Tamil Nadu BJP Vice President Khushbu Sundar emphasised.

Advocating an inclusive society built on secularism, harmony and unity at the Creative Economy Forum South organised in Visakhapatnam, Khushbu delivered a thought-provoking talk on the theme 'Money, Markets, and IP: Financing the Future of Films and Music'. Emphasising the importance of understanding the economy and personal growth, Khushbu said platforms like Creative Economy Forum (CEF) provide insightful ideas for growth and development of the creative domain.

Hosted by The Hans India and CEF in collaboration with HMTV, the CEF aimed at encouraging industry leaders and policymakers to

focus on the growing role of creative industries in India's economic growth. Moderated by founder of CEF Supriya Suri, the session on 'Money, Markets, and IP: Financing the Future of Films and Music' saw Kerala-based actress Cuckoo Parameswaran, filmmaker Satya Reddy and secretary of SIMCA Secretary Sridhar J Swaminathan sharing their thoughts on the theme.

Elaborating the theme, Khushbu said, "Global trade financing, institutional funding, private investments, smart cooperation models and new-age tools are needed to back talent. Films and music are assets that can be structured, valued and scaled." The maiden edition of Creative Economy Forum South brought leaders and entrepreneurs from diverse fields, shared insights into multiple themes and nudged the communities to explore new ideas by adopting innovative methods and unlearning redundant practices.

Creative Tech Revolution

Bringing experts from anima-



Actress and Tamil Nadu BJP Vice President Khushbu Sundar, founder of CEF Supriya Suri and Kerala-based actress Cuckoo Parameswaran walking the ramp at the CEF South organised in Visakhapatnam by The Hans India and CEF

tion, film production, Artificial Intelligence and digital media, the first session focused on 'Creative Tech Revolution: How AI, Gaming, Animation and Digital Media are Redefining Growth'.

As a session moderator-speaker, Professor and Director of The School of Core Engineering GITAM Dr. Pakki Bharani Chandra Kumar highlighted how technology is slowly but surely changing the way one creates or chooses stories.

During the session, Telugu Film Producers Council president KL Damodara Prasad expressed confidence that AI cannot take away human emotions in storytelling but it would certainly help ease lives of certain departments and save time. "Things get pretty fast now," he opined.

Echoing similar views, co-founder of LBS Studio and co-chair of Andhra Pradesh VFX Animation and Gaming Association Meghana



Creative Economy Forum Supriya Suri and managing director of Hyderabad Media House Private Limited K. Hanumantha Rao felicitating the speakers at the CEF South organised in Visakhapatnam by The Hans India and CEF

Tirumalasetty opined that AI made the pre-visualisation and VFX parts much effortless. "However, it cannot replace human intervention anywhere in near future," she opined.

Director of Vishal Peripherals Vikash Hisariya and founder Chief Executive Officer and VFX Supervisor Phantomfx Bejoy Aruptharaj shared their views on the theme.

Handlooms to High Streets

Centred on 'Handlooms to High Streets: Transforming Heritage

into Scalable Businesses', the following session threw insights into leveraging traditional crafts and design for modern markets. Moderated by product designer of Eco Friends Jameela Akula, executive director of FDDI-Hyderabad Narsimhugari Tej Lohit Reddy, founder of Sankalpa Art Village Chalapathi Rao shared insights into how labour-intensive Indian handloom sector has emerged into a sought-after and sustainable segment, experiencing a significant renaissance.

Culinary Crossing Borders

Speaking about 'culinary crossing borders' in the last session, food expert N Parthasarathy opined, "Food festivals, exhibitions, television shows, and digital platforms draw massive audiences and inspire curiosity, learning, and opportunity." Chairman of Pioneer Institute of Hotel Management chef Saka Sudha Kumar, corporate executive chef of GITAM Deemed to be University Agatamudi Rupeshwar Rao, co-founder of HETC Foods Pvt Ltd

Vavilala Srinivas and Sun International of Tourism and management Principal Rajeshwari laid emphasis on how the food industry is one of the largest employment generators globally and how it has evolved in creation of jobs. They spoke about how cuisines connect cultures and serve as an economic and cultural bridge across countries.

Envisioned as an effective platform to foster collaboration among government, industry and the creative community, placing Andhra Pradesh and Telangana as emerging hubs for creative and cultural enterprises of the country, the four sessions of the forum aided in exploring how creativity, technology and heritage can be transformed into scalable economic opportunities.

Featured by founder of the Creative Economy Forum Supriya Suri, the coveted event in the City of Destiny was held in the presence of managing director of Hyderabad Media House Private Limited K Hanumantha Rao, among others.

Interesting insights emerge on human lifespan

LIFE expectancy in India at the time of independence was approximately 30-32 years. This rather low figure was driven by widespread poverty, inadequate healthcare, malnutrition, and high infant/maternal mortality rates. Since 1947, life expectancy has more than doubled, rising to over 70 years in recent years. This is, by itself, considered to be a major milestone as it reflects an improved public health care in the country. With about 65 per cent of Indians currently under the age of 35 and the median age speculated to be around 29, lifespan is a constant subject of interest. With a senior citizen population of around 11 per cent of the total, many a time the statement ‘age is just a number’ is bandied about in social circles. It thus becomes interesting to know how a human being’s lifespan can be computed; some recent studies are helpful in this regard. Genetics may explain about half of a person’s lifespan, a study has suggested, pointing to a far more significant role of genetics than indications from earlier research. The findings, published in the journal Science, show that once mortality due to external factors such as accidents or infections are accounted for, “heritability of human life span due to intrinsic mortality is above 50 per cent”.

Researchers from Israel’s Weizmann Institute of Science and Karolinska Institutet in Sweden pointed out that understanding the heritability of human life span is central to ageing research, yet measuring genes’ influence on longevity remains a challenge. Earlier studies have estimated that life span may be 15-33 per cent heritable across varied populations, with a typical range of 20-25 per cent, they said. The researchers show that the estimates “are confounded by extrinsic mortality -- deaths caused by extrinsic factors such as accidents or infections”. While genes linked to lifespan have been identified, external environments like disease or living conditions can exert a powerful influence on how long one lives and often obscure or confound potential genetic effects, they said. “Extrinsic mortality systematically masked the genetic contribution to life span in traditional analyses,” the authors wrote. The team added that historical data from twin studies -- often explored for understanding how genes interact with environment and contribute to noticeable traits -- lack sufficient cause of death information to correct for extrinsic mortality.

“We use mathematical modeling and analyses of twin cohorts raised together and apart to correct for this factor, revealing that heritability of human life span due to intrinsic mortality is above 50 per cent,” they said. “Correcting for extrinsic mortality raises the estimate for the heritability of human life span in twin and sibling studies to (nearly) 55 per cent, more than twice previous estimates and in line with heritability of most human traits,” the team added. All the same, for humans around the world, it would be far more important to add life to years than add years to life as another popular saying goes. With quality of life under constant strain owing to prevailing socio-economic conditions, lifespan, whether inherited or lived

LETTERS

Duty exemption on cancer drugs is a life-saving move

IN a major initiative, the Union Budget 2026-27 has given Customs duty exemption on cancer medication drugs and brought down life-saving medications at affordable rates, which is a widely appreciable initiative. One must remember that cancer patients are increasing by over a million every year in India. Another good augury is the government’s proposal to establish over 200 cancer care centres across the nation. One fondly hopes that this will bring a huge relief to cancer-inflicted patients and their families from the middle- and low-income groups.

Saketh Sirasanagandla, Hyderabad

Middle class ignored, yet again

THE 2026-27 Union Budget ignores the middle class by retaining income-tax slabs and rates, while increasing securities transaction tax. The super rich are incentivised by write-offs of their loans and lower class is enjoying the benefit of freebies and free/subsidised housing. However, the middle class has to bear the brunt huge education costs, EMIs for essential consumer goods and rising house rents on the one side and loss of job security and rising unemployment or underemployment owing to technological progress and adverse changes in labour codes, on the other side.

P R Ravinder, Hyderabad

High-speed rail corridors must include Warangal

THE Union Budget 2026–27 has announced three high-speed rail corridors for Hyderabad connecting Pune, Bengaluru and Chennai, projecting them as “growth connectors.” However, the complete omission of Warangal—the second-largest city of Telangana and a major educational, industrial and cultural hub—is deeply disappointing and economically short-sighted. Equally concerning is the proposal to divert nearly half of the rail traffic through the Bibinagar–Nadikudi section. Instead of upgrading Kazipet into a modern transit hub, the current plan risks turning it into a congestion bottleneck. Warangal has been repeatedly assured of a railway manufacturing unit and redevelopment under the Amrit Bharat Stations Scheme. I urge the Ministry of Railways and the Telangana Government to re-examine the corridor alignments and include Warangal–Kazipet in the high-speed rail framework, ensuring that Telangana’s development is not confined to Hyderabad alone.

Vidyasagar Reddy Kethiri, Hanumakonda -506009

Oppn has chosen rhetoric over reason

THE Opposition’s criticism of the Union Budget 2026-27 appears less an exercise in economic scrutiny and more of a reflexive political ritual. Ignoring fiscal constraints, global uncertainty, and inflationary pressures, it has chosen rhetoric over reason. The budget’s calibrated focus on capital expenditure, infrastructure push, fiscal consolidation, and targeted welfare reflects pragmatic governance, not indifference. To dismiss these measures as “anti-people” without credible alternatives only exposes an unwillingness to engage with hard economic realities.

S Lakshmi, Hyderabad

Unbecoming of Cong, DMK and TMC

THE Congress, TMC and DMK have indulged in irresponsible fault-finding over the Union Budget, branding it with a variety of pejorative labels rather than engaging with its substance. Such rhetoric is uncalled for at a time when the economy demands constructive debate and policy seriousness. Instead of offering credible alternatives or acknowledging fiscal constraints, the Opposition has chosen theatrics over analysis. Budgetary scrutiny is vital in a democracy, but reducing a complex financial exercise to slogan-driven criticism only weakens parliamentary discourse and does little to advance national economic interests.

Sakunthala K R, Hyderabad

Should the Centre fund development projects in states?

THE Union Budget sets out how the Centre will spend money on national priorities like national highways, railway corridors, power grids, defence, and large infrastructure projects. States, on the other hand, prepare their own budgets to meet local needs like irrigation canals, hospitals, schools, and village roads. Transfers from the Union Budget to states happen in several ways. First, tax devolution: a constitutionally mandated share of central taxes recommended by the Finance Commission. Second, grants-in-aid: funds given to states to cover revenue deficits, disaster relief, or special needs. Third, centrally sponsored schemes: programmes like MGNREGA or PMAY, where both Centre and states share costs. Fourth, central sector schemes: fully funded by the Centre but implemented in states, such as PM-KISAN. Chief Ministers often criticize the Union Budget because it does not announce state-specific projects or increase their share of funds. They feel their states are ignored when allocations are shown only in aggregate. The Union Budget builds national infrastructure, while state budgets decide local development priorities.

