

GOOD MORNING ANDHRA

Awakening Andhra with Truth

English Daily

Guntur, Friday, February 13, 2026

Editor: D. Hanumantha Rao

English Daily

Volume: 12

Issue No. 349

Pages: 8 Rs. 1.00

CM pushes for maximum gains from union budget allocations

(By GMA Staff Reporter)

Amaravati, Feb 12: Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu reviewed the allocations made to Andhra Pradesh in the 2026-27 Union Budget and directed officials to prepare proposals for establishing key projects in the state, including the proposed Rare Earth Corridor.

During a meeting with senior officials of various government departments at the camp office on Thursday, the Chief Minister instructed them to prepare comprehensive proposals not only for projects specifically sanctioned to the state but also for those announced at the national level that could be located in Andhra Pradesh.

He emphasized the need to leverage Centrally Sponsored Schemes and integrate various programs to secure additional funding from the Union Government. The Chief Minister noted that in the past, funds under centrally sponsored schemes were not fully utilized, leading to issues related to submission of utilization certificates. He said that if departments effectively spend allocated

funds, they would be eligible to draw additional resources.

The Chief Minister directed officials to prepare action plans to secure maximum allocations in the upcoming budget cycle. He also suggested making use of the recently introduced "challenge method" by the Centre to mobilize additional funds.

Key Project Proposals

The Chief Minister specified that the Rare Earth Corridor announced by the Centre should be established in the districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, and Visakhapatnam. He also called for proposals to develop value-chain industries related to other valuable minerals.

In the context of the East Coast Industrial Corridor, he instructed officials to submit proposals extending from Mulapeta in the coastal region down to Krishnapatnam. He directed that proposals be prepared at the earliest for container manufacturing and equipment manufacturing projects.

He suggested establishing a Mega Textile Park in the Palnadu region and examining the feasibility of setting up a Sports



Manufacturing Hub in Tirupati. Under the India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, he directed officials to initiate action for setting up semiconductor design and related projects in Amaravati.

The Chief Minister stated that an ecosystem comprising Bio-Design, MedTech Park, and Bio-Pharma Shakti Mission could be developed in the Health City planned in

the capital region. He also proposed developing projects in Amaravati under a "Heal in AP" policy to promote medical tourism.

He directed that electronics components manufacturing be proposed in Hindupur and said Tirupati has significant potential to be developed as a tourism destination.

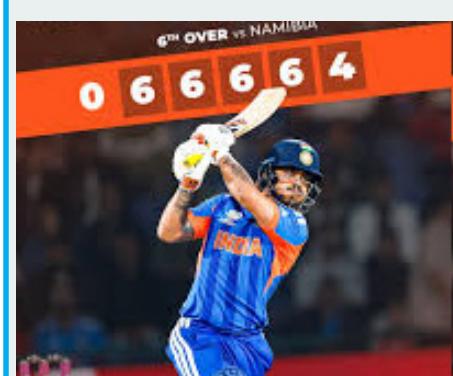
Focus on Transport and Agriculture

The Chief Minister instructed officials to effectively utilize the 1,000 electric buses sanctioned by the Centre and prepare plans to secure additional e-buses.

He also pointed out that there is considerable scope to secure higher funding for crops such as coconut, cocoa, cashew, and coffee. Furthermore, he said that the state has strong potential to establish food processing projects on a large scale.

The Chief Minister concluded by reiterating the importance of proactive planning and coordination among departments to ensure that Andhra Pradesh secures the maximum possible benefits from the Union Budget.

India Crushes Namibia



New Delhi, Feb 12: (GNS) India secured a convincing win over Namibia in their second league match of the T20 World Cup.

Batting first, India posted a massive total of 209 runs for the loss of 9 wickets in 20 overs. Namibia failed to chase down the daunting target and were bowled out for 116 runs.

Ishan Kishan played a sensational knock at the top of the order, scoring 61 runs off just 24 balls. His explosive innings included 5 sixes and 6 fours, giving India a flying start.

After Ishan's dismissal, Hardik Pandya took charge and continued the aggressive approach. He smashed 52 runs off 28 balls, further strengthening India's total and ensuring a commanding position in the match.

Rahul Dares Centre: 'File an FIR, I'll Fight for Farmers' Rights and Food Security'

New Delhi, Feb 12 (GNS) Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday launched a sharp attack on the Centre over trade negotiations, declaring he was prepared to face legal action if necessary while opposing any agreement he believes harms farmers' livelihoods or India's food security.

In a post on X, Gandhi wrote, "Let there be an FIR filed, let a case be registered, or bring a Privilege Motion—I will fight for the farmers."

Escalating his criticism that he raised in the Lok Sabha earlier, Gandhi said that any trade deal that undermines rural incomes or weakens the country's food security framework would amount to an anti-farmer measure.

Taking direct aim at the Narendra Modi-led government, Gandhi added, "We will not allow the anti-farmer Modi government to compromise with the interests of the food

providers."

Gandhi's remarks come amid ongoing



products. Critics have argued that greater market access to foreign agricultural goods could depress domestic prices and hurt small and marginal farmers.

The Congress has repeatedly accused the government of sidelining farmers' interests in policymaking, citing the now-repealed farm laws that triggered year-long protests in 2020-21.

Gandhi's challenge — inviting the filing of an FIR or a Privilege Motion — signals a willingness to escalate the confrontation both politically and legally.

The statement is expected to intensify the political debate over trade policy and agricultural protections, particularly as farmer unions continue to voice concerns about price security, minimum support price (MSP) guarantees, and exposure to global competition.

Sitharaman Defends Fiscal Policy, Says Inflation Tamed and Middle Class Expanding

New Delhi, Feb 12 (GNS) Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday defended in the Rajya Sabha the Centre's approach to fund allocation and dismissed claims of middle-class suppression, asserting that government finances are managed transparently and responsibly.

Responding to opposition members in Parliament who questioned the release of funds to various states, Sitharaman said, "Centre's funds are not a free pool of cash. It's hard-earned contribution of every Indian citizen. We refuse to squander the money simply to meet a deadline. There is a very

transparent process and we go by that."

Addressing concerns about the middle class, the Finance Minister rejected allegations of financial strain or suppression, stating that the segment is in fact expanding.

"The economy is not only for the elite, the middle-class basket is widening. Between 2013-14 and 2024-25, the



number of taxpayers rose from 5.26 crore to 12.13 crore. Thus, within the last 11 years, the number of income-tax payers has more than doubled. Growth has therefore been at a CAGR of 7.9%, she said.

Calling it the "largest structural expansion of the middle class in the country," Sitharaman added that a widening tax base reflects voluntary compliance rather than suppression.

"Suppression cannot be claimed when the tax base is widening and the

(Contd..P/3)

Nationwide Bharat Bandh Called by Trade Unions and Farmers; Mixed Impact Reported

New Delhi, Feb 12: (GNS) A nationwide Bharat Bandh is underway on February 12, 2026, as central trade unions and farmers' organisations have initiated a day-long general strike to protest against the central government's policies, including new labour codes, economic decisions, and proposed trade agreements.

The bandh has been organised by a joint forum of 10 central trade unions, who claim participation by around 30 crore workers across the country. Reports suggest that the strike is being observed in over 600 districts nationwide.

Unions, including INTUC, AITUC, CITU, HMS and others, are protesting what they describe as "anti-worker, anti-farmer, and pro-

extended support, particularly opposing

aspects of the India-US trade deal and labour code changes.

Odisha is reportedly experiencing near-complete shutdown conditions, with markets, transport and government offices affected. In Kerala, bus services and markets have seen significant disruption due to the support of local unions. Assam and parts of West Bengal are also showing strong bandh response, with noticeable participation.

In contrast, states like Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have seen limited impact, with normal life largely continuing. Public transport: Some state-run buses and movement on roads are affected in strike-supporting areas.

(By GMA Staff Reporter)

Amaravati, Feb 12: Film producer Bandla Ganesh met Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu at his Assembly chamber on Thursday.

Bandla Ganesh had earlier vowed to undertake a padayatra (foot march) to Tirumala if Chandrababu Naidu was released from jail and became Chief Minister again. In 2023, the YSRCP government had filed cases against Chandrababu and sent him to jail. Following the 2024 elections, the alliance secured victory, and Chandrababu Naidu assumed office as Chief Minister for the fourth time.

Fulfilling his vow, Bandla Ganesh began his foot march, named "Sankalpa Yatra," from his residence in Shadnagar on January 19

and reached Tirumala on February 10. The padayatra covered a distance of 535 kilometers over 23 days. Two days ago, he offered prayers at the Tirumala Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple and fulfilled his vow.

On Thursday, during his meeting with the Chief Minister in Amaravati, Bandla Ganesh presented the sacred prasadam brought from Tirumala. Chief Minister Chandrababu warmly greeted and embraced him.

Bandla Ganesh shared details of his padayatra with the Chief Minister, stating that party workers supported him throughout the journey and walked alongside him. He said their encouragement kept his spirits high and helped him successfully complete the yatra and reach Tirumala.

Telangana Betrayed, Says Kavitha; Vows Fresh Political Movement

Hyderabad, Feb 12 (GNS) A massive Udyamakartula Aatmagourava Sabha of Telangana activists was held under the banner of Telangana Jagruti at the historic RTC Kalyana Mandapam in Baghlingampally on Thursday, drawing participation from more than ten activist organisations and a large number of movement veterans and leaders.

Addressing the convention, Telangana Jagruti president Kalvakuntla Kavitha launched a sharp attack on successive governments, alleging that the biggest betrayal after the formation of Telangana has

(Contd..P/2)



GOOD MORNING ANDHRA

Awakening Andhra with Truth

English Daily

EDITORIAL

Friday 13, February 2026

Water Breakthrough

After decades of delay, political friction, and inter-state disputes, the long-pending Indrapuri reservoir project on the Sone river appears finally poised to move forward. The resolution of the water-sharing deadlock between Bihar and Jharkhand marks not only an administrative breakthrough but also a defining moment in cooperative federalism and regional water management. At the heart of the issue lay the 1973 Bansagar Agreement, signed by Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh for the utilization of Sone river waters. Under the agreement, undivided Bihar was allocated 7.75 million acre-feet (MAF) of water. However, the creation of Jharkhand in 2000 complicated the equation, as the newly formed state inherited a significant portion of the river's catchment area. For years, ambiguity over how the original 7.75 MAF allocation should be divided between Bihar and Jharkhand stalled progress on the Indrapuri reservoir project. Bihar maintained that 5 MAF had already been earmarked for the reservoir under the original understanding, leaving only 2.75 MAF to be shared.

Jharkhand, on the other hand, argued that since much of the catchment lay within its territory, it was entitled to a larger share — even demanding the entire remaining 2.75 MAF at one point. The impasse persisted despite technical-level discussions, including a Joint Technical Team meeting in Ranchi in 2023 that failed to produce consensus. The matter eventually escalated to the East Zone Council, where, in July 2025, a meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah reportedly helped broker a settlement. The new arrangement allocates 5.75 MAF to Bihar and 2 MAF to Jharkhand from the original 7.75 MAF. While neither state secured its maximalist demand, the compromise reflects a pragmatic approach to water governance — one that balances historical entitlements with present-day realities. For Bihar, the implications are significant. The Indrapuri reservoir project promises to expand irrigation across eight districts — Bhojpur, Buxar, Rohtas, Kaimur, Aurangabad, Arwal, Gaya, and Patna. In a state where agriculture remains the backbone of rural livelihoods, enhanced irrigation capacity could transform cropping patterns, stabilize farm incomes, and reduce vulnerability to erratic monsoons. Water infrastructure projects of this scale are not merely engineering endeavors; they are instruments of social and economic change. Improved irrigation can lead to higher agricultural productivity, diversified crops, and greater food security. It can also reduce distress migration and strengthen rural economies. However, several challenges remain.

Large reservoir projects inevitably raise environmental and rehabilitation concerns, particularly when submergence areas extend into neighboring states. Transparent impact assessments, fair compensation for affected communities, and sustainable water management practices will be essential to ensure that development does not come at an unacceptable social or ecological cost. The Opposition's walkout in the Assembly following the Minister's statement suggests that political contestation around the project is far from over.

