


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

The fourth edition of 'Ramayana Kalpavriksham,' presented by Shankarananda Kalakshetra and Natyarambha, featured a galaxy of performances, talks.

P8 EDIT

**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.

P6 CITY/REGION

**Union budget puts Tirupati district on high-growth path**

Tirupati district is set to benefit significantly from the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, with a series of proposals aimed at boosting spiritual tourism, improving transport connectivity.

P3 EDIT

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

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.

P4

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**WINDOWS**

**Mamata, along with 'SIR-affected' families, meets CEC**

NEW DELHI: Wearing black shawls as a mark of protest, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee along with some 'SIR-affected' families and party leaders on Monday met Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar here. Last week, CEC Kumar had given time to Banerjee, who has been demanding a halt to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in poll-bound West Bengal, for a meeting on Monday. Banerjee, who reached the national capital on Sunday, was being accompanied by Trinamool Congress MPs Abhishek Banerjee and Kalyan Banerjee, who is also an advocate.

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**Sports Ministry keen to revive Formula 1 in India**


NEW DELHI: The Sports Ministry is keen to bring Formula 1 back to the Buddh International Circuit soon and has already initiated dialogues with the track authorities to revive the race last held in India in 2013. According to a ministry source, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has already visited the circuit in Greater Noida and held talks with officials from Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority, the state run body which took control of the facility from the owners—the now bankrupt Jaypee Group. Adani is in fray to buy the troubled Jaypee Group and once that happens, the whole process of trying to get the race back in India may gain momentum. What is clear for now is that the central government wants the high-profile sport to return to the country. The India round was held for three seasons from 2011 to 2013 before being dropped from the Formula 1 calendar due to tax and bureaucratic issues.


**Iran President orders restart of nuclear talks with US**


# Maintaining law & order paramount for govt: CM

Naidu alleges YSRCP conspiracy to incite violence  
 Calls for restraint among Telugu Desam Party workers

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister and TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday said maintaining law and order is paramount and that no violation will be tolerated under any circumstances, irrespective of political affiliation.

The Chief Minister's remarks come in the wake of high drama over the weekend, which witnessed the arrest of senior YSRCP leader Ambati Ramababu in Guntur and also an alleged attack against Opposition party leader Jogi Ramesh's house in Vijayawada.

"Maintaining law and order is paramount, and that

no violation will be tolerated under any circumstances, irrespective of political affiliation," Naidu said. The Chief Minister took note of the incident involving protests held outside Ramesh's residence, following which the Ibrahimpatnam police registered a case on its own. Police have booked several TDP leaders from the Mylavaram

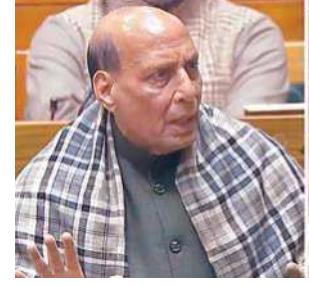
Assembly constituency in connection with the incident.

Naidu stated that the rule of law must prevail at all times and that political disagreements should be expressed only through democratic and constitutional means.

He also alleged that the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) was conspiring to incite violence and disturb law and order in Andhra Pradesh.

Addressing a teleconference with ministers and senior party leaders, the Chief Minister said that YSRCP leaders were resorting to provocative statements and abusive language out of frustration after losing power.

Continued on Page 7


**RAHUL GANDHI VS RAJNATH SINGH IN LS**

## Massive showdown over ex-army chief's memoir

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

The ruling party's leaders, including ministers, asked Gandhi to stop "speaking the language of anti-India elements".

While Gandhi said the government is "afraid" of a line that he wants to quote from the book and asserted that he would state that line in the Lower House, the BJP alleged that the Congress leader undermined the dignity of Parliament and hurt the morale of the Indian soldiers with his false accusations, in defiance of Speaker Om Birla's ruling.

Continued on Page 7

**PARL BEGINS DEBATE ON PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS**
REPORT  
P7

# ICC mulls suspending Pakistan as T20WC 'India boycott' row deepens

NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD



HOURS after the Pakistan government announced that the cricket team of the country will not play against India in the upcoming T20 World Cup, the ICC has warned to reconsider the stance, making the board aware of the long-term implications they might face as a result of boycotting the high-profile fixture.

The ICC issued a warning that the boycott could lead to punitive sanctions, including its suspension. "The ICC hopes that the PCB will consider the

significant and long-term implications for cricket in its own country as this is likely to impact the global cricket ecosystem, which it is itself a member and beneficiary of," the global body said in a

statement.

Pakistan on Sunday announced a boycott of its high-profile men's T20 World Cup group league match against India. "The Government of the Islamic

Republic of Pakistan grants approval to the Pakistan Cricket Team to participate in the ICC World T20 2026, however, the Pakistan Cricket Team shall not take the field in the match scheduled on February 15 against India," the government posted on social media.

"While the ICC respects the roles of governments in matters of national policy, this decision is not in the interest of the global game or the welfare of fans worldwide, including millions in Pakistan," the ICC further stated.

Continued on Page 7

Continued on Page 7

## Air India grounds flight after fuel switch moves from 'run' to 'cutoff'

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

AN Air India Boeing 787 Dreamliner was grounded after its left fuel control switch failed to stay in the 'run' position twice and moved to 'cutoff' during engine startup, an airline spokesperson said.

The flight AI 132 came from Heathrow to Bengaluru on Monday.

"We are aware that one of our pilots has reported a possible defect on the fuel control switch of a Boeing 787-8 aircraft," the Air India

Continued on Page 7

### MUSK, TRUMP, PRINCE ANDREW & BILL CLINTON Epstein files reveal hidden ties

NEW YORK



A massive tranche of three million pages of previously sealed Jeffrey Epstein documents has brought elite figures back into the spotlight. Some of the people named always maintained that they barely knew him; many others stated that they were repulsed by him from the start.

The latest files, including emails, letters and travel records, revealed Epstein

kept close ties with Hollywood stars, politicians, and industry leaders, even after he had been convicted of sex crimes in 2008.

Continued on Page 7

Elon Musk, Howard Lutnick, and Richard Branson are among those now under scrutiny.

# Guntur man bids Rs 2.08 cr for fancy vehicle number!

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMARAVATI

THE craze for fancy vehicle registration numbers in the Telugu states has once again come to light, with a resident of Guntur setting a new national record by purchasing India's most expensive number plate for whopping Rs 2.08 crore.

Kiran Kolapaka of Guntur won the online auction of the ultra-rare VIP registration number 'DDC 0001' (also known as DDC 001) for Rs 2.08 crore in January. This is the highest amount ever paid for a vehicle registration number in India. The auction was conducted

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**Revised IBC Bill in 2nd half of budget session: FM**

NEW DELHI: The Union government is likely to bring in the revised Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) Amendment Bill when Parliament re-assembles for budget session after recess, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday, signaling progress on the long-pending overhaul of India's insolvency framework.