Dr O Prasada Rao, Hyderabad

thehansreader@gmail.com

BENGALURU ONLINE

Govt changes timing of Urdu schools during Ramadan

BENGALURU: The Karnataka government has decided to change the school working hours for Urdu-medium primary, upper primary and high schools across the state during the month of Ramadan in the academic year 2025-26. State Home Minister G Parameshwara on Monday said calling the government’s move as appeasement of minorities was not right. The decision applies to all government, aided and unaided Urdu-medium schools and follows a review of existing orders and a representation submitted by the Karnataka State Primary School Education Association (R), Bengaluru, a government circular said.

Read more at
<https://epaper.thehansindia.com>

Bad governance leading to erosion of lakes and water bodies



PROF MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU

YEARS back, every village and settlement had a lake—protected by a raised embankment, a katta. The lake was not merely a water body but a living institution. Its embankment was guarded by local deities—Katta Maisamma, Gandhi Katta Maisamma, Pochamma—symbols of collective memory and ecological discipline. The deity stood there as a reminder and a silent message—do not breach the bank, do not pollute the water and do not encroach upon the commons. Cut to the present times. At most places, the lake is gone. The embankment is gone. But the deity remains. Massive temples have replaced modest shrines. Expensive cars are driven in for rituals. Lemons are tied, pumpkins broken and garlands draped. There is a ticket for the vehicle and another for Ashtottara. Water is sprinkled to complete the ritual—often drawn not from the vanished lake, but from a purchased plastic “water bubble.”

Faith without water, development without life: Faith continues. Ecology does not. This is not a criticism of belief. Every society has its rituals. Even rockets sent into space are adorned with lemons, ginger,

and tamarind. Belief is not the problem. Selective belief is. We remember the deity but forget her purpose. We worship the guardian but destroy what she guarded.

Lakes turn drains; rivers become sewers:

Today though lakes exist, many of them have turned into drains. The Musi is no longer a river; it is an open sewer. Lake beds have been converted into schools, universities, hospitals, malls, and even government offices. Planning permissions were granted, layouts approved, foundations laid—often by the very State that is constitutionally bound to protect all natural resources.

We are now told not to drink water from our village lakes. We are told the wells are unsafe. That may be true—but it hides a deeper truth: the water did not become unfit by accident; it was made so by neglect, encroachment, and pollution. Real estate did not merely consume land. It consumed water, memory, and accountability.

From wells to water bubbles:

Every backyard once had a well. No one asked where the water came from—it was right there. Today, in apartments and gated colonies, no one asks about water sources. Buyers ask about parking, lifts, and amenities. Water is assumed. If there is a shortage, they say: ‘buy a water bubble.’

Plastic bottles have replaced public water systems. We buy packaged drinking water bottles oblivious of whether they are mineral water or ordinary tap water. We have even forgotten how to ask for pure water, because purity has been outsourced to a label.

This is not a consumer



When lakes disappear, and bottled water becomes the norm, it is not culture that has failed—it is constitutional governance that must be blamed. When citizens are forced to rely on plastic bottles instead of public water infrastructure, the State has abdicated its duty. When faith is commercialised, and ecology is ignored, governance loses moral legitimacy.

choice. It is a governance failure. The Supreme Court, in several judgments, questions this failure of the Union and State governments. The apex court has held that the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution inherently includes the right to clean drinking water, sanitation, and a healthy environment. For instance, last year, the Supreme Court while giving its ruling on M/s Landmark Ventures vs MPPCB & Ors, explained: “The right to life inherently includes the right to enjoy a pollution-free environment... and thereby has also recognised the ‘right to clean drinking water’ as a fundamental right.” (2025 INSC 131)

The Court further emphasised that the State must regulate water supply, safeguard water bodies, and prevent health hazards to protect this right. While focused on sanitation in court premises, the Supreme Court in Rajeeb Kalita vs Union of India (2025) affirmed access to sanitation as part of Article 21, grounding it in earlier jurisprudence which linked environmental and public health rights to life and dignity. (2025 INSC 75)

Supporting constitutional jurisprudence:

Beyond these, the Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasised in decisions such as M C Mehta vs Union of India and related environment cases that:

Protection of the environment, water, and air is integrated with the right to life under Article 21;

The State has constitutional duties under Article 48-A (environmental protection) and the public trust doctrine to preserve natural resources;

Sanitation and access to clean water are essential for human dignity.

Virender Gaur vs State of Haryana (1995):

The Supreme Court reiterated that: “Article 21... the protection and preservation of environment, ecological balance free from pollution of air and water, sanitation... are essential for enjoyment of life with human dignity.” (1995) 2 SCC 577. This decision emphatically placed water and sanitation within the ambit of Article 21 rights.

In a case of A P Pollution Control Board vs M V Nayudu

(1999), although primarily an environmental pollution and public trust doctrine case, the Court explicitly tied environmental protection to Article 21 and held that:

“Protection and preservation of environment, ecological balance free from pollution of air and water... are integral facets of the right to healthy life under Article 21.”

This reinforced that a hygienic environment and clean water are essential to life and dignity.

Hygiene: From discipline to convenience:

There was a time when the first act on returning home was washing one’s hands and feet. Earthen pots cooled water naturally. People drank without touching the vessel—the madi tradition—an act often dismissed as superstition, but deeply rooted in hygiene. Even hot coffee was sipped that way.

Today, we walk into homes with shoes on. We drink by putting bottles to our lips. Half-used plastic bottles are discarded. Caps are left open; water spills onto smooth floors, causing slips and broken bones. Dustbins fill with plastic and wastewater. This, we are told, is “modern civilisation.” What has changed is not merely the habit, but our relationship with water, waste, and responsibility.

Constitutional failure behind the cultural shift:

The Constitution of India does not speak the language of nostalgia. It speaks the language of duty.

Article 21 guarantees the right to life—not mere survival, but life with dignity. The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that this includes the right to clean drinking water, sanitation, and a healthy envi-

ronment. Article 47 directs the State to improve public health. Article 48A mandates environmental protection. Natural resources, including water bodies, are held by the State under the public trust doctrine—they are not commodities to be sold or sacrificed.

When lakes disappear, and bottled water becomes the norm, it is not culture that has failed—it is constitutional governance that has to be blamed.

When citizens are forced to rely on plastic bottles instead of public water infrastructure, the State has abdicated its duty. When lake beds are allotted for construction, the State has breached trust. When faith is commercialised, and ecology is ignored, governance loses moral legitimacy.

Faith cannot replace water: You can build a grand temple for Katta Maisamma. You can perform elaborate rituals. But if the lake she guarded is gone, the worship is hollow. Faith cannot recharge groundwater. Lemons cannot purify drains. Plastic bottles cannot substitute for living water bodies.

A civilisation that remembers its gods but forgets its lakes is not progressing—it is erasing its future.

The Constitution does not ask us to abandon belief. It asks the State to ensure that belief does not become an excuse for ecological destruction. It asks governance to protect the commons—water, land, air—so that culture, faith and life itself can survive.

Until lakes return, wells are revived, and water is treated as a right rather than a product, no amount of ritual will quench our collective thirst.

(The writer is Advisor, School of Law, Mahindra University, Hyderabad)

Frequent conduct of tribal festivals can propel TG and AP economies

NOMULA SRINIVAS RAO

WHEN the deep forests of Tadvai in Mulugu district begin to reverberate with divine chants, the world witnesses a spectacle unlike any other. The Sammakka Saralamma Jatara, reverentially deemed as the ‘Kumbh Mela of the south,’ is not merely a religious congregation; it is a seismic cultural event.

For a brief, intense period of 10 to 12 days, the forest transforms into a sea of humanity. Over one crore pilgrims traverse difficult terrains, thousands of buses ply continuously, and tons of ‘bangaram’ (pure jaggery) are offered to the deities. The sheer scale of logistics, the transactional volume of offerings, and the mobilization of resources prove one thing undeniably: tribal culture has a magnetic pull that can generate massive economic activity.

However, a pertinent question arises. If a biennial or annual event can stimulate such colossal engagement, why restrict this potential to a single, massive calendar date?

There is a pressing need for the state governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to transition from relying solely on “mega-events” to hosting regular, frequent tribal festivals. Such a shift could be the master key to unlocking rural entrepreneurship and revitaliz-

ing local economies in the tribal hinterlands.

Moving beyond the ‘boom and bust’ cycle:

Currently, the economic benefits of tribal festivals are concentrated in short, explosive bursts. During the Sammakka Saralamma Jatara, local traders, transporters, and artisans see a windfall. But once the deities return to the forest and the temporary shelters are dismantled, the economic silence returns.

By institutionalizing a calendar of frequent tribal festivals—perhaps monthly or quarterly circuits across districts like Adilabad, Bhadradi Kothagudem, Visakhapatnam, and East Godavari—the two Telugu states can create a sustainable economic ecosystem. Regular events would mean a steady stream of income for local populations rather than a once-a-year lottery. It transforms the narrative from “pilgrimage management” to “cultural economy management.”

Untapped potential of tribal entrepreneurship:

The primary beneficiary of frequent festivals would be the tribal entrepreneur. Our tribal belts are reservoirs of unique craftsmanship and organic produce that the urban market desperately craves but rarely accesses.

Handlooms and handicrafts:



Tribal festivals serve as the perfect open-air market for authentic goods. From the intricate Dokra metal crafts of Adilabad to the vibrant handlooms of the Koyas and Gonds, these products often languish due to a lack of market visibility. Regular festivals would provide a permanent platform for artisans to display and sell their work directly to consumers, eliminating middlemen. This encourages the younger generation of artisans to continue their hereditary crafts, viewing them as viable businesses rather than dying traditions.

Culinary entrepreneurship:

In an era where “organic” and “farm-to-table” are the buzzwords, tribal cuisine is the gold standard. The bamboo chicken of Araku or the millet-based rotis of Telangana’s tribes are delicacies that urban foodies travel miles to taste. Frequent festivals would allow local families to set

There is a pressing need for the state governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to transition from relying solely on “mega-events” to hosting regular, frequent tribal festivals. Such a shift could be the master key to unlocking rural entrepreneurship and revitalizing local economies in the tribal hinterlands.

up food stalls regularly, turning home kitchens into micro-enterprises. This not only monetizes traditional knowledge but also preserves culinary heritage.

