



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.

P6

EDITOR

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, Gandi Katta Maisamma.

P4

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.

P7

Pan-India 'Nagabandham' teaser announced

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

P8



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WINDOWS

Principal 'sacked' for asking students to offer namaz

MATHURA: A principal of a government primary school in Mathura was suspended and an inquiry initiated against him for allegedly asking students to offer namaz, officials said on Monday. Basic Shiksha Adhikari (BSA) Ratan Kirti said a complaint against the headmaster, Jan Mohammad, was received on January 30 from BJP's Naujheel block president Durgesh Chauhan. According to the complaint, Chauhan claimed that parents of students had approached him alleging that the principal asked students to offer namaz and that the national anthem was not being sung in the school. Taking cognisance of the complaint, the Basic Education Department suspended the principal and constituted an inquiry committee, Kirti said. "The inquiry committee has been directed to submit its report at the earliest. Further action will be taken after the report is received," the officer added. PTI

Two tigers found dead in MP's Shahdol district

BHOPAL: Two tigers were found dead in the forests of Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol district on Monday, a senior forest official said. The carcasses of a tiger and a tigress were found in the North Shahdol forest area, and as per initial reports, one of them appeared to have been killed in a territorial fight, and the other was electrocuted. Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) L Krishnamoorthy told PTI. "A team has rushed to the spot, and investigations have begun. As per the initial report, one tiger seems to have been killed in a territorial fight, while the other died due to electrocution," he said.

SC grants bail to SAD leader Bikram Majithia

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday granted bail to Shiromani Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia in a disproportionate assets case. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta passed the order while hearing Majithia's plea challenging the Punjab and Haryana High Court's order which denied him bail in the case.

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'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 (retd), 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 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"

- 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 reading "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.

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

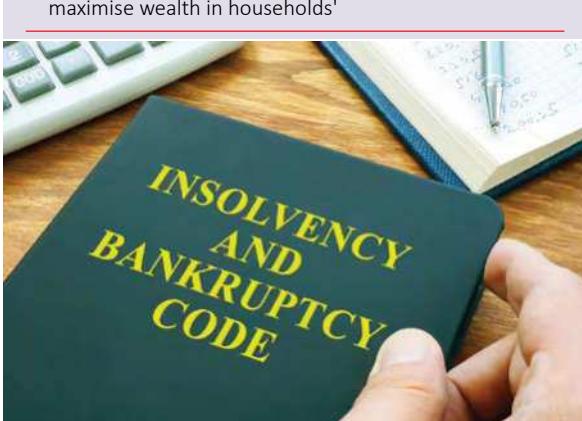
NEW DELHI

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



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 have 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 PTI. "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."

Budget boosts Central funding for Delhi: CM

PURNA SINGH

NEW DELHI

DELHI Chief Minister Rekha Gupta outlined the financial allocations made for the national capital in the Budget, saying the budget is designed to strengthen the economy while providing support and confidence to citizens. She described it as a growth-oriented budget guided by three core priorities—speeding up economic growth, meeting public aspirations and enabling people to move forward.

The Chief Minister said the budget would give fresh momentum to the country's development and noted that the Delhi government is working closely with the central government. The allocations are



in Delhi's interest, with the city receiving ₹1,348 crore in central funding. She added that the overall budget size has been significantly enhanced, rising from ₹6,275 crore to ₹15,380 crore. Gupta said the education sector would see major benefits, with increased funding for school education. She also announced plans for the establishment of five universities and the development of an education hub in Narela, aimed at strengthening educational infrastructure and expanding learning opportunities in the capital.

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 artistes, 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.

POLITICKLE BY MANJUL



ALL FOR COWS AND NOTHING FOR BULLS, MA'AM?

Delhi govt tells Supreme Court

New law to regulate school fees will not be implemented in 2025-26

- In view of the clarification of Raju that the legal regime will not be implemented with effect from 2025-26, no further orders are required
- The bench left all the issues open for being raised before the Delhi High Court which is hearing a batch of pleas challenging the 2025 Act

HANS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi government on Monday told the Supreme Court that a new law which regulates fees in private schools in the national capital will not be implemented



of Fees) Act, 2025.

Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, appearing

for the Delhi government, told the bench that the law will not be enforced in the current academic year. "In view of the clarification of S V Raju... that the legal regime will not be implemented with effect from 2025-26, no further orders are required," the bench said. The bench left all the issues open for being raised before the Delhi High Court which is hearing a batch of pleas challenging the 2025 Act and its subsequent rules.

The top court was hearing pleas, including those challenging a January 8 order of the high court which

refused to stay a notification directing private schools here to constitute fee regulation committees but extended the time for setting up such panels.

During the hearing, one of the advocates appearing in the matter said the high court must decide the issue at the earliest as a number of schools and lakhs of children are involved. "The high court is aware of it. There is no need to assume that the high court is unaware and we are the only ones who are aware of it," the

bench said. When another lawyer said the matter must be heard by the high court before March 31, the bench said the parties may make a request for early disposal of the petitions before the high court. While hearing the pleas on January 19, the apex court had questioned the Delhi government over its timing in enforcing the law. The bench had said implementation of the 2025 Act, when the academic year was already underway, appeared confused and potentially unworkable.

Uttar Pradesh authorities to take stringent measures

Strict action required against people involved in illegal sand mining: NGT

- The green body was hearing a plea regarding illegal sand mining in Kanpur and Unnao causing pollution in River Ganga
- The applicant has submitted that sand mining activities have been carried out without having environmental clearance

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

UNDERLINING that strict action is required to be taken against people involved in illegal sand mining, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Uttar Pradesh authorities to

take stringent measures for preventing such unauthorised mining and transportation of minor minerals.

The green body was hearing a plea regarding illegal sand mining in the Kanpur and Unnao areas in Uttar Pradesh causing pollution in River Ganga. In an order

dated January 16 and made available recently, a bench of NGT's judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member Afroz

Ahmad said, "The applicant has submitted that sand mining activities have been carried out without having environmental clearance

(EC) and even if ECs have been granted, then those norms of clearances have not been complied with by the mining lessees which has caused severe damage to river belt."

The tribunal noted that the applicant had named a private person or project proponent who was carrying out illegal sand mining in Bilhaur near Kanpur and built an unauthorised bridge in the Ganga river, dividing it into two streams which had become hazardous to the nearby villages and could be catastrophic

for the entire region.

Noting a report by a panel, the tribunal, however, said it revealed a "grave misconduct" of illegal construction of a temporary road in the Ganga, dividing the stream and obstructing its flow, which had a far more serious adverse environmental impact than any temporary bridge.

Rapping the state's director of the geology and mining department for remaining "completely insensitive to the issue" and "culpably ignoring" it, the tribunal said, "Natural river

channels can be destroyed and dried up by spending small amounts of money, but cannot be created even with huge amounts of money and other infrastructural resources."

