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# BUDGET 2025

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## BUDGET 2025 FOR MIDDLE INDIA AND BIHAR



PROF. GOURAV VALLABH  
GUEST REPORTER

The Union Budget 2025-26 has been presented, reaffirming Prime Minister Narendra Modi's unwavering vision for a Viksit Bharat. Over the past decade, while the goal has remained steadfast, everything else has evolved-transformative reforms spanning agriculture, MSMEs, youth empowerment, global trade, and middle-class welfare have redefined India's economic trajectory. In these turbulent global times, the budget emerges as a beacon of hope. Pragmatic yet bold, visionary yet rooted in reality, it reaffirms the government's unwavering commitment to building a future where growth is inclusive, opportunities are boundless, and India's rise on the global stage remains unstoppable.

The Indian middle class is no longer a silent observer; it is a dynamic force shaping the nation's future. Over the past decade, more than 25 crore Indians have transitioned out of poverty, fueling aspirations in fields such as sports, start-ups, space exploration, and technological advancements. This budget builds upon previous commitments, ensuring continued financial relief and empowerment. Steady rise in tax exemption limits, offers greater financial relief and empowers millions of taxpayers. From ₹2.5 lakh in 2014 to ₹5 lakh in 2019, then ₹12 lakh in 2023, and now a remarkable ₹12 lakh in 2025-this consistent expansion has, for the first time, left a vast majority of the middle class completely out of the burden of paying personal income tax. Under the new tax regime, a taxpayer earning ₹12 lakh will receive a substantial benefit of ₹80,000-effectively eliminating their entire tax liability under the existing rates. This

means 100% of the tax payable as per previous slabs is now saved, allowing individuals to retain more of their hard-earned income. And this comes at a time when the share of income tax in total government receipts has actually increased from 19% to 22%. This makes it even more impressive-stronger tax compliance and a rapidly expanding formal economy have ensured that despite widespread tax relief, revenues remain robust and sustainable.

In a deeply considerate step, the government has doubled the tax deduction limit for senior citizens from ₹50,000 to ₹1 lakh, recognizing their evolving financial needs and ensuring a dignified, secure future. Yet, even as tax relief is extended to millions, fiscal prudence remains paramount. The fiscal deficit target has been firmly set at 4.4% of GDP, reinforcing the government's commitment to responsible economic management.

At the heart of India's economic fabric lies agriculture-the lifeblood of millions. This budget further strengthens the government's commitment to our farmers with transformative initiatives: enhanced credit through Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) will benefit 7.7 crore farmers, providing them with greater financial stability. A visionary 5-year mission to boost cotton productivity will enhance India's textile competitiveness, while the establishment of a dedicated Makhana Board in Bihar will offer vital institutional support to farmers engaged in niche agri-products. Additionally, a six-year roadmap for Aatmanirbharta in pulses will reduce import dependence, ensuring food security and improving rural incomes.

In India, MSMEs have often remained small, not just by circumstance but sometimes by choice-to evade regulatory complexities and compliance burdens. However, this government does not see MSMEs as entities meant to stay small; it envisions them as dynamic engines of growth, capable of scaling, innovating, and driving economic transformation. In line with this vision, the budget introduces structured interventions to propel MSMEs forward so that they are not just surviving



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presents the Union Budget 2025-26 in the Lok Sabha

but thriving, contributing more significantly to India's industrial and economic landscape. In a significant move, the MSME classification criteria have been revised, with turnover and investment limits more than doubling-easing regulatory constraints and enabling more businesses to thrive. The credit guarantee cover has been doubled to ₹10 crore for Micro & Small Enterprises (MSEs) and ₹20 crore for start-ups, ensuring greater financial security and access to capital. To facilitate financial inclusion, 10 lakh credit cards with a ₹5 lakh limit will be issued to micro enterprises, enabling them to expand operations with ease. Additionally, a special scheme has been introduced to