Scrutiny is healthy in a democracy, especially for projects involving thousands of crores of public funds — in this case, a budgetary demand of Rs. 7,127.35 crore for the Water Resources Department. Yet, the broader picture is clear: resolving a decades-old inter-state dispute through dialogue and institutional mechanisms is a positive development. In an era where water scarcity is intensifying and river disputes frequently turn acrimonious, the Indrapuri breakthrough offers a template for negotiation rather than confrontation. If executed efficiently, transparently, and sustainably, the Indrapuri reservoir project could become a landmark in Bihar's development trajectory — not just as an irrigation scheme, but as a symbol of long-delayed cooperation finally bearing fruit.

District Sets Target to Cover Over 3.5 Lakh Children Under National Deworming Drive



(By Our Staff Reporter)

Bhimavaram, Feb 12: A District-Level Coordination Committee meeting was held on Thursday at the Vasishta Conference Hall in the Collectorate under the chairmanship of District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani, in connection with the National Deworming Programme organized by the Medical and Health Department.

Addressing the meeting, the Collector directed health officials to complete all arrangements to distribute Albendazole tablets free of cost to 3,51,125 children

institutions in the district on February 17, as part of National Deworming Day. The beneficiaries include children from Anganwadi centers, schools, colleges, and out-of-school children.

She stated that the programme is being implemented by the State Government under the guidance of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, with the objective of improving children's health and reducing malnutrition. Under this initiative, Albendazole tablets will be administered free of cost to children and

adolescents aged 1 to 19 years.

The Collector directed officials to conduct a special drive to identify and cover children residing in factories, aqua sector areas, and SC/

ST colonies to ensure that they receive deworming tablets without fail. She explained that deworming helps prevent anemia, malnutrition, weight loss, and lack of concentration in studies among children.

She instructed that the programme be implemented effectively in all government and private schools and

February 24.

staff, ASHA workers, and teachers should administer the tablets safely after midday meals and create awareness about hygiene and handwashing practices.

Parents should also be made aware of the importance of administering deworming tablets to their children.

For children aged one to two years, half a tablet should be dissolved in water before administration, and Anganwadi staff must take special care in this regard. The Collector informed that the tablets will be received on February 17 and administered to children on

poster prepared as part of the campaign titled, "Let Us Eliminate Worms for Healthy Children."

DM&HO G. Geethabai, DCHS P. Suryanarayana, RBSK Programme Officer K.M. Kishore, District Swarna Grama-Swarna Ward Officer Y. Dosireddy, DPO Ram Ramanatha Reddy, DEO E. Narayana, District Social Welfare Officer Aruna Kumari, BC Welfare Officer A.V. Suri Babu, District Tribal Welfare Officer Pushpa Rani, officials from various departments, and medical staff participated in the programme.

.

Collector Kritika Shukla and SP Review Maha Shivaratri Arrangements at Kotappakonda Temple

(By GMA Staff Reporter)

Narasaraopet, Feb 12: District Collector Kritika Shukla, along with Superintendent of Police Krishna Rao, conducted a field inspection on Thursday to review the arrangements being made for the upcoming Maha Shivaratri festival at the renowned pilgrimage center of Kotappakonda.

During the visit, the Collector inspected the temple premises and devotees' queue lines and issued several key instructions to officials. She emphasized that no inconvenience should be caused to the large number of devotees expected on Shivaratri and directed officials to take all necessary precautionary measures in advance.

The Collector instructed that there should be no compromise in providing essential facilities such as drinking water, shade, sanitation, parking, and security. She also reviewed the queue lines and surrounding areas of the temple, directing that



sanitation works be carried out continuously across the temple premises, hill pathways, and queue areas. Special sanitation teams should be deployed to ensure that no garbage accumulates.

She further directed officials to ensure the availability of drinking water, toilets, medical camps, ambulances, and fire safety arrangements. As many devotees are likely to stay on the hill overnight on Maha

Shivaratri, she called for enhanced security measures and coordination among the Police, Revenue, and Endowments Departments. Officials were instructed to ensure uninterrupted power supply and keep staff

on standby to address any lift or electrical issues promptly.

The Collector emphasized that all departments must work in close coordination to ensure the festival is conducted peacefully and smoothly.

Telangana Betrayed, Says Kavitha; Vows Fresh Political Movement

(From P1)

been the continued injustice

to activists and families of

martyrs.

political party will be

launched soon, clarifying

that it would be a movement-

based platform rather than a

conventional party, commi

tted to protecting Telangan

a's identity, dignity and

historical consciousness.

She put forward key

demands, including

immediate identification and

official recognition of

Telangana

activists,

establishment of a statutory

welfare board for activists,

and 20 per cent reservation

for Telangana youth in

private-sector jobs.

She revealed that Telangana

Jagruthi has developed a

digital enrolment application

for activists and announced

health insurance coverage

for families of registered

activists.

Warning the Congress

government ahead of the

budget session, Kavitha

said any budget that ignores

activists would face strong

resistance. She also

criticised what she described

as the erosion of democratic

values, citing arrests and

cases even for social media

expression.

Kavitha asserted that

justice, not power, defines

dharma, and said Telangana

Jagruthi would continue its

struggle until dignity and

justice are delivered to

activists and martyrs.

Declaring a major

political shift, Kavitha

announced that a new

families.

Odisha court sentences man and parents

to life imprisonment in dowry death case

Balasore, Feb 12 (GNS) In a landmark judgment, the

Additional District and Sessions Court at Soro sentenced

a man and his parents to life imprisonment on Thursday

for their involvement in a dowry death case dating back to

2012. The court, presided over by Judge Meenakshi Dash,

also imposed a fine of Rs. 10,000 on each convict, with an

additional eight months of imprisonment in case of default.

The convicted individuals have been identified as

Santosh Barik and his parents, Binod Barik and Sanjumani

Barik, residents of Similai village.

According to prosecution records, Santosh married

Swapna Barik of Khadgapur village in 2010. After the

marriage, Santosh and his parents allegedly subjected

Swapna to both physical and mental harassment,

repeatedly demanding additional dowry from her family.

Tragically, Swapna later died due to poisoning under

suspicious circumstances. Following her death, her father,

Gangadhar Barik, filed an FIR at Soro Police Station on

June 30, 2012, citing dowry-related harassment.

Police registered a case under Sections 304(B) and

498(A) of the Indian Penal Code, along with Section 4 of the

Dowry Prohibition Act, leading to the arrest of the

accused trio. After careful examination of 18 witnesses and

review of documentary and material evidence, the court

delivered its verdict on Thursday, bringing long-awaited

justice to Swapna's family.



After the lunch break, sessions will focus on topics

such as permissions for church construction, trust

registration procedures, matters related to 12A and

80G certifications, constitutional rights of

Christians, and information

about government

institutions available to

them. Discussions will also

include representation opportunities for Christians at

mandal, constituency, district, state,

and national levels.

Professor Mosiganti added that guidance will be

provided on how even less

formally educated pastors

can effectively, safely, and

easily use technology in their

services. Information will

also be shared about

required documentation if

opportunities are provided

for honorariums to new

pastors. Additionally,

awareness will be created

about precautions to avoid

falling victim to cybercrimes.

Professor Joseph

Mosiganti urged Christian

leaders across districts to

make use of this opportunity,

PIB Media Delegation Explores Eastern Naval Command, Showcasing INS Udaygiri and India's Indigenous Naval Strength

Visakhapatnam, Feb 12 (PIB) As part of a special media outreach initiative organised by the Press Information Bureau (PIB), a delegation of journalists from Dehradun, Uttarakhand, visited Headquarters Eastern Naval Command Visakhapatnam also known as the Sunrise Command to gain first-hand exposure to India's maritime security architecture and the operational preparedness of the Indian Navy. The visit to Eastern Fleet (Purvi Beda) Ship was aimed at enhancing public awareness—through the media—of the Navy's modern capabilities, strategic role, and the steady progress being made in indigenous defence production.

The highlight of the programme was an onboard visit to the advanced stealth frigate INS Udaygiri followed by interactions. Udaygiri indigenously designed by Warship Design Bureau of the Indian Navy and constructed at Mazagon Docks Ships Builders Ltd (MDL) under Project 17A, represents the next generation of multi-role stealth frigates. Designed with state-of-the-art stealth features and reduced radar signature, the warship is capable of operating with enhanced survivability in complex maritime environments while effectively evading enemy detection.

INS Udaygiri is equipped with advanced surveillance and radar systems, surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missile capabilities, anti-submarine warfare platforms, and sophisticated electronic warfare suites. The ship integrates modern navigation and network-centric warfare technologies, enabling seamless coordination with other naval assets during joint and multi-domain operations.

Commanding Officer Captain Vikas Sood welcomed the visiting delegation aboard the ship and interacted with the journalists, providing insights into the operational role of the vessel and the Navy's mission



readiness.

During the technical briefing, Defence PRO Visakhapatnam Commander Sujit Reddy, along with Lt. Commander Prashant Kumar the Officer of the Day from Udaygiri, explained various aspects of naval operations, the functioning of frontline warships, and the Navy's role in safeguarding India's maritime interests.

Principal Warfare Officer also the Executive Officer Commander Ambrish Yadav highlighted that INS Udaygiri stands as a strong testament to India's growing indigenous shipbuilding capability, reinforcing the Government of India's vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' in the defence sector. He emphasised that, besides combat readiness, the platform is also designed to undertake Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations, search-and-rescue missions, and maritime safety tasks—demonstrating the Navy's role as a force for security and stability in the Indian Ocean Region.

The journalists were taken through key operational areas of the warship, including

the bridge, Foxle with its weapons deck, Helo Deck with Hangar where Helicopter is stowed at Sea followed by the Boat and Torpedo firing Decks. Naval officers also briefed the delegation on emerging maritime security challenges, India's strategic responsibilities in the Indian Ocean Region, and the increasing importance of technologically advanced, indigenously built platforms in modern naval warfare.

The visiting media representatives appreciated the professionalism, technological sophistication, and high operational standards maintained by the Indian Navy. They noted that such exposure visits enable accurate and informed reporting on national security, defence preparedness, and indigenous technological advancements.

The media outreach programme served as an important platform to highlight India's expanding defence self-reliance, strengthening Indian Navy's maritime capabilities, and showcased Eastern Naval Commands commitment to safeguarding national interests while contributing to regional peace and stability.

Hillary Clinton likely to speak at 'Mumbai Climate Week 2026'

Mumbai, Feb 12 (GNS) A high-profile global meet on climate called 'Mumbai Climate Week 2026' will be held at the Jio World Convention Centre, Bandra-Kurla Complex, from February 17-19, according to an official statement here on Thursday.

The event is being organised by award-winning NGO Project Mumbai and is being supported by the Government of Maharashtra, the Environment and Climate Change Department, Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), as per the statement.

'Mumbai Climate Week 2026' will feature an eminent line-up of global speakers including former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Rajiv Shah who represents The Rockefeller Foundation; Imad Fakhoury, the Regional Director, South Asia, International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group; Amanda Leland, the Executive Director of Environmental Defense Fund and Clarissa De Franco, the Senior Advisor of Allied Climate Partners, as per the statement.

Other participants expected for the event are union Minister for Environment Bhupendra Yadav; union Minister for Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi, Minister for External Affairs S Jaishankar, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, union Corporate Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal, among others.

Speaking about 'Mumbai Climate Week 2026', Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said, "Mumbai Climate Week (MCW) showcases India's resolve to lead with action on climate, from the city level to the global stage. As Mumbai hosts leaders from across India and the world, including governments, businesses, financiers, experts and young people, we are sending a clear message that Maharashtra is ready to work with all partners to build cleaner, safer and more resilient futures for our citizens and for the Global South".

Business leaders like Tata Trusts Chairman Noel Tata, IDFC First Bank Managing Director & CEO Vaidyanathan, Bain Capital PE India Managing Director Amit Chandra, Brookfield Asset Management Managing Partner Ankur Gupta, Godrej & Boyce Chairman and Managing Director Janshyd Godrej, Godrej Industries Managing Director Nadir Godrej, Schneider Electric

Sitharaman Defends Fiscal Policy, Says Inflation Tamed and Middle Class Expanding

(From P1)

net itself is expanding. This is not suppression; people are coming on board voluntarily to pay taxes," she said.