It said, "The facts and circumstances of the present case reveal serious violations of environmental laws/norms by the Respondent 2 (project proponent) and serious derelictions of duties by concerned officers of the (state's) mining department and Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board

(UPPCB)."

The tribunal directed the state chief secretary to issue appropriate instructions to all district magistrates to ensure that a copy of the executed mining lease is immediately sent to the UPPCB's member secretary and the board's regional office. This, the tribunal said, was necessary to ensure compliance with the EC conditions and for obtaining the mandatory consent to establish (CTE) and consent to operate (CTO) before commencement of mining.

PDA a ploy to mislead masses, protect 'parivar,' says CM Yogi

Those who make such claims must be asked that while the double engine government has ensured that 25 crore people across the country, including six crore in Uttar Pradesh, move ahead with pride and dignity, why could the same not be achieved during their tenure?

HANS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW

UTTAR Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday slammed Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav's 'PDA' pitch saying the opposition party cared more about 'parivar' (family) than marginalised communities. The SP chief had earlier claimed the Union Budget 2026-27 had largely ignored the 'PDA', Yadav's coinage denoting 'pichde' (backward classes), Dalit and alpshanyak' (minorities).

Responding to a query on Yadav's comment while speaking to mediapersons here, Adityanath said, "Those who make such claims must be asked that while the double engine

government has ensured that 25 crore people across the country, including six crore in Uttar Pradesh, move ahead with pride and dignity, why could the same

not be achieved during their tenure? The PDA must have been there then too."

The chief minister questioned why the PDA was not discussed during the

previous government, alleging that the past dispensation had only cared about 'parivar', he said.

He claimed safeguarding the PDA was merely a

ruse to mislead the masses for the sake of dynasty. "For the prime minister, the nation is family. Our vision is to help the poor, youth, and farmers. Our goal is to ensure top-class infrastructure, one aimed at realising the goal of an 'atmanirbhar' (self-reliant) and 'viksit' Bharat."

This vision is amply reflected in the Union budget, but those without vision, those who lack any plan for the future, can only make such meaningless claims," Adityanath said.

He also dismissed Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi's criticism of the Union budget and pointed out various budgetary allocations which he claimed would facilitate the country's growth.

2 toll plaza staff arrested for assaulting female advocate

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SONBHADRA

POLICE have arrested two toll plaza staff for allegedly assaulting a female advocate and her relatives after dispute in Sonbhadra district, officials said on Monday. Circle Officer (City) Randhir Mishra said Ramji Tiwari, a resident of Hamirpur district, and Sarvesh Yadav from Ambedkar Nagar district have been arrested in connection with the incident that took place at the Lodhi village toll plaza in the Robertsganj police station area on Sunday.

Police said a search is underway to trace and arrest seven-eight other toll plaza staff named in the FIR, whose details are not known yet. The case was registered based on a complaint filed by Aarti Pandey, an advocate by profession. According to Robertsganj SHO Swaroop Verma, in her complaint,

Aarti said that she was going to Obra with her relatives and friends in a car, and on reaching the toll plaza at around 3 pm, they noticed some vehicles standing ahead of their car, causing a traffic jam.

When the vehicles did not move for a long time, her brother-in-law, Naveen Singh, stepped out of the car and asked the toll plaza employees the reason for the jam. However, the staff abused Singh and even threatened to kill him, Aarti said in her complaint.

As the matter escalated, the toll plaza staff thrashed Singh, causing serious head injuries, the complaint said. When Avnish Dubey, a relative of Aarti, tried to intervene, he too was beaten with sticks, it said. Aarti alleged that the toll plaza staff then grabbed her and Garima Singh, another relative, by their hair and dragged them, and even threatened to kill them.

The complainant said they felt humiliated as the toll plaza staff pushed them around, causing them to fall.

Renaming MGNREGA scheme anti-poor: Kang writes to Modi

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MOHALI

SENIOR Congress leader Jagmohan Singh Kang said on Monday that he has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking reconsideration of the Centre's decision to "rename the MGNREGA scheme and impose new conditions on its implementation". In a statement issued here, Kang described the move as "anti-poor and unfortunate", alleging that the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from the scheme was a regressive attempt at diluting the legacy of the Father of the Nation.

He also opposed the decision to shift 40 per cent of the financial burden onto states, saying it would severely impact debt-ridden states like Punjab. Kang said the scheme framed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) symbolises dignity and a constitutional right to work for millions of rural labourers. He pointed out that the scheme, launched during the UPA government under former prime minister Manmohan Singh, was a legal guarantee and not a welfare charity.

The former Punjab minister criticised the Centre's proposal to increase working days while transferring additional financial responsibility to states, calling it unjust at a time when many states were facing serious financial stress. He claimed Punjab was already struggling with a severe fiscal crisis. Kang also expressed concern over the "removal" of the unemployment allowance and the "curtailment of powers of Gram Panchayats", saying these steps have weakened the democratic framework of rural development.

2 held in crackdown on cyber criminals

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE CBI has arrested two alleged cybercriminals after conducting a massive countrywide search operation across 35 locations as part of a sweeping multinational crackdown on cyber-enabled financial crimes, officials said on Monday. Operation CyStrike was launched on January 30 in coordination with the FBI in the United States and agencies of the United Kingdom, Kuwait, Ireland, and Singapore.

The CBI officers searched 35 locations across 10 states, including Delhi, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Telangana and West Bengal. The raids disrupted multiple cybercrime networks based in India that targeted victims in the United States, the United Kingdom, Kuwait, Ireland, Singapore, and India, officials said.

Two individuals were arrested for being part of separate rackets busted by the agency during the operation. "During search operations, CBI busted and dismantled a transnational cyber-enabled financial crime network being operated by the accused persons from New Delhi, targeting US victims online.

Budget a roadmap for developed India: Raj CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR

RAJASTHAN Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma on Monday described the Union Budget 2026-27 as a roadmap for a developed India. "The budget reflects a strong commitment to fulfill the aspirations of a new India while ensuring inclusive growth by reaching the last person. It is a roadmap for a developed India," he said at a media briefing at the chief minister's office.

He said the budget was youth-centric, focused on employment generation, skill development, promotion of startups and strengthening the service sector, which will expand both job opportunities and self-employment. Sharma said the establishment of content creator labs in secondary schools and colleges would provide benefits to the youth of the state.

"The budget also includes significant provisions to strengthen women's empowerment, security and eco-

Man kills woman in Uttarakhand

HANS NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN

A man accused of killing his female friend by shooting her in Uttarakhand's Rishikesh was arrested in Uttar Pradesh on Monday, police said. Police said the accused, Suresh Gupta, 40, was arrested from the Chhutmalpur area of the Saharanpur district. According to the police, Preeti Rawat, 32, who lived alone in a rented room in the Shivaji Nagar area of Rishikesh, was shot dead on the night of January 31. Police said Preeti was divorced and worked as an assistant at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh.