provide term loans of up to ₹2 crore for 5 lakh first-time entrepreneurs, with a special focus on women, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes. These transformative measures will not only fuel growth but also drive formalization and job creation across the sector. Recognizing that India's youth are its greatest asset, the budget places a sharp focus on education, research, and skill development. The expansion of IIT capacities and the introduction of the Bharatiya Bhasha Pustak scheme will strengthen higher education and promote learning in regional languages. To foster innovation from an early age, 50,000 Atal Tinkering Labs will be set up in government schools over the next 5 years,

igniting young minds with hands-on scientific learning. Increased investment in medical education will help meet the growing healthcare demands of the nation, ensuring a skilled workforce in critical sectors. Furthermore, broadband connectivity for all government secondary schools and primary health centers will bridge the digital divide, ensuring equitable access to knowledge and healthcare services. A significant ₹20,000 crore allocation for private-sector-driven research, development, and innovation initiatives will accelerate India's technological advancements and global competitiveness.

The government's unwavering commitment to infrastructure development remains a defining pillar of this budget, reinforcing India's journey toward economic transformation. With a ₹1.5 lakh crore outlay for 50-year interest-free loans to states for capital expenditure-linked to incentives for structural reforms-the focus is firmly on sustainable and inclusive growth. The Asset Monetization Plan 2025-30, targeting ₹10 lakh crore in investments for new projects, will unlock value from existing assets while fueling fresh infrastructure expansion. Meanwhile, the extension of the Jal Jeevan Mission till 2028 ensures that the dream of 100% safe drinking water coverage becomes a reality for every household, improving public health and quality of life. These strategic investments will drive economic expansion, generate employment, and elevate India's global competitiveness.

To make India a more business-friendly destination, the budget introduces progressive regulatory reforms - A regulatory framework based on trust and principles to boost productivity and employment. A High-Level Committee for Regulatory Reforms to ease compliance burdens and Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 to decriminalize over 100 provisions in various laws will enhance ease of doing business and attract both domestic and foreign investments. With an eye on global leadership, the government has launched key initiatives to integrate India into global supply chains. 'BharatTradeNet' (BTN), a

unified digital public infrastructure platform for international trade documentation and financing. A National Framework for Global Capability Centers (GCCs) to promote emerging Tier-2 cities as investment hubs. Exemptions on key imports, including 36 lifesaving drugs, LED/LCD TV components, 35 capital goods for EV battery manufacturing, and 28 capital goods for mobile phone battery manufacturing, are expected to boost domestic production and affordability. Rationalization of the customs tariff structure will take place, removing seven tariff rates to enhance trade competitiveness.

The 2025-26 budget is not merely a budget but a bold statement of vision, defining India's path towards self-dependency, global competitiveness, and shared prosperity. With a sharp accent on farmers, MSMEs, infrastructure, and ease of compliance, it creates a strong platform for long-term growth and yet keeps in consideration that anyone and everyone in India must have an opportunity to flourish. Despite budgeted consolidation, the government has delivered a citizen-first, progressive budget-one that inspires hope, induces investments, and accelerates national development.

Gone are the days when India was counted among the Fragile Five. Today, we stand on the cusp of greatness-soon to be recognized as one of the world's foremost economic powerhouses, a leader in business, resilience, and global influence. With structural reforms, strategic investments, and a future-ready approach, India is not just navigating change but shaping it. The journey toward Viksit Bharat is well underway, and this budget ensures that no Indian is left behind. From the fields of our farmers to the ambitions of our entrepreneurs, from the aspirations of our youth to the well-being of our senior citizens-this is a budget that empowers, uplifts, and inspires. The future belongs to India, and with unwavering resolve, we are building a nation that is strong, self-reliant, and unstoppable.

— The writer is a professor of finance at Xavier School of Management, XLRI




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# VIEWPOINT

## Old politics, new politics



Romit Bagchi

One year has passed since Ram Lalla was consecrated amidst unprecedented devotional buoyancy that swept over large parts of this ancient land. This whirlwind of spontaneous elation kindled a fond hope in many, including me, that with the long-nurtured collective yearning being finally fulfilled, India—renewed by the spiritual energy unleashed by this spectacular event—would march ahead with an invincible confidence in the direction of her spiritual destiny, leaving behind the schism-scarred past. But what unfolded afterwards is far from edifying: the noise of political triumphalism drowned the deeper call of the nation's soul.