"The select committee has submitted its report, and it is expected to be taken up in Parliament in the latter half of the current session after the House reconvenes following the recess," Sitharaman told the media during a post-budget briefing.

The remarks indicate that the government is preparing to move ahead with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2025, after factoring in the recommendations of the parliamentary panel.

deal was later cancelled due to non-payment. The plate was eventually resold for Rs 26.7 lakh. In comparison, the successful sale of 'DDC 0001' has now become the highest confirmed transaction in this segment.

Experts said the record-breaking sale reflects the rising demand for premium registration numbers as status symbols and collectible assets. Such numbers are increasingly viewed as a mark of prestige among business owners and automobile enthusiasts.

The Rs 2.08-crore sale has surpassed all previous benchmarks for registration number auctions in the country. In 2025, the 'HR 88 B 8888' plate was auctioned for Rs 1.17 crore, but the

# CPM calls 'Chalo Delhi' on March 24, slams Centre's 'anti-people' policies

- Party to hold nationwide mobilisation from March 9-20 ahead of 'Chalo Delhi' protest, targeting what it calls anti-people laws and policies of the Centre
- Politburo member Raghavulu terms Union Budget 'accounting jugglery,' flags cuts to welfare sectors, Polavaram funding drop, MGNREGS cost burden on states, and loan-driven Amaravati funding
- Questions NDA allies TDP and Jana Sena over Andhra Pradesh fund denial, criticises pro-corporate projects, and warns new Bills will hurt workers and farmers

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VIJAYAWADA

CPM politburo member B V Raghavulu announced that the party will stage a 'Chalo Delhi' protest on March 24, demanding withdrawal of what he termed the Centre's anti-people policies and laws. Ahead of this, a nationwide campaign from March 9 to 20 will be launched to mobilise public opinion.

The announcement came during the CPM state committee's two-day meeting at MBVK here, attended by po-



CPM politburo members B V Raghavulu and U Vasuki, along with state secretary V Srinivasa Rao, at the two-day state committee meet in Vijayawada on Monday

—

CPM politburo member B V Raghavulu described the Union Budget as "deceptive accounting jugglery," alleging that allocations to key sectors and welfare schemes were slashed. He accused the Centre of manipulating figures by comparing allocations with revised expenditure estimates, creating an illusion of higher spending.

Citing examples, he noted that Polavaram project funding fell from over Rs 5,000

Raghavulu alleged that de-

crore last year to Rs 3,320 crore, warning that completion could take decades. He also criticised replacing Amaravati funds with loans, forcing dependence on borrowings. On MGNREGS, he said though Rs 95,000 crore was allocated, states must bear 40% of costs, calling it "fraudulent."

Raghavulu alleged that de-

spite TDP and Jana Sena's alliance with the NDA, Andhra Pradesh continues to face injustice in fund allocation. He questioned CM Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan over their failure to secure resources.

He further criticised industrial corridors and semiconductor projects as benefiting corporates rather than gener-

ating local employment. He warned that new Bills on labour, electricity, seeds, nuclear liability, and geo-spatial issues would harm workers and farmers. Condemning recent political violence, Raghavulu urged parties to end abusive language and attacks, stressing that democracy can only survive through constructive debate and public trust.

## Don't turn AP into a 'Ravana Kashtam': CPI

CPI state secretary Eswaraiah alleges that mutual attacks by TDP and YSRCP are aimed at diverting attention from people's issues

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA



G Eswaraiah

houses and offices, prolonged detentions even in the presence of women, and the apparent inaction of the police. He said there was little difference between the previous YSRCP regime and the present TDP-led government in terms of governance style. He warned that political violence, irrespective of who was in power, would erode democratic values.

The CPI leader stressed that the state is not a private estate or a rowdy arena, and demanded that both ruling and opposition parties focus on real issues such as unemployment, education, healthcare, agrarian distress, remunerative crop prices, labour rights, and overall development.

He urged political parties to exercise restraint, uphold democratic decorum, and act responsibly, warning that people were closely watching their conduct and would respond at the appropriate time.

mocracy itself appeared to be hanging its head in shame.

Criticising the politicisation of sensitive spiritual issues such as the Tirupati laddu, he said such actions reflected a lack of maturity and responsibility on the part of political leaders. Instead of addressing people's concerns, both parties were resorting to personal attacks to conceal their failures and anti-people policies, which he described as highly deplorable.

Eswaraiah expressed serious concern over attacks on

**Rs 10,000 cr allocated to AP rail projects in Budget: Vaishnaw**

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

ANDHRA Pradesh has been allocated a record outlay of over Rs 10,000 crore for railway projects in the Union Budget for fiscal 2026-27, railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. "Infrastructure projects worth Rs 93,649 crore are underway in Andhra Pradesh and a record budget allocation of Rs 10,134 crore has been made for the state for the year 2026-27," Vaishnaw was quoted as saying in a press release issued by the Vijayawada division of the South Central Railway (SCR).

The railway network in the southern state has achieved 100 percent electrification, the minister added. Observing that seven high-speed rail corridors were announced across the country in the budget, he said two of those, Hyderabad - Bengaluru and Hyderabad - Chennai, will traverse through the state.

## Pawan raps JSP leaders over silence on ghee issue

**Deputy CM says party failing to counter YSRCP attacks**

HANS NEWS SERVICE



JANA Sena Party president and Deputy chief minister K Pawan Kalyan on Monday expressed strong displeasure with party leaders for failing to effectively counter the YSRCP's criticism against him over the Tirumala laddu issue. At the party's general body meeting held at the Jana Sena office in Mangalagiri, Pawan Kalyan reacted sharply to the conduct of party MLAs, ministers, and Political Affairs Committee (PAC) members, questioning their silence despite sustained attacks from the YSRCP.

Citing the ICAR-NDRI report, which stated that no animal fat was found in the Tirumala laddu samples, the YSRCP has been targeting Pawan Kalyan. The opposition party has alleged that he had earlier spread false propaganda about animal fat being mixed in the laddus and had also made false claims regarding laddus sent to Ayodhya.

The Deputy CM cautioned party leaders against falling into what he described as the

Against this backdrop, Pawan said he was facing intense criticism from the YSRCP, while Janasena leaders were not responding adequately. "Even with so much happening regarding the Tirumala laddu issue, why is no one speaking up? Do I have to answer everything? If that is the case, why are you here as MLAs and ministers?" he asked. "If I have to speak about everything, then what are you here for?" he remarked, expressing dissatisfaction over their silence.

The Deputy CM cautioned party leaders against falling into what he described as the

YSRCP's trap. He said opposition leaders were resorting to personal attacks and advised Jana Sena members to remain vigilant. He instructed them to counter criticism with facts and ideological clarity and warned that YSRCP leaders might target them and their family members. He urged party leaders to respond only on policy, ideology, and subject-related matters and avoid personal controversies.

Pawan made it clear that the party should not suffer setbacks due to the personal affairs of individual leaders and stressed the need for disciplined public conduct.