Preeti's father, Bachan Singh Rawat, had filed

ANTI- TERROR OPS ACROSS JAMMU: TWO SUSPECTED DETAINED

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU

TWO persons moving in a suspicious manner were detained on Monday as security forces intensified their anti-terror operations across the Jammu region, officials said. The search operation also resumed in snow-bound Chattoo belt in Kishtwar district to track down and neutralise terrorists who

were engaged in at least four encounters over the past fortnight, the officials said. They said two suspicious persons were caught by the Quick Reaction Team (QRT) of the army near their camp in Bari Brahma area of Samba district around 10.30 am and later handed over to local police for questioning. Security forces also observed suspicious movement in

Joffer area of Ramnagar sector late Sunday night and immediately launched a search operation covering Joffer, Marta, Kulthian, Sohan, Kheal, and Chour Mottu along Ujh river, the officials said, adding no suspicious persons was found during the operation.

The officials said movement of suspected terrorists was also reported in Ramgarh forests in Udhampur district and Kalas top in Rajouri district and accordingly an operation is underway at both the places.

He also opposed the decision to shift 40 per cent of the financial burden onto states, saying it would severely impact debt-ridden states like Punjab. Kang said the scheme framed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

• Global warming has emerged as a major challenge worldwide and its adverse effects are clearly visible. Keeping this in view, the state government is according high priority to environmental conservation

• 16,376 square kilometers of land in HP is snow-covered, barren or mountainous where plantation is not feasible. CM instructed the department to identify potential areas in each district suitable for plantation

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA

CHIEF Minister Sukhdev Singh Sukhu on Monday directed Forest Department officials to prepare a comprehensive roadmap to increase Himachal Pradesh's forest cover to 31 per cent by 2030.

Presiding over a review meeting of the department here, the chief minister said the current forest cover in the state stands at 29.5 per cent and needs to be enhanced in a planned and sustainable manner. "Global warming has emerged as a major challenge worldwide and its adverse effects are clearly visible. Keeping this in view, the state government is according high priority to environmental conservation," Sukhu said.

The chief minister added that about 16,376 square kilometers of land in Himachal Pradesh is snow-covered, barren or mountainous where plantation is not feasible. He instructed the department to identify potential areas in each district suitable for plantation and prepare a phased plan accordingly. He said the drive should focus on native species, fruit-bearing plants and those with medicinal value.

Sukhu stressed that the drive must focus on protecting existing forests alongside creating new ones, while ensuring the active participation of local communities. "The state government has launched the 'Rajiv Gandhi Van Sam-

vardhan Yojana' to promote community participation in forest plantation and conservation. Under the scheme, plantation was carried out over 924.9 hectares during the previous year.

A total of 285 Mahila Mandals, 70 Yuva Mandals, 59 Self Help Groups and 13 community-based organisations actively contributed to this initiative," he said.

Under this scheme, the state government provides financial assistance of Rs 2.40 lakh for plantation over two hectares to these groups, along with annual

incentives linked to survival rates. Sukhu said the scheme has received an encouraging response from the targeted groups.

The chief minister added that a target has been set to undertake plantation over 5,000 hectares in the next financial year under the scheme.

Of this, 3,376 hectares have already been identified, while the process for the remaining 1,624 hectares is underway. He also reviewed the progress of other schemes being implemented by the Forest Department.



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PARLIAMENT SECURITY BREACH CASE

Terrorising MPs, others can't be condoned: Police oppose bail

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

OPPOSING the bail pleas of three accused in the 2023 Parliament security breach case, police on Monday told the Delhi High Court here that carrying inflammable material inside the Parliament in smoke canisters and "terrorising the minds" of the parliamentarians cannot be condoned. The counsel for the Delhi Police said Manoranjan D and Sagar Sharma

were the "lead players" in the "high-level" conspiracy, and their actions created havoc, which was seen live on television.

A bench of Justices Prarthiba M Singh and Madhu Jain was hearing the bail plea by the accused Manoranjan D, Sharma and Lalit Jha. "There was a threat to the sovereignty and integrity of the country. They terrorised the minds of the parliamentarians, the staff and those watching," said the police

counsel.

The Delhi Police lawyer further stated that the pamphlets with the accused carried an "open threat" to the prime minister and they intended to "usurp power". Use of smoke canisters containing inflammatory material and jumping into the Parliament cannot be condoned, he submitted. He also said that if released, the accused could influence the material witnesses, who were yet to be examined, and could also flee from

trial. The senior counsel for the accused, however, said the high court has already granted bail to two co-accused in the case. He urged the court to grant the relief to the three applicants as well, saying the trial was unlikely to conclude in the near future as even the charges were yet to be framed. On being informed that the trial court was scheduled to take up the case on February 6, the court said it would hear the matter on March 17. "Let's

see if charges are framed (by then)," the bench said.

The senior lawyer for the accused reiterated that while the Parliament was the temple of democracy and their way of "protest" might not be right, the court should consider that they were not terrorists and nobody was injured. In a major security breach on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack, accused Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan D allegedly



jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during the Zero Hour on December 13, 2023, released yellow gas from canisters and raised slogans before they were overpowered by some MPs.

Cheating case

GPS tracking leads cops to arrest habitual offender

The incident took place on January 18 when a 55-year-old woman was travelling from her residence to Uttam Nagar. While she was waiting at the Haiderpur bus stand, the occupants of a car offered her a lift, claiming to be bank officials

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi Police has arrested a 40-year-old proclaimed offender for allegedly cheating a woman of her gold ornaments and cash in northwest Delhi, officials said on Monday. The arrest was made after the police tracked the movement of the accused's vehicle using a GPS device, they said. The accused, identified as Rahul, was arrested from the Model Town area. Police also recovered the car which was used in the commission of the crime.

According to the police, Rahul is a habitual criminal involved in nine cases, including robbery.



snatching, theft, culpable homicide. He is also a proclaimed offender in seven different cases. "He committed such offences to earn easy money," Additional Commissioner of Police (Northwest) Bishwanth Singh said in a statement.

The incident took place

on January 18 when a 55-year-old woman was travelling from her residence to Uttam Nagar. While she was waiting at the Haiderpur bus stand, the occupants of a car offered her a lift, claiming to be bank officials. Once she boarded the vehicle, the accused persuaded

her to hand over her gold ornaments and cash for "verification", stating they were also depositing their own money. The woman handed over two gold rings, two ear tops and Rs 5,000 in cash.

Shortly after, the accused asked her to alight quickly and handed her an envelope, claiming that bank officials had arrived.

Upon checking, the woman found the only papers in the envelope, while the accused fled with her belongings. The woman later approached the police and lodged a complaint. Following the complaint, police analysed technical inputs and traced the car used in the crime.

Road accident leads to arrest of mobile snatcher

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A 22-year-old man was arrested after a road mishap exposed his alleged involvement in a mobile phone snatching spree in central Delhi, police said on Monday. The accused, Ritik alias Kalwa, a resident of Paharganj, was caught near the Model Basti red light on Rani Jhansi Road and three mobile phones, suspected to be stolen, were recovered from his possession, they said.