Way back in 1905 when the Swadeshi movement was raging across Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore warned that a movement founded on religious passions would make dust fly thick and fast all around and consequently, the luminous message of eternal Hinduism would be blown away in the dust storm. The

shrill cacophony seems to be gobbling up everything, leaving little or no place for the soul to come out and reflect. Significantly, a few days before Swami Vivekananda gave up his mortal body, he warned that as long as India clung to its thirst for God she would remain alive but once politics came to rule her she would die.

While sitting in my veranda one Sunday morning, I chanced to see two processions walking down the road. One was a political procession as it was when the campaigning for the civic body election was reaching its crescendo in Dehradun. Less than half an hour later, another procession came. It was a religious procession. I observed the faces and gait of the people present in both. When I compared, I realised once again the correctness of Swamiji's insight. The radiant faces and the vibrant gait of the children, women, men and even the elderly who were walking in the religious procession when contrasted with the gloomy, weary expression written on the faces of those who were, parrot-like, chanting political slogans helped further fortify my long-held belief. Politics is not dear to our heart as much as love for God is. While the former connotes something mechanical and superficial coming out from the outermost fringe of our psyche—far removed from the deeper springs of our soul—the latter is spontaneous as though coming straight from the

deepest fount of our collective mind.

If it were so, should we cast ourselves adrift from politics altogether? The answer is a No. But if we look deep into ourselves we will not fail to see that India's soul—not, of course, her excitement-loving surface self—yearns to go beyond politics to churn out a politics that may still be politics and yet unlike the shrill, combative, exclusive politics we are willy-nilly being subjected to. The time seems to have come when India must remould and reinvent many of the key principles and practices of politics in the light of the eternal truths of existence her soul embodies.

But what is India? Does India connote just a collective nomenclature for those inhabiting the geographical land demarcated in the map as India? Or does she epitomise an idea, a peculiar energy or power that recognisably makes her different from other races of the world—the idea that helps her perpetual survival and revival through millennia of time?

Vivekananda said, "Truth does not pay homage to the society; the society must pay homage to the Truth or perish." What is this Truth that India holds? It is perhaps the grand Vedantic vision of Oneness—the Oneness of All, shorn of the superficial differences in colour, credo, caste, creed and country. Let me quote Swamiji again: "This vision of Oneness is the most wonder-



ful, convincing, broadening and ennobling idea that can be found only in that most marvellous product of the soul of man—the Vedanta."

What does this Oneness signify? It signifies that there is but one Soul—the omnipresent Soul—throughout the universe. All is but One Existence and this Oneness is the secret base, constituting

and upholding the multiple manifestations. That is what the Rishis of yore concretely realised in themselves. However, not content with this realisation, they continuously experimented with this supreme Truth while applying it in the life of this land. The momentous task they were entrusted with was to rebuild individual and collective life on the bedrock of this truth of

Oneness. Chaturshram, Chaturvarna, four Purusharthas and the preponderance given to Dharma in the monarchical polity were the outcome of these experiments and applications.

India's greatness lies in the fact that she accepts the enormous diversity present in life. She believes that all the musical notes when playing together form the perfect symphony. She never seeks to suppress a note to reduce the polyphony to unison on the belief that one of the notes is the most mellifluous to which others must conform to by silent acceptance. All are allowed to play their notes fully to build the inclusive concord. While applauding the infinite assimilative capacity inherent in the Indian vision of life, Romain Rolland wrote: "A symphony is not a class of babies taught in a primary school to spell out a word all in the same tone."

This is why India passionately clings to her pantheon of gods and goddesses along with their religious sects and rituals. Monotheism does not suit her soul. Again, this is why she accepts all religions of the world as true and conversion is an anathema to her. The genius of India views the multifaceted splendour of life as a delightful manifestation of the truth of Oneness.