## Kollu blames anger against YSRCP for attack against Ambati

- The excise minister says attack on Rambabu reflects growing resentment against 'corrupt YSRCP'
- Rejects caste angle, calls comparisons with Vangaveeti Ranga 'shameful' and accuses YSRCP of provoking divisions
- Alleges misdeeds by YSRCP leaders, warns of legal action, and claims Jagan Reddy is plotting unrest in the state

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

EXCISE minister Kollu Ravindra on Monday said the attack on YSRCP leader Ambati Rambabu was the result of growing public anger against the party. Speaking to the media in Machilipatnam, the minister said public resentment against the "corrupt YSRCP" was increasing by the day and accused the party of provoking caste and religious sentiments as it was unable to face people's anger.

He strongly objected to comparisons being made between Rambabu and late leader Vangaveeti Mohana Ranga, calling such remarks shameful. "What was Ranga's stature as a leader who stood for the people, and what is the stature

of Rambabu, who speaks irresponsibly on the streets?" he said. Ravindra said it was disgraceful to attribute the attack on Ambati Rambabu to caste when it was a spontaneous expression of public outrage.

The minister urged people to note YSRCP's "devious attempts" to gain political mileage by giving caste colour to incidents. He said YSRCP leaders had no moral right to criticise Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and minister Nara Lokesh, adding that Rambabu was being widely criticised by the public. He claimed the ruling coalition was exercising restraint despite what he termed as "shameful conduct" by YSRCP leaders, and alleged that former chief minister Jagan



Excise minister Kollu Ravindra addressing a meeting of TDP leaders in Machilipatnam on Monday

ward Classes (BCs) as ironic, Ravindra asked where he was when BCs faced attacks and arrests during the previous YSRCP regime.

The minister said the government was committed to maintaining law and order and warned that cases would be filed and legal action taken against every YSRCP leader found guilty of wrongdoing. He earlier addressed a meeting of TDP leaders and in-charges of various wings.

Mohan Reddy was conspiring to create unrest in the state.

Ravindra also lashed out at YSRCP leader Perni Venkataiah alias Nani, accusing him of speaking without shame after allegedly misappropriating rice meant for the poor.

He further criticised former minister Jogi Ramesh, alleging that he had endangered public lives through spurious liquor. Terming Jogi Ramesh's claims of speaking for Back-

## Gunadala Matha Utsavams from Feb 9

**Elaborate arrangements are being made for the 102nd annual Gunadala Lourdes Matha Maha Utsavams, scheduled to be held for three days**

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

VIJAYAWADA Catholic Diocese Bishop Rev Dr Telagathotu Joseph Raja Rao has said that elaborate arrangements are being made for the 102nd annual Gunadala Lourdes Matha Maha Utsavams, scheduled to be held for three days from February 9 to 11.

He said that more than 10 lakh devotees from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and other states are expected to attend the annual festival.

In view of the upcoming celebrations, Bishop Joseph Raja Rao, along with Monsignor Muvvala Prasad and

other clergy, unveiled the festival poster at the Gunadala Social Service Centre in Vijayawada on Monday. Later, the bishop also laid foundation stones for new residential complexes near the Centenary Church, intended for the benefit of priests and devotees visiting the shrine.

Addressing a press conference, Bishop Raja Rao said that comprehensive arrangements are being put in place to ensure the smooth and orderly conduct of the three-day festival. He informed that several bishops from the Visakhapatnam Archdiocese, along with bishops from the dioceses of Nellore, Kadapa, Kurnool, Guntur, and others, would attend the celebra-



Vijayawada Catholic Diocese Bishop Rev Dr Telagathotu Joseph Raja Rao, along with Monsignor Muvvala Prasad and festival committee members, releasing the poster for the 102nd Gunadala Lourdes Matha Utsavams in Vijayawada on Monday

tions as chief guests. Vicar General Meshapam Gabriel, Education Desk Director Father Kolakani Marianna, Social Service Centre Director Father Thota Sunil Raju, and others were present at the press meet.

## Govt move to halt hike in land market value hailed

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

THE Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI), Andhra Pradesh has welcomed the State government's decision to suspend the proposed hike in land market values, saying it will ease the registration burden on home-buyers and boost liquidity in the real estate sector.

In a statement issued on Monday, CREDAI AP Chairman Buddiga Srinivasu, Presi-

dent Bayana Srinivasa Rao, and General Secretary Dasari Rambabu expressed gratitude to the NDA-led state government for the timely intervention, which they said would help accelerate real estate activity across the State. They noted that halting the increase in market values will particularly benefit middle and lower-income homebuyers by preventing additional financial pressure during property registration. The leaders also applauded the Union Government for presenting a

growth-oriented Budget that provides a major boost to the construction and real estate sectors. They highlighted the increased allocation for infrastructure development and the announcement of a one-crore housing target under PMAY-Urban 2.0 as confidence boosters for developers.

Furthermore, they urged the Centre to revise the definition of "affordable housing," noting that existing parameters fixed nearly eight years ago are no longer viable due to inflation.

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State level coordinator N Bhaskara Reddy addressing participants during the launch of SAKSHAM 2026 fuel conservation campaign at the Tummalapalivari Kshetrayya Kalakshetram in Vijayawada on Monday

February 1, will conclude on February 15.

The state-level inauguration of SAKSHAM 2026 was held at Tummalapalivari Kshetrayya Kalakshetram in Vijayawada. The campaign was formally launched, and a fuel conservation pledge was administered by State Level Coordinator (SLC) for the oil industry, N Bhaskara Reddy, along with senior officials

of petroleum products, and sustainable energy practices.

He added that the campaign would engage different segments of society through people-centric activities such as cycloths, walkathons, CNG auto and car rallies, training programmes for LPG delivery personnel, group interactions with homemakers, students, and college youth, vehicle emission checks, and technical workshops on oil and gas conservation.

T Bhaskara Rao, divisional LPD head of Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Vijayawada, stressed the need to conserve petroleum products in view of rising demand due to the rapid increase in vehicles. C T Venugopal, BPCL, Vijayawada territory manager

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**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH SAMGRA SHIKSHA**  
Notification for Expression of Interest  
(RFB No.SS/5/2026-GCDO, Dt.01-12-2026)  
The State Project Director, Samgra Shiksha, Andhra Pradesh invited applications from the interested firms/agencies to participate in Request for Bid (RFB) for Procurement and Supply Sanitary Incinerator with Smoke Eliminator under Samgra Shiksha & PM SHRI Schemes for AY 2025-26. The details can be seen in the e-procurement portal at <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> from 03.02.2026 by 11.00 AM  
Sd/- B. Srinivasa Rao, I.A.S.,  
State Project Director, Samgra Shiksha  
DIPR R.O.No.4786-PP/CL/ADVT/1/1/2021-22, Dt: 02.02.26

- Fortnight-long campaign aims to spread awareness on efficient fuel use and sustainable energy practices
- Activities include cycloths, walkathons, rallies, training for LPG staff, student interactions, emission checks and technical workshops
- Officials stress on renewable fuels, electric vehicles, and reducing crude oil imports; students awarded for conservation-themed drawings

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

SAKSHAM 2026 (Sankrashan Kshamta Mahotsav), the flagship fuel conservation campaign of the ministry of petroleum and natural gas, Government of India, was launched in Andhra Pradesh on Monday. The fortnight-long awareness campaign, which began on

from various Oil Marketing Companies.