According to police, a constable was on routine patrolling in the early hours of January 27 noticed a motorcycle carrying three youngsters collide with a stationary car. On seeing the police approaching, the trio allegedly became nervous and tried to flee. Sensing something amiss, the

constable chased them and managed to nab one of the riders, while the other two escaped on the motorcycle, police said.

During a search, police recovered three mobile phones from the accused and further investigation revealed that one of the phones was linked to a snatching case registered at Moti Nagar police station, while another was connected to a similar case in Lahori Gate police station, police said. According to the police, the accused failed to produce ownership documents for the third phone.

UDAN scheme has revolutionized the Indian civil aviation sector, and we were able to extend the connectivity to regional remote areas, especially the areas of tier two and tier three cities, where we were able to establish the airports, but the connectivity was still a challenge: Union Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu

unserved/underserved airstrips. Replying to supplementaries during Question Hour, Union Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said, "UDAN scheme has revolutionized the Indian civil aviation sector, and we were able to extend the connectivity to regional remote areas, especially the areas of tier two and

Union Budget: AIIMS gets Rs 5,200 crore

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

THE Union Budget presented on Monday announced separate allocations for central government hospitals located in Delhi, continuing the annual practice of earmarking funds for key healthcare institutions in the capital. The largest share of the allocation has been given to AIIMS Delhi, while increased funding has also been announced for Safdarjung Hospital, Lady Hardinge Medical College, Sucheta Kriplani Hospital and Kalawati Saran Children's Hospital. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital is the only institution among the six to see a reduction in its budget compared to the previous year.

AIIMS Delhi has been allotted Rs 5,200 crore in the current budget, a move aimed at strengthening the healthcare system in the national capital.



Budget trends over the last few years show a steady rise in allocations for AIIMS Delhi. The institute received Rs 4,134.67 crore in 2023-24 and Rs 4,523 crore in 2024-25, reflecting an increase of nearly Rs 397 crore. The continued rise in funding is intended to strengthen infrastructure, enhance equipment capacity, recruit specialist medical staff and expand super-specialty services, including beds, ICU facilities and research infrastructure. Among other central

government hospitals in Delhi, Safdarjung Hospital has been allocated Rs 2,179.58 crore, Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital Rs 1,458.26 crore, Lady Hardinge Medical College and Sucheta Kriplani Hospital Rs 800 crore, and Kalawati Saran Children's Hospital Rs 183.16 crore. The total allocation for these five hospitals stands at approximately Rs 8,821 crore, compared to Rs 8,937 crore in 2024-25, marking an overall increase of Rs 884 crore.

Rules under new labour code to be finalised by month-end, HC told

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Centre on Monday told the Delhi High Court that rules under the Industrial Relations Code will be finalised by the end of February. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma informed a bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia that suggestions from the public had been sought and framing of rules was under consideration. The court was hearing a petition on the implementation of the Industrial Relations Code 2020, which consolidates all laws relating to trade unions, conditions of employment in an industrial establishment and settlement of industrial disputes. According to the petitioners, N A Sebastian and Sunil Kumar, the Central government published a gazette notification on November 21, 2025, notifying the Industrial Relations Code 2020, but did not frame the rules to implement the new regime or constitute the new code.

The court closed the proceedings, observing that the petitioners' concerns had been addressed. It said that if there were any "hiccups" in the implementation of the new labour code after the formulation of the new rules, the petitioner could raise them in a petition at that stage.



Gupta said that on the first day of the programme, Surya Prakash Khatri, Poonam Bhardwaj and Anil Jha underwent medical examinations. Describing the initiative as a positive and necessary step, he said public representatives are required to remain actively engaged with people and therefore must prioritise their health. He remarked that effective public service is possible only when representatives are physically fit, mentally healthy and emotionally balanced.

He further stated that the programme will run for two weeks, from February 2 to February 14, and that five MLAs are expected to participate daily with enthusiasm.

Stressing the importance of preventive healthcare, Gupta said regular health check-ups become especially important after the age of 40, when early detection and prevention of health issues can significantly improve long-term well-being.

Jailed gangster plots killing of key witness

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Police on Monday claimed it had foiled a conspiracy of a targeted killing of a key prosecution witness, allegedly hatched inside Mandi Jail, and arrested four persons in this connection. The alleged mastermind Irfan alias Chhenu Pehalwan, an incarcerated gangster, and his three associates -- Adeeb (22), Farman and Usman -- have been arrested, police said.

"The plot was uncovered following secret information about a plan to eliminate a crucial witness in a pending case. Acting on the input, police conducted a raid

on Shastri Park on the night of January 24," a senior officer said. Adeeb, a resident of Chauhan Banger, was arrested during the operation. A semi-automatic pistol and five live cartridges were recovered from his possession, and a case under the Arms Act was registered, police said.

During interrogation, Adeeb allegedly disclosed that the weapon had been procured for a murder ordered by Irfan alias Chhenu Pehalwan, currently lodged in Mandi Jail. He also named his associates Farman and Aamir, who were allegedly roped into the conspiracy, police said.

According to police, a constable was on routine patrolling in the early hours of January 27 noticed a motorcycle carrying three youngsters collide with a stationary car. On seeing the police approaching, the trio allegedly became nervous and tried to flee. Sensing something amiss, the

constable chased them and managed to nab one of the riders, while the other two escaped on the motorcycle, police said.

During a search, police recovered three mobile phones from the accused and further investigation revealed that one of the phones was linked to a snatching case registered at Moti Nagar police station, while another was connected to a similar case in Lahori Gate police station, police said. According to the police, the accused failed to produce ownership documents for the third phone.

Two more sent to jail in counterfeit footwear racket

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi Police has arrested two more persons, including a technical support provider and an assembling unit operator, in a continued crackdown on a counterfeit shoes racket, officials said on Monday. The accused, identified as Idu Ansari alias Raju (30) and Pintu (40), were arrested in separate operations, they said. The arrests come days after police unearthed a manufacturing unit in northeast Delhi's Sonia Vihar on January 28. The unit was allegedly producing duplicate shoes of international brands. Its owner, Sandeep Singh (44), was arrested earlier and police seized heavy machinery and materials from the site.

During the investigation into the case registered under sections related to cheating,



forgery and the Copyright Act, police teams conducted raids across various locations in the city based on information provided by Singh.

The accused, Ansari, was arrested from Nangloi. Police said Ansari is a graphic designer who allegedly designed and manufactured counterfeit dies used for printing brand names and logos on the fake footwear. He then supplied them to the main accused. Police seized a computer system containing digital sketches of counterfeit dies, two industrial machines and two pen drives with digital data at his instance.

2 airports, nine helipads identified in HP under UDAN scheme: Center

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE government on Monday informed the Rajya Sabha that two airports and nine helipads have been identified in Himachal Pradesh for operating flights under the UDAN scheme providing air connectivity to remote areas. The Regional Connectivity Scheme-Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (RCS-UDAN) was launched in 2016 with an aim to enhancing regional air connectivity to remote and unserved areas of the country through a demand based bidding mechanism that incentivises airlines to connect

tier three cities, where we were able to establish the airports, but the connectivity was still a challenge".