Viewed from this perspective, what India's politics should be like? Should it be intolerant and exclusive like 'follow me or perish'? Or

should it be inclusive like 'let me follow my own and let you follow your own and all together will bring forth the perfect symphony that signifies the eternal India'?

The Oneness suffusing the many-splendoured political life may be what India has been yearning to churn out from her depths. This may be devoid of the lowly enjoyment of dramatic combativeness which the surface part of our consciousness relishes but that will doubtless gratify the inner consciousness which is connected to the soul. All should be allowed to play their notes in full and if founded on the idea of Oneness, these separate notes will not jar but just soothe.

And if this happens it will mark another consecration of Lord Ram, who is not just a religious symbol for a particular community but whose legacy is universal, extending beyond religious boundaries, resonating in all as a robust presentment of a noble and virtuous ruler of a Dharma-governed harmonious society. If we sincerely consecrate ourselves to this divine archetype He may lead India to another Renaissance, consummating in the rebirth of India as a New and Vibrant India for herself and for the world.

### Tikait attempts to resolve dispute between Champion & Kumar

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait reached Haridwar on Saturday and talked to former MLA Pranav Singh Champion's wife Devyani Singh as part of his effort to resolve the ongoing dispute between the former MLA and Khanpur MLA Umesh Kumar. Tikait met the former MLA's wife and supporters at Damkothi, after which he went to meet Champion at the Roshnabad jail where he is under judicial custody. The two reportedly had a detailed conversation there. In a live video, Tikait said that both sides should listen to the responsible members of society, adding that there is no use in taking the dispute forward

as it will only add to tensions in society. He said that both sides should forget the past and stop trying to denigrate the other side. Tikait then left late in the evening for Dehradun to meet the Khanpur MLA. It is expected that a solution to the dispute may be arrived at after his talk with Kumar. It will be recalled that insults traded by the two politicians on social media for some days escalated on January 26 when rounds were fired by the former MLA and his supporters at Kumar's Roorkee residence. The two were arrested by the police and the court sent Champion to judicial custody while Kumar secured bail.

### UPES collaborates with FutureLearn to provide world-class online education

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The UPES has collaborated with FutureLearn to expand access to world-class online education for its students. The university's vice chancellor Ram Sharma said this while addressing the media here on Saturday. FutureLearn is a global online learning platform committed to providing high-quality education from top universities and industry experts. This collaboration aims to transform learning opportunities for UPES students, employ-

tional resources available. Our partnership with FutureLearn aligns with our vision to provide flexible, high-quality learning opportunities that cater to the diverse aspirations of our students, faculty and their families." He further said that FutureLearn offers courses from renowned global institutions such as Cambridge, King's College and University College London, among others. This will provide flexible and accessible learning



ees and their families by granting access to FutureLearn's comprehensive educational solutions. FutureLearn offers innovative and flexible educational programmes tailored to a wide range of learning needs. Through this partnership, the UPES community will have the opportunity to engage with thousands of expert-led courses, micro-credentials, online degrees, expert tracks and corporate training solutions. Sharma said, "We are committed at UPES to nurturing a culture of lifelong learning and empowering our community with the best education for acquiring new skills, earning accredited certifications and more, he added. Executive chairman of FutureLearn, Jo Johnson highlighted the significance of the partnership. He said, "We are delighted to partner with UPES in our shared mission to make high-quality education accessible to all. By leveraging our diverse and industry-relevant learning solutions, we aim to equip learners across India with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in today's dynamic global landscape."

### Uttarakhand shuttlers secure silver medal in National Games

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand men and women badminton teams secured silver medals at the 38th National Games here on Saturday. Officials informed that on the fifth day of the games, Uttarakhand's badminton teams delivered a commendable performance and won silver medals in both the men's and women's team events. This is a significant moment for Uttarakhand, especially considering that last year the

women's team did not participate, and the men's team won a bronze medal, they said. They further added that with this achievement, Uttarakhand's badminton players have showcased their hard work and talent, suggesting a promising future for badminton in the State. This victory is expected to boost the morale of the players for upcoming competitions.