She also noted that the Budget remains mindful of past economic challenges, including periods of double-digit inflation.

Highlighting Budget 2026 announcements, Sitharaman said 16 new schemes have been introduced with allocated funds, while four existing schemes have received additional allocations.

"In earlier times, schemes were announced without allocation. Budget speeches are more than just announcements about schemes and allocations they also set the direction," she said.

The Finance Minister urged states to actively participate in centrally sponsored schemes, many of which will operate in a challenge mode under the PM Gati Shakti framework. "I urge all parties and members of the House to encourage their respective State Governments to participate actively. Any state that comes forward for these mega schemes can stand to benefit," she said.

On inflation, Sitharaman maintained that price stability has been achieved without compromising growth.

"I want to highlight the fact that inflation is at a historic low, even though growth remains high. There is no inflation crisis in India today. Inflation has been tamed and firmly anchored due to stability and the steps taken by the government," she said.

Responding to concerns over unemployment, the Finance Minister said the

MP seeks NH status for key Mizoram-Myanmar border roads

Aizawl, Feb 12 (GNS) Mizoram's lone Rajya Sabha member K. Vanlalvena on Thursday pressed the central government to accord national highway status to two strategic border roads along the Mizoram-Myanmar frontier, citing their importance for connectivity, trade, security and regional development. Raising the issue during Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, Vanlalvena urged the Centre to declare the Hnathial-Tarpho-Khawhri-Cherhlun-Thingsai-Bualpui H-Saisihchhuah road and the Hnathial-Tuipui D-Darzo-S. Vanlaiphai-Sangau-Pangkhu-Saisihchhuah road as national highways. Both routes provide vital links to Myanmar through Saisihchhuah, a border village in southern Mizoram's Lawngtlai district. The MP informed the House that on the Myanmar side, the government has already completed construction of a double-lane road from Hakha, the capital of Chin State, up to Saisihchhuah. However, he pointed out that connectivity on the Indian side remains inadequate, undermining the potential of cross-border infrastructure already in place. Vanlalvena noted that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has declared Saisihchhuah as a border haat, intended to function as a mini border trade centre. Despite this, he said, the lack of proper road connectivity has prevented the border haat from becoming operational and benefiting local communities.

Life Imprisonment Awarded in 2023 Rape Case; Court Imposes Rs.10,000 Fine

(By GMA Staff Reporter)

Nandyal, Feb 12: In a rape case that occurred in the early hours of September 24, 2023, the accused, Dudekula Dastagiri (23), son of late Hussaini and a resident of Sanjamala village and mandal, was sentenced to life imprisonment along with a fine of Rs.10,000 by the Special Sessions Court.

According to the case details, at around 2:15 a.m., the accused sexually assaulted a mentally challenged woman near Railway Station Road on the outskirts of Kovelakuntla town. The victim was at the Kovelakuntla bus stand when the accused allegedly deceived her by promising to drop her home.

He took her on his motorcycle to a secluded area near the railway station road and forcibly assaulted her before abandoning her in nearby bushes.

Bleeding and injured, the victim managed to walk to a nearby petrol bunk, where locals noticed her condition and arranged for her to be shifted by auto to the Government Hospital in Kovelakuntla. Upon receiving the Medicolegal Case (MLC) intimation, Sub-Inspector Smt. Shaik Moulani reached the hospital, recorded the victim's statement, and registered a case at Kovelakuntla Police Station as Crime No. 137/2023 under Section 376 IPC.

The investigation was taken up by In-charge Circle Inspector P. Hanumantha Naik, who arrested the accused and filed the charge sheet. During trial proceedings, the accused absconded and failed to appear before the court, leading to the issuance of a Non-Bailable Warrant (NBW). Under the special



supervision of Nandyal District SP Sunil Shoran, IPS, and the leadership of Allagadda Sub-Division DSP K. Pramod, the police team traced and apprehended the accused. The NBW was executed, and he was remanded to judicial custody for trial.

During the court proceedings, CI P. Hanumantha Naik and SI P. Mallikarjuna Reddy ensured timely production of witnesses. Public Prosecutors Smt. Sarala Devi and Smt. Venkata Lakshmi presented arguments before the Special Sessions Court for Trial of Cases Against Women-cum-VII Additional District and Sessions Judge,

Kurnool, presided over by V. Lakshmi Rajyam.

After thorough examination, the court found the accused guilty and sentenced him to rigorous life imprisonment along with a fine of Rs.10,000.

Senior officials commended CI P. Hanumantha Naik, WSI Smt. Shaik Moulani, SIP. Mallikarjuna Reddy, and staff members HCB. Naganna, PCS. Chand Basha, N. Mali, A. Vamsi Krishna, and Court Constable M. Srinivasulu for successfully identifying, arresting, and securing conviction of the accused through strong evidence and diligent investigation.

KIIT to lead Asia's first initiative to safeguard unprotected Buddhist heritage

Bhubaneswar, Feb 12 (GNS) In a landmark move for heritage preservation, the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) is poised to play a transformative role in protecting Asia's unprotected Buddhist sites.

The initiative marks a significant step toward safeguarding vulnerable rural heritage landscapes through legal, academic, and community-driven frameworks.

An International Academy for the Preservation and Management of Unprotected Buddhist Heritage and Sites in Rural Areas is being established by the Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development.

The initiative is being led intellectually and strategically by Professor Dr. Amareswar Galla, Pro-Chancellor and Professor at KIIT and KISS.

A distinguished scholar in Indigeneity

and Inclusive Museum & Heritage Studies, Prof. Galla is also collaborating with the KIIT School of Law to design a specialised programme in UNESCO International Heritage Law.

Once launched, it will be the first academic programme of its kind in South Asia, positioning KIIT as a leader in heritage governance and international conservation law.

The proposal for the Academy received

strong backing at a major international conference last year. Building on that momentum, a core group of global experts convened in New Delhi on February 7 to deliberate on the Academy's structure, curriculum, and long-term roadmap.

Speaking on the sidelines of the

discussions, Prof. Galla emphasized the urgent

need for integrated preservation models that combine robust legal frameworks, active community participation, and ethical stewardship to protect endangered Buddhist heritage sites, particularly those located in rural landscapes.

The initiative holds special significance for Odisha. Recently, UNESCO included the

State's renowned Buddhist Golden Triangle

— Ratnagiri, Udayagiri, and Lalitgiri — in

India's Tentative List for World Heritage

status under a serial nomination.

The proposed academic programme and

the International Academy are expected to

significantly enhance Odisha's capacity to

conserve, manage, and legally safeguard

these historic treasures, while reinforcing

KIIT's growing global role in heritage studies

and preservation leadership.

UoH signs MoU with Kerala State Higher Education Council for Academic, Research Collaboration

Hyderabad/Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 12 (GNS) The University of Hyderabad (UoH) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) to strengthen academic and research collaboration between higher education institutions of the two states.

The MoU was signed through KSHEC's Centre of Excellence, the Kerala Network for Research Support in Higher Education (KNRSHE).

The formal signing ceremony was held in Thiruvananthapuram at the office of Kerala Higher Education and Social Justice Minister Dr R Bindu.

The University of Hyderabad was represented by Prof M Ghanashyam Krishna, Director, Institution of Eminence, and Prof Samrat L Sabat, Director, R&D Cell.

KSHEC was represented by Vice Chairman Prof Rajan Gurukkal, Member Secretary Dr Rajan Varughese, Registrar Smt. Beena Rani and Research Officer Dr Sudheendran.

Described as a unique inter-state collaboration, the MoU aims to enhance access to advanced research facilities, support professional development of faculty and researchers, and provide internship opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The partnership will facilitate joint academic and research projects and promote long-term institutional engagement between the University of Hyderabad and state universities in Kerala.

Dr R Bindu said such collaborations are vital for improving academic standards and enabling globally competitive research. She appreciated the University of Hyderabad's initiative in partnering with KSHEC to modernise Kerala's research ecosystem through structured cooperation and shared infrastructure.

Following the signing, an interactive meeting was held at KSHEC with experts from the University of Hyderabad, coordinators of KSHEC Centres of Excellence, project teams and researchers associated with UoH through the ANRF-PAIR project, a UoH statement said on Thursday.

Assam court restrains Cong leaders from making defamatory statements against CM

Guwahati, Feb 12 (GNS) A court in Guwahati on Thursday issued a showcause notice to Congress leaders Gaurav Gogoi, Jitendra Singh and Bhupesh Baghel over their recent allegation against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The court of the District and Sessions Judge Kamrup Metropolitan district also restrained the three Congress leaders from publishing, circulating and disseminating any further defamatory statements against the Chief Minister. The court order came after Sarma recently approached the court over defamatory statements and allegations made against him by the three Congress leaders.

Sarma has filed a defamation case seeking Rs 500 crore against the three Congress leaders for making false, malicious and defamatory allegations against him through a press conference. It may be mentioned here that the three Congress leaders during a press conference on February 4 made a series of corruption allegations against Sarma. The opposition leaders have accused Sarma of holding illegal land assets worth Rs. 12000 crore. "It is evident that the petitioner is the Chief Minister of Assam, having high status in the society and his reputation has suffered before the society and he has to suffer mentally due to the impugned defamatory publications by the defendants without any documents," the court observed.

The court order said that the interim order has been passed to restrain the defendants from making any further defamatory statements.

Sarita Yolmo makes history as the first woman TTE in Darjeeling Himalayan Railway

Siliguri, Feb 12 (GNS) Sarita Yolmo has made history as the first woman Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE) to be assigned "Tour Duty" on the iconic Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) under Northeast Frontier Railway.

Seen performing her duty here on the UNESCO World Heritage Toy Train route, she represents a landmark moment for women in field and operational roles within Indian Railways. "Sarita's journey to this historic moment is one of remarkable perseverance. She began her career in the Railway Press, serving with dedication until the facility's closure. "Rather than letting a career shift slow her down, Sarita transitioned seamlessly into the commercial department, taking on a new role as a TTE based in New Jalpaiguri (NJP)," said Kapinjal Kishore Sharma, Chief Public Relations Officer, NFR.

Meghalaya Govt felicitates ten outstanding persons with disabilities

Shillong, Feb 12 (GNS) Meghalaya Governor C.H. Vijayashankar on Thursday felicitated ten outstanding persons with disabilities for their indomitable spirit.

The felicitation programme was organised by the office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Social Welfare Department in collaboration with Lok Bhawan, Shillong at the Lok Darbar hall in the presence of their family members.

Those felicitated were Ferdinand Lyngdoh Marshillong, Anjelina Tynhiang, Simseng M. Sangma, Willingson Manar, Orphon Nongrum, Shanborlang Siangshai, Madhu Subedi, Keneddy Rynjah, Ms. Jepora T. Sangma and Pillbert Hanse.

The ceremony stood as a reaffirmation of Meghalaya's commitment to inclusivity, dignity and equal opportunity for all. The event not only celebrated individual achievements but also strengthened the collective resolve to build a compassionate and barrier-free society where every citizen can contribute fully to the State's growth and development.

Addressing the gathering, the Governor

commended the awardees for their indomitable spirit and stated that their achievements serve as a powerful reminder that disability is not a limitation but a mark of strength and courage.

Vijayashankar also underscored the importance of identifying the root causes of disabilities and strengthening preventive measures.

He emphasised that while empowerment and inclusion remain essential, equal attention must be given to early detection, awareness, timely medical intervention, maternal and child healthcare, road safety, and preventive public health strategies to reduce avoidable disabilities.

The Governor also called upon all concerned departments to adopt a proactive and coordinated approach to prevention, alongside rehabilitation and support.

Noting that India, as a signatory and ratifying nation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), he said India has reaffirmed its commitment to uphold the dignity, rights and full participation of persons

with disabilities.

Vijayashankar further emphasised that true progress of a society is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable members.