Tourism as a force multiplier:

The jatara proves that people are willing to travel for an experience. However, the modern tourist—especially the younger demographic—seeks ‘experien-

tial travel.” They want to witness the rhythmic beats of the Gussadi dance, understand the rituals of the Dhimsa, and immerse themselves in nature.

By organizing frequent cultural festivals, the Tourism Departments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh can curate ‘tribal circuits’. These festivals can act as anchors for eco-tourism. When thousands of tourists visit a district for a weekend festival, the ripple effect is felt across the hospitality sector. Homestays, local guides, transport operators, and small shops all thrive. It encourages infrastructure development in remote areas, not just for the sake of construction, but to service a growing service economy.

Empowering women and youth:

The most significant impact of a localised festival economy is on women and youth. In the tribal context, women are often the custodians of agricultural produce and handicrafts. The sale of forest produce—honey, medicinal herbs, tamarind, and the famous ‘bangaram’ (jaggery)—is often managed by women.

Regular market-festivals give Self-Help Groups (SHGs) a consistent revenue channel. Instead of selling raw produce to middlemen at throwaway prices, they can package and brand their products for festival

visitors, capturing higher value. Similarly, tribal youth can be trained as cultural ambassadors, tour guides, and event managers, fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship that reduces migration to overcrowded cities.

The path ahead:

The government of Telangana state has already shown commendable dedication in organising the massive Sammakka Saralamma Jatara. The machinery is in place; the intent is visible. The next step is decentralisation and frequency.

We need not wait for the stars to align for a biennial Jatara to celebrate tribal culture. By creating a robust calendar of smaller, frequent festivals, we can turn every district into a cultural hub. This approach respects the sanctity of the massive annual pilgrimages while acknowledging that culture must be a living, breathing, and earning part of daily life.

Transitioning to frequent tribal festivals is not just about celebration; it is a strategic economic policy. It is about taking the spirit of the ‘bangaram’ offering—which symbolises wealth and purity—and ensuring that wealth flows back into the hands of the people, for whom the forest is their home.

(The writer is a former OSD to former Union Civil Aviation Minister)

Coordinated efforts urged for Maha Shivaratri at Srisailam

MINISTER ANAM RAMANARAYANA REDDY INSTRUCTS OFFICIALS TO RECTIFY LAST YEAR'S SHORTCOMINGS AND PROACTIVELY ADDRESSING POTENTIAL ISSUES

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SRISAILAM
(NANDYAL DISTRICT)

THE State government has issued directives to ensure smooth, devotional, and hassle-free conduct of Maha Shivaratri Brahmotsavams at Srisailam temple, prioritising devotees' comfort and sentiments.

Endowments Minister Anam Ramnarayana Reddy chaired a comprehensive review meeting at Sadashivayya Bhavan in Srisailam on Monday, attended by Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha, Roads & Buildings Minister BC Janardhan Reddy, Endowments Commissioner Ramachandra Mohan, Ex-officio Principal Secretary Hari Jawahar Lal, district Collector G Raja Kumari, SP Suneel Sheoran, Srisaileam Devasthanam Executive Officer M Srinivasa



Ministers Anam Ramnarayan Reddy, BC Janardhan Reddy and V Anitha along with Collector G Raja Kumari, SP Suneel Sheoran and EO M Srinivasa Rao addressing a meeting at Srisailam on Monday

Rao, Trust Board Chairman Pothugunta Ramesh Naidu, and other senior officials.

Minister Anam instructed the officials to focus on efficient temple management, darshan arrangements, accommodation, security, sanitation, and essential services. He stressed rectifying last year's shortcomings, proactively addressing potential issues, and strictly adhering to

SOPs. The government aims to prioritise common devotees in all religious events and build a 'Spiritual Andhra Pradesh' with special emphasis on temples. VIP and VVIP darshans will be strictly time-slotted. Despite forest conservation constraints limiting expansion, facilities will be maximised, including support for pilgrims on 48-km forest route. Key an-

nouncements include free laddu prasadam distribution (as last year), free vehicle passage at toll gates on February 14 and 15, night time decorative illumination of the temple, and immediate road widening near Sakshi Ganapathi using Forest Department land.

Home Minister V Anitha directed comprehensive police security, traffic regu-

lation, emergency management, and strict law-and-order maintenance to ensure zero incidents amid the expected massive crowd.

R&B Minister BC Janardhan Reddy ordered completion of repairs, widening, pothole filling, and safety measures on key roads—especially Atmakur to Dornala—by February 8 to prevent traffic disruptions.

Officials noted a projected 30% increase in devotee turnout this year, requiring scaled-up arrangements. District Collector G Raja Kumari confirmed coordinated duties from February 8 to March 18. Executive Officer M Srinivasa Rao presented detailed plans via Power Point. All departments reiterated their commitment to ensuring every devotee experience spiritual fulfillment and satisfaction after darshan.

CM Naidu's efforts brought Budget gains to AP: Minister

Savitha welcomes Centre's decision to establish girls' hostels in every district to boost girls' education

HANS NEWS SERVICE
PENUKONDA



BC Minister S Savitha addressing a press conference in Penukonda on Monday

BC, EWS Welfare, Handlooms and Textiles Minister S Savitha credited Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu entirely for the Central government's priority and substantial allocations to Andhra Pradesh in the Union Budget.

Speaking at a press conference at her camp office in Penukonda on Monday, she highlighted the Chief Minister's frequent Delhi visits and meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, and other Union Ministers as key to securing favourable outcomes for the State.

Describing the Budget as progressive and inclusive, Savitha said it benefits all sections of society. The income tax exemption raised to Rs 12 lakh and standard deduction increased to Rs 75,000 will provide significant relief to salaried

employees, with middle-income earners saving Rs 60,000 to Rs 1 lakh annually. She welcomed the Centre's decision to establish girls' hostels in every district to boost girls' education and the proposal for 'She Marts' at mandal level, which will generate employment for rural women and promote local products.

The Minister outlined major allocations: Rs 500 crore for rural roads, Rs 350 crore for roads and bridges, Rs 800 crore for drink-

ing water and sewerage, Rs 3,320 crore for the Polavaram project, and Rs 1,128.91 crore for Amaravati. She also noted a strong push for handloom and textile sector with mega textile parks proposed at Dharmavaram, Pithapuram, and Mangalagiri. Additionally, bullet train corridors will pass through Andhra Pradesh, with stations planned at Duddabanda and Hindupur in Rayalaseema, promising major economic growth for the region.

Child marriage eradication awareness rath yatra held

HANS NEWS SERVICE
PUTTAPARTHI

AS part of the efforts to eliminate child marriages in Sri Sathya Sai district, District Superintendent of Police S Satish Kumar flagged off child marriage eradication rath yatra at district police office premises on Monday.

The awareness campaign is being organised by RDS organisation and the Shakti Team, with support from Just Rights for Children.

The SP said such initiatives play a crucial role in creating awareness about the harmful impact of child marriages and can significantly contribute to reducing their occurrence in society. He emphasised the need for collective responsibility from all sections of



SP S Satish Kumar flagging off child marriage eradication awareness rath yatra in Puttaparthi on Monday

society to protect children's rights and ensure their education, health, and safety. "Sustained awareness and community participation are key to completely eradicating child marriage," he said.

RDS Director Bhanuja stated the Rath Yatra would

be conducted across Puttaparthi and Kadiri divisions with the objective of sensitising people and preventing child marriages at the grassroots level.

Members of Shakti Team and RDS staff and others participated in the programme.

Rare kidney transplant successful at Kurnool Medcover

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KURNOOL

MEDICOVER Hospitals, Kurnool, successfully performed its fifth kidney transplant on January 25 - a rare and complex procedure.

The patient, S Ravindra (48) from Alluru village, Nandikotkur mandal, Kurnool district, was discharged in good health on February 2.

Suffering from kidney failure for four years due to congenital urinary tract issues, Ravindra had been on hemodialysis. His wife K Padmavathi (40) donated her kidney.

The treatment involved three major surgeries: BNI (laser treatment), retroperitoneal laparoscopic nephrectomy to remove the damaged kidney, and the



transplant—all covered under the NTR Vaidya Sree - Aarogyasri scheme.

Dr Abdul Samad, Senior Consultant Urologist & Microsurgical Andrologist, highlighted the challenges posed by congenital condition and credited the team's expertise and advanced technology for the success.

Dr Siddharth Herur, Consultant Nephrologist, noted the transplant's

significant improvement to the patient's quality of life, made possible by timely intervention and government support.

Hospital Head Maheshwar Reddy reaffirmed Medcover's commitment to delivering high-quality healthcare to Rayalaseema residents using state-of-the-art facilities and skilled professionals. Both recipient and donor are recovering well.

Cong releases posters of employment guarantee protection yatra



Congress leaders releasing posters of Employment Guarantee Protection Yatra in Kurnool on Monday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KURNOOL

DISTRICT Congress Committee (DCC) president B Kranti Naidu released posters of Employment Guarantee Protection Yatra at the party office here on Monday. The yatra, launched by Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president YS Sharmila Reddy from Bandlapalli village in Anantapur district, demands the continuation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in its original name and spirit.

Kranti Naidu announced that Sharmila Reddy will visit Kurnool district on February 17, covering Pattikonda and

Kodumuru Assembly constituencies. He urged Congress activists, farmers, rural labourers, and the public to participate in large numbers to make the programme successful. The yatra seeks to protect employment opportunities for rural poor and underscore the scheme's vital role in ensuring livelihood security. Kranti Naidu, accompanied by senior leaders, departed for Bandlapalli to express solidarity with the ongoing yatra. Former MLC M Sudhakar Babu, city Congress president Sheikh Jilani Basha, Kodumuru coordinator Anantaratnam Madiga, INTUC leaders, and heads of SC, OBC, Minority, and Kisan Congress wings and others were present.

Prasanthi Nagar land removed from prohibited list



District officials handing over orders removing Prasanthi Nagar residential land from the Section 22A prohibited list

HANS NEWS SERVICE
PUTTAPARTHI

RESIDENTS of Prasanthi Nagar colony in Parigi village, Penukonda division, expressed immense relief after the district administration removed their residential land from the prohibited list under Section 22A, ending a seven-year ordeal.

The 1.65-acre land in survey no. 294 was originally Dyggat patta. With Gram Panchayat approval, a residential layout of 40 plots was developed in 1996, leading to 24 houses and the area being named Prasanthi Nagar, where families have lived for decades.

In 2000, the landowner voluntarily donated 0.11 cents for an Urdu school, which now operates as a government institution.

However, in 2018, the entire extent was mistakenly included in Section 22A prohibited properties list, barring registrations and preventing residents from selling or transferring their plots and homes.

After persistent petitions, the 0.11 cents school land was sub-divided. On February 2 this year, during a Revenue Clinic at the district Collector's office, the Collector issued orders removing the remaining 1.54 acres (Survey No. 294-1B2) from the prohibited list.