### 22 new CCTV cameras now on in Paltan Bazaar

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In order to enhance public safety, Dehradun district magistrate Savin Bansal, along with senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh inaugurated 22 CCTV cameras and a public address (PA) system in Paltan Bazaar on Saturday. During the event, Bansal emphasised that all available resources are dedicated to public interest. He stated that government services and social schemes aim to benefit every citizen and efforts are being made to achieve this goal. He also said that all suggestions received for the public's benefit would be seriously considered. Further, Singh said that proposals submitted to the DM for security and traffic arrangements in the city are being promptly addressed, leading to the release of necessary funds. This has contributed to maintaining law and order in the area. He added that while the police budget has limitations, cooperation with the district administration is helping to overcome these challenges, and improvements will soon be evident in the city. The SSP also announced plans to install 46 additional CCTV cameras in Rishikesh. During the event, members of the Vyapar Mandal commended the collaborative efforts between the DM and SSP to enhance public safety. They highlighted the effective coordination between the district administration and police as a key factor in achieving positive outcomes for the community. Traders present also requested for the installation of CCTV cameras in Sarafa Bazaar, to which the DM responded by asking the police to submit a proposal. Earlier during the joint visit of the DM and SSP instructions were issued to set up CCTV cameras, a public address system and pink booths in Paltan Bazaar for the safety of the public, traders and women. The DM has allocated funds for this initiative, resulting in the formal launch of the CCTV cameras and public address system in Paltan Bazaar on Saturday.

### Registering live-in relationships to ensure women's safety: BJP

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The BJP has claimed that chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama is a flagbearer of culture while the Congress is bothered more about appeasement than the State. Reacting to Congress leader Harish Rawat's statement, BJP State media in-charge Manveer Singh Chauhan said that live-in relationships are not part of our culture but considering present conditions and various court decisions, a provision for it was felt necessary in the Uniform Civil Code. "Women's safety is our priority and registering such relationships will prevent anyone from concealing identity and the guardians of the individuals will also be aware. There have been incidents in recent years in which a person concealed real identity and duped the partner. Registration of live-in relationships will deter the criminally minded from duping women and this provision in the UCC will especially ensure the safety of women," Chauhan said. Before raising questions at the UCC, the Congress should clarify its intention. It should state whether it is concerned about the State or a particular community, he added.

### IN BRIEF

#### Union budget will boost MSME growth: KGCCI

KASHIPUR: Kumaun Garhwal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KGCCI) president Ashok Bansal lauded the Union budget presented on Saturday as a growth-boosting and balanced one with special focus on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and startups. He also hailed the welfare announcements involving education and health sectors and the tax exemption for the middle class taxpayers. Women have also a lot to benefit from the budget announcement, he added. He particularly mentioned the expansion of the guarantee loan limit for small scale industries and credit facilities for the MSMEs, withdrawal of TCS on transaction, proposals to boost women entrepreneurship, creation of additional 75,000 beds in the medical colleges across the country and increasing seats in the IITs aside from substantially expanding the income tax exemption limit benefiting the middle classes.

#### Initiation of class XII students concludes at Acharyakulam

HARIDWAR: The initiation ceremony of students of class XII for the academic session 2024-25 was completed in Vedic tradition at the Haridwar-based residential school Acharyakulam on Saturday. A total of 97 students—57 boys and 40 girls—were initiated on the occasion. Yoga guru Swami Ramdev said that Acharyakulam is the only educational institution in the world where the students reach new heights daily through the values



being acquired through the practice of Yoga and spirituality. Acharya Balkrishna said that the initiation ceremony radiates positivity. He exhorted the students to cling to the Yogic principles and discipline all through their lives. Following the initiation, the students pledged to spread the values and education they are receiving at Acharyakulam everywhere. Acharyakulam vice-president Ritambara Shastri and the principal Swati Munshi were also present. They urged the students to do their best for the upcoming board examinations.