He noted that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 provides a strong legal foundation for ensuring equality, accessibility and non-discrimination, and called upon all stakeholders -government departments, institutions, civil society and citizens - to work together to translate the spirit of the Act into meaningful action on the ground.

The Governor also encouraged the awardees to continue striving for excellence and assured them of the State's continued support.

Principal Secretary to Governor, H. C. Chaudhary, Commissioner & Secretary Social Welfare Department, Pravin Bakshi, Director Social Welfare Department, C.D. Lyngwa, Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Meghalaya, Lyngkor Kynjing, Chief Adviser, Meghalaya State Paralympics Association Himalaya M. Shangpliang, and other senior officers were present in the programme.

With sustainable urban development as theme, DDA to host first-ever Green Expo at Baansera Park on Feb 14

New Delhi, Feb 12 (GNS) The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) will host the first-ever "DDA Green Expo 2026" on February 14-15 at Baansera Park, bringing together senior government leaders, urban planners, climate experts and industry stakeholders to chart the next phase of sustainable urban development in India, an official said.

The two-day summit at Delhi's first bamboo-themed park, located on the bank of the Yamuna River near Sarai Kale Khan, aims to deliberate on how Indian cities can transition from expansion-led growth models towards climate resilience, ecological restoration and people-centric planning.

The Expo will be inaugurated by Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena, who will also deliver the keynote address. The Delhi LG is also the chairperson of the DDA.

Designed as a strategic, solution-driven national platform, the Green Expo will feature high-level panel discussions and expert sessions on pressing urban challenges such as extreme heat, flood resilience, nature-based infrastructure, circular food systems and innovative financing for green cities.

A special fireside conversation featuring environmental leaders Swami Prem Parivartan (Peepal Baba) and Ramveer Tanwar, popularly known as the 'Pond Man of India', will focus on the role of community action and behavioural change in restoring urban

ecosystems.

On the sidelines of the Expo, DDA will formalise strategic partnerships with leading national institutions to strengthen Delhi's green and cultural ecosystem.

Collaboration with the National Medicinal Plants Board will support the development of herbal gardens, medicinal nurseries and biodiversity conservation across DDA parks.

In partnership with the National School of Drama, DDA will launch 'RangBaag', a community theatre initiative for children in park spaces.

A comprehensive collaboration with the University of Delhi will promote urban ecological research and youth engagement, while a partnership with WWF will establish 'Citizens' Nature Hubs' to encourage environmental learning and action.

DDA will also work with Delhi Technological University to enhance research and development in ecology, sustainability and technology-driven urban solutions, with a focus on involving young professionals in planning and implementation.

Additionally, a collaboration with the Mathura-Vrindavan Development Authority (MVDA) will facilitate knowledge-sharing and technical guidance in areas such as urban built environment improvement, public realm enhancement and sustainable material use.

Key sessions at the Expo include

"Building Climate-Ready Cities Through Nature-Based Infrastructure," which will examine the role of urban forests, restored floodplains and biodiversity corridors as climate infrastructure.

Another major discussion titled "Responding to Urban Heat: Policy, Planning and Public Health" will explore integrated strategies linking urban design, Heat Action Plans and healthcare preparedness.

Senior policymakers and development leaders will also participate in a panel on "Designing for Climate-Responsive Cities," focusing on energy-efficient urban design, climate-adaptive public spaces and resilient infrastructure.

The Expo will further highlight emerging sustainability priorities such as urban food circularity, balancing development with ecological conservation, and scalable green financing models including CSR and public-private partnerships. Innovations in urban greening, water management, waste solutions and climate-resilient design will also be showcased.

With participation from senior government officials, global institutions, academia, industry and civil society, the DDA Green Expo 2026 is expected to emerge as a landmark national forum for advancing climate-responsive urban development in the country.

Manipur Witnesses Partial Shutdown due to All India strike

Imphal, Feb 12 (GNS) Manipur witnessed a partial shutdown on Thursday as the state joined the nationwide Bharat Bandh call given by central trade unions and various national federations. The bandh received support from the Co-ordinating Body of Trade Unions, Manipur, resulting in mixed responses across the capital and other areas.

A large portion of Khwairamband Keithel, including the women's market remained closed during the day. Public transport services were also affected as some transporters supported the strike.

In a statement, the Co-ordinating Body of Trade Unions, Manipur noted that the strike was organised in protest against what it termed as "pro-corporate policies" of the Central Government. The unions alleged that recent economic and labour reforms have weakened workers' rights, accelerated privatization, and increased economic hardship for workers, farmers and the general public.

The unions strongly criticised the

implementation of the four Labour Codes, claiming they dilute existing labour protections and undermine collective bargaining rights. They also opposed privatization of public sector enterprises and essential services, as well as policies encouraging increased corporate control over key sectors of the economy.

The unions expressed concern over rising unemployment, growing contractualisation of jobs, and the escalating prices of essential commodities, including fuel and LPG. They noted that domestic LPG cylinder prices have crossed Rs. 1,000 in many areas.

Objections were also raised against the proposed Electricity Bill 2025, amendments to the Insurance Act, the National Education Policy, the Seed Bill 2025, and Free Trade Agreements with the United Kingdom, European Union and the United States. According to the unions, these measures adversely affect workers, farmers and the broader public.

The statement further highlighted

concerns over privatization initiatives in sectors such as banking, insurance, railways, defence production, coal, steel, telecommunications, ports, airports and other public utilities, alleging that such policies increase inequality while benefiting large corporations.

Among their major demands, the unions called for a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) at C2 plus 50 percent with assured procurement for all crops, loan waivers for farmers, proper implementation of the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Act, 2013, strengthening of public sector units, protection of workers' rights and social security, effective measures to control price rise, employment generation, and regularisation of contract workers.

The Co-ordinating Body of Trade Unions, Manipur — comprising AITUC, CITU, INTUC, TUCC, UTUC and SKM-Loumi Lupsing extended full support and actively participated in the All India General Strike.

Liver, kidney transplants soon in Jharkhand

Ranchi, Feb 12 (GNS) Jharkhand Health Minister Irfan Ansari on Thursday announced that liver and kidney transplant services will soon be introduced in the state, with a special financial package to be provided to patients undergoing these procedures.

Ansari said the government is working tirelessly to strengthen the state's healthcare system and expects cooperation from the Opposition. He alleged that efforts were being made to obstruct development in the health sector, to the RIMS-2 project and proposed infrastructure upgrades aimed at improving emergency services, including lift installations. He said these projects are meant for public welfare and not for private benefit.

Ansari described senior physician Majid Alam as a valuable asset to the state and said he personally learned the nuances of surgery under his guidance.

The MS Memorial Super Speciality Hospital (Alam Hospital Unit) was inaugurated in Ranchi to further strengthen advanced healthcare services. The Health Minister said providing quality medical facilities to the people of the state remains his top priority.

The hospital will offer multi-speciality services equipped with advanced technology, including organ transplant facilities, gynecology and obstetrics, plastic surgery, and a high-tech pathology laboratory. It

houses Jharkhand's first robotic surgery facility, has a capacity of 150 beds, four modular operation theatres, an 8,000 sq ft ICU, and a 20-bed NICU.

Hospital CEO Dr Majid Alam stated that 10 beds will be reserved on a charitable basis for underprivileged patients. The facility will provide services such as bariatric surgery, advanced laparoscopic and hysteroscopic procedures, microscopic and endoscopic spine surgery, advanced urological surgery, interventional radiology, high-risk pregnancy management, and cancer screening and surgeries. Kidney and liver transplant services are also planned to be launched at the hospital in the near future.

BJP fulfils long-pending demand for equal pay for MCD MTS employees: Delhi Mayor

New Delhi, Feb 12 (GNS) Delhi Mayor Raja Iqbal Singh on Thursday announced that the long-pending demand for equal pay for Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS) employees working in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has been fulfilled.

Addressing a press conference, the Mayor said that all MTS employees in the MCD will now receive equal pay and a separate budgetary provision has been made for the purpose.

"The Bharatiya Janata Party does what it says. We have fulfilled the promise made to MTS employees. Tomorrow, during the budget session, Leader of the House Pravesh Wahi will formally announce this and officially seal the decision," Singh said.

He alleged that previous governments had only given assurances to MTS employees, whereas the BJP has implemented its commitment on the ground.

Around 4,000 MTS employees in the MCD are expected to benefit from the decision.

The Mayor said the move reflects the BJP's commitment and sensitivity towards municipal employees and marks a significant step in ensuring fairness and equality in pay structure.

Leader of the House Pravesh Wahi said that Rs 50 crore has been allocated in the budget to implement equal pay for MTS employees. He added that the decision was taken after detailed discussions with the party leadership, in line with the BJP's policies and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's philosophy of Antyodaya.

Wahi claimed that earlier governments had created unnecessary obstacles in resolving the issue, which the current leadership has now removed to honour its promise.

Standing Committee Chairperson Satya Sharma said that the BJP ensures implementation of its announcements.

She noted that MTS employees had repeatedly raised concerns about disparities in pay scales under previous administrations.

Sharma said that some MTS employees were earlier receiving different pay scales, leading to inequality. With the new decision, all MTS employees will now receive equal pay, strengthening a sense of fairness and satisfaction among them.

Left, Congress-backed unions hold massive protest at HPSEBL headquarters against Modi Govt

Shimla, Feb 12 (GNS) On the All India strike call given by Left parties and the Congress-backed trade unions, a massive congregation of electricity employees, engineers and pensioners assembled outside the headquarters of the Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board Limited (HPSEBL) here on Thursday, protesting against what they termed as "anti-worker" and "crony capitalistic" policies of the Narendra Modi Government.

A complete pen-down and tool-down strike was observed under the banner of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of HPSEBL Employees, Engineers and Pensioners. The impact of the strike was visible in offices and field operations across the state, although emergency services were exempted. During the lunch break, protest demonstrations were held at 63 locations outside Electricity Board offices statewide.

Memoranda were submitted to the Central Government through local administrations in several districts. Pensioners and electricity consumers also joined the protests in solidarity with organised and unorganised workers participating in the nationwide strike.

The agitation was primarily directed against the proposed Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which the unions allege seeks to promote privatisation, allow multiple distribution licensees in a single area and grant private players access to the existing government network.

The JAC convenor Hira Lal Verrma claimed that the move would eliminate cross-subsidies for middle- and lower-income consumers while leaving the responsibility of supplying power to remote and tribal areas solely with the state utility.

The union leaders warned that privatisation would erode employment opportunities, weaken the financial position of the Board—especially if industrial consumers shift to private firms—and adversely impact service conditions and pension security.

They demanded strengthening of the public utility, fresh recruitment, implementation of the Old Pension Scheme and regularisation of long-serving outsourced workers, cautioning that any move toward privatisation would trigger a larger statewide movement.

After impressive performances in Jr World Cup and HIL, Manmeet makes Senior India debut

Rourkela, Feb 12 (GNS) Hailing from an army background, it's no surprise that discipline, consistency and hard work have been the core elements of shaping Manmeet Singh's journey ever since his father - who played hockey in the Army team- began to teach him how to play hockey at the age of 11.

At 20, the midfielder has now made his senior debut for India, representing his team against Belgium at the FIH Men's Pro League 2025-26 in Rourkela on Thursday.

The youngster came into the limelight courtesy his performances at the FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup 2025 in Tamil Nadu, where he finished as the top scorer for his team, scoring six goals and helping India secure a Bronze medal. His notable performances in the last two editions of the Men's Hero Hockey India League (HIL) also caught the eye, eventually earning him his place in India's 24-member squad for the Rourkela leg of the ongoing FIH Men's Pro League 2025-26.

Reflecting on his maiden senior appearance for the country, Manmeet said, "Knowing that I'm representing India and wearing the blue jersey motivates me. It's a feeling of great pride. It was the same when I played at the Junior World Cup, but the only

difference now is that I have more responsibilities while being part of the senior team. The support from the senior players is always there, which is great for us young players." Having been part of the senior camp ahead of the tournament, the midfielder from Punjab is constantly striving to find ways to improve his game. With an eye for goal and a vision for a killer pass, complimented by his attacking intent, Manmeet credited the learnings from the Junior World Cup and the impact of his coaches at the tournament- PR Sreejesh and Birendra Lakra.