Addressing the gathering, Bhaskara Reddy said SAKSH-

(LPG), advocated the use of renewable, clean, and green fuels and electric vehicles for transportation.

GAIL DGM S K Tiwari called upon students to act as ambassadors of energy conservation, while Pankaj S Chaudhary, DGM (LPG), HPCL, highlighted the importance of fuel conservation for environmental protection and reducing India's dependence on crude oil imports.

Prizes were distributed to school students who won drawing competitions on the conservation theme. A large number of students and stakeholders participated in the event. HPCL senior sales manager N Murali Krishna and other officials were also present.



# 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.

## BACKLASH AGAINST YSRCP LEADERS

### Jagan accuses Naidu govt of anarchy, warns of public rebellion

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

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

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

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

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

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

"When Central govern-



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

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

would soon erupt against the ruling dispensation. "In the coming days, the flames of people's anger will reduce your government to ashes," he said. Issuing a direct warning to Chief Minister Naidu, Jagan said history had repeatedly shown that governments which relied on force and intimidation never survived.

"In a democracy, the hand that lights the fire of violence will inevitably get burned. Anarchic rule will come to an end. The jungle raj you created will be buried," he wrote. He also asserted that political power gained through fear would not last and that democratic resistance would ultimately prevail.

## LADDU GHEE CASE

### CBI chargesheet sparks fresh political row

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

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI  
TIRUPATI



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

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

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

According to the SIT findings, Bhole Baba Dairy is the prime accused in the adulteration case and had supplied ghee to the TTD even during the TDP regime. Bhumana also alleged that Premier Dairy, another key accused, was repeatedly granted approval to supply ghee during the same period.

# Primary focus should be on financial success: Khushbu

RANI DEVARLA  
VIJAKHAPATNAM

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

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

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

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

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

**Creative Tech Revolution**

Bringing experts from anima-



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Handlooms to High Streets:** Centred on 'Handlooms to High Streets: Transforming Heritage

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

**Culinary Crossing Borders**

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

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

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

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

**IN BRIEF**  
Notices issued to  
over 500 PG  
accommodations

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

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

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

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

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

### Tattoo artist tied up, assaulted and shot with air gun

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
MANGALURU

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

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

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

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



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

Critics, including BJP leaders, seized on the discrepancy to highlight what they call a "law enforcement vacuum" under Congress stewardship. Barely a month later, on January 28, 2026, the NCB struck again, this time in Mysuru, the political stronghold of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Intervening an

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

The trail led to a covert lab in Mysuru's Hebbal Industrial Area, masquerading as a chemical cleaning plant.

Equipped with advanced machinery, the facility yielded over 500 kg of raw materials, Rs. 25.6 lakh in cash, and additional contraband. The ringleader, Mahindra Kumar Vishnoi from Surat, reportedly honed his craft during prior imprisonment, establishing the operation post-bail.

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

findings.

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

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

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

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

## 'Akka Pade' squad empowers girls, conducts awareness campaign



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
CHIKKAMAGALURU

LOCAL authorities in Chikkamagaluru took a significant initiative to bolster safety awareness among young female students,

hosting a dedicated session through the 'Akka Pade' program at the PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya.

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

Key discussions revolved around digital security prac-

tices, potential hazards in virtual environments, and the necessity of following road safety guidelines.

Officers engaged personally with the attendees, encouraging them to feel empowered in recognising and reporting issues.

Translating to "Elder Sister Squad" in Kannada, 'Akka Pade' represents a comprehensive effort by the Karnataka State Police, involving female law enforcers, auxiliary guards, and occasionally National Cadet Corps members.

Rolled out progressively in districts starting from the end of 2025 and gaining momentum this year, the squad prioritises swift intervention for females and youngsters at risk, alongside awareness campaigns in educational institutions, higher learning

centers, and public areas.

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

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

## NSUI leader survives sword attack

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
UDUPI



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BENGALURU

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

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

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

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

information available to me, more than 15 lakh migrants have settled in the state. Of these, over six lakh migrants are residing in and around Bengaluru city. As a result, they have been successful in taking away employment opportunities from workers who have migrated to Bengaluru from various rural parts of our own state," Ashoka claimed.

Some of those who have been settled here for decades are also involved in criminal activities in the state.

There are reports that the

High Court has denied bail to an accused who was caught after creating fake documents.

Of these, over six lakh migrants are residing in and around Bengaluru city. As a result, they have been successful in taking away employment opportunities from workers who have migrated to Bengaluru from various rural parts of our own state," Ashoka claimed.

As per the information available to me, police are allegedly collecting monthly bribes from infiltration camps.

They are also reportedly taking monthly bribes from landowners who have provided shelter to these illegal settlers.

Illegal electricity connections have also been provided to these settlements," Ashoka noted.

"There are reports of an incident in which a woman

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

Bharat by 2047.

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

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

## Union Budget reflects vision of 'Amrit Kaal': KATEEL



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
MANGALURU

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

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

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

tions the Chief Minister's participation in GST Council meetings. He said Karnataka would benefit from central budget allocations across sectors such as agriculture, railways, fisheries, women's self-help groups, logistics hubs and inland water transport. Bengaluru has been included in the Urban Economic Zone programme, under which the city will receive Rs 5,000 crore over five years for development.

Highlighting the fisheries sector, KATEEL said the Union Budget 2026-27 earmarked a record Rs 7,61,800 crore, including Rs 2,530 crore for scheme-based initiatives and Rs 2,500 crore under the Pradhani Mantri Mysa Sampada Yojana. Measures include integrated development of 500 reservoirs and Amrit Sarovars to strengthen the fisheries value chain.

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

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

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# 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,

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

### Lakes turn drains; rivers become sewers:

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

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

### From wells to water bubbles:

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

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

This is not a consumer



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

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

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

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

### 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.

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

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

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

# Frequent conduct of tribal festivals can propel TG and AP economies

NOMULA SRINIVAS RAO

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, reverentially deemed as the 'Kumbh Mela of the south', is not merely a religious congregation; it is a seismic cultural event.

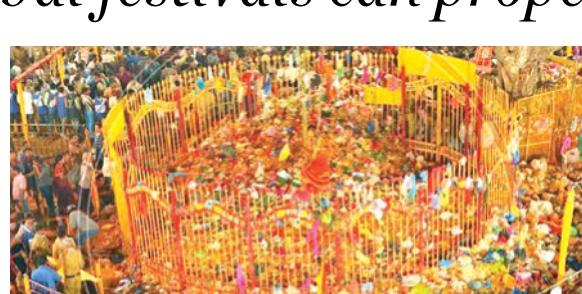
For a brief, intense period of 10 to 12 days, the forest transforms into a sea of humanity. Over one crore pilgrims traverse difficult terrains, thousands of buses ply continuously, and tons of 'bangaram' (pure jaggery) are offered to the deities.