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I am the owner of land/property bearing Khasra No. 1142Ka Mauza Chalang Parwadoon, District Dehradun having total area of 111.42 sqm, the correction deed related to the said property duly registered in Registrar Office IV, Dehradun on 30.11.2013 executed by Rishika Land and Building Pvt. Ltd. in favour of me and my sister. The said original documents have been actually lost somewhere on 01.02.2025 and not found even after sufficient efforts. It has not been mortgaged with any bank or anyone else. Kiran Bhatt D/o Daya Krishna Bhatt resident of 92, Rajpur Enclave, Near IT Park, Doon Khas, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

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## Budget-2025 to give impetus to development in U'khand: CM

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has said that the Union budget-2025 will give an impetus to the development activities in Uttarakhand. He said that the Union government has given a major relief to the middle class by making an income up to Rs 12 lakh per annum free from income tax. The CM said that the Union government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has presented a development oriented and welfare budget. He opined that Uttarakhand will get both direct and indirect benefit from the Union budget.



The CM said that as per the revised estimates, the State will receive about Rs 14,387 crore as share in central taxes which have paved the way for the State receiving an additional sum of Rs 444 crore in this financial year. He added that in the next financial year this amount

can go up to Rs 15,902 crore. The CM said that the State government in the pre-budget conclave had requested the Union Finance minister to include 11 points in the budget and these issues were reflected in the budget speech on

Saturday. He said that in the budget, the setting up of five national centres of excellence has been announced and declaration of constructing 50,000 Atal Tinkering labs was also made by the Finance minister.

Similarly, the announcement

of broadband connectivity in the schools is important for the State and it will help in laying a strong foundation of the knowledge economy.

The CM said that Uttarakhand will get the benefit of the scheme to start air connectivity with 125 cities of the country. He said that health services in the State will get a boost as the Finance minister has announced constructing cancer centres in all the districts. The CM said that the decision to increase the loan limit to Rs five lakh from existing Rs three lakh under Kisan Credit Card scheme will prove beneficial for the farmers of the State. He said that the decision to convert India Post into a mega public logistic organisation will give economic mobility to the far flung areas of Uttarakhand with the help of the post office.

## U'khand left empty handed in Union budget: Maikhuri

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

CPI-ML leader Indresh Maikhuri has said that while Finance minister has made a provision of Rs 15,000 crore to the Andhra Pradesh for developing its new capital in the Union budget 2025, the Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha speaker Ritu Khanduri is talking about holding budget session of Assembly in Dehradun in the absence of facilities in Gairsain, the summer capital of the State.

He said that Uttarakhand has got nothing in the budget. Maikhuri said that some announcements were made in the budget about tourism but no mention of

Uttarakhand was made even as the State happens to occupy a prominent place on the tourism map of the country.

Stating that reference to incidents of cloudbursts and landslides in Uttarakhand was made in passing in the budget, he said that no serious intention was decipherable in the speech of the Finance minister in dealing with these disasters. Maikhuri added that the entire budget was dedicated mainly to private sector profits and the insurance sector was opened 100 per cent for foreign direct investment.

## Union budget to catalyse growth through innovation, infrastructure & inclusive development: CII

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has stated that the Union budget 2025-26 presents a forward-looking roadmap for India's economic transformation, with a strong push for innovation, entrepreneurship and infrastructure development. The enhanced support for MSMEs, focus on skill development and urban transformation initiatives will be instrumental in driving industrial growth and job creation, particularly in the northern region.

Commending the budget, CII Uttarakhand chairman Kanishk Jain stated, "The budget is an all inclusive budget with focus on agriculture, MSME, investments, infrastructure,

welcome step," he said.

By prioritising private sector investment and strengthening the MSME ecosystem, the budget paves the way for sustained industrial growth and job creation. The significant boost in credit availability for MSMEs, establishment of National Manufacturing Mission, streamlined tax structures and targeted manufacturing incentives will drive entrepreneurship and innovation at scale. Equally transformative is the government's strong push for infrastructure, with accelerated urban development initiatives. This forward-looking budget strikes a balance between inclusive development and economic momentum, setting a strong foundation for a Viksit Bharat, Jain added.