"For me personally, they emphasized on the importance of playing forward as much as possible. As a midfielder, you have to lead the team in many ways, whether it is by assisting goals or remaining strong defensively. The coaches always kept the team motivated, and also shared their experiences to help us tactically. My focus has been on carrying the same learnings with the senior team as well."

Manmeet was part of HIL GC in the recently concluded Men's Hero Hockey India League, playing alongside experienced players like Hardik Singh and Kane Russell. He highlighted the importance of the tournament, not only for the opportunity it provides to rub shoulders with the best

players in the world, but also the platform it offers to help youngsters make their mark.

"It's a great platform for us. Before the HIL, the players coming into the national camp and setup would come straight from the state teams. Now, this tournament gives us an opportunity to showcase ourselves. Everyone is always watching the matches, including the coaches. So, if you play well, you will get called up to the national camp."

Further elaborating on his learnings from the tournament, Manmeet highlighted, "You get to learn from the seniors. You learn how to play under pressure, how to control the ball, and how to do pre-scanning. Even from the foreign players, you can see how they get ready for their matches and how they maintain their mindset."

From doing well in the Junior World Cup last year to now making his senior debut for India, it's been a rapid rise for the 20-year-old. However, Manmeet insists that this is only the first step in fulfilling his lifelong dream of winning a medal for India at the Olympics.

"My mindset is focused on working on my game as much as possible, to improve on areas where there might be some shortcomings and eventually represent India at the Olympics to win a medal. That's the dream", he concluded.

policies, privatisation, and price rise.

"This strike is extremely significant to protect workers' interests and to oppose the amendments to labour laws. The Centre's policies are curtailing workers' rights, increasing contractual employment and gradually pushing public sector undertakings



Chingkheihunba and X-Polo Club Enter Polo final



Imphal, Feb 12 (GNS) Chingkheihunba Polo Club, Kongpal and X-Polo Club, Wangkhei stormed into the final of the 2nd Dr. KSH Chourjit Singh Inter-District Polo Tournament, 2026, after registering convincing victories in their respective semifinal matches held on Thursday under the aegis of the Manipur Horse Riding & Polo Association.

In the first semifinal played at the 1st Ground, Chingkheihunba Polo Club, Kongpal outplayed Assam Rifles Polo Team by 7-5 goals in a closely contested encounter.

The Kongpal outfit began aggressively, securing three goals in the opening chukker while restricting Assam Rifles to a single goal. Though Assam Rifles attempted a comeback in the second and fourth chukkers, adding one goal each, Chingkheihunba maintained their lead with disciplined defence and timely strikes. The third chukker saw Kongpal add two more goals, consolidating their advantage before sealing the match with another goal in the fourth. The fifth chukker remained scoreless.

For Assam Rifles Polo Team, L. Joykumar, Riyakut Ali, Kh. Chandrakumar, Kh. Susilo, M. Kubir and S. Bonbon featured in the lineup. Chingkheihunba Polo Club fielded Th. Rohen, O. Roben, Leishemba, A. Alex, M. Bhupendrojit and Th. Manisana.

With a final tally of seven goals, Chingkheihunba Polo Club secured their place in the championship match.

In the second semifinal, X-Polo Club, Wangkhei delivered a commanding performance to defeat Thangmeiband Youth Polo Club, Thangmeiband by 11-3 goals.

After a goalless first chukker, X-Polo Club took control of the match in the second chukker, netting three goals. They continued their dominance in the third chukker, scoring five goals to effectively put the contest beyond reach. Adding three more goals in the fourth chukker, Wangkhei sealed a comprehensive victory. Thangmeiband Youth Polo Club managed to score one goal in the second chukker and two in the fourth but could not match the attacking intensity of their opponents.

The X-Polo Club squad comprised Th. Jacob, W. Angamba, P. Bijit Singh, L. Koleshanda, Th. Herojit and Th. Santosh. Representing Thangmeiband Youth Polo Club were O. Daikomba, K. Vikter, S. Saolia, K. Swarna Kumar and P. Danish.

The final score stood at 11-3 in favour of X-Polo Club, Wangkhei.

With these results, the final of the tournament will witness a clash between Chingkheihunba Polo Club, Kongpal and X-Polo Club, Wangkhei, promising an exciting showdown for the coveted title.

The matches were officiated by mounted umpires and technical officials appointed by the Manipur Horse Riding & Polo Association.

Partial response to industrial strike in West Bengal

Kolkata, Feb 12 (GNS) A nationwide industrial strike called on Thursday by a joint forum of 21 central trade unions evoked a partial response across West Bengal, with work affected in some banks, factories and industrial zones, while normal activities continued in many areas.

The strike was part of a nationwide general strike called by central trade unions, including CITU, AITUC and UTUC, demanding the repeal of the four new labour codes introduced by replacing 29 existing labour laws.

The unions alleged that the new codes were "anti-worker, curtailed labour rights, reduced job security and made hiring and retrenchment" easier for employers.

They also raised concerns over privatisation, wage structures, and lack of social security. In poll-bound West Bengal, the joint forum also launched protests under the slogan "Save Bengal."

In Hooghly district, the strike had a visible impact in the jute sector. Workers of Shyamnagar North Jute Mill at Bhadrak and Ganges Jute Mill at Bansberia joined the strike, with unions staging demonstrations and picketing outside the mill gates.

Although the gates opened around 6 am, workers did not enter the premises and production remained suspended during the morning shift. In Durgapur, the strike had a mixed impact on the industrial and mining belt. Left-affiliated trade union supporters assembled outside the main gate of the Durgapur Steel Plant, raising slogans and holding banners against the Centre's labour

towards privatisation," CITU leader Swapnil Majumdar said.

While protests led to brief tension outside the plant, industrial operations were largely unaffected. Leaders of the ruling Trinamool Congress-backed labour wing opposed the strike and called for the normal functioning of industries.

In the Asansol industrial area, the Trinamool labour organisation actively opposed the shutdown and assured public sector unit officials of support to ensure workers could enter factories if obstructed.

Left trade union leaders criticised the move, accusing the ruling party of undermining workers' protests.

The strike had a partial impact in north Bengal's Siliguri, where several markets and shops remained closed and picketing was

CM Rekha Gupta to inaugurate month-long 'Delhi Khel Mahakumbh' on Feb 13

New Delhi, Feb 12 (GNS) Delhi Education Minister Ashish Sood on Thursday interacted with over 50 sports influencers, media representatives, Arjuna Awardees, fitness coaches and sports personalities ahead of the launch of 'Delhi Khel Mahakumbh', scheduled to begin on Friday.

The formal inauguration will be held at Chhatrasal Stadium on February 13 and will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

The opening ceremony will feature a grand march-past led by Delhi's para-athletes.



The month-long sporting event is modelled on the lines of Khelo India and aims to strengthen the sports culture in the national capital. Addressing the gathering, Sood said Delhi has abundant sporting talent but needs the right platform and opportunities.

He said competitions in seven major sports disciplines, including football, basketball, volleyball and kabaddi, will be held in the initial phase.

The events will take place across 17 major stadiums in Delhi, including Chhatrasal Stadium, Bawana, Najafgarh, Vikaspuri and other key locations in the city.

Highlighting the scale of the event, the Minister said more than 16,000 athletes have already registered, with the process still underway.

The government has set a target of over 30,000 participants for this edition. In the coming years, the aim is to expand participation to more than one lakh grassroots athletes annually.

Sood said the Mahakumbh will provide a strong platform for women athletes, with special focus on their safety and participation. He added that increased involvement of women in sports would encourage wider participation and create a positive social impact.

Sports help instill discipline among youth and keep them away from substance abuse and other social evils, the minister said. The initiative will not only identify emerging talent but also support their progression to national and international levels, he added.

The Minister said the event would also help assess existing sports infrastructure in Delhi. Organising competitions across multiple venues will provide inputs for future upgrades and improvements.

He added that the Chief Minister has assured the Sports Department that sports facilities in Delhi will be modernised and developed to world-class standards in the coming years.

Sood also announced that Indian cricketer Shikhar Dhawan has been appointed as the Brand Ambassador of Delhi Khel Mahakumbh to inspire young athletes and generate enthusiasm for sports among the youth.

He expressed confidence that the initiative would help build a strong sporting culture in Delhi and improve the capital's medal tally at national and international competitions in the years ahead.

Young engineer commits suicide in Chandrapur

Chandrapur, Feb 12 (GNS) A 34-year-old engineer was found dead at his home in Rajura in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district on Wednesday night, in what appears to be a case of suicide, police said on Thursday.

Deepak Baba Pade, who worked with a reputed Pune-based company, had recently returned to Rajura.

Police said he was discovered hanging in his bedroom after family members, unable to reach him, checked on him.

Known for his calm demeanour and academic diligence, Pade had reportedly been suffering from back pain, which may have affected his mental health.

The exact cause of the suicide is under investigation.

Local police are examining the circumstances surrounding the incident.

Dropped Chances, Heavy Consequences: Fielding Errors Haunt Teams in T20 World Cup Opener



social media accounts were flooded with abusive messages, many of which crossed acceptable boundaries — a harsh reminder of the pressures modern players face.

A Similar Story in Mumbai

On the same day, but at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, another dropped catch altered the course of the game. Dutch pacer Logan van Beek bowled a full toss that Pakistan's Faheem Ashraf miscued toward long-off. As the ball hung in the air, Ashraf later admitted he began praying.

Max O'Dowd ran to his right, settled under the skier and appeared set to complete the catch. But as he took it, his knee brushed the ground, causing the ball to pop out of his hands.

Pakistan, at that stage, needed 23 runs off 11 balls with their last recognized batting pair at the crease.

The reprieve proved decisive. The next four deliveries went for six, dot, six, and four, reducing the equation to just five runs in the final over. Pakistan went on to seal the win, while the Dutch were left rueing what could have been.

"Any fan with a brain knows that was the moment that cost us," Dutch pacer Paul van Meekeren later remarked.

Unfortunately, the aftermath extended beyond the field. O'Dowd revealed that his

proved beyond USA's reach, handing the defending champions a winning start to their campaign.

Ireland's Fielding Woes Deepen

If the Netherlands and USA were undone by one critical mistake each, Ireland endured a far more difficult outing. Across two matches, the Irish side dropped as many as 10 catches, including several in their clash against Sri Lanka in Colombo.

With Sri Lanka at 104/4 after 16 overs, batters Kusal Mendis and Kamindu Mendis accelerated aggressively. In attacking Mark Adair, they offered multiple chances — three clear opportunities in quick succession — but

all were spilled by Irish fielders.

Ireland's struggles continued against Australia, where more chances went begging. One notable miss came in the 18th over when Gareth Delany dropped Marcus Stoinis, allowing Australia to press home their advantage. Harry Tector acknowledged the disappointment but resisted attributing it to a lack of focus. "I think they're isolated incidents. Sometimes it becomes a bit contagious when one gets dropped and the next one follows. It's certainly disappointing, and we can't afford to let it happen," he said.

Spin bowling coach Chris Brown echoed similar sentiments, insisting that such lapses do not reflect the team's usual standards.

The Cost of Missed Opportunities

At the group stage of a global tournament, margins are razor-thin. A single defeat — especially one influenced by a missed catch — could determine whether a team advances to the Super Eight or heads home early.

Fielding standards are expected to improve as the tournament progresses. However, for some teams, the damage may already be done. In a competition where pressure amplifies every mistake, one dropped catch can define an entire campaign.

As the T20 World Cup unfolds, the lesson is clear: in the shortest format of the game, there is little room for error — and sometimes, the difference between glory and regret is a ball that slips through the fingers.

Guntas Kaur Sandhu tied 17th after Round 1 of Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific

Wellington (New Zealand), Feb 12 (GNS) India's Guntas Kaur Sandhu carded a one-under 71 at the Royal Wellington Golf Club here on Thursday to emerge as the best Indian at tied 17th position after the opening round of the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific.

The tournament is hosted by The R&A (Royal & Ancient, Scotland), the world governing body for the rules of golf, in association with the Asia-Pacific Golf Confederation (APGC).