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 activity.”

### 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-

ential travel.” 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.

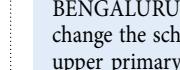
### The path ahead:

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)



**BENGALURU ONLINE**

**Govt changes timing**

CEF South-Creativity is the new economy

# MSME Minister highlights AP's visionary growth model

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

VASU POTNURU

VIJAYAWADA



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

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

thinking has the potential to build strong and sustainable economies.

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

tatives, modern agricultural practices, micro-education reforms, and reliable power supply for farming."

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

Srinivas stressed.

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



MSME Minister Kondapalli Srinivas speaking at the CEF South organised by The Hans India and CEF in Visakhapatnam

## Int'l Fleet Review, Milan-2026 to be held in Vizag on Feb 18&19

- Ships from 19 nations, 4,000 delegates to participate
- President, Governor, Chief Minister, defence minister will attend the event
- State govt assures full cooperation to ensure the successful conduct of both events
- Chief of staff, vice admiral along with senior naval officers met CS Vijayanand

HANS NEWS SERVICE VIJAYAWADA



Chief of Staff, Eastern Naval Command, the Vice Admiral Sushil Menon, along with senior naval officers, meet chief secretary K Vijayanand to review preparations for International Fleet Review, at the Secretariat on Monday

United States, Germany, and France would also participate. From India, around 90 ships, 45 aircraft, and nearly 600 delegates are expected to take part. The events will be held along the Visakhapatnam coastline on February 18 and 19. President Droupadi Murmu, Governor Justice S Abdul Nazeer, and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will attend the International Fleet Review, while defence minister Rajnath Singh will participate in Milan-2026. The Chief Minister and other dignitaries will also take part in the International City Parade.

Milan is a multinational naval exercise aimed at strengthening mutual cooperation and enhancing maritime capabilities. Naval forces from various countries also participate. Key warships and submarines take part in the programme.

During the meeting, Vice Admiral Menon informed that ships from 19 countries, including Sri Lanka and Iran, would take part in the IFR, along with nearly 4,000 delegates. He said three ships and about 150 delegates from the

to ensure foolproof security and logistical facilities.

The President of India reviews the operational preparedness and capabilities of the Navy once during his tenure through the President's Fleet Review. In the International Fleet Review, warships from friendly and neighbouring countries also participate. Key warships and submarines take part in the programme.

Chief secretary K Vijayanand assured full cooperation from the State government to ensure the successful conduct of both events. He instructed officials of various departments to make necessary arrangements, especially in view of the presence of VVIPs. He also directed them

to ensure foolproof security and logistical facilities.

Principal secretary, GAD, J Shyamala Rao, protocol additional director Mohan Rao, special chief secretary Krishna Babu, and IG operations CH Srikant participated.

## Two AP veterinarians bag national award



HANS NEWS SERVICE VIJAYAWADA

TWO veterinary officers from Andhra Pradesh have been selected for the prestigious Dr C M Singh Shashwat Gaurav Ratna Samman 2025 national award by the Veterinary Association of India (VAI). The awardees are Dr Nallapati Jagat Srinivas, Deputy Director of On-

## ICC mulls suspending Pakistan as T20WC 'India boycott' row deepens

Continued from P1

Meanwhile, Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha on Monday said the players will follow whatever instructions are given to them by the government or the cricket board with regards to boycotting the marquee T20 World Cup match against India on February 15 in Colombo.

Salman told the media before leaving with the team from Lahore to Colombo that the players

had been informed about the decision by the team manager on Sunday immediately after the match

against Australia. "We are players contracted to the Board and whatever decision our government and Board have taken all the players are on board with it," he said.

Salman said that the T20 World Cup was not just about playing against India and the team was going to Sri Lanka with the aim to perform well and try to win all its matches against every side in the tournament. "We have three other group matches so we will try to win all of them and qualify for next round," he said.

Leader's remarks, the US President said that he was hopeful both the nations will make a deal. "Hopefully, we'll make a deal. If we don't make a deal, then we'll find out whether he was right," Trump said while talking to reporters. Even though Iran and the United States have been at odds for quite some time, the recent

escalation in tensions between the two nations was triggered by the anti-government protests in Iran during which, thousands of people reportedly died during crackdown on demonstrators, which prompted the US President to intervene and warn Iran against taking action against

protesters.

## Parl begins debate on President's Address

NEW DELHI

THE Rajya Sabha has taken up discussion on the motion of thanks on the President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint sitting of both the Houses of Parliament.

A total of 16 hours has been allotted for the discussion. Moving the motion, Nominated Member C Sadanandan Master said, President Murmu in her address has articulated a clear and confident vision of India's journeys towards Viksit Bharat.

Salman said that the NDA government has been very clear about social justice and poverty eradication.

The MP said, Viksit Bharat can be built only with the basic strategy Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas. He said, Government was able to bring 25 crore people out of poverty in the last decade.

Seconding the motion, Dr Medha Vishram Kulkarni of BJP said, the President's address highlights India's continued progress. She said that India's economy remains very strong, with the growth

rate rising to 7.2 percent. Dr Kulkarni said that the GST revenue has increased, and over the past few years, three crore new taxpayers have been added.

Digvijay Singh of Congress alleged that the government is anti-farmer and anti-labour.

He also alleged that employment is declining in the country and despite the government's promise, farmers' income has not been doubled so far.

Sagarika Ghose of TMC alleged that digital systems are enabling cyber fraud and data scams. She said the air pollution and water pollution are increasing and causing financial losses.

Sanjay Singh of AAP criticised the government for allocating less funds for health and agriculture sectors in the Union Budget. AIADMK's M Thambidurai expressed gratitude towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi for always highlighting Tamil culture and language. Sanjay Kumar Jha of JD(U), Tiruchi Siva of DMK, and Ram Gopal Yadav of Samajwadi Party also participated in the discussion, among others.

## Epstein files reveal hidden ties

Continued from P1

The documents show Musk exchanging a handful of emails with Epstein over the years about potential travel or social events. One email even mentions a part of Epstein's private island. Last year, Musk claimed he never visited Epstein's island and even posted on social media that the serial sex offender tried to get him to go to his infamous place, but he refused. The files, though, suggest that in November 2012, Musk seemed curious about the island, sending Epstein an email asking, "What day/night will be the wildest party on your island?" After the documents came out, Musk clarified on social media that he only had a few emails with Epstein and has repeatedly denied visiting his island, or flying on his private plane, nicknamed the "Lolita Express". He also said that some of the emails could be misinterpreted and used by people trying to damage his reputation. "I was well aware that some email correspondence with him could be misinterpreted and used by detractors to smear my name," he added.