Through this scheme, he said the government has been able to operationalise 657 routes, and 1.59 crore passengers have travelled in these routes also. "So the success of this UDAN story needs to be continued,



because we are in the plan of opening up more airports in the country. So it is a necessity that UDAN needs to be extended," the minister said. Naidu said the government has been making changes in the scheme based on the feedback from stakeholders.

"I am very thankful to

going to be given a priority in establishing regional connectivity," the minister said. Naidu said Himachal Pradesh and to the extent Shimla is going to be there in the extended UDAN also. "Under the UDAN scheme, two airports and nine helipads have been identified in the state of Himachal Pradesh for development and operation of RCS flights," the minister said. A total of 38 RCS routes have been operationalised, connecting 6 aerodromes namely Shimla, Kullu, Rampur (Heliport), Mandi (Heliport), Reckong Peo (Heliport) and Sanjauli (Heliport) in Himachal Pradesh.

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Interesting insights emerge on human lifespan

IFE 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 modelling and analyses of twin cohorts raised together and apart to cor-

rect 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 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

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BENGALURU ONLINE

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.

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



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, Ganti 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,

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 madri 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 environment.

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)



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.

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, Bhadrak, 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 economic 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

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 “experi-

ence.” They want to witness the rhythmic beats of the Gusadi 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 cultivate “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.

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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.

On infrastructure, Krishna Babu informed that road development works covering 10,700 km are underway across the State.

Funds of Rs.3,000 crore will be released in phases—Rs.1,000 crore by the end of March, Rs.1,500 crore by the end of June, and Rs.500 crore by the end of July—for road repairs, development, maintenance, and allied works. He said the Chief Minister has clarified that the initiative would expedite the development and repair of key highways and help resolve pending infrastructure issues, with the objective of providing safer and improved transportation facilities to the public. APSRTC executive directors K S Brahma Reddy (administration), G V Ravi Varma (engineering), A Appala Raju (operations), FA & CAO Sudhakar Rao and others were present.

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 Nalapadu 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.

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 Nalapadu 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

CPI ditches Congress for Kothagudem civic elections

THE RULING PARTY STRIKES ALLIANCE WITH CPM

KOLISHETTY
VENKATESHWARLU
HYDERABAD



IN a significant twist in alliance politics during the ongoing municipal elections, the CPI has extended only an "empty hand" to the ruling Congress, while the Congress has instead forged an understanding with the CPM, particularly in the Kothagudem Municipal Corporation where the CPI is considered strong.

While the CPI and Congress are contesting the municipal polls in alliance in parts of North Telangana, including Mancherial Municipal Corporation, the tie-up has broken down in Kothagudem.

The two parties had allied in the Assembly and Parliament elections, in which the CPI won the lone Kothagudem Assembly seat.

However, the alliance did not continue during the sarpanch elections, where the CPI contested independently, winning 40 sarpanch posts and securing more votes than the Congress in the constituency.

In the Kothagudem Municipal Corporation, the CPI demanded 30 of the 60 divisions, citing its organisational strength. The Congress offered 20 to 25 seats, a proposal the CPI rejected, arguing that it was unfair for Congress to dictate terms in an area where the CPI has a stronger base. CPI leaders maintained that, "as per dharma," they should decide seat-sharing in Kothagudem, alleging that the Congress was taking decisions even in areas where it is weak.

Amid the deadlock, the Congress entered into an alliance with the CPM in

Kothagudem, allotting two divisions to the CPM and contesting the remaining 58 divisions. Apart from Congress and CPI, the BRS is also in the fray. Meanwhile, the CPI is understood to have entered into a friendly arrangement with the TDP, which has considerable influence in the constituency, with several TDP leaders filing nominations.

The alliance impasse has also affected other municipalities.

In Edulapuram municipality of Palair constituency, represented by Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, the CPI fielded candidates in 15 wards, while the Congress contested all 32 wards. In Madhira municipality, the CPI fielded five candidates, with Congress contesting all wards after alliance talks failed. A similar situation prevails in Satupally municipality, where the CPI is contesting independently.

Meanwhile, both CPI and CPM have given a free hand to their local leadership to decide on alliances in the mu-

nicipal elections, as was done during the sarpanch polls. With this autonomy, local leaders are engaging in tactical arrangements with Congress and the BRS based on local political equations.

Responding to the CPI's stance, Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said the Congress party would always keep its doors open to like-minded parties.

He added that the party was willing to work with any political force that comes forward without making unreasonable demands, as it has done in the past.

A close associate of CPI State Secretary and party's lone MLA Kunnamneni Sambasivarao said the party is contesting independently in Kothagudem. He clarified that the TDP is extending support to the CPI and that TDP candidates are also contesting in a few divisions in Kothagudem Municipal Corporation. It is learnt that the CPI is firm on its stand to win the Kothagudem Municipal Corporation mayor's post at any cost.

BACKLASH AGAINST YSRCP LEADERS

Jagan accuses Naidu govt of anarchy, warns of public rebellion

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 (NDB) 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

Give B-Forms only to winning horses, Revanth prods TG Cong

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

MAKING it clear that leaders should take responsibility for the victory of candidates if they want to recommend them for the ongoing municipal elections, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy said

that the party should give B-forms only to winning candidates. The Chief Minister exuded confidence that the party is going to win the elections with a good majority as all surveys have come in favour of the Congress party.

While participating in a Zoom meeting on Monday,

along with AICC in-charge general secretary Meenakshi Natarajan, TPCC chief B Mahesh Kumar Goud, and other Ministers, Political Advisory Committee (PAC) members and DCC presidents, CM Revanth Reddy said that all leaders should work together diligently,

taking the municipal elections as a challenge since the polls are being held on party symbols. The Chief Minister suggested that leaders prepare a local manifesto and go to the people to explain the party's programmes and initiatives.

JANA SMALL FINANCE BANK (A Scheduled Commercial Bank)

Registered Office: The Fairway, Ground & First Floor, Survey No.10/1, 112 & 12/2B, Off Domlur, Koramangala Inner Ring Road, Next to EGL Business Park, Challaghatta, Bangalore-560071.

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR AUCTION OF GOLD ORNAMENTS

The below mentioned borrowers have failed to repay the loan and redeem the gold ornaments within the stipulated time in spite of several reminders. The Gold Jewellery/ornaments pledged under the said loan accounts by the below listed borrowers will be sold in public/ Online/ private auction at our Branch premises on 18.02.2026 at 10:30 AM. Those willing to participate are requested to contact the branch. The Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any bid without assigning any reason whatsoever. Please note if the auction does not get completed on the same day, the same will follow the subsequent days on the same terms and conditions. If the customer is deceased all the conditions pertaining to auction will be applicable to nominee/legal heir. The Borrower are hereby notified to pay the upto date interest and ancillary expenses before the date of auction, failing which the pledged gold ornaments will be sold and balance dues if any will be recovered with interest and cost. For any queries and terms and conditions contact branch. For details of branch address visit www.janabank.com.