Part of the four-member team sent by the Indian Golf Union (IGU), Guntas began on a modest note with a bogey on the first hole before sinking birdies on the third, eighth and 12th holes. But a bogey on the 15th hole pegged her back. She trails the leader Yunseo Yang of South Korea by seven strokes.

Other Indians in fray, Ananyaa Sood (2-over 74; Tied 42nd), Zara Anand (7-over 79; Tied 66th) and Jia Kataria (9-over 81; Tied 75th) had a disappointing first round.

Guntas Kaur Sandhu, ranked 545th in the world, had a remarkable domestic season winning four times on the IGU circuit, namely the Gujarat Ladies & Junior Girls Amateur, Eastern India Ladies & Junior Girls Amateur, Southern India Ladies & Junior Girls Amateur and the Maharashtra Ladies & Junior Girls Amateur Golf Championships.

She finished third in the 2025 IGU All India Ladies & Junior Girls Amateur Championship.

Speaking about her round, Guntas said: "Royal Wellington is a challenging parkland course. I attacked the flags from the start but got mixed results today. I will draw inspiration from some of my good performances on the domestic IGU circuit tomorrow. Looking forward to a memorable outing here."

The winner of World Amateur Asia-Pacific earns invitations to play in three major championships- the AIG Women's Open, the Amundi Evian Championship and The Chevron Championship.

WTT Star Contender 2026: Manush-Diya survive scare to reach mixed doubles quarters



Chennai, Feb 12 (GNS) India's top mixed doubles combination of Manush Shah and Diya Chitale kept their nerves in the decider to pack off Korea's Republic's Oh Seunghwan and Kim Seongjin to reach the quarterfinals of the WTT Star Contender Chennai 2026.

WTT Star Contender Chennai 2026 is co-hosted by Ultimate Table Tennis, Sharath Kamal Academy, and Stupa Sports AI with the support of SDAT at the Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University here on Thursday.

The top seeded Indian combination, who recently won the WTT Contender Muscat 2026, were pushed to the brink by the Korean qualifiers as they saved three match points before the home favourites emerged victorious 3-2 (10-12, 11-6, 12-10, 5-11, 12-10) in 42 minutes.

They will now face Indian wild cards Payas Jain and Syndrela Das, who defeated Kazakhstan's Iskender Kharki and Sarvinoz Mirkadirova 11-8, 11-6, 11-7 in their first round clash.

Fourth seeds Harmeet Desai and Yashaswini Ghorpade and the young combination of Ankur Bhattacharjee and Swastika Ghosh also set up an all-Indian quarterfinal.

Desai and Ghorpade defeated Darius Movileanu and Andreea Dragoman of Romania 3-0 (11-8, 11-4, 11-7) while Bhattacharjee and Ghosh beat another Korean combination of Park Gyuhyeon and Kim Nayeng 3-2 (11-9, 3-11, 11-8, 6-11, 11-9).

While the mixed doubles players excelled, it wasn't a good opening day for the hosts in other categories as the top seeded men's doubles combination of Manav Thakkar and Manush Shah went down 3-1 (12-1, 8-11, 11-5, 11-9) against Flavien Coton and Thibault Porey of France.

In the women's singles first round clash, 15-year-old Divyanshi Bhowmick put up a good fight against WTT Feeder Series Vadodara 2026 winner Ryu Hanna of Korea but ended up on the wrong end of a 3-1 (6-11, 11-6, 11-8, 11-5) scoreline.

Officials told to prevent fetal gender determination tests

Eluru, Feb 12 (GNS) District Collector K Vetri Selvi has directed concerned officials to ensure strict implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC & PNDT) Act, which prohibits gender determination of the foetus.

A district-level committee meeting on the implementation of the PC & PNDT Act was held in the district collectorate on Thursday, under the chairmanship of the District Collector. Speaking on the occasion, Collector Vetri Selvi emphasized the need to create widespread awareness about the ban on foetal gender determination in the district. She voiced concern over the alarming trend where some families opt for abortion upon learning that the unborn child is a girl.

The Collector described such incidents as deeply distressing and highlighted that both the Central and State governments have

introduced the PC & PNDT Act to prevent such practices.

The Collector said that the district authorities should crackdown on illegal fetal gender determination practices. The district currently has 13 government hospitals and 102 private scanning centres, she said and asked the officials to take strict action to ensure that no centre conducts gender determination of the foetus.

The operations will be conducted under a robust strategy formulated jointly by the Health Department officials and police authorities, using appropriate equipment and standard procedures to ensure effectiveness, the Collector told the officials.

The Collector informed that Eluru district reported a total of 1,499 abortions during the last year and directed the officials to conduct comprehensive investigation into scanning

centres and the trend of prenatal gender determination.

The district administration was directed to provide detailed data on abortions and scanning centre operations by mandal and village, as part of a wider effort to address the alarming gender imbalance in the region.

Collector Vetri Selvi instructed the officials concerned to initiate strict action against scanning centres involved in illegal prenatal gender determination and deceptive operations and ordered filing of criminal cases under the PCPNDT Act (Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act) and the rigorous enforcement of the law.

District Medical and Health Officer Dr. P.J. Amrutham, DCHS Dr. B Pal Satish Kumar, District Immunization Officer Dr. U. Shobha, ICDS PD P. Sharda and other officials were among those who attended the meeting.

ED files chargesheet in Goa land grab, money laundering case

New Delhi, Feb 12 (GNS) The Enforcement Directorate (ED), Panaji Zonal Office, today said it has recently filed a chargesheet (prosecution complaint) in a North Goa court against Mohammed Suhail and others in connection of the Goa land grab and money laundering case.

The chargesheet was filed before the Principal District and Sessions Judge, North Goa, Panaji, which has taken cognisance of the matter.

The ED initiated the PMLA investigation based on a chargesheet filed by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Goa Police.

The ED investigation revealed that Mohammed Suhail, described as a habitual offender allegedly involved in land grabbing cases, hatched a criminal conspiracy to fraudulently transfer the title of a land parcel situated at Anjuna, Bardez, Goa, belonging to the parents of the complainant.

The modus operandi allegedly involved the preparation of forged birth certificates to create a fictitious person, named 'Malwin G. Lobo', and forged death certificates of the rightful owners. These fabricated documents were then used to prepare a false deed of succession and subsequently execute a fraudulent power of attorney in favour of an associate of Mohammed Suhail.

The property was later transferred to Suhail's wife in 2010 and subsequently sold to Shaikh Salim in 2011.

The investigation established that the property was allegedly significantly undervalued to project the proceeds of crime as legitimate. Cash transactions over and above the registered value were allegedly utilised by the accused for personal gain.

Mohammed Suhail was arrested by the ED in 2025.

Further investigation in the matter is ongoing.

Mah govt Takes Initiative to Implement a 'Quantum Technology Mission'

Mumbai, Feb 12 (GNS) State Higher and Technical Education Minister Chandrakant Dada Patil has said that greater emphasis should be placed on developing skilled manpower for leveraging future technologies in line with the National Quantum Mission.

As per the directions of Minister Patil, the Directorate of Technical Education has taken the initiative and submitted a proposal to the state government for building the required human resources, infrastructure, and research capacity in the quantum technology sector, an official release stated on Thursday.

The minister said that under this initiative, a Hub-and-Spoke model is proposed to be implemented through the Directorate of Technical Education, with IISER Pune (I-Hub Quantum Technology Foundation) as the central hub.

Leading institutions such as COEP Technological University, Pune; Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Technological University, Lonere; Veermata Jijabai Technological Institute (VJTI), Mumbai; and VNIT Nagpur are proposed to participate as spokes.

Quantum technology-related subjects will be introduced at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, quantum simulation laboratories will be established, and special training programs will be conducted for faculty members and students.

In the first phase (2026–2028), approximately rupees 20 crore will be allocated for faculty training, curriculum development, creation of essential infrastructure, establishment of quantum laboratories, and implementation of pilot training programs.

In the second phase, about rupees 300 crore will be invested to promote research projects, Ph.D. and post-doctoral training, patent filing, and industry collaboration. In the third phase, around rupees 200 crore will

be used for commercialization of developed technologies, creation of startups, and promotion of employment generation.

As quantum technology is an emerging and interdisciplinary field, there will be a significant demand for skilled manpower in the future. According to various academic and industry estimates, around 25,000 job opportunities per year are expected to be created in this sector in the coming years. In this context, the state government has set a target of developing more than 50,000 quantum-trained engineers and experts in Maharashtra.

The Central Government has launched the National Quantum Mission (NQM) with the primary objective of making India a global leader in cutting-edge technology domains such as quantum computing, quantum

communication, quantum sensing, and quantum materials.

Fully aligned with this national policy, the state has decided to implement the Maharashtra Quantum Technology Mission. Keeping in mind the requirements of future industries, Minister Patil has appealed for special emphasis on the creation of a competent workforce in the field of quantum technology, along with the development of the necessary infrastructure.

Minister Patil further stated that the Maharashtra Quantum Technology Mission is fully aligned with the long-term vision of "Developed Maharashtra 2047" and will be a significant step toward establishing Maharashtra as a leading state in the country and a globally competitive hub in the field of quantum technology.

Kolkata, Feb 12 (GNS) Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta literature worth more than Rs one crore were sold in the recently concluded 49th edition of Kolkata International Book Fair (KIBF).

This clearly shows that the popularity of the philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Vedanta is fast growing among the youths, who constituted the majority of the visitors at the KIBF, Ramakrishna Mission sources said.

The Ramakrishna Mission centres which publish books, including the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Advaita Ashrama, Udbodhan, Saradapith, had stalls at the KIBF. The stall of Udbodhan, the Bengali publishing house of the Ramakrishna Math

and Ramakrishna Mission, was designed after Nahabat of Dakshineswar, where Ma Sarada (Sri Ramakrishna's consort) lived till Sri Ramakrishna moved out of the temple complex to Kolkata for the treatment of cancer.

There was 10% rise in the books sold by Udbodhan this year. It may be recalled that books worth more than Rs 9 lakhs were sold in a day when Sri Mayer Padarpur Divas was celebrated in June 2025.

The visitors stood in long queues to get a copy of Chabite Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita painted by Ramananda Bandyopadhyay. The stall introduced a quirky yet profound section titled Ankibuki. This initiative aimed to weave Swami Vivekananda's philosophy into everyday lifestyle products, proving that

spirituality is not just for the prayer room, it is for the work desk and living room too.

The Proshnottari quiz which was conducted online before the Book Fair, had also evoked an overwhelming response from the younger people.

The Alochhaya photography event was based on the theme Bahujana Hitaya Bahujana Sukhaya (for the good of the many). The photographs were displayed at the stall.

Swami Aryeshananda said "As the dust settles on the 2026 Book Fair, Udbodhan stands as a testament to the fact that in an increasingly digital world, the craving for grounded, meaningful literature presented with a touch of artistic grace is only growing stronger."

Italy Script Historic First T20 World Cup Win with Dominant 10-Wicket Rout of Nepal

Mumbai, Feb 12 (GNS) Italy registered a landmark moment in their cricketing history, crushing Nepal by 10 wickets to secure their first-ever victory in the men's T20 World Cup. In only their second appearance in the tournament, the Italian side delivered a commanding all-round performance at the Wankhede Stadium on Thursday.

After dismantling Nepal for a modest 123 with disciplined spin bowling, Italy chased down the 124-run target with remarkable ease, finishing the match with 7.2 overs to spare. The emphatic win marked a dramatic turnaround for the debutants, who had suffered a heavy 73-run defeat against Scotland in their tournament opener in Kolkata.

Mosca Brothers Power Italy to Glory

The chase was headlined by an explosive unbeaten opening partnership between brothers Anthony Mosca and Justin Mosca. The duo combined precision and power to leave Nepal's bowlers helpless.

Anthony Mosca played the more aggressive role, blasting 62 not out off just 32 deliveries, an innings studded with six towering sixes and three fours. His younger brother Justin complemented him perfectly with a composed yet attacking 60 not out off 44 balls, striking three sixes and five boundaries.