Residents, who received the official orders, thanked the district administration and State government for resolving their long-pending grievance and restoring normalcy to property transactions.

YSRCP condemns attacks on leaders, demands President's rule

HANS NEWS SERVICE
ANANTAPUR

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) on Monday strongly condemned recent attacks on senior leaders, including former Ministers Ambati Rambabu and Jogi Ramesh, alleging a complete breakdown of law and order under the TDP-led coalition government in the State. Addressing a protest in Anantapur, YSRCP State secretary and BC Cell State working president Ramesh Goud described the assaults on opposition figures as an attack on democracy and the Constitution. He urged the President and Vice-President to intervene, dismiss the TDP coalition government, and impose President's Rule in the State. "If former Ministers and opposition leaders are unsafe, imagine the condition of ordinary citizens," he pointed out.

Ramesh Goud criticised Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for betraying backward classes despite TDP's BC-friendly claims and warned of intensified agitation if attacks con-



YSRCP leaders and activists staging a protest in Anantapur on Monday

tinue. Earlier, party leaders paid floral tributes at Jyotiba Phule statue near Zilla Parishad office. Speakers, including ZP Chairperson Boya Girijamma and SEC member Meesala Rangananna, accused the government of authoritarian politics and diverting attention from governance.

Mayor Wasim, Deputy Mayor Vasanthi Sahitya, and BC Cell district leaders joined in condemning routine political violence and called for the government to prioritise administration over targeting opposition.

CM to visit Yemmiganur on Feb 7

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KURNOOL

DISTRICT Collector Dr A Siri said elaborate arrangements are being made for the visit of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to Kalugotla village in Yemmiganur mandal on February 7.

The CM will participate in the distribution of pattadar passbooks and also in other official engagements.

Ahead of the visit, the Collector, along with Superintendent of Police Vikranth Patil, Joint Collector Noorul Khameer, Yemmiganur MLA Dr Jaya Nageswara Reddy, Adoni Sub-Collector Ajay Kumar, and officials, inspected the proposed helipad site, public meeting venue, and locations suitable for farmer interaction programmes. The inspection focused on ensuring smooth conduct of all events without any inconvenience to the public.



District Collector Dr Siri along with SP Vikrant Patil inspecting CM N Chandrababu Naidu's tour arrangements in Kalugotla village on Monday

Speaking to the media, Dr Siri said, in addition to pattadar passbooks distribution, the CM will attend a public meeting, interact with farmers, and inspect agricultural fields. She assured that all necessary administrative, security, and logistical arrangements are being put in place.

SPL POWER ADALAT TOMORROW IN PUTTAPARTHI

HANS NEWS SERVICE
PUTTAPARTHI

THE Electricity Department will organise a special Power Adalat in Puttaparthi on Wednesday (February 4), to resolve long-pending electricity-related grievances of consumers.

APSPDCL Puttaparthi Executive Engineer O Sivaramulu, in an official release on Monday, stated that the programme will be held from 3.30 pm to 5.30 pm under the supervision of Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum (CGRF). The CGRF Chairperson, along with other forum members, will be present to hear complaints and provide solutions. Consumers facing unresolved or long-standing issues related to power supply, billing, service connections, or other electricity matters have been advised to utilise this opportunity to seek redressal through the Adalat. The Electricity department has requested all electricity consumers in and around Puttaparthi to attend the programme with relevant documents to facilitate prompt disposal of their complaints.

The department also appealed to the media to give wide publicity to the event through newspapers and other platforms so that maximum number of consumers are informed and can benefit from the initiative.

Police invoke NDPS Act against ganja smuggler

NELLORE: In a major move, the district police on Monday invoked Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic (NDPS) Act against a notorious ganja smuggler and habitual offender. He was shifted to Kadapa Central Prison. The accused was identified as Beekara Prakash @ Surya Prakash (51) of Krishna Nagar, Rajahmundry town, East Godavari district. It may be recalled that in August 2025, police headed by Balaji Nagar CI K Sambasiva Rao arrested the accused at SVGS College grounds on NH 16, while he was transporting ganja in a car brought from Manyam area of Alluri Sitarama Raju district. CI Sambasiva Rao fired two rounds on the accused when he tried to kill the cops by hitting them with



his car. Police registered cases against the accused under various sections in Santhapet and Balaji Nagar police stations.

In a statement released on Monday, SP Ajitha Vejjenda has warned that stringent action will be taken by invoking NDPS Act against those, involved in ganja smuggling. He appealed the public to alert police immediately by dialling 100 if they notice anti-social activities.

Prudhvi appointed as BJYM State V-P

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TRUPATI

BHARATIYA Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) has appointed young leader Prudhvi as its State vice-president, recognising his talent

and dedication to social service. In recent years, Prudhvi has been actively involved in politics, successfully carrying out every assigned programme and serving as an inspiration to the youth.





Shivaranjani Harish



Sujata & Preetisha

ANNA RAO GANGAVALLI

The fourth edition of ‘Ramayana Kalpavrksham,’ presented by Shankarananda Kalakshetra and Natyarambha, featured a galaxy of performances, talks, and interactive sessions. CCRT, Madhapur, was the venue for the three-day event (January 30th–February 1st, 2026). Always attended by an overflowing audience, the yearly event, conceived and curated by

Padma Shri Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayant, has become an eagerly awaited star attraction in the cultural landscape of Hyderabad. After the inauguration on the first day by Dr. Sandhya Purecha, Chairperson of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the evening featured a poignant Odissi duet titled ‘Seeta Haran,’ presented by Dr. Sujata Mohapatra and her daughter Preetisha. Sujata wore a green costume with blue borders, while Preetisha

Ramayana Kalpavrksham returns with a grand celebration of dance, music and devotion

The fourth edition of ‘Ramayana Kalpavrksham,’ presented by Shankarananda Kalakshetra and Natyarambha, celebrated India’s epic heritage through a rich confluence of dance, music, and dialogue. Held at CCRT, Madhapur, the three-day festival offered audiences an immersive journey into the Ramayana through performances, talks, and interactive sessions. Conceived and curated by Padma Shri Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayant, the annual event continues to be a highlight of Hyderabad’s cultural calendar



Ananda Shankar & Raghav Krishna



Rekha Achyutani

wore the same colours in reverse. Debiprasad Mishra’s lighting effects created a tracery of lights moving in incandescent columns across the stage like glowing pillars, enveloping the artistes. The duo’s synergy was in full play as they alternated in the role of Ravana, which was the highlighted sequence of the piece. As he abducts Sita, who is persuaded to step over the threshold of safety,

the valiantly loyal Jatayu tries to rescue her. After a striking duel, the great eagle is defeated. Bleeding and torn, Jatayu expires in Rama’s lap. Exquisite abhinaya was displayed throughout. Next came Sandeep Narayan’s Carnatic vocal concert, balancing classical rigour with contemporary sensibility and receiving exceptional audience recognition. Producing rapture, the



Carnatic Fusion

swara alaap of Kambhoji was melodiously interpreted. Immersive Rama rasa was fully appreciated in the various other compositions in different ragas and languages, some requested by aficionados of the exceedingly popular singer. Day two began at dawn with a deeply absorbing pravachanam on Sita Rama Kalyanam by the famous Chaganti Koteswara Rao. The divine marriage was described as the sacred union of Dharma and Shakti. He explained that Sita was central to the Avatar’s unfolding to achieve the destruction of Ravana. A thought-provoking dialogue between Dr. Ananda Shankar and Raghava Krishna of BRHAT

explored the role of the arts in reclaiming India’s civilisation in a contemporary context. Dharma, truth, and art are inseparable, and knowledge elevates consciousness. Dr. Mohan Raghavan examined the Ramayana experience with regard to technology, while critiquing colonial interpretations of Indic texts. Charusmitha Rao and Shivaranjani Harish presented ‘Navarasa through the Ramayana,’ interspersing Bharatanatyam with design and storytelling. The evening was exciting with the mesmerising puppet-style dance drama ‘The Ramayana’ by Rangasri Little Ballet Theatre, Bhopal, where human puppets glided as though

controlled by unseen strings. Entertainingly vibrant folk music by Bhungar Khan and the Manganiyar group Dharohar from Barmer, Rajasthan, with fast pacing and beats, energised the spectators at the day’s conclusion. The final day of the festival opened with Chaganti Koteswara Rao’s discourse on Hanumat Darshanam. Hanuman’s strength, devotion, and importance were extolled using the metaphor of the connecting knot of flowers in a garland, symbolising him as the link between Rama and Sita during and after their separation. Historian T. S. Krishnan delivered a talk drawing on his extensive research on South Indian temples, inscriptions,

and literature, reflecting on the importance of awareness in shaping narratives. Rekha Achyutani spoke about Dharmic parenting, noting that while modern education may lead to success, true happiness lies in Indian traditional approaches that nurture grounded and timeless Bharatiya values. An engaging and interactive quiz session followed, reinforcing key Ramayana themes. As evening approached, Shrinivasa Varakhedi, Vice-Chancellor of the Central Sanskrit University, delivered a scholarly address on the epic’s ethical framework and its continued relevance today. The festival concluded exuberantly on a high note with a classical fusion concert led by music producer Mahesh Raghavan. Tradition was reimagined in Carnatic music tailored to contemporary tastes while staying rooted in heritage. The medley of blended vocals and instruments was a spectacular finale, heartily enjoyed by the huge audience, who expressed their admiration with tremendous applause. Also set up were a host of Kala Grama artisanal stalls with local merchandise, including a Ramayana Dolls display, which was eye-catching and thronged with customers.