Sr. No.	Loan Account No.	Name of Borrower/Co-Borrower	Gross Weight of Pledged Gold Ornaments
1	3206874000431	Saraswati Saraswati	8
2	3206873008413	Laljaiwahar Yadav	20.9
3	4527874000132	Varun Sharma	31.53
4	34038730021982	Seema Sharma	15.26
5	34038740001484	Dinesh Kumar	10
6	34038740001932	Rinku Chakravati	5.75
7	34038740001892	Faruk Husain	13.47
8	34038740001679	Kamlesh Ashok Kumar	31.54
9	34038740001853	Ruby Pandey	15.56
10	34038740001780	Sarvesh S	5
11	34038740001267	Raj R	19
12	34038730022206	Chandni Khattan	5.75
13	34038730022093	Amit Kumar	11.6
14	34038730022202	Ram Bharose	6.45
15	34038730021969	Nanna Ram	11.95
16	34038730021956	Munni M	8.5
17	3020874000970	Renu Rohtash	17.76
18	3020676000022	Jai Prakash	164.7
19	33698730009863	Dheeraj D	55.9
20	3369874000931	Manju Yadav	11.83
21	3369874000928	Priti .	15.44
22	3369874000891	Rahul R	32.09
23	3369874000776	Sunita Devi	33.52
24	3369874000687	Surender Singh	64.7
25	47918740002098	Reena Reena Reena	15.2
26	47918740002050	Mukesh Yadav	20.49
27	47918740002020	Rajbir Singh	8.1
28			

"If Pakistan does not have a valid reason to justify withdrawing from the big match (T20 WC) against India, or if they cannot show grounds for breaching the contract, then action will be taken by the ICC Board. However, it should be something that ensures no other team in the future also considers doing that,"

- Sunil Gavaskar

Squash on Fire Open in Washington Anahat wins maiden PSA Bronze-level title

WASHINGTON: 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.

This is the biggest title of young Anahat's career and her 15th overall on the PSA Tour, where the Indian world No. 31 has competed in 26 tournaments.

Kennedy had beaten Singh 3-0 in their only previous encounter at this season's Canadian Women's Open, and she made a strong start here, too, bringing up two game balls at 10-8 in the first.

But Anahat was then 3-2 down in game two, but from that moment on, barely took a step back, mixing her



game up well with attacking boasts, sharp kills and well-placed lobs.

A run of four straight points moved the teenager 6-3 in front, and she would only lose another two points in the game, moving within one game of glory.

A fast start to game three was always likely to be key to Kennedy's hopes of staging a comeback, but instead

it was Anahat who charged out of the blocks, moving 5-1 in front in less than two minutes.

5-1 soon became 10-6 and four match balls, and while the first came and went, Anahat would not have to wait long for her moment of glory, with a clinical forehand boast winner providing a fitting finale to a sensational week. "I'm extremely

happy. I knew I wanted to do well in these events, get my ranking up and also put on a performance, and I'm glad I was able to do that this time," Anahat said after her victory against the World No 10.

She has been in excellent form this season, reaching the semi-finals of the Silver-level Canadian Women's Open, finishing runner-up at the British Junior Open Under-19, helping India win the first-ever Squash World Cup, and claiming the Daly College Cup PSA title in Indore.

At the British Junior Open, she lost a tight four-game final to France's Lauren Baltayan (9-11, 11-7, 3-11, 9-11), marking her ninth BJO final across different age groups and underscoring her rising stature on the PSA Tour.

India qualify for Tent Pegging WC finals

NEW DELHI

INDIA on Monday qualified for the Tent Pegging World Cup Championships to be held in Jordan in November 2026 after a strong showing in the qualifying competition, where they won a total of six medals, including four team medals and two individual honours.

The Indian team comprised Dfr Sandeep Kumar, Dfr Dhanraj Sirsat, Dfr Bonge Ganesh Baliram and ASI Jitender Singh, all of whom contributed to the team medals across events.

Competing against traditional powerhouses such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Norway and Indonesia, the Indian contingent delivered a consistent performance across lance, sword and combined events to secure an overall bronze medal and confirm their place in the



World Cup finals in Jordan.

India opened their medal tally on January 29 with a team silver in the lance event, while Dfr Dhanraj Sirsat of the Rashtriya Rifles clinched an individual bronze in the same discipline.

The following day proved to be the highlight of the campaign as India struck gold in the team sword event. Sirsat added his second individual medal with a silver in the sword event, underlining his standout performance in the competition.

On January 31, the Indian team claimed bronze medals

in the combined Lemon & Pigs, Rings & Pigs and Relay events. The cumulative results earned India an overall team bronze, sealing qualification for the World Cup championships.

The team's coach-cum-manager Tarsem Singh Warraich, whose appointment caused a controversy as he is facing rape allegations, expressed satisfaction with the outcome, saying the sustained effort of the young riders has paid. "Each day we won a medal, our athletes were consistent. It's a team effort," said Warraich.

Tata Steel Masters Nodirbek wins title, Gukesh finishes joint 8th

WIJK AAN ZEE (THE NETHERLANDS): Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan clinched the Tata Steel Masters title with a black-piece victory against out-of-form Arjun Erigaisi while world chess champion D Gukesh emerged as the best Indian with a joint eighth finish as the tournament concluded here on Monday.

Gukesh drew with Vincent Keymer of Germany in the final round to end as the top performing Indian on 6.5 points. But, his fifty per cent score was below par and the Indian ace slipped below the 2750 rating mark.

R Praggnanandhaa also drew the last round with Jorden van Foreest of the Netherlands to end on 5.5 points and there are some lessons to be learnt for the Indian if the performance here is any indication ahead of the Candidates tournament.

Erigaisi had the biggest deficit in terms of rating as he lost a whopping 29 points to find himself out of top 10 in world rankings in a while.

In fact, Gukesh is the only Indian player ranked at number 10 on the live rating list and much to the surprise of the chess buffs, there is no Indian above 2750 ratings. Nodirbek scored a commendable nine points out of 13 games while his junior compatriot and World Cup winner Javokhir Sindarov made it an Uzbek domination by finishing second a half point behind.

Results Final round (Indians unless specified): R Praggnanandhaa (5.5) drew with Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 7.5); Arjun Erigaisi (4.5) lost to Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 9); Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 6.5) beat Aravindh Chithambaram (4.5); Thai Dai Van Nguyen (Cze 3) lost to Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 8.5); D Gukesh (6.5) drew with Vincent Keymer (Ger, 7.5); Matthias Bluebaum (Ger, 7) drew with Yagiz Kaan Erdogan (Tur, 7); Anish Giri (Ned, 6.5) drew with Hans Moke Niemann (Usa, 7.5).