From the outset, Italy's intent was clear. Anthony launched a six over long-on in the very first over, setting the tone for the chase. Justin followed suit in the third over,



punishing Karan KC with two fours and a six. By the fourth over, the Mosca brothers had hammered another six each off Lalit Rajbanshi as Italy raced to their half-century at a brisk pace.

Nepal's decision to hold back their premier spinner Sandeep Lamichhane during the powerplay proved costly. By the time he was introduced into the attack, Italy had already surged to 58 without loss, effectively taking control of the contest. The Rhinos failed to create even a half-chance as Italy maintained a run rate close to 10 per over, cruising to victory before the 13th over.

Spin Strangles Nepal
Earlier, Italy's spinners laid the foundation for the victory with a clinical bowling display. Ben Manenti (2/9) and Crishan Kalugamage (3/18) spearheaded the attack, exploiting the surface with tight lines and clever variations.

Manenti, delivering disciplined off-spin, returned figures of 4-0-9-2, choking the Nepal batters at one end. Kalugamage, relying on grip and subtle turn, dismantled the middle order, including a sharp dismissal of Dipendra Singh Airee (17) with a deceptive wrong'un that crashed into the off-stump.

Nepal's innings struggled to gain

momentum from the start. Opener Aasif Sheikh was brilliantly stumped by wicketkeeper Gian-Piero Meade off Manenti, while skipper Rohit Paudel briefly counter-attacked with two sixes before being caught near the ropes attempting another big shot.

Arif Sheikh top-scored with 27, while Karan KC's late cameo of 18 not out off 11 balls added some respectability to the total. However, Nepal's innings ended in a run-out via a direct hit from stand-in skipper Harry Manenti, symbolizing Italy's sharp fielding and overall dominance.

A Statement Performance

Italy's bowlers allowed no freebies and backed their effort with impeccable fielding, not dropping a single catch throughout the innings. Former South African cricketer JJ Smuts contributed with 1/22 in four overs, adding experience and control to the attack.

Despite missing regular captain Wayne Madsen due to a dislocated shoulder, the Italian unit functioned seamlessly under Harry Manenti's leadership. The team displayed remarkable composure and coordination, reflecting the steady growth of Italian cricket on the global stage.

For Nepal, who had pushed England to the brink in their previous outing, the defeat was a major setback. The highly anticipated clash turned into a one-sided affair as Italy outclassed them in every department.

With this historic victory, Italy not only kept their campaign alive but also announced their arrival on the world stage with authority.

Comprehensive Arrangements Directed for Smooth Maha Shivaratri Celebrations Across the District

(By Our Staff Reporter)

Vijayawada, Feb 12: District Collector Dr. G. Lakshmisha has instructed officials to make foolproof arrangements across the district to ensure that devotees do not face any inconvenience during the auspicious occasion of Maha Shivaratri and that no untoward incidents occur.

On Thursday, the Collector conducted a video conference from the camp office with Endowments Department officials, Executive Officers (EOs) of various temples, and officials from the Revenue, Police, and other departments. He issued detailed guidelines on the precautionary measures to be taken during the festival.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that large numbers of devotees are expected to visit temples across the district, including the renowned Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Temple. He emphasized the need for systematic planning and effective coordination.

As thousands of devotees are likely to take holy dips in the Krishna River at Durga Ghat, Punnami Ghat, Bhavani Ghat, and the sacred Sangamam, officials were directed to remain on high alert on the 14th and 15th of this month. The Police Department was instructed to maintain continuous surveillance at ghats and queue lines, ensure proper traffic regulation, prioritize devotees' safety, and install adequate barricading to prevent congestion.

Officials of the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation were directed to ensure continuous sanitation at all ghats and provide drinking water and mobile toilet facilities for devotees. The RDOs of Vijayawada,



Nandigama, and Tiruvuru were asked to supervise arrangements at the field level and take steps to prevent stampedes or overcrowding, especially during peak hours at major temples.

The Health Department was instructed to set up medical camps at key ghats and ensure the availability of essential medicines. The Electricity Department was directed to ensure uninterrupted power supply during the festival and take preventive measures to avoid accidents at the ghats.

To enhance safety, the Fisheries Department was instructed to deploy 15 trained swimmers in three shifts at the ghats. In case exhibitions are organized, officials

were told to maintain daily fitness check registers. Preventive measures against fire accidents must be taken, and CCTV cameras and drones should be utilized for surveillance. Control rooms are also to be established.

Special attention should be given to the safety of women devotees, children, and the elderly. The Collector also stressed that Annaprasadam and laddu prasadam should be distributed with the highest quality standards.

District Endowments Officer N. Shanmugam, RDOs K. Balakrishna and K. Madhuri, along with officials from coordinating departments, participated in the meeting.

Organic Mango Cultivation Brings 'Double Benefit' to Farmers and Consumers: NTR District Collector

(By Our Staff Reporter)

Vijayawada, Feb 12: NTR District Collector Dr. G. Lakshmisha stated that reducing the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture and adopting organic methods would bring a "double benefit" to both farmers and consumers.

On Thursday, the Collector, along with Tiruvuru RDO K. Madhuri, visited Rangapuram village in Reddigudem mandal and inspected mango orchards at the field level. He interacted with progressive farmers from Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and inquired about the usage and benefits of fruit covers. The Collector personally covered mango fruits with protective fruit bags during the visit.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Lakshmisha said the government is taking proactive measures for the welfare of mango farmers and advised them to make effective use of horticulture schemes. He explained that using fruit covers helps produce blemish-free mangoes with good color and uniform size. The government is providing 15,000 fruit covers per hectare at a 50 percent subsidy, he said.

Such mangoes fetch better prices in the market, and consumers benefit by receiving high-quality, healthy fruits. The Collector explained that when the fruit is about the size of a lemon, covering it prevents fruit flies and



other pests from attacking it. This significantly reduces pesticide costs for farmers and ensures the production of chemical-residue-free fruits.

He encouraged mango farmers to adopt 100 percent natural farming practices. Farmers expressed gratitude to the district administration for establishing a mango procurement center through coordinated

efforts.

The Collector also mentioned that attention is being given to the issue of poultry-related pests affecting mango farmers, and appropriate measures will be taken with the support of agricultural scientists.

District Horticulture Officer P. Balaji Kumar and other officials participated in the program.

Joint Collector Reviews AMRUT Phase-1 Works, Stresses Timely Supply of Safe Drinking Water



(By Our Staff Reporter)

Bhimavaram, Feb 12: District Joint Collector T. Rahul Kumar Reddy stated that officials must pay special attention to the effective implementation of the AMRUT Mission to ensure the supply of safe drinking water to the public.

On Thursday, he conducted a field inspection of AMRUT Phase-1 works undertaken in Srirampuram and ASR Nagar areas of Bhimavaram town and issued necessary instructions to the concerned officials.

During the visit, the Joint Collector interacted with local residents and inquired about the water supply system—whether clean drinking water was being supplied

through taps and if they were facing any difficulties. He stated that the primary objective of the AMRUT scheme is to strengthen drinking water infrastructure in urban areas and ensure the supply of treated water to every household.

He emphasized the need to modernize the water supply system in view of the growing urban population. Officials were directed to inspect whether all newly laid pipelines under the AMRUT scheme are functioning properly and to identify any leakages or technical issues. Necessary corrective measures should be taken to ensure efficient and modernized water distribution.

The Joint Collector also advised citizens

to use water judiciously and avoid wastage. He noted that through the AMRUT Phase-1 scheme, urban development, public health protection, and improvement in living standards can be achieved. He reiterated that the goal is to complete the works on time and provide purified drinking water to the public without delay.

Municipal Commissioner K. Ramachandra Reddy, Public Health In-charge EE R. Vijay, DE Tata Babu, and staff members were present during the inspection.

ASR, Feb 12: District Nodal Officer of the Swarna Grama-Swarna Ward Department, P.S. Kumar, stated that when illiterate individuals become literate, a new light enters their lives.

On Thursday night, he made a surprise inspection of the Aksharandhra Center in Konthili village of Hukumpeta mandal. He interacted with the women who were learning to read and write and assessed their learning abilities. He encouraged all women to pursue education and give up the practice of using thumb impressions.

He further informed that in Alluri district, around 85,000 illiterate individuals have been identified across 10 selected mandals. The District Collector has appointed one volunteer for every 10 learners to support the literacy initiative.

JC Conducts Surprise Inspection of Anna Canteen in Bhimavaram



(By Our Staff Reporter)

Bhimavaram, Feb 12: District Joint Collector T. Rahul Kumar Reddy conducted a surprise inspection of the Anna Canteen operating near the Old Bus Stand in Bhimavaram town on Thursday.

He stated that through Anna Canteens, the government is implementing a prestigious initiative to provide poor people with quality and tasty meals at just ₹5. During the inspection, he examined the wash area, serving area, drinking water facilities, and the food distribution system.

The Joint Collector directed that both the wash area and dining area must always be kept clean. He instructed that staff serving food should mandatorily wear gloves and head caps. He also interacted with beneficiaries having meals at the canteen and sought their feedback on food quality,

quantity, and services.

He warned that the daily menu must be strictly followed and that any negligence would not be tolerated. Emphasizing hygiene, he instructed that the canteen premises must be maintained in a clean condition at all times, with proper handwashing facilities available. He also directed officials to continuously monitor the quality of drinking water.

Stating that the Anna Canteen scheme is highly beneficial for the poor and is being implemented with great priority by the government, the Joint Collector instructed officials to ensure regular supervision so that quality meals are provided to the public on time.

Municipal Commissioner K. Ramachandra Reddy, Municipal DE Tata Babu, and staff members were present during the inspection.

Cong & CPM Unions stall basic services during All India Strike in HP

Shimla, Feb 12 (GNS) Basic services were partially disrupted across Himachal Pradesh on Thursday as unions affiliated with the Congress and the CPI(M), along with other central trade unions and farmers' organisations, observed the All India Strike, impacting electricity and other public utilities in several districts.

Employees, engineers and pensioners of the Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board Limited (HPSEBL) joined the nationwide protest, leading to reduced functioning in offices and field operations. Engineers under the Himachal Power Engineers Association also stayed away from duty. Rallies were organized in Shimla and other towns, with a march from Panchayat Bhawan through Lower Bazaar to the Deputy Commissioner's office in the state capital. A demonstration was also held at the Electricity Board Headquarters.

Apart from opposing the proposed Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2025, the striking

unions raised wider national issues. Speakers criticised the Centre over the implementation of the four new labour codes, alleging that these dilute workers' rights related to job security, working hours and collective bargaining. They also demanded restoration and strengthening of MGNREGA, claiming recent policy changes had weakened employment guarantees for rural households.

The protesters called for withdrawal of the labour codes, a halt to privatisation and outsourcing in public utilities, regular recruitment against vacant posts and regularization of contractual workers. They further opposed fixed-term employment and extended working hours. Union leaders claimed significant participation across sectors and warned that if their demands on labour laws, employment guarantees and power sector reforms were not addressed, the agitation would be intensified in the coming weeks.

Mizoram launches MSME excellence project, entrepreneurs' forum to boost local enterprise

Aizawl, Feb 12 (GNS) Seeking to energize Mizoram's growing enterprise ecosystem, Chief Minister Laldohoma on Thursday launched the Micro & Small Entrepreneurs Excellence Project and unveiled the Mizoram Entrepreneurs Development Forum at the I&PR Conference Hall here.

The twin initiatives, a joint effort of the Confederation of Indian Industry's Centre for Excellence on Employment & Livelihood (CIECEL) and the Government of Mizoram, are designed to strengthen the state's Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and provide structured support to entrepreneurs looking to scale up their ventures.

Addressing entrepreneurs, industry representatives and officials at the inaugural

function, Laldohoma said the Mizo people have long demonstrated exceptional skills and craftsmanship, pointing to the vast, yet underutilised, potential within the MSME sector. He cited the achievements of Mizo youth at national skill platforms— including award wins at last year's IndiaSkills Competition and Mizoram's emergence as Overall Champion at the IndiaSkills North East Championship this year—as evidence of the state's rising talent base.