Kalpana Iyer, the original ‘Ramba Ho’ girl, reveals she danced barefoot despite bleeding feet for the song

In an exclusive conversation, Bollywood veteran star Kalpana Iyer, the woman of the moment, opened up about the grit and physical toll behind her iconic dance performances. The actress’ is currently stirring headlines, as a recent video of her dancing to her legendary number “Ramba Ho” at the age of 70 took the internet by storm. Talking to IANS, the actress recalled her early years in the industry as a dancer. Kalpana spoke candidly about dancing through pain, bruises, and bleeding feet, long before comfort and vanity became industry norms. “I started dancing at 17, and I have never complained. I have shared green rooms, danced barefoot with scraped and bloodied soles, during Ramba Ho and have even done Raja Hindustani



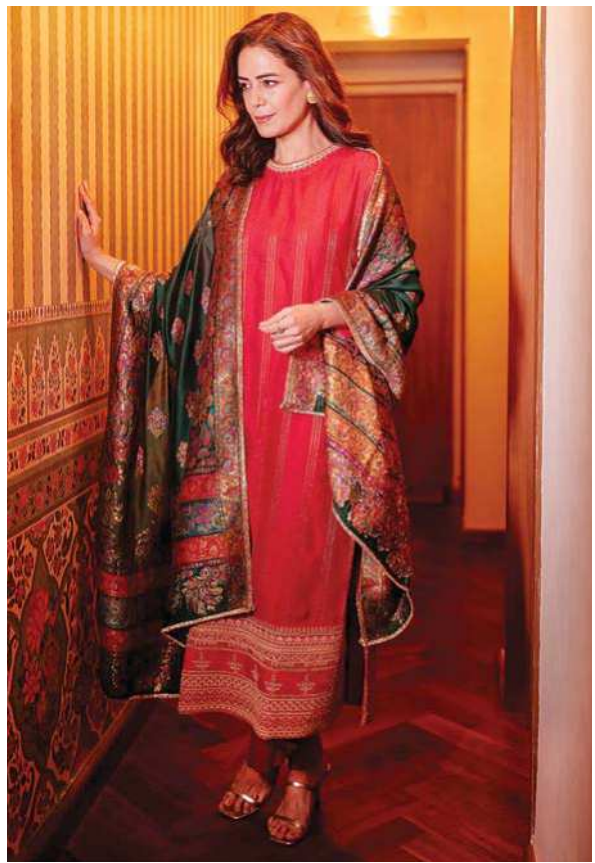
barefoot with injury. I didn’t have time to complain; I just worked and kept moving focusing on the opportunities that came my way and was so grateful for it. Dance has brought me so much joy in my life,” she said, reflecting on an era where perseverance mattered more than privileges. For Kalpana, in her own words, dance was never just a performance but a calling that demanded complete surrender, regardless of physical hardship.

Speaking about today’s generation of performers, Kalpana was generous in her praise, stressing that comparisons between any eras of Bollywood is unfair. “These days, girls have to put in a lot more effort. We did too, I don’t deny that, but today you can see the detailing and the investment producers make. The more effort you put in, the more is invested in you. They look beautiful, their clothes are gorgeous, and some of them dance exquisitely. Times have changed and I respect that completely. I have immense love for all these girls and I truly wish them well,” she shared. Taking a trip down memory lane, Kalpana explained that it were her stark features and individuality that defined her success. She credited her slim frame, long legs, and expressive movement for

setting her apart in her time, while also acknowledging the role of camera work. From songs like ‘Jab Chhaaye Mera Jaadu’ and ‘Hari Om Hari’ to many hit movies, she described her journey as fulfilling and unique. Now open to a second innings, Kalpana said she is willing to explore any role, as long as it respects her age and comfort, adding that she is even open to playing a naani or daadi. The actress further also clarified a long-held myth about Ramba Ho shoot. Kalpana revealed that the song was not shot in Goa, as widely believed. “We had shot at Nataraj Studio in Mumbai. Prema and I danced in a dance studio, right in front of Ramanand Sagar’s office,” she said, offering a behind-the-scenes detail.

Mona Singh on mistakes: They are lessons that help you grow as a human being

Actress Mona Singh strongly believes that mistakes are an essential part of life and should be treated as lessons rather than burdens to carry forward. Sharing her thoughts, the actress said that when she makes a mistake, she prefers to reflect on it, learn from it, and move on, rather than feeling guilty or weighed down by it. According to her, that is the only way to truly move ahead in life. Asked whether she ponders over the mistakes she makes or has learnt to accept them and move on, Mona, who is all set to be seen in the second season of the Netflix series ‘Kohrra,’ said: “That’s the only way to go forward in life, I think — and not treat it as a mistake or feel guilty about it and carry that baggage. It’s a lesson.” Mona added that life constantly teaches people valuable lessons, often through the people who enter their lives. She said: “And I think that’s what life does. It keeps teaching us those lessons. People come into our lives for a certain reason.” She shared that some relationships last, while others fade with time, but each one serves a purpose and leaves behind a learning experience. “Some stay, some go. But they always teach you a lesson. And I think that’s very, very human. And that’s the way forward, if you don’t want to stay bitter and want to grow and evolve as a human being,” said the actress. The new chapter of ‘Kohrra’ also stars Barun Sobti and Rannvijay Singha. The



second season will stream on Netflix starting February 11. In the new season, Barun reprises his role as the sharp-witted investigator Amarpal Garundi, who teams up with a new character played by Mona to solve a complex, dark murder mystery of a woman. ‘Kohrra’ season 2 is scheduled to premiere on February 11. Created and written by Gunjit Chopra, Diggi Sisodia, and Sudip Sharma, Season 2 brings a fresh case and a new pairing, rooted once again in Punjab’s bleak, wintry terrain where silence often speaks louder than a confession.

A Film Squad Production in association with Act Three, produced by Saurabh Malhotra, Sudip Sharma, Manuj Mittra, and Tina Tharwani, Season 2 also marks an important creative evolution for the series. Talking about Mona, she is widely recognised for playing the eponymous heroine in the soap opera ‘Jassi Jaissi Koi Nahin.’ The actress is also known for her work in ‘Kya Huaa Tera Vaada,’ ‘Pyaar Ko Ho Jaane Do,’ and ‘Kavach... Kaali Shaktiyon Se.’ She made her film debut with a supporting role in Rajkumar Hirani’s comedy-drama ‘3 Idiots’ in 2009.

CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

1 Precious metal (4)

4 Capital of the Bahamas (6)

8 Ten decibels ? (3)

10 A day in Rome (4)

13 Diminish (8)

14 Change for Norma Jean (7)

15 Worships (6)

17 Receding (9)

21 Bear lair (3)

22 Vane directions ? (3)

23 The unit of electrical

26 Set right (9)

27 Young ones of cows (6)

28 Calls for (7)

32 The rules of state etiquette (8)

34 Take it easy (4)

35 Resv. Bank of India (3)

36 Mental health (6)

37 Sumerian sun god (4)

DOWN

1 Stern (4)

2 Sly look (4)

3 Actress Lamarr (4)

5 Scrape off (6)

6 Jamaican popular music (3)

7 Jittery (6)

9 Sir Hutton of cricket (3)

11 Stunned or confounded ? (5)

12 Temptress (5)

15 Assert or affirm (4)

16 Cheering words (4)

18 Prison room (4)

19 Discerns or observes (4)

20 Our country, abbr. (3)

23 Schindler of “Schindler’s List” (5)

24 Repairs (5)

25 Ranges or extents (6)

26 Cutting reply (6)

28 Beetle (3)

29 Italian island (4)

30 Subsequent (4)

31 Doe’s mate (4)

33 Have or possess (3)

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Solution to February 2

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Solution to February 2

Emerging roles in risk, finance, and technology: What students must learn today?

WILLIAM MAY

If you're a student or just starting your career, you may be wondering where the strongest long-term opportunities will be in the coming years. One area that's becoming increasingly relevant is risk management. Hiring trends show strong momentum, with risk-specific roles among the fastest-growing in India and ranked among the top 25 job roles in LinkedIn's 2026 job trends report. What's more, demand for risk professionals is rising not only in traditional financial services, but also across emerging and fast-evolving sectors such as artificial intelligence (AI), sustainability, technology, and consulting. This broad-based demand highlights how risk management has moved from being a niche function to a core business capability.

This growth reflects the way business itself is changing. Market volatility, evolving regulations, climate-related disruptions, and the rapid adoption of artificial intelligence are reshaping how organizations make decisions—both in daily operations and long-term strategic planning. As a result, risk considerations now influence lending decisions, investment strategies, technology adoption, and enterprise-wide planning. Risk management has also become central to how



companies protect their assets, ensure regulatory compliance, and identify opportunities for sustainable growth. Together, these shifts are opening new and diverse career pathways in India and globally, offering students and early professionals meaningful opportunities for long-term professional success.

Opportunities across finance, AI, and sustainability

Financial innovation, digital lending platforms, and advanced technologies continue to increase exposure to financial, operational, technological, and sustainability-related risks. This environment is creating steady demand for pro-

fessionals who can assess risk, interpret data, and support decision-making across different functions within an organization. For instance, credit risk teams play a critical role in evaluating the financial strength of borrowers and counterparties in faster, more data-driven lending environments. Their work helps institutions manage defaults while expanding access to credit.

Market risk professionals, meanwhile, focus on how changes in interest rates, equity markets, foreign exchange movements, and commodity prices impact trading activities and investment portfolios. Their analysis supports institutions in managing vol-

atility and protecting capital. Liquidity, operational, and model risk teams ensure that organizations can meet financial obligations during periods of stress and that internal models, systems, and processes function as intended. Together, these roles form the backbone of modern financial risk management.

The wider use of AI and digital infrastructure has introduced additional challenges that go beyond traditional financial risk. Issues such as model bias, data quality, system transparency, cybersecurity threats, and data privacy concerns are becoming increasingly important. These risks have driven demand for profession-



als who can oversee responsible technology use, strengthen governance frameworks, and ensure compliance with emerging regulations. At the same time, climate change and sustainability pressures are influencing asset values, credit decisions, insurance models, and long-term corporate strategy. As a result, organizations are seeking risk professionals who can connect climate and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) data with financial analysis to support resilience and long-term value creation.

Emerging risk specializations and skills in demand

Employers are increas-

ingly focusing on specialized risk roles across finance, AI and data analytics, cybersecurity risk management, ESG and sustainability risk, and regulatory compliance. These areas reflect the growing complexity of global financial systems, digital platforms, and regulatory expectations. Roles such as credit risk analyst, operational risk manager, cybersecurity risk specialist, ESG risk analyst, and compliance specialist continue to see strong and sustained demand across industries.

At the same time, organizations are looking for professionals who combine technical expertise with practical, real-world skills. This includes the

ability to work with data and quantitative models, familiarity with regulatory frameworks, digital and AI literacy, awareness of cybersecurity risks, and the capability to communicate risk clearly to diverse stakeholders. Strong communication skills are particularly important, as risk professionals often need to translate complex analysis into actionable insights for senior management and business teams. Together, these capabilities support informed decision-making in fast-moving financial markets and evolving business environments.

Preparing for risk careers in a changing job market

For students and early

professionals, entry-level risk-related careers can offer both stability and attractive base salary potential relative to other sectors, depending on skills, location, and the organization. Over time, as professionals gain experience and develop specialized expertise, they can progress into higher-earning risk specialist or leadership roles, where annual total compensation can be significantly higher.

To build a strong foundation, students can consider pursuing dedicated, globally recognized certification and certificate programmes in risk management across areas such as finance, sustainability, and AI. These programmes help develop essential analytical, technical, and governance-related skills that are increasingly valued by employers. They are relevant across banking, asset management, consulting, technology firms, and real-economy organizations focused on navigating financial markets, sustainability challenges, and the growing use of Generative AI. By investing early in these skills, students can position themselves strongly for the evolving world of work and long-term career growth in risk management.