## Iran Prez orders resumption of nuclear talks with US

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Monday ordered the start of nuclear talks with the United States, according to reports. "Iran and the United States will hold talks on the nuclear file," the reports said, without specifying the date. The move signals a de-escalation after Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a stern warning on Sunday to the US, stating that if the latter starts a war, it will turn into a regional war. However, Trump had, even after Khamenei's strong remarks, reiterated his hope that the US and Iran could strike a deal. While responding to questions related to Iran's Supreme

Leader's remarks, the US President said that he was hopeful both the nations will make a deal. "Hopefully, we'll make a deal. If we don't make a deal, then we'll find out whether he was right," Trump said while talking to reporters. Even though Iran and the United States have been at odds for quite some time, the recent

## Air India grounds flight after fuel switch moves from 'run' to 'cutoff'

Continued from P1

Following the incident, a Boeing spokesperson confirmed they are in touch with Air India and are "supporting their review of this matter."

Air India said it has informed the civil aviation regulator DGCA about the matter concerning the fuel switch. "At Air India,

safety of our passengers and crew remains top priority," the spokesperson said.

After an Air India Dreamliner crashed in Ahmedabad in June 2025, killing 260 people, the Tata-owned airline had checked the fuel control switches on all Boeing 787 aircraft in its fleet.

The airline had reported it found no issues.

In July 2025, a preliminary report from investigators who looked into the Ahmedabad Dreamliner crash showed that seconds after takeoff, the plane's engine fuel control switches were switched off briefly, starving them of fuel.

## CM NAIDU LAUNCHES PILLOO AI

Continued from P1

Chief secretary Vijayanand, MLA Prathipati Pulla Rao, Muthavarapu Suresh, Ram Mohan Locharla, co-founder of Piloo AI, and company investors attended the event.

Piloo AI enables business owners to generate invoices, record transactions, access financial reports, and manage accounts through simple voice commands in their native language. The platform eliminates the need for accounting knowledge, complex software, or manual paperwork. Designed for speed and ease of use, the

app targets micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that still depend on handwritten records or costly accounting systems. "Technology should simplify life, not complicate it," Naidu said at the launch. "Piloo AI shows how digital tools can help small businesses manage finances easily, improve transparency, and strengthen Andhra Pradesh's vision of ease of doing business," he added.

During the event, the Chief Minister personally generated the first invoice on the platform using voice commands, demonstrating

how spoken instructions could instantly convert into business transactions.

Sai Praneeth G, founder of Piloo AI, said the platform was created to remove fear and confusion around accounting. "Our aim is to help every entrepreneur run their business with confidence. Through conversational AI, we want small businesses to grow faster and participate in India's digital economy," he said.

Currently available in five Indian languages, the platform is designed to expand to more than 50 languages globally.

## Massive showdown over ex-Army Chief's memoir

Continued from P1

"Naravane ji has written about the Prime Minister and Rajnath Singh ji clearly in his book, which has appeared in an article, and I am quoting from that article. They are scared because if it comes out, the reality of Narendra Modi ji and Rajnath Singh ji will be revealed. What happened to the 56-inch chest when China was before us and advancing?" Gandhi said.

Congress and its leaders also shared on social media excerpts from an article in a magazine that quoted Naravane's unpublished book.

Earlier, 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 said was the "memoir" of Naravane talking about the India-China conflict of 2020.

However, Defence Minister Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah strongly protested 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 saying 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.

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". Rajnath Singh maintained that the book had not been published.

Gandhi then said he was quoting from a magazine article to put forth his views. Birla again disallowed it and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju called for the Speaker's ruling to be adhered to. Rijiju said if the Leader of Opposition repeated

edly ignores the Speaker's ruling and flouts rules, the House will have to discuss what action should be taken against such a member.

When Gandhi persisted, the Speaker repeatedly warned him against quoting the book. Singh then got up and asked if the book was not allowed to be published as alleged, why didn't Naravane go to court against it. The Defence Minister also accused Gandhi of "misleading" the House. When the House reassembled at 4 pm, Gandhi said he was raising a matter of national security. "It is uncomfortable for the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister, I understand. I consider national security the most important issue. If it was not uncomfortable, they would have let me speak, but the fact that they are not allowing me to speak shows that they are uncomfortable," Gandhi said.

Several Opposition leaders, including TMC's Mahua Moitra and Kalyan Banerjee, RJD's Manoj Jha and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, supported Gandhi on the issue.

## Maintaining law & order paramount for govt: CM

Continued from P1

"The YSRCP has been caught red-handed in the Tirumala laddu adulteration case, and the entire state is disgusted with that party. To divert attention from their misdeeds, they are hatching conspiracies. Our focus is on attracting investments and developing the state, which they cannot tolerate," he said.

Naidu stated that all those who had committed crimes would be punished legally. He urged TDP ministers and leaders to ensure that party workers exercised restraint and did not take the law into their own hands. "Party workers should not fall into the YSRCP's trap. If we do, there will be no difference between them and us. The YSRCP was built on violence, destruction, and corruption," he said.

He alleged that criminal politics was the YSRCP's ideology and that their tenure reflected illegal governance. "Rule of law has been restored in the state after 2024.





Shivaranjani Harish



Sujata &amp; Preetisha

ANNA RAO GANGAVALLI

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

Padma Shri Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayant, has become an eagerly awaited star attraction in the cultural landscape of Hyderabad.

After the inauguration on the first day by Dr. Sandhya Purecha, Chairperson of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the evening featured a poignant Odissi duet titled 'Seeta Haran,' presented by Dr. Sujata Mohapatra and her daughter Preetisha. Sujata wore a green costume with blue borders, while Preetisha

# Womenia

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

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



Ananda Shankar &amp; Raghav Krishna



Rekha Achyutani



Carnatic Fusion

swara alaap of Kambhoji was melodiously interpreted. Immersive Rama rasa was fully appreciated in the various other compositions in different ragas and languages, some requested by aficionados of the exceedingly popular singer.

Day two began at dawn with a deeply absorbing pravachanam on Sita Rama Kalyanam by the famous Chaganti Koteswara Rao. The divine marriage was described as the sacred union of Dharma and Shakti. He explained that Sita was central to the Avatar's unfolding to achieve the destruction of Ravana. A thought-provoking dialogue between Dr. Ananda Shankar and Raghava Krishna of BRHAT

explored the role of the arts in reclaiming India's civilisation in a contemporary context. Dharma, truth, and art are inseparable, and knowledge elevates consciousness. Dr. Mohan Raghavan examined the Ramayana experience with regard to technology, while critiquing colonial interpretations of Indic texts.

Charusmita Rao and Shivaranjani Harish presented 'Navaratri through the Ramayana,' interspersing Bharatanatyam with design and storytelling. The evening was exciting with the mesmerising puppet-style dance drama 'The Ramayana' by Rangasri Little Ballet Theatre, Bhopal, where human puppets glided as though

controlled by unseen strings. Entertainingly vibrant folk music by Bhungar Khan and the Manganiyar group Dharohar from Barmer, Rajasthan, with fast pacing and beats, energised the spectators at the day's conclusion.

The final day of the festival opened with Chaganti Koteswara Rao's discourse on Hanumat Darshanam.