"As Mizoram advances and new avenues of employment open up, our responsibility is to ensure that our skilled youth are supported and guided in the right direction," he said, reiterating the government's commitment to nurturing home-grown talent.

Make Effective Use of Aksharandhra Centers – Say Goodbye to Thumb Impressions

(By GMA Staff Reporter)

ASR, Feb 12: District Nodal Officer of the Swarna Grama-Swarna Ward Department, P.S. Kumar, stated that when illiterate individuals become literate, a new light enters their lives.

On Thursday night, he made a surprise inspection of the Aksharandhra Center in Konthili village of Hukumpeta mandal. He interacted with the women who were learning to read and write and assessed their learning abilities. He encouraged all women to pursue education and give up the practice of using thumb impressions.

He further informed that in Alluri district, around 85,000 illiterate individuals have been identified across 10 selected mandals. The District Collector has appointed one volunteer for every 10 learners to support the literacy initiative.



Empowering Women Through Skill Development: Former MLC Lakshman Rao

(By GMA Staff Reporter)

Guntur, Feb 12: Former MLC K.S. Lakshman Rao praised the efforts of the Guntur Fighters Charitable Trust for consistently working towards women's empowerment over the past two years. He appreciated the organization for boosting confidence and self-reliance among poor women by conducting sewing machine training camps that help them gain skills and achieve self-employment.

On Thursday, Lakshman Rao, along with senior pediatric specialist Dr. Ala Venkateswarlu, jointly inaugurated a sewing machine training camp organized by COVID Fighters at Ankamma Nagar in Guntur.

Speaking on the occasion, Lakshman Rao said that COVID Fighters have truly embodied the spirit of "Service to Humanity is Service to God." He lauded the organization

for serving meals to nearly 11 lakh people and for providing free ambulance services to poor patients and accident victims.

Dr. Ala Venkateswarlu stated that COVID Fighters, which began during the pandemic with just 40 Muslim youth volunteers, has grown into a remarkable humanitarian force. The organization has so far conducted final rites for over 6,000 unclaimed bodies, becoming a symbol of compassion and humanity.

Janachaitanya Vedika President Vallamreddy Lakshman Reddy noted that in a city like Guntur with a population of nearly 10 lakh, tailoring training can help many women develop skills and achieve financial independence.

He praised COVID Fighters for becoming a role model for other voluntary organizations and earning a permanent place in the hearts

of the people of Guntur.

Social activist Kanaparthi Raghava Rao appealed to donors to extend their support to COVID Fighters for their selfless multi-faceted services.

On this occasion, Dr. Ala Venkateswarlu donated five sewing machines for the training classes, Kanaparthi Raghava Rao donated two machines, and K.S. Lakshman Rao announced a donation of ₹10,000. COVID Fighters expressed gratitude for their generous contributions.

The program was attended by Nestham Foundation founder Jaleel Ahmed, Janachaitanya Vedika State General Secretary T. Dhanunjaya Reddy, COVID Fighters leaders Pathan Allabakhshu, Pathan Mujeeb, Pathan Hussain Khan, Topi Babu, trainer Shaik Ayesha, Mekala Ramarao, Vijayalakshmi, and others.

Collector Reviews Progress of School Infrastructure Works Under Key Education Schemes



(By Our Staff Reporter)

Bhimavaram, Feb 12: At the Vasishta Conference Hall of the District Collectorate, District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani reviewed the progress of works undertaken in government schools under the PM SHRI, AWP&B, and Mana Badi Mana Bhavishyathu schemes. The review meeting was held with officials from the Education and Engineering Departments.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector stated that under the PM SHRI scheme, 104 works were sanctioned in the selected school in the district. These include construction of additional classrooms, compound walls, toilets, special toilets for differently-abled students, ramps, and other infrastructure facilities. Out of these, 42 works have already been completed. She directed officials to

expedite the completion of the remaining works. Under the AWP&B scheme, 76 works were sanctioned, including the construction of various laboratories. She also instructed that the works being undertaken at Cherukuvada and Mogalturu schools under the Mana Badi Mana Bhavishyathu scheme be completed at the earliest.

The Collector directed engineering officials from PR, RWS, APWIDC, PHD, and SSA departments to closely monitor the works and ensure they are completed with quality standards.

District Educational Officer E. Narayana, Samagra Shiksha APC P. Shyam Sundar, DE G. Nagendra Shekhar, AE N. Ramesh, and engineering officials from PR, RWS, APWIDC, and PHD departments, among others, participated in the meeting.

Collector Nagarani Orders Intensive Monitoring of Welfare Hostels to Safeguard Students' Health

(By Our Staff Reporter)

Bhimavaram, Feb 12: District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has directed members of the Joint Inspection Team to focus special attention on welfare hostels across the district.

On Thursday, during a meeting held at the Vasishta Conference Hall in the Collectorate under her chairmanship, the Collector reviewed the inspection of students' health conditions in welfare hostels.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector instructed Joint Inspection Team members to conduct daily inspections in hostels and submit reports on students' health and daily routines. She emphasized that there should be no complaints regarding sanitation in hostels across the district. She warned that strict departmental action would be taken against the concerned welfare hostel officer if any sanitation-related complaint is received.

In view of the increasing spread of communicable diseases, she stated that the

government has taken steps to strengthen inter-departmental coordination under the "One Health" approach, as recommended by the State-Level Task Force Committee on communicable diseases. The Collector also directed officials to conduct regular and surprise inspections in schools and welfare hostels without fail.

The meeting was attended by committee

members including DM&HO G. Geethabai, DCHS P. Suryanarayana, RBSK Program Officer K.M. Kishore, DIO Dr. Deva Sudha Lakshmi, District Agriculture Officer Z. Venkateswara Rao, District Swarna Grama-Swarna Ward Officer Y. Dosireddy, DPO N. Rammam Reddy, DEO E. Narayana, District Social Welfare Officer N.V. Arun Kumar, BC Welfare Officer A.V. Suri Babu, District Tribal Welfare Officer Pushpa Rani, officials from various departments, medical staff, and others.

Faster Building Approvals Announced for MSME Service Enterprises

(By Our Staff Reporter)

Vijayawada, Feb 12: District Industries Officer M. Madhu has stated that the State Government has taken key decisions to further strengthen the "Ease of Doing Business" initiative by moving towards "Speed of Doing Business." As part of this effort, building plan approvals for MSME service sector units will now be processed on par with industrial units, and they will also receive similar exemptions.

In a statement issued on Thursday, he explained that this facility will be available to

service sector MSMEs located within the jurisdiction of Urban Development Authorities (UDAs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), provided they are registered on the Udyam portal.

He said the latest decision would benefit MSMEs engaged in activities such as automobile servicing, food processing, healthcare services, logistics, hotels (up to 20 rooms), function halls, laundry and dry-cleaning services, warehousing, and tourism services. The State Government has issued clear instructions to ensure that these benefits

are extended without exception. He further stated that the government is making significant efforts to provide faster approvals for MSMEs, create an investor-friendly environment, and expand industrial growth across the state.

District Industries Officer M. Madhu also mentioned that awareness about these exemptions was provided to industrial representatives during the recent District Industrial Enterprises Promotion Committee (DIEPC) meeting held under the chairmanship of the Honorable District Collector.

Government Employees Demand Restoration of Old Pension Scheme in AP

(By GMA Staff Reporter)

Guntur, Feb 12: Andhra Pradesh Government Employees Service Association (APGES) State General Secretary Syed Chand Basha has demanded that the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) be reintroduced for all employees currently under the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) in the state.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, he said that the CPS system, which was implemented for employees and teachers from November 1, 2004, has become highly unfavorable and unsatisfactory. He expressed concern that the scheme has not met the expectations of employees.

Chand Basha criticized ruling parties for promising a favorable decision on CPS during election campaigns but failing to address the issue after coming to power. He recalled that Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan had assured during the elections that a decision



acceptable to employees would be taken within one year of assuming office.

He stated that nearly 2.21 lakh CPS employees across the state would benefit if the Old Pension Scheme is restored. Employees are now eagerly awaiting a positive decision from Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, he added.

Collector Ansariya Calls for Strengthening Public Confidence in Government Welfare Programs

(By GMA Staff Reporter)

Guntur, Feb 12: District Collector A. Thameem Ansariya emphasized the need to enhance positive public perception regarding the welfare schemes and programs being implemented by the government.

On Thursday, the Collector conducted a review meeting with concerned officials at the Collectorate to discuss ways to improve public confidence and positive perception. He stated that the government is giving high priority to implementing various schemes and development programs. He directed officials to ensure proper execution at the grassroots level with effective monitoring. He stressed that close supervision would bring meaningful improvements and instructed officials to identify problem areas and resolve them promptly to ensure smooth implementation of schemes and services.

The Collector advised every employee to recognize that delivering quality services to the public brings job satisfaction and that serving people efficiently should be considered a responsibility.

He also instructed officials to take necessary steps to increase student admissions in Government Degree Colleges. Students should be clearly informed about the courses available, along with the higher education and employment opportunities associated with them. As Intermediate students will soon be appearing for examinations, he directed principals and faculty members to personally interact with them and encourage higher enrollment. He noted that better academic results would



attract more students in the future.

The Collector highlighted that timely distribution of essential commodities by the Civil Supplies Department is crucial in building positive public perception. He said that delivering ration supplies within the government's stipulated timeline would strengthen public trust. He further stated that home delivery of ration to elderly and differently-abled beneficiaries between the 26th and 30th of every month would significantly enhance positive perception.

He instructed officials to motivate housing beneficiaries and inform them about bill payment details, which would help expedite the completion of housing projects

and improve public confidence.

The Collector also suggested that uninterrupted power supply, availability of staff, and prompt resolution of complaints upon receiving calls would contribute to a positive perception of the Electricity Department.

Regional Joint Director of Degree Colleges, Kalavathi, stated that all necessary measures are being taken to increase student enrollment.

District Civil Supplies Officer P. Komali Padma, Housing Corporation Project Director J.V.S.R.K. Prasad, CPDCLSE Ramesh, Deputy Director of Mines N. Chandrasekhar, and other officials attended the meeting.

NTR District to Host Organic Farming Expo on Feb 21–22 to Boost Market Access for Farmers

(By Our Staff Reporter)

Vijayawada, Feb 12: In connection with the District-Level Organic Mela scheduled to be held on February 21 and 22 in NTR District, the District Collector today inspected the venue along with the MPDO, local RDO, and DPM-RYSS officials.

During the visit, the Collector reviewed the arrangements required for the successful conduct of the mela, including basic infrastructure, farmer-friendly facilities, exhibition stalls, training programs, and provision of market linkages. Comprehensive discussions were held on organizing display stalls, capacity-building sessions, marketing opportunities, and overall coordination. The Collector issued necessary guidelines to officials to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the event.



Objectives of the District-Level Organic Mela:

To provide market linkages for organic farmers

To conduct capacity-building training programs for farmers interested in organic farming

To create awareness among the public about organic products

Officials stated that the mela will feature exhibitions and sales stalls of organic products, training seminars, live demonstrations, input demonstrations, and interactive platforms for farmer-expert discussions.

On February 21, the event will be held at a mango orchard in Krishnayapalem village of A. Konduru mandal. Farmers will be encouraged to reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and increase organic carbon in their soil. Model farmers, FPOs, and those promoting natural farming will be felicitated on the occasion.

On February 22, a Natural Farming Mela

will be organized in Vijayawada. The program aims to bring farmers, consumers, and buyers onto a common platform. Marketing linkages will be established to ensure better market access for naturally grown produce. Awareness will be created regarding MoUs, agreements, and various marketing opportunities to help farmers secure remunerative prices for their crops.

E-commerce companies and buyers, including BigBasket, are expected to participate in the mela.

The District Collector appealed to interested farmers, consumers, and buyers to actively participate in the mela to be held in Vijayawada on the 22nd. He stated that the initiative aims to further promote organic farming across the district and enhance farmers' income.

RDO Madhavi, DPM Y. Shankar Naik, Bhoomi Organic representative Raguram, MRO, MPDO, and natural farming staff, along with other departmental officials, participated in the site inspection.