(The author is Managing Director, Global Head of Certifications and Educational Programs)

Students showcase next-gen space & robotics innovations

MIT inaugurated the International Rover Challenge (IRC) 2026 and the International Space Drone Challenge (ISDC) 2026. The events are being organised in collaboration with the Space Robotics Society (SPROS) and have drawn participation from young innovators across India and overseas.

The inauguration marked the beginning of a global convergence of student-led teams showcasing technological innovation, scientific curiosity, and collaborative problem-solving in the fields of space robotics and aerial systems. This year's editions feature 33 national and international rover teams and 22 drone teams, underscoring the growing global footprint of the two competitions.

Lt. Gen. (Dr.) M. D. Venkatesh, VSM (Retd.), Vice Chancellor of MAHE, presided over the ceremony as Chief Guest. Welcoming participants, he highlighted that platforms such as IRC and ISDC reflect MAHE's



philosophy of experiential learning, where classroom knowledge is translated into real-world engineering solutions.

He noted that such competitions foster perseverance, confidence, and innovation, while also contributing to technological advancement, nation-building, and economic growth.

Cdr. (Dr.) Anil Rana, Director, MIT, emphasised the vibrant culture of innovation on campus and reiterated the institute's commitment to holistic education beyond academ-

ics. He highlighted MIT's strong ecosystem of student engagement through 26 major project teams and over 70 technical and cultural clubs, along with experiential initiatives that build resilience and adaptability among students.

The event also acknowledged Sagar Dhaka, MIT alumnus (EEE, Class of 2019) and Founder of SPROS, for his leadership and continued association with his alma mater in promoting global student innovation in robotics and aerospace technologies.

Celebrating healers, leaders, and changemakers



National Women Physicians Day 2026 is a moment to recognise and celebrate the extraordinary contributions of women doctors who serve at the healthcare systems worldwide. Observed on February 3, the birthday of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell—the first woman to receive a medical degree in the United States—this day honors both the pioneers who broke barriers and the present-day physicians who continue to redefine medicine through skill, compassion, and leadership. Women physicians play a vital role across every specialty, from primary care and pediatrics to surgery, research, public health, and medical education. Beyond clinical excellence, they are often at the

forefront of patient advocacy, community health initiatives, and innovation. Their work has been especially visible in recent years, as women doctors have led responses to public health crises, advanced medical research, and championed equitable access to care.

Despite these achievements, women physicians continue to face challenges, including gender bias, pay gaps, underrepresentation in leadership, and the pressure of balancing demanding careers with personal responsibilities. National Women Physicians Day is not only a celebration, but also a reminder of the need for continued progress toward equity, inclusion, and supportive work environments within healthcare.

Scientists develop single-unit device to capture, save solar energy

NEW DELHI

Indian scientists at the Department of Science and Technology (DST) have developed a solar-powered energy storage device that can both capture and store energy in a single unit, marking a major step towards clean, self-sustaining storage systems, an official statement said.

Unlike conventional solar systems that require separate units for energy harvesting and storage, the new technology can do both functions, reducing cost and energy losses during conversion, it said.

The statement from the Ministry of Science and Technology said the device known as photo-rechargeable supercapacitor was developed by researchers at the Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences, Bengaluru under DST.

The new technology paves way for efficient, low cost, and eco-friendly power solutions for portable, wearable, and off grid technologies, it said.

Conventional hybrid systems relied on additional power management electronics to regulate voltage and current



mismatches between the energy harvester and the storage unit.

The resultant system complexity and device footprint was detrimental for miniaturised and autonomous devices, the statement said. The innovation used the help of binder-free use of nickel-cobalt oxide (NiCo2O4) nanowires, which have been uniformly grown on nickel foam using a simple in situ hydrothermal process.

"These nanowires, only a few nanometres in diameter and several micrometres long, form a highly porous and conductive 3D network that efficiently absorbs sunlight and stores electrical charge. This unique architecture allowed the material to act simultaneously as a solar energy harvester and a supercapacitor elec-

trode," the statement detailed. When tested for real-world applications, the device delivered a stable output voltage of 1.2 volts, maintained 88 per cent of its capacitance retention even after 1,000 photo-charging cycles.

Further, it operated efficiently under varying sunlight conditions—from low indoor illumination to intense sunlight. This stability indicates that the nanowire structure can endure both mechanical and electrochemical stress over extended periods of use, the statement noted.

The self-charging power system can function anywhere even in remote regions without access to an electrical grid and can substantially reduce dependence on fossil fuels and conventional batteries.

Nasr School hosts farewell for ISC batch

HYDERABAD

Nasr School hosted a farewell ceremony for the outgoing students of Classes X and XII of the ISC Batch of 2025–2026, celebrating the completion of an important chapter in their academic journey. The evening was a graceful blend of tradition, talent, emotion, and togetherness, reflecting the core values of the institution.

The programme began with a vibrant welcome that set an upbeat tone for the celebrations. One of the most awaited highlights was the Ramp Walk, where students from both classes took to the stage with remarkable confidence and elegance. Showcasing individuality, charm, and poise, the participants impressed the audience as the event progressed through multiple rounds. The final

round featured a Question-and-Answer segment, testing the finalists' clarity of thought, articulation, and presence of mind.

The event was judged by distinguished guests from the creative field. Lucky Lakshmi Naidu—model, actress, journalist, and NCC achiever—and Madhuri Atluri, renowned designer and Mrs. Hyderabad 2019, brought valuable insights and inspi-

ration through their experience and achievements. As a gesture of appreciation and sustainability, the guests were welcomed with saplings.

The cultural segment added colour and energy to the evening, with captivating dance performances and melodious songs presented by students of Classes IX and XI. A soulful trumpet performance and an energetic flash mob further elevated

the atmosphere, followed by a lively DJ session that allowed students to celebrate and create lasting memories.

The declaration of titles, recognising students for their confidence, stage presence, and unique personalities.

Principal Mir Mohiuddin Mohammed announced the winners and addressed the gathering, extending his blessings and best wishes to the outgoing batch.



- Sunil Gavaskar

Anahat wins maiden PSA Bronze-level title

The high court on December 16 last year rejected the bail pleas of eight accused, including Gaikwad, Sood and Mittal, in the case. (PTI)

BIZ BRIEFS

Bridgestone's new partnership

Bridgestone India has announced a new collaboration with Parmish Verma, a Punjabi singer and actor as part of its strategy to deepen consumer engagement in key regional markets. Rajiv Sharma, Executive Director, Bridgestone India, said: "North India is a strategically important market for us. Parmish Verma's credibility and deep connection with audiences make him an ideal partner to represent Bridgestone. This collaboration enables us to engage meaningfully with young consumers."

HIET partners with Air India

Hindustan Institute of Engineering and Technology (HIET), part of the Hindustan Group of Institutions (HGI), announced a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Air India Limited at Wings India 2026 at Begumpet Airport, Hyderabad. Under the agreement, HIET will deliver structured training for Category B1.1 (Aeroplane Turbine) and Category B2 (Avionics) engineers selected by Air India. The programme is designed to support the airline's growing requirement for licensed aircraft maintenance engineers amid rapid fleet.

Mkts rise over 1% as value buying spurs rebound on D-St

BLUE-CHIP OIL & GAS, BANKING AND AUTO SHARES SPURRED REBOUNDS AFTER FACING A MASSIVE DRUBBING ON BUDGET DAY

Recovery Mode

- BSE-Sensex rallied 943.52pts or (+1.17%) to 81,666.46
- NSE-Nifty climbed 262.95pts or (+1.06%) to 25,088.40
- FII offloaded Rs588.34 cr on Sunday



MUMBAI: Stock markets rebounded on Monday with benchmark Sensex jumping by 943 points on value buying in blue-chip oil & gas, banking and auto shares after facing a massive drubbing on the Budget day.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rallied 943.52 points or 1.17 per cent, to settle at 81,666.46. During the day, it surged 1,009.31 points or 1.25 per cent to a high of 81,732.25. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 262.95 points or 1.06 per cent to end at 25,088.40. During the day, it advanced 282.65 points or 1.13 per cent to 25,108.10.

Value buying after a sharp correction on Budget day and a steep decline in global crude oil prices helped key indices recover, experts said. From the Sensex firms, Power Grid jumped 7.61 per cent and Adani Ports climbed 4.76 per cent. Bharat Electronics, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, InterGlobe Aviation, ICICI Bank and UltraTech Cement were among the other major gainers. Axis Bank, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Trent and Titan were the laggards.

Among indices, BSE Utilities jumped the most by 2.66 per cent, followed by power (2.54 per cent), services (2.38 per cent), energy (1.98 per cent), auto (1.98 per cent), oil & gas (1.92 per cent) and metal (1.90 per cent). IT, BSE Focused IT and healthcare were the laggards.

India's manufacturing sector activity witnessed a slight recovery in January, amid faster increase in new orders, even as business confidence slipped to its lowest level in three-and-a-half years, a monthly survey said on Monday. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), rose from a two-year low of 55 in December to 55.4 in January.

In the PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday announced measures to boost manufacturing, offered long-term tax incentives for global data centres, and support for agriculture and tourism as she unveiled a Rs 53.5 lakh crore Union Budget for 2026-27, seen as a long-term blueprint for sustaining growth amid rising global risks. Shunning populist measures despite five key states, including West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, heading to polls, the Budget signalled continued fiscal consolidation and infrastructure spending.

Non-IT sectors lead white-collar hiring with 3% growth in Jan

BPO/ITES among the top 5 sectors to register a double-digit YoY growth, says report

Positive growth

- BPO/ITES sector posted a 21% growth in hiring
- Hospitality/travel sector registered a 15% rise
- Insurance sector also registered more than 7% growth
- However, banking and financial services saw a decline of 15%



INDIA'S white-collar hiring began 2026 on a steady footing, with a 3 per cent rise (year-on-year) in January, driven by non-IT sectors and fresher hiring, a report showed on Monday.

Non-IT sectors were the primary drivers of this growth, with BPO/ITES surging more than 21 per cent, hospitality/travel climbing over 15 per cent, insurance advancing more than 7 per cent, and healthcare gaining more than 5 per cent, as per the Naukri Job-Speak Index.

Banking and financial services was one major non-IT sector to see a decline, slipping 15 per cent (on-year). Meanwhile, the IT sector remained flat for the month. Within this landscape, AI/ML roles sustained strong momentum with a more than 34 per cent rise.

Over the past three months, BPO/ITES has consistently ranked among the top 5 sectors for double-digit YoY growth.