Hanuman's strength, devotion, and importance were extolled using the metaphor of the connecting knot of flowers in a garland, symbolising him as the link between Rama and Sita during and after their separation. Historian T. S. Krishnan delivered a talk drawing on his extensive research on South Indian temples, inscriptions,

and literature, reflecting on the importance of awareness in shaping narratives. Rekha Achyutani spoke about Dharmic parenting, noting that while modern education may lead to success, true happiness lies in Indian traditional approaches that nurture grounded and timeless Bharatiya values. An engaging and interactive quiz session followed, reinforcing key Ramayana themes.

As evening approached, Srinivasa Varakchedi, Vice-Chancellor of the Central Sanskrit University, delivered a scholarly address on the epic's ethical framework and its continued relevance today. The festival concluded exuberantly on a high note with a classical fusion concert led by music producer Mahesh Raghavan. Tradition was reimagined in Carnatic music tailored to contemporary tastes while staying rooted in heritage.

The medley of blended vocals and instruments was a spectacular finale, heartily enjoyed by the huge audience, who expressed their admiration with tremendous applause.

Also set up were a host of Kala Grama artisanal stalls with local merchandise, including a Ramayana Dolls display, which was eye-catching and thronged with customers.

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

In an exclusive conversation, Bollywood veteran star Kalpana Iyer, the woman of the moment, opened up about the grit and physical toll behind her iconic dance performances.

The actress' is currently stirring headlines, as a recent video of her dancing to her legendary number "Ramba Ho" at the age of 70 took the internet by storm.

Talking to IANS, the actress recalled her early years in the industry as a dancer. Kalpana spoke candidly about dancing through pain, bruises, and bleeding feet, long before comfort and vanity became industry norms.

"I started dancing at 17, and I have never complained. I have shared green rooms, danced barefoot with scraped and bloodied soles, during Ramba Ho and have even done Raja Hindustani



barefoot with injury. I didn't have time to complain; I just worked and kept moving focusing on the opportunities that came my way and was so grateful for it. Dance has brought me so much joy in my life," she said, reflecting on an era where perseverance mattered more than privileges.

For Kalpana, in her own words, dance was never just a performance but a calling that demanded complete surrender, regardless of physical hardship.

Speaking about today's generation of performers, Kalpana was generous in her praise, stressing that comparisons between any eras of Bollywood is unfair.

"These days, girls have to put in a lot more effort. We did too, I don't deny that, but today you can see the detailing and the investment producers make. The more effort you put in, the more is invested in you. They look beautiful, their clothes are gorgeous, and some of them dance exquisitely. Times have changed and I respect that completely. I have immense love for all these girls and I truly wish them well," she shared.

Taking a trip down memory lane, Kalpana explained that it were her stark features and individuality that defined her success. She credited her slim frame, long legs, and expressive movement for

setting her apart in her time, while also acknowledging the role of camera work.

From songs like 'Jab Chhaaye Mera Jaadu' and 'Hari Om Hari' to many hit movies, she described her journey as fulfilling and unique. Now open to a second innings, Kalpana said she is willing to explore any role, as long as it respects her age and comfort, adding that she is even open to playing a naani or daadi.

The actress further also clarified a long-held myth about Ramba Ho shoot.

Kalpana revealed that the song was not shot in Goa, as widely believed. "We had shot at Nataraj Studio in Mumbai. Prema and I danced in a dance studio, right in front of Ramanand Sagar's office," she said, offering a behind-the-scenes detail.

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

Actress Mona Singh strongly believes that mistakes are an essential part of life and should be treated as lessons rather than burdens to carry forward.

Sharing her thoughts, the actress said that when she makes a mistake, she prefers to reflect on it, learn from it, and move on, rather than feeling guilty or weighed down by it. According to her, that is the only way to truly move ahead in life.

Asked whether she ponders over the mistakes she makes or has learnt to accept them and move on, Mona, who is all set to be seen in the second season of the Netflix series 'Kohrra,' said: "That's the only way to go forward in life, I think — and not treat it as a mistake or feel guilty about it and carry that baggage. It's a lesson."

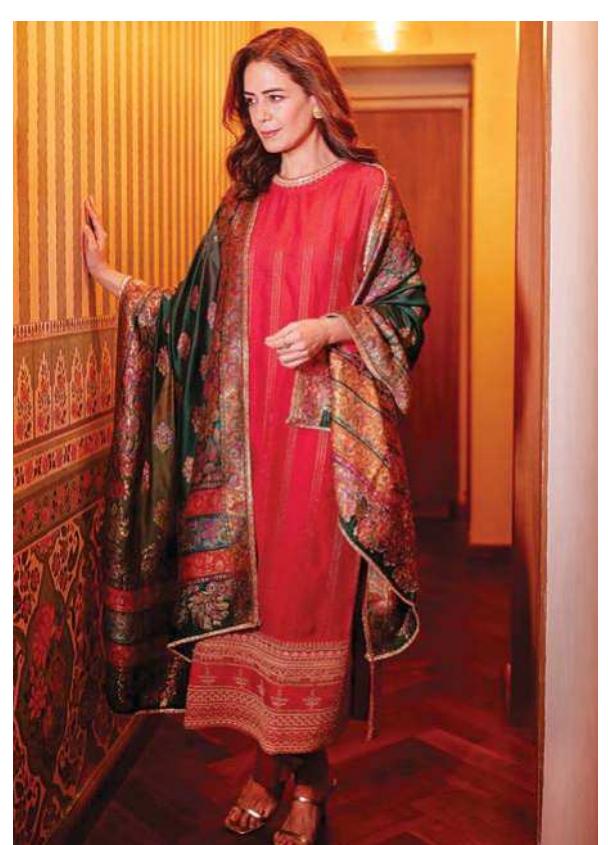
Mona added that life constantly teaches people valuable lessons, often through the people who enter their lives.

She said: "And I think that's what life does. It keeps teaching us those lessons. People come into our lives for a certain reason."

She shared that some relationships last, while others fade with time, but each one serves a purpose and leaves behind a learning experience.

"Some stay, some go. But they always teach you a lesson. And I think that's very, very human. And that's the way forward, if you don't want to stay bitter and want to grow and evolve as a human being," said the actress.

The new chapter of 'Kohrra' also stars Barun Sobti and Rannvijay Singh. The



second season will stream on Netflix starting February 11. In the new season, Barun reprises his role as the sharp-witted investigator Amarapal Garundi, who teams up with a new character played by Mona to solve a complex, dark murder mystery of a woman.

A Film Squad Production in association with Act Three, produced by Saurabh Malhotra, Sudip Sharma, Manuj Mittra, and Tina Tharwani, Season 2 also marks an important creative evolution for the series.

Talking about Mona, she is widely recognised for playing the eponymous heroine in the soap opera 'Jassi Jaissi Koi Nahin.' The actress is also known for her work in 'Kya Huua Tera Vaada,' 'Pyaar Ko Ho Jaane Do,' and 'Kavach... Kaali Shaktiyon Se.' She made her film debut with a supporting role in Rajkumar Hirani's comedy-drama '3 Idiots' in 2009.