India women brace for stiff test, men eye podium at Asia Team C'ships

QINGDAO (CHINA): A depleted Indian women's side will face an uphill task in defending its crown without talisman PV Sindhu, while the men will bank on a seasoned core to mount a strong podium challenge at the Badminton Asia Team Championships beginning here on Tuesday.

India had scripted history by clinching their maiden women's team gold in the last edition in Malaysia, but Sindhu's withdrawal due to a niggle has dealt a significant blow to their medal hopes.

The absence of the two-time Olympic medallist leaves the younger crop, led by Tanvi Sharma, with the responsibility of carrying the campaign.

The 17-year-old from Punjab was part of the champion team in 2024 although she didn't get to play any



games. In two years, Tanvi has emerged as the next big hope in women's singles with a silver medal at World Junior Championships in Guwahati, and a final finish at the US Open Super 300.

Unnati Hooda, 18, too, is coming into the tournament after a successful 2025 season where she achieved a career-high world ranking of No. 23 and defeated Sindhu at the China Open. The youngest Indian ever to win a BWF Super 100 title, Unnati ended 2025 with a title at the Odisha Masters.

T20 WC warm-up matches

Tilak, Mayank included in India 'A' squad

MUMBAI: Swashbuckling batter Tilak Varma was on Monday named in the India A squad for the T20 World Cup warm-up matches, while tearaway pacer Mayank Yadav returned after a long injury layoff.

Tilak, who has been cleared by the BCCI's Centre of Excellence (CoE) following a successful recovery from a groin injury, will feature in one of the two warm-up games before rejoining the senior national side. The left-handed batter will make a comeback to the national side after missing the recent T20 series against New Zealand, in which Shreyas Iyer was used as his replacement.

"Tilak Varma will feature in one warm-up match before joining the senior team," the BCCI said in a post on social media while announcing the squad. India A will take on the USA at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai on Monday before facing Namibia on Friday at the CoE in Bengaluru. Ayush Badoni will captain



the 15-member India A squad, which also includes Naman Dhir, Vipraj Nigam and Riyan Parag. Mayank, meanwhile, had been sidelined for over a year due to a stress fracture.

Defending champions India will begin their campaign against the USA on the opening day of the T20 World Cup on February 7.

India A squad: Ayush Badoni (c), Naman Dhir, Ashutosh Sharma, Priyansh Arya, N. Jagadeesan (wk), Tilak Varma, Riyan Parag, Manav Suthar, Ashok Sharma, Urvil Patel (wk), Gurjanpreet Singh, Vipraj Nigam, Ravi Bishnoi, Khaleel Ahmed, Mayank Yadav. (PTI)



VARUNI JAISWAL (GSM) and Swarnendu (AVSE) emerged as women and men singles titlists in the Telangana State Table Tennis League Championship at the GSM Table Tennis Academy, Secunderabad, from January 31 to February 2.

In a thrilling women's singles final, Varuni Jaiswal edged past Sri Saanvi (SPARS) 3-2 in a closely fought contest, winning 11-5, 8-11, 9-11, 11-9, 11-9. The third-place match saw Devires

(GSM) overcome G Pranitha (HVS) 3-2 (13-11, 9-11, 11-9, 9-11, 11-8). The men's singles final was equally competitive, with Swarnendu defeating Trishul Mehra (HDTT) 3-2 (11-6, 7-11, 11-8, 9-11, 11-8). Ali Mohammed (HDTT) secured third place by beating Vathsin B (GTTA) 3-1 (11-5, 11-4, 8-11, 11-9).

The three-day championship witnessed high-quality matches and strong participation, highlighting the growing standard of table tennis in Telangana.

'Pak's boycott of T20 WC against India pretty disgraceful'



NEW DELHI: Congress MP Shashi Tharoor criticised the politicisation of cricket, calling Pakistan's boycott of the T20 World Cup 2026 match against India "disgraceful" and urged all parties to "contact each other on an emergency basis" regarding the imbroglio.

Shashi Tharoor said cricket is being politicised and called it disgraceful after Pakistan's decision to boycott the T20 WC match against India, while also noting that Bangladesh's pacer Mustafizur Rahman should not have been denied his contract with Kolkata Knight Riders for the Indian Premier League (IPL) in the first place. He called Bangladesh's response to the Mustafizur situation an overreaction and noted that the whole T20 WC row is spiralling out of control.

"It is pretty disgraceful that sport has been politicised in this way on both sides, frankly. I don't think that Mustafizur (Bangladeshi cricketer Mustafizur Rahman) should have been denied his contract to play in Kolkata. It was most unfortunate. Intrusion of politics, I think the Bangladeshi reaction was an overreaction but it is also a reflection of the same and Pakistan is trying to show its solidarity with Bangladesh. This whole thing is spiralling out of control," Tharoor told reporters.

"I think we need to really need to come to an understanding that sports, especially a sport like Cricket which means so much to all the people, should be a means of bringing us together at least on the playing field, rather than allowing this to go on like this. I honestly think this is now a wake up call for all concerned to contact each other on an emergency basis, the ICC could be the platform for it - just say, let's call off this nonsense... You can't go on like this forever," Tharoor added.

Row over SC/ST Act

Bareilly ex-magistrate threatens Delhi stir

VARANASI: Former Bareilly city magistrate Alankar Agnihotri, suspended by the Uttar Pradesh government on charges of indiscipline, has said that he would stage a protest in Delhi from February 7 if the Centre does not withdraw the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The 2019-batch Provincial Civil Services (PCS) officer, who made headlines after resigning as the Bareilly city magistrate, made the announcement after meeting Swami Avimuktешwaranand Saraswati on Sunday at the Srividya Math located at Kedarghat here.

Agnihotri said several organisations of the upper-caste community would participate in the stir if the central government fails to withdraw the SC/ST Act by February 6.

Responding to questions on his meeting with Swami Avimuktешwaranand, who was allegedly prevented by the administration from taking a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam during Magh Mela

in Prayagraj on January 18, Agnihotri termed it a "fortunate coincidence" and not part of any political strategy.

He said Swami Avimuktешwaranand -- the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath in Uttarakhand -- had earlier invited him to Prayagraj, but he could not meet him due to lack of time.

"With his arrival in Kashi, I got the opportunity to meet him," he said. During his interaction with the media, Agnihotri said there was widespread resentment among people over the new University Grants Commission (UGC) rules.

"The core voter base is angry with the government," he said, describing the SC/ST Act, enacted in 1989, as the

"blackest law" in the country.

Agnihotri alleged that 85 per cent of the population was affected by the Act and claimed that 95 per cent of cases registered under it were false,

adding that upper-caste organisations across the country were backing his stand.

The Uttar Pradesh government

on January 26 suspended

Agnihotri, then posted as

Bareilly Nagar Magistrate, on charges of indiscipline.

Earlier the same day, he had resigned from his post, expressing displeasure over government policies,

particularly the new UGC

regulations and issues re-

lated to Swami Avimuktеш-

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The Uttar Pradesh government

on January 26 suspended

Agnihot

Affordable drugs, vaccines and diagnostics, supported by domestic biomanufacturing, would be a major social and economic support, especially for the middle class and vulnerable sections.