In January 2026, hiring in the sector rose 21 per cent YoY, supported by broad-based demand across experience levels, including a strong 39 per cent increase in fresher hiring and a 9 per cent rise among professionals with 13-16 years of experience. Non-metro cities emerged as key drivers, with Jaipur (more than 66 per cent) and Ahmedabad (over 43 per cent) posting stand-out contributions. Foreign multinational corporations (MNCs) were a major force behind this surge, contributing more than an 80 per cent increase in hiring activity, said the report.

"It's encouraging to see sustained year-on-year growth in key sectors like BPO/ITES and Hospitality. These areas have shown consistent momentum over recent months and have kicked off 2026 on a strong, positive note. Equally promising is the robust performance from Indian IT MNCs, which bodes well for the overall job market," said Dr Pawan Goyal, Chief Business Officer, Naukri.

Classic Legends' new outlet

Classic Legends marks an important milestone in its journey of strengthening technical capability and service excellence with the inauguration of the Advanced National Training Centre at its Pithampur plant in Indore. Anupam Thareja, Co-Founder, Classic Legends, said: "As our brands continue to grow, strengthening our service capability ecosystem becomes extremely important. The Advanced National Training Centre is a strategic investment in people, skills and infrastructure, aimed at building future-ready technicians."

Montra Electric gets certification

Montra Electric (e-M&HCV business vertical), part of the Murugappa Group, has become the first heavy-duty electric truck manufacturer in the country to receive certification under the Government of India's PM E-DRIVE Scheme. HD Kumaraswamy, Union Minister, said: "The PM E-DRIVE scheme is a testament to the growing prowess of Indian innovation in the heavy-duty electric vehicle segment. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, we are committed to decarbonizing our logistics."

INDIAWOOD event in B'luru from Feb 26

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

THE 26th edition of the biennial event INDIWOOD 2026 will be held at the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre (BIEC) from February 26 to March 2. Organised by NürnbergMesse India, the show is set to attract woodworking and furniture manufacturing industry players.

The event is further supported by EUMABOIS, the European Federation of Woodworking Machinery Manufacturers.

Set to be the largest edition in its history, the show will host over 1,000 brands from more than 50 countries, welcome 90,000 industry professionals, and span 85,000 sqm of exhibition space, marking a 15 per cent growth over the previous edition. The scale and diversity of participation reflect strong global confidence in India's manufacturing capabilities and align with the country's Viksit Bharat vision, where advanced manufacturing, exports and global integration are key growth drivers.

FPIs offloaded ₹36,000-cr in Jan

Amid global uncertainties, going ahead the sharp increase of STT in futures and options is likely to act as a marginal negative for FPI flows in the near term



NEW DELHI: Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) remained in a selling mode in January, withdrawing nearly Rs36,000 crore (about \$3.97 billion) as global uncertainties persisted. Meanwhile, a higher securities transaction tax (STT) proposed in the Union Budget may weigh on overseas investor participation in the near future.

The recent flight of foreign capital followed the worst outflow of Rs 1.66 lakh crore (\$18.9 billion) recorded in 2025, triggered by volatile currency movements, global trade tensions and concerns over potential US tariffs and stretched market valuations.

Going ahead, the sharp increase of STT in futures and options is likely to act as a marginal negative for FPI flows in the near term, particularly for high-frequency and derivative-focused global funds, said Akash Shah, Technical Research Analyst at Choice Equity Broking.

"While the STT hike may help boost tax collections, it risks dampening trading volumes and could slow tactical FPI participation. To meaningfully revive sustained FPI inflows, investors will be looking more closely at macro stability, the rupee movement, and consistency in tax policy rather than just growth optics," he added.


Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her Budget speech for 2026-27, announced a proposal to raise the STT on futures to 0.05 per cent from the present 0.02 per cent and STT on options premium and exercise of options to be raised to 0.15 per cent from the present rate of 0.1 per cent and 0.125 per cent, respectively.

According to data from

NSDL, FPIs pulled out Rs35,962 crore from Indian equities in January. This continued selling pressure by FPIs reflects a combination of global and domestic drivers impacting foreign investor sentiment.

The key reasons for the FPIs sell-off include US tariff threats on Europe amid the Greenland dispute, which sparked global risk-off sentiment, alongside a stronger US dollar, elevated bond yields, rupee weakness to Rs90-92 levels, and stretched valuations, Vaqarjaved Khan, Senior Fundamental Analyst, Angel One Ltd, said. Himanshu Srivastava, Principal, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said, "Globally, persistent risk aversion, still elevated interest rates in developed markets, and a strengthening US dollar have encouraged capital to remain on the sidelines or rotate into other markets perceived to offer better risk-adjusted returns."

Share buybacks to be taxed as capital gains for shareholders



NEW DELHI: In a move to protect minority shareholders and curb tax arbitrage by promoters, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday proposed a major overhaul of the taxation framework governing share buybacks. Presenting the Union Budget 2026-27, Sitharaman said that buybacks will be taxed as capital gains for all categories of shareholders.

To discourage misuse of tax arbitrage, promoters will be subject to an additional buy-back tax, raising the effective tax rate to 22 per cent for corporate promoters and 30 per cent for non-corporate promoters, she stated. Sitharaman said, "Change in taxation of buyback was brought in to address the improper use of buyback route by promoters." Market experts believe that the higher tax burden on promoters may lead companies to reassess their capital allocation strategies between dividends and buybacks.

RoopBhootra, Whole-time Director, Anand Rathi Share and Stock Brokers, said: "The proposed move is a positive

for individual shareholders as tax liability reduces from 30 per cent (highest slab rate) to capital gains rates (short term 20 per cent and long-term 12.5 per cent) and negative for corporates and discourages buyback and pushes corporates to use reserves for capital expenditure and/or R&D."

"Revamp of buyback tax framework, and the rise in STT (Securities Transaction tax) on futures and options will influence investor behaviour and short-term sentiments," ParizadSirwalla, Partner and Head, Global Mobility Services- Tax, KPMG in India, said.

In market parlance, buy-back tax is a kind of tax levied on companies that buyback their own shares from shareholders. Generally, governments impose this tax to restrain firms from distributing profits to shareholders through share buybacks rather than paying dividends.

Union Budget redefines the individual tax experience

This Budget 2026-27 marks a quiet but powerful shift in India's personal taxation philosophy

K NARESH KUMAR

WITH the Budget now placed before Parliament, many who wait anxiously for this annual exercise will likely feel a sense of relief. Personally, I believe the Budget—at least from an individual's perspective—should ideally be a largely non-consequential event, intervening only when course correction or genuinely transformative change is required. Instead, it has gradually evolved into a highly hyped spectacle, one that often inflates expectations and, in turn, breeds disappointment. Over time, this anticipation has made the Budget less about steady governance and more about headline-driven outcomes.

Ironically, some of the most consequential fiscal decisions in recent years have been announced outside the Budget itself—whether it was the corporate tax reductions in 2019 or the personal income tax slab changes in 2024. This shift suggests a deliberate move by the government to decouple major policy actions from Budget Day theatrics, reserving the Budget for consolidation rather than surprise.

This Union Budget 2026-27 marks a quiet but powerful shift in India's personal taxation philosophy—from enforcement-heavy compliance to citizen-centric tax design. At the heart of the Budget lies the Income Tax Act, 2025, replacing a 65-year-old law with one built for a digital, mobile, globally connected taxpayer. Simplified language, redesigned forms, and automation are announced signaling a clear intent: compliance should feel routine, not risky. This is the biggest structural change in decades possibly with less legal interpretation, fewer disputes and easier DIY (Do-It-Yourself) compliance.

The most immediate relief comes through cash-flow friendly measures. By slashing TCS on overseas travel, education, and medical remittances to 2 per cent from 5 per cent, the government addresses a long-standing grievance—money being col-



In a rare display of empathy, the Budget fully exempts interest awarded by Motor Accident Claims Tribunals from tax. Compensation meant for rehabilitation will no longer be diluted by tax deductions through TDS (Tax Deducted at Source)—a small change with profound human impact.

lected upfront and refunded months later. For families funding education abroad or managing medical emergencies, this is real, tangible relief. It results in lower cash

blockages, fewer refunds, and immediate liquidity relief especially for students, families and global Indians. Also, customs duty on imports for personal usage was proposed

to cut to 10 per cent from 20 per cent.

In a rare display of empathy, the Budget fully exempts interest awarded by Motor Accident Claims Tribunals from tax. Compensation meant for rehabilitation will no longer be diluted by tax deductions through TDS (Tax Deducted at Source)—a small change with profound human impact. No officer interaction with automated lower/nil TDS certificates for small taxpayers. This removes a major friction for retirees, pensioners, freelancers and investors with multiple income sources.

Compliance reforms go beyond rates. Automated lower-TDS certificates, centralized Form 15G/15H submission via depositories, and extended timelines for revising returns reflect an understanding of how people actually earn, invest, and make mistakes. The system now corrects errors rather than punishing them. ITR (Income Tax Return) revision deadlines are extended to 31st March with a nominal

fee. Also, the filing of returns for non-audit business cases & trusts is extended to 31st Aug, lowering stress, fewer penalties and better alignment with real-life realities.

Perhaps the most progressive move is the one-time foreign asset disclosure window. In an era of global careers and digital assets, inadvertent non-disclosure is common. A six-month amnesty-style window is proposed for small foreign income/asset declaration, targeted at students, tech employees, relocated NRIs and first-time global earners. By offering immunity for small assets and a clean-up window without stigma, the government chooses trust over threat. The limit is set at small non-immovable assets less than 20 Lakh under Black Money Act. This is a humane correction mechanism instead of criminalization for genuine mistakes.

Share buy-backs are now taxed as capital gains for all shareholders with an additional tax for the promotor to disincentivize misuse of tax arbitrage. That said, the

Budget also nudges behaviour. Higher STT (Securities Transaction Tax) on derivatives reminds retail traders that leverage and speculation carry costs—both financial and systemic. The STT increased on futures by 0.05 per cent and options by 0.15 per cent. The message is subtle but firm: productive investing over churn, thus increasing barriers for frequent traders while long-term investors remain unaffected. Hope retail investors take note.

In sum, Budget 2026-27 does not merely tweak slabs or rates. It reimagines the relationship between the individual and the tax system—simpler, fairer, and more aligned with modern economic life. For the honest taxpayer, this is one of the most psychologically reassuring Budgets in recent memory.

(The author is a partner with "Wealocity Analytics", a SEBI registered Research Analyst firm and could be reached at info@wealocity-analytics.com)



Pan-India 'Nagabandham' teaser announced

A bhishek Nama's much-anticipated mythological action drama 'Nagabandham', starring Virat Karina, is generating strong buzz, with the first-look posters receiving an immense response. The makers have now locked the teaser release for February 15, the auspicious occasion of Maha Shivaratri.