### CROSSWORD



**ACROSS**

- Precious metal (4)
- Capital of the Bahamas (6)
- Ten decibels? (3)
- A day in Rome (4)
- Diminish (8)
- Change for Norma Jean (7)
- Worships (6)
- Receding (9)
- Bear lair (3)
- Vane directions? (3)
- The unit of electrical
- Precious metal (4)
- Capital of the Bahamas (6)
- Ten decibels? (3)
- A day in Rome (4)
- Diminish (8)
- Change for Norma Jean (7)
- Worships (6)
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- resistance (3)
- Set right (9)
- Young ones of cows (6)
- Calls for (7)
- rules of state
- etiquette (8)
- Take it easy (4)
- Resv. Bank of India (3)
- Mental health (6)
- Sumerian sun god (4)

### DOWN

- Stem (4)
- Sly look (4)
- Actress Lamar (4)
- Scrape off (6)
- Jamaican popular music (3)
- Jittery (6)
- Sir Hutton of cricket (3)
- Stunned or confounded? (5)
- Tempress (5)
- Assert or affirm (4)
- Cheering words (4)
- Prison room (4)
- Discerns or observes (4)
- Our country, abbr. (3)
- Schindler of "Schindler's List" (5)
- Repairs (5)
- Ranges or extents (6)
- Cutting reply (6)
- Beetle (3)
- Italian island (4)
- Subsequent (4)
- Doe's mate (4)
- Have or possess (3)
- SATRAP, BOGZ, YRNINE, LOAF, ZEALOT, GUP, YNAFFECTION, GASP, AIM, T, Y, AISLE, PILLED, CCC, LADIC, DOTTY, STALK, P, A, PUT, YELL, EXCALIBUR, RWA, IHL, NOTIFY, INCALIEUSO, G, BAS, DEMEAN

Solution to February 2

### SUDOKU



6 7 9 2 4 1 3 5 8  
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Solution to February 2



## IN BRIEF

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

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

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

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

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

### Towing to resume in Bengaluru

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

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

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

## I stand by Siddaramaiah and he stands by me: Shivakumar

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU

SAYING that politics was the art of the possible, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Monday said that one man with courage could achieve the impossible. "Politics is the art of the possible. Everything is possible here. I believe that one man with courage makes a majority. With conviction and determination, one can have 140 people and even more.

Let's see what happens in 2028," the DCM said replying to Leader of the Opposition R Ashok during Motion of Thanks to Governor's address in the Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## State to host international Big Cat Summit at Bandipur and Nagarhole

The concept of the Global Big Cat Alliance was first announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2023 during the release of the national tiger census report in Mysuru

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU

SOON after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the Global Big Cat Alliance in her ninth Union Budget, India has stepped up preparations to host the prestigious International Big Cat Summit later this year. In a major recognition for Karnataka's wildlife heritage, the state's famed Bandipur and Nagarhole Tiger Reserves have been chosen as venues for the global event.

The five-day international workshop and training programme will be held from February 9 to 13. The programme is being jointly organised by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the International Big Cat Alliance. This is the first major summit of the alliance being conducted in India and is expected to place a global spotlight on South India's conservation initiatives.

Representatives from 18 countries will take part in the event along with senior forest



officials from across India. The first two days of deliberations will be held at Bandipur Tiger Reserve, while the programme will shift to Nagarhole on February 11 and 12. The summit will conclude on February 13 after field visits and interactive sessions.

The concept of the Global Big Cat Alliance was first announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2023 during the release of the national tiger census report in Mysuru. The alliance aims to bring together tiger range countries and other nations to strengthen efforts for the protection of big cats across the world.

India is home to the largest population of tigers globally and also plays a key role in the conservation of leopards, snow leopards and other big cat species. The summit will focus on sharing global experience, modern technology use in wildlife monitoring, habitat management and strategies to curb wildlife crimes. Experts are also expected to discuss issues such as human-wildlife conflict, rehabilitation of forest-dependent communities, and regulation of development projects in ecologically sensitive tiger habitats. Strengthening cooperation among countries for better protection of migratory wildlife corridors will also be a major subject of discussion.

State forest department officials said hosting such a major global event in Karnataka is a matter of pride. Both Bandipur and Nagarhole are internationally known for their rich biodiversity and successful tiger conservation models. The summit is expected to bring global experts, researchers and policymakers onto a common platform to frame better strategies for the long-term survival of big cats. Karnataka's role as a leader in wildlife conservation is likely to gain further prominence through this event.

## Congress govt sensitive, BJP insensitive: Siddaramaiah

BENGALURU



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

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

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

died. Was that your sensitivity?" he asked.

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

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

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

## GOVT CHANGES TIMING OF URDU SCHOOLS DURING RAMZAN

BENGALURU

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

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

In its January 30 circular, which became public on

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

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

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

However, taking into ac-

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Minister slams Centre, calls Budget 'weakest' one

BENGALURU

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

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

several hopes on the Budget for the country's development, but all of them had been belied. He alleged that the Union government had completely ignored critical sectors such as agriculture, industry, education and basic infrastructure.

"This is the weakest budget among the nine budgets presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman," Parameshwara said. Earlier budgets had given importance to agriculture and the industrial sector and had introduced

several programmes aimed at poverty alleviation, he added.

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

## Pinarayi Vijayan seeks independent inquiry into businessman's suicide

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU

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

However, reports suggest that Roy was able to enter another room and shoot himself with a licensed pistol. If these reports are accurate, it amounts to a major procedural failure, Vijayan pointed out.

He also referred to allegations made by Roy's relatives that the businessman had been facing severe pressure from investigative agencies. While the Income Tax Department may provide its explanation, Vijayan stressed that an objective and neutral investigation



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

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

repeat in the future.

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

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

## SIT probe underway in Roy suicide case: HM

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU

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

Responding to allegations made by Roy's close associates that he was under pressure and harassment from the Income Tax Department and the Enforcement Directorate, the Home Minister said unnecessary speculation should be avoided. "To ensure that there are no rumours or doubts, we immediately constituted an SIT. We will wait for its report to understand what exactly happened and who was responsible," he said while speaking to reporters near Vidhana Soudha.

Meanwhile, the SIT investigation into Roy's death has gathered pace. Officers have begun recording statements from his family members and close associates. Investigators have also seized a personal diary maintained by Roy, in which he reportedly recorded details about his daily activities, meetings and business decisions. However, SIT officials

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

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

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



"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 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), Gurjapneet Singh, Vipraj Nigam, Ravi Bishnoi, Khaleel Ahmed, Mayank Yadav. (PTI)

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## Pan-India 'Nagabandham' teaser announced

**A**bhishek 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, 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



**T**ejas 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

**T**he 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

**T**he 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

**T**he 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

**H**oney 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 always wanted to work with Karuna Kumar. I met him during the film 'Palasa', but it didn't work out then. I immediately agreed when he called me for this project.'

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

### Devotional drama 'Dakshina Kaali' releases worldwide

**D**akshina 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.



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