-Dr Jitendra Singh, Union MoS for Science and Technology



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.

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."

Xiaomi opens 15 service centres

Xiaomi announced the strategic expansion of its Premium Service Centre network in India with the launch of premium service centres across 15 new cities. Sudhin Mathur, COO, Xiaomi India, said: "The strong response to our first 10 Premium Service Centres reaffirmed that customers are increasingly value faster, more dependable, and experience-led after-sales support. As part of Xiaomi's value-for-experience strategy for 2026, the expansion into 15 additional cities is a natural next step."

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
- FIs 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.

INDIAWOOD event in B'luru from Feb 26

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

THE 26th edition of the biennial event INDIAWOOD 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 Aakash 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, along with 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."

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.

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To discourage misuse of tax arbitrage, promoters will be subject to an additional buyback 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.

Roop Bhootra, 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," Parizad Sirwalla, Partner and Head, Global Mobility Services-Tax, KPMG in India, said.

In market parlance, buyback 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.

NEW DELHI: Silver prices extended its steep fall for the third straight day, tumbling Rs 52,000 to Rs 2,60 lakh per kg in the national capital on Monday, while gold fell to Rs 1.52 lakh per 10 grams amid weak global trends and a firm US dollar. According to the All India Saraf Association, the white metal nosedived Rs 52,000, or nearly 17 per cent, to Rs 2,60,000 per kilogram. On Saturday, the metal tanked 19 per cent, or Rs 72,500, to Rs 3.12 lakh per kilogram. In the last three sessions, silver prices have fallen Rs 1,44,500, or nearly 36 per cent from Rs 4,04,500 per kg -- its all-time high -- recorded on January 29. Gold price of 99.9 per cent purity also bore the brunt of the sell-off, crashing by Rs 12,800, or 7.73 per cent, to Rs 1,52,700 per 10 grams. It had settled at Rs 1,65,500 per 10 grams in the previous session. Over the last three sessions, the metal has plunged Rs 30,300, or nearly 17 per cent, from its record high of Rs 1,83,000 per 10 grams on January 29, as investors rushed to book profits after a sharp rally.

Silver nosedives ₹52,000, gold plunges by ₹12,800

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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-

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 window is proposed for small foreign income/asset declaration, targeted at students, tech employees, 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 back-logs are now taxed as capital gains for all shareholders with an additional tax for the promoter 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)

Business

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%

NEW DELHI

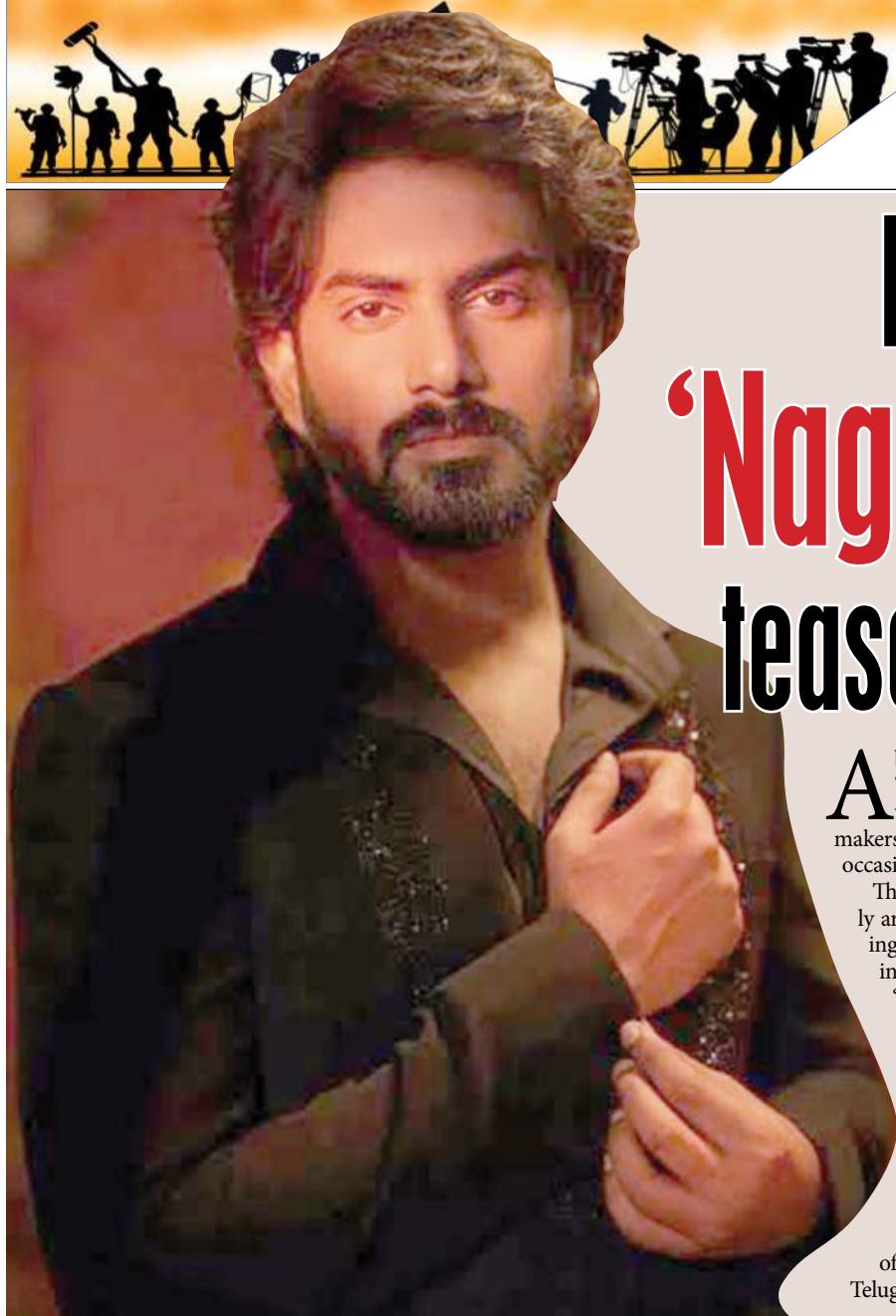


Banking and financial services was one major non-IT sector to see a decline, slipping 15 per cent (on-year). Meanwhile, the IT sector remained flat for the month. Within this landscape, AI/ML roles sustained strong momentum with a more than 34 per cent rise.

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 standout contributions. Foreign multinationals (MNCs) were a major force behind this surge, contributing more than an 80 per cent increase in hiring activity, said the report.



Pan-India 'Nagabandham' teaser announced

Abhishek Nama's much-anticipated mythological action drama 'Nagabandham', starring Virat Karrna, 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.

'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 'Ishqama', 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 Nuvve'. 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.

'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, Aaditya Suraj Singh, Kusuma Chandhaka, Shashikala, and Srijita 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



'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.



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 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.'

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.