The striking teaser poster features a majestic cobra coiled protectively around a hidden treasure inside an ancient temple, perfectly hinting at the film's mystical suspense and divine intrigue. This glimpse into the core narrative promises a thrilling exploration of the sacred 'Nagabandham' tradition, set against the backdrop of India's historic Vishnu temples.

Nabha Natesh and Iswarya Menon play the leading ladies, alongside powerhouse performers Jagapathi Babu, Jayaprakash, Murali Sharma, and B.S. Avinash in pivotal roles.

The film boasts strong technical support, with Soundar Rajan S handling cinematography, RC Pranav in charge of editing, and Ashok Kumar overseeing production design, ensuring a grand visual spectacle. Produced by Kishore Annapureddy and Nishitha Nagireddy, 'Nagabandham' is nearing the final phase of production and is gearing up for a massive Pan-India release in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam this summer.



Naveen Chandra praises 'Honey' at trailer launch

'Honey' is a psychological horror film written and directed by Karuna Kumar, starring Naveen Chandra and Divya Pillai in the lead roles. Produced by Ravi Peetla and Praveen Kumar Reddy under the banner of OVA Entertainments and presented by Shekhar Studios, the film blends psychological depth, social relevance, and horror elements. 'Honey' is set to release in theatres on February 6. The promotional content released so far has received a wonderful response, and the makers recently launched the trailer.

Speaking at the trailer launch event, hero Naveen Chandra said, "Hello everyone. I am very happy with the wonderful response to the trailer. I thoroughly enjoyed the filmmaking

process. This is a film that will grow through word of mouth. We have tried to make it within our budget while still delivering a different and unique experience to the audience in theatres."

Director Karuna Kumar said, "This time too, I have made a new attempt. I originally wrote this story, titled 'Darkness', for literature. Our producers later decided to adapt it into a film. We see such incidents happening in places like Madanapalle and Old Basti, often within the same house. In 'Honey', we explore the life of a person searching for and achieving something called 'Pilli Maya'. It is a story that unfolds within the mind, even when everything seems dark. The film was inspired by a real-life incident."

Actor Raja Ravindra

shared, "Hello everyone. When the director narrated the story, I liked it but wondered how it would be executed. The film has been shot even more wonderfully than I expected. He also gave me an extraordinary and memorable character. Technically, the film is outstanding."

Heroine Divi said, "Hello everyone. I always wanted to work with Karuna Kumar. I met him during the film 'Palasa', but it didn't work out then. I immediately agreed when he called me for this project."

Heroine Divya Pillai added, "Hello everyone. I was scared when the director narrated the story to me. It is very new and unique. I thank Karuna Kumar and Ravi for giving me this opportunity. I am very happy to work with Naveen again."

'One by Four' emerges box-office winner



Tejas Gunjal Films and Rohit Gunjal Films have jointly produced the action crime drama 'One by Four (One/4)', starring Venkatesh Peddapalem, Aparna Mallick, and Heena Soni in the lead roles. The film is directed by Bahubali Palani K, who previously worked as an associate director on the blockbuster 'Baahubali'. It is jointly produced by Ranjana Rajesh Gunjal and Rohit Ramdas Gunjal.

Recently released, 'One by Four (One/4)' has emerged as a successful film, receiving appreciation from audiences across all sections and performing well in theatres. To celebrate the success, the team held a success meet at the Hyderabad Film Chamber, where they shared their experiences and gratitude.

Director Bahubali Palani K said, "Audiences have made 'One by Four (One/4)' a blockbuster. Collections are strong in every theatre. Once again, viewers have proved that if the content is good, even a small film can achieve big success. Hero Venkatesh impressed everyone with his action sequences and performance. He has already done action films in Kannada, and I believe he

has a bright future in Telugu cinema as well. Our producers Ranjana and Rohit came from Mumbai with great passion for cinema and entered Tollywood with dedication. I hope they produce many more films. However, it is unfortunate that some actors who initially seek opportunities do not show up during promotions. They should at least support the film out of gratitude."

Producer Ranjana Rajesh Gunjal said, "Our film 'One by Four (One/4)', which blends a strong message with entertainment, is being well received by audiences. The success is purely due to its solid content. The character 'Pavitra' is receiving special appreciation, and hero Venkatesh's performance is widely praised. The film highlights the struggles a woman faces due to blackmail, making it a thought-provoking experience. We are deeply hurt that we did not receive promotional support from the heroines. Despite providing all facilities, they did not participate in promotions. Their absence caused losses to the film. We feel it is better to encourage and cast Telugu girls rather than depend on outsiders."



Celebrities rally behind 'Barabar Premistha' release

The team of 'Barabar Premistha' held a grand pre-release event ahead of the film's theatrical launch, with several prominent guests extending their support and wishing success for the youthful entertainer. Starring Attitude Star Chandra Hass in the lead, the film is directed by Sampath Rudra and presented by Kakarla Satyanarayana. It is produced by Geda Chandu, Gayatri Chinny, and AVR under the banners of CC Creations and AVR Movie Wonders. Miss India finalist Meghna Mukherjee plays the female lead, while Arjun Mahi, known for 'Ishtamga', appears as the antagonist. The film is all set for a grand release in theatres on February 6.

The pre-release event, held on Sunday (February 1), was attended by chief guests Jayanth C. Paranjee, JD Chakravarthy, and Aadi Saikumar, along with the film's cast

and crew. The evening was filled with appreciation for the team's efforts and confidence that the film would connect strongly with audiences.

Speaking at the event, Chandra Hass expressed gratitude for the support he has received. He said he has always admired filmmakers like Jayanth C. Paranjee and actors like Aadi Saikumar, whom he considers an inspiration. Thanking his father Prabhakar for constant encouragement, he added that the film has been made with complete sincerity. He promised that 'Barabar Premistha' would keep viewers engaged throughout with numerous twists and an engaging narrative. He also praised director Sampath Rudra for presenting him in a new and impactful way.

Aadi Saikumar extended his heartfelt wishes to Chandra Hass, recalling his association with Prabhakar during

'Next Nuvvu'. He appreciated Chandra Hass' dedication and hard work and said he hopes 'Barabar Premistha' becomes a major breakthrough in the young actor's career. He urged audiences to watch the film in theatres and support the team.

Veteran director Jayanth C. Paranjee said the title 'Barabar Premistha' reflects confidence and attitude, perfectly matching Chandra Hass' personality. He praised the film's music, performances, and direction, expressing strong belief that it would emerge as a big hit.

JD Chakravarthy also conveyed his best wishes, applauding Prabhakar's inspiring journey and encouraging audiences not to miss the film. Director Sampath Rudra shared that the film has a Telangana backdrop and a gripping climax that will leave a lasting impression. He thanked the producers and music director RR Dhruvan for their contributions.

Devotional drama 'Dakshina Kaali' releases worldwide

'Dakshina Kaali' is an upcoming devotional entertainer starring Subbu and Priyanka as the lead pair, while actress Archana will be seen in the role of the Goddess. The film is produced by Satyavani Meesala under the Srinidhi Creations banner, for which she has also provided the story. Directed by Thota Krishna, the movie is being made as a devotional drama with strong spiritual elements. The film is all set for a worldwide grand theatrical release on the 6th of this month in Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada.



Recently, the songs launch event of 'Dakshina Kaali' was held at the Hyderabad Film Chamber. Renowned director V. Samudra and producers Tummalapalli Rama Satyanarayana and Prasanna Kumar attended the event as chief guests. Speaking on the occasion, director V. Samudra said that the songs and trailer of 'Dakshina Kaali' were very impressive and reminded him of the film 'Ammoru'. He expressed hope that actor Azad, who played the villain in the film, would gain recognition similar to Sonu Sood's performance in 'Arundhati'. He added that for producers who cannot afford Sonu Sood's remuneration, Azad would be a strong alternative.

Producer Tummalapalli Rama Satyanarayana stated that new films must continue to enter the industry and expressed confidence that 'Dakshina Kaali' would definitely be a success after watching its content. He wished for the film to achieve grand success like 'Ammoru'.

Producer Prasanna Kumar said that filmmaking is not just about words but requires immense effort and dedication. He appreciated the lady producer for making 'Dakshina Kaali' with great commitment and assured that their support would always remain with the film's team. Director Thota Krishna said that 'Dakshina Kaali' has been made to showcase the divine power and greatness of the Goddess. He revealed that apart from directing the film, he also played an important role in it. He assured that the movie would entertain audiences with all the elements they expect. Producer Satyavani Meesala shared that the Goddess guided them from the beginning of production until release. She said the shooting was completed smoothly without any hurdles due to the Goddess's blessings. She clarified that the film was not made for monetary gains but solely to portray the greatness and miracles of Goddess Dakshina Kaali. She also thanked seniors like V. Samudra, Prasanna Kumar, and Rama Satyanarayana for their encouragement and support.

'Winter' begins with traditional pooja ceremony

The film 'Winter', jointly produced by Crescent Cinemas and TSR Makers, was launched grandly with a traditional pooja ceremony.

'Winter' features Ram, Aadithya Suraj Singh, Kusuma Chandhaka, Shashikala, and Srijitaa Ghosh in the lead roles. The film is being produced by Riyaz Ahmed

and T. Srinivas Rao. Suresh Lankalapalli, who received critical acclaim for 'Racharikam', is handling the story, screenplay, and direction for this project. With this film, Rizwan Ali will be introduced on screen as the antagonist. Notably, 'Winter' is based on real-life incidents that occurred in Kashmir.

The pooja ceremony

marking the commencement of the film was recently held in a grand manner, with the entire team in attendance. Rituals were performed seeking the film's success and a smooth, obstacle-free production journey. Details regarding the remaining cast and technical crew will be announced soon.



'Mr. Work From Home' team creates buzz in Bheemili

The pre-release ceremony of 'Mr. Work From Home' was held at the Visakhapatnam Film Nagar Center in Bheemili Thimmapuram on Saturday. The film is being produced by Aravind and directed by Madhu, with Trigun playing the hero and Palayi Radha Krishna as the heroine.

Director Madhu said that the story of the film is centered on the use of new machinery in agriculture. The film focuses on the love and marriage of a young woman born into a rural farming family, while also delivering entertainment within a family setting.

Hero Trigun added that this film is very relevant for today's generation and carries a message for future generations.

Producer Aravind stated that the film will be appreciated by audiences and praised director Madhu for crafting the story in a way that will resonate well with viewers. He also confirmed that the film is scheduled to release on February 13. The film team actively participated in the pre-release event, generating excitement among fans and the local community.

