

UNION BUDGET PUTS TIRUPATI DISTRICT ON HIGH-GROWTH PATH

- Bird-watching towers proposed in the budget will make Pulicat lake to emerge as major eco-tourism hub
- High-speed rail corridors to put the district on national fast track
- Spiritual tourism to get a boost with temple town development plan

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI

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, strengthening healthcare, promoting renewable energy and supporting education and small businesses. The budget measures are expected to accelerate development, create employment opportunities, and enhance quality of life for people across the district.

A major highlight for the district is the Centre's decision to develop Pulicat Lake as a



Flamingos at Pulicat lake

key eco-tourism destination. As part of this initiative, bird-watching towers have been proposed at Pulicat, a move expected to significantly enhance tourism in the region. The towers will offer panoramic views of the lake, attract more visitors, and help generate employment opportunities for local youth, thereby giving a boost to the local economy.

Pulicat Lake, spread across Sullurupeta and Tada mandals, is known for its unique blend of freshwater and sea water and its rich biodiversity. Every year, thousands of migratory birds, including flamingos, arrive from distant countries and stay for sev-

eral months. Despite drawing large numbers of visitors, the absence of proper viewing infrastructure has so far limited the tourist experience. The proposed bird-watching towers are expected to address this long-standing gap and allow visitors to fully appreciate the lake's natural beauty.

The budget has also brought major relief to Tirupati in terms of connectivity. Tirupati district will be covered in Hyderabad-Chennai high-speed rail corridor, which can significantly reduce travel time to two major cities. Further, efforts are underway to include Tirupati in Chennai-Bengaluru high-speed

rail corridor as well. If approved, Tirupati will become one of the few cities in the country to be connected by two high-speed rail corridors, marking a major milestone in its infrastructure growth.

The Budget has offered positive signals for Tirupati, one of the world's leading spiritual destinations.

Under a national plan to transform major temple towns into economic regions, the Centre has proposed strengthening infrastructure in prominent pilgrimage centres. For Tirupati, this could mean improved transport networks, better accommodation facilities for pilgrims,

and upgraded civic amenities. The budget has also extended support to MSMEs in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities through the proposed 'Corporate Mitra' initiative, which is expected to benefit small traders by simplifying licensing and tax-related procedures. The allocation of Rs 40,000 crore for the electronics manufacturing sector is seen as a major boost for Sri City and the industrial areas around Renigunta, providing stability to thousands of workers.

Renewable energy initiatives in the budget are expected to further strengthen the district's push towards solar power.

The removal of customs duty on key materials used in solar panel manufacturing is likely to reduce costs and encourage wider adoption of rooftop solar systems by households, institutions, and government bodies. With electric vehicle usage also rising in the district, reduced battery costs will add further momentum.

In agriculture, special support for crops like coconut, cashew and cocoa in coastal mandals such as Satyavedu and Varadaiahpalem is expected to improve farmers' incomes.

- 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

THE International Fleet Review (IFR) will be held in Visakhapatnam on February 18, followed by Milan-2026 on February 19, with the participation of naval forces from several countries.

On Monday, Chief of Staff, Eastern Naval Command, Vice Admiral Sushil Menon (VSM), along with senior naval officers, met chief secretary K Vijayanand at the AP Secretariat to review preparations for the events.

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



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.

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.

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.

Milan is a multinational naval exercise aimed at strengthening mutual cooperation and enhancing maritime capabilities. Naval forces from various countries participate in demonstrations and joint activities. Cultural programmes by participating nations are also held as part of the event.

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

Two AP veterinarians bag national award



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VIJAYAWADA

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

gole Veterinary Poly Clinic and Dr Madina Prasada Rao, Assistant Director in Visakhapatnam. Dr Damodar Naidu, state Director of Animal Husbandry, presented the award certificates at a ceremony attended by senior department officials. Both veterinarians have previously received numerous state and national honours for their service.

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

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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.

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. He said, from day one, 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.

Indus water talks stalled as India rejects Hague arbitration

NEW DELHI: India has refused to recognise the latest orders of the Court of Arbitration (CoA) in The Hague under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), asserting that it will not participate in proceedings it deems illegitimate. The CoA had directed India to submit operational "pondage logbooks" from the Baglihar and Kishanganga hydroelectric plants as part of the "Second Phase on the Merits" and scheduled hearings on February 2-3. The court noted that India had not filed any counter-memorial or indicated participation. Government sources described the CoA as "so-called illegally constituted" and accused Pakistan of seeking to involve India in "parallel proceedings" outside the neutral expert mechanism. "Since we do not recognise the legitimacy of the CoA, we do not respond to any of its communications," a source said. India placed the IWT in abeyance on April 23, 2025, a day after 26 civilians were killed in Pahalgam by Pakistan-linked terrorists. For the first time since 1960, New Delhi explicitly linked water cooperation to Pakistan's continued use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy.

Epstein files reveal hidden ties

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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.

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

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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

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

Pilloo 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. "Pilloo 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 Pilloo 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

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"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 repeat-

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

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"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.

Our ideology is to serve and empower people. As their real nature is being exposed, they are resorting to abuses," he added.

Meanwhile, Excise Minister Kollu Ravindra said that the attack on YSRCP leader Ambati Rambabu was a result of public anger against corruption. Speaking to the media, he said public opposition to the YSRCP was growing and accused the party of trying to incite caste and religious sentiments to divert attention. Rajahmundry BJP MP Daggubati Purandeswari strongly condemned the remarks made by Ambati Rambabu against the Chief Minister. Speaking to the media in Delhi, she said the comments were unacceptable in any civilized society and alleged that they insulted Naidu's mother. She said women would not tolerate such remarks and accused YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and his associates of deliberately creating unrest in the state.