C I I Uttarakhand vice chairman Suyash Agrawal said, "The Union budget 2025 lays a strong foundation for sustainable urban growth, infrastructure modernisation, human capital development and a thriving investment climate. The National Manufacturing Mission under Make in India will create a robust framework for industries across solar PV, electrolyzers, and grid-scale batteries. The expanded Rs 10,000 crore Fund of Funds will provide a vital boost to startups, driving innovation and entrepreneurship."

health, digital economy, social welfare and taxation reforms. Targeted support for manufacturing, exports and agriculture will drive India's economic momentum. Enhanced PPP model in infrastructure, incentives for high-value manufacturing and the 'BharatTradeNet' digital trade platform will strengthen global competitiveness. The budget has given a strong push to healthcare by expanding cancer centers which is a

## Income tax exemption inadequate: Employees federation

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State Employees Joint Federation has termed the decision of the Union Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman to increase the income tax relief limit from existing Rs seven lakh to Rs 12 lakh as inadequate. The

spokesman of the federation RP Joshi said that after the implementation of the eighth pay commission the relief granted by the Finance minister in income tax will prove inconsequential.



12 lakh or less and they will have to pay tax as per the existing rates on income above Rs 12 lakh.

The general secretary of the federation Shakti Prasad Bhatt said that the government should have kept zero tax upto an income of Rs 10 lakh, five per cent tax between Rs 10 lakh to Rs 15 lakh and 10 per cent on income slab of Rs 15 lakh to 20 lakh if it wanted to provide benefit for the salaried class.

The president of the federation Arun Pandey said that the tax relief has been provided only in the new tax regime which means that the employees will be forced to move to the new regime and they will not avail the benefit of relief on home

## Union budget 2025 for a developed & prosperous India: Maharaj

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State's Tourism, Public Works, Irrigation and Panchayati Raj minister Satpal Maharaj said that the Union budget 2025 presented on Saturday is proactive, worth welcoming and a budget for the common citizen. Expressing his views after the presentation of the Union budget by Union Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the minister said that this budget is for a developed and prosperous India. He said, "This budget is one which aims to fulfill Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment and the dreams of a new energetic India. The interests of all the sections of society have been kept in mind while preparing this budget. Keeping those with an annual income of



upto Rs 12 lakh out of the income tax bracket in the new tax regime will provide major relief to the common man while also enabling the nation to move forward on its developmental trajectory," Maharaj said. The minister further said that the Central government has taken various steps to fur-

## Cooperative elections process starts in U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

After completion of elections of the delegates will be on February 25. He said that for the first time, 33 per cent reservation will be provided to women in the election of the cooperative committees. As per the election schedule, the interim voter list for these elections will be released on February 11 and on February 13 the objection on the list

will be registered. On February 14 hearing on the objections will be held and disposed of. The final voter list will be released on February 14. The filing of nomination papers will be done on February 15. The elected delegates will elect the members of district committees, cooperative federations and cooperative banks.

## Union budget to ensure common man's welfare, says BJP

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party has stated that the Union budget 2025 will ensure the welfare of the common man while also benefitting Uttarakhand in various spheres. The BJP State president and Rajya Sabha member Mahendra Bhatt said that the tax relief provided to about 80 per cent of the salaried middle class along with the priority accorded to the tourism and agriculture sector will prove important in facilitating Uttarakhand's development. He thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman for what he termed an inclusive and all encompassing budget. "Based on the mantra of development and heritage, this budget will lead pace to the development of Viksit Bharat. When it comes to Uttarakhand, the proportion of the middle class in the population is considerable. Considering this, the tax relief provided to those with an average monthly income of Rs one lakh will enable them to make annual savings of upto Rs 80,000. The farmers of Uttarakhand will also benefit due to the priority accorded to agriculture in the budget. About 1.7 crore farmers will benefit from the PM Dhan Dhaanya Krishi Yojana with plans to improve the sectoral structure in 100 districts.

Further, raising the limit of MSME loan with guarantee from Rs five crore to Rs 10 crore will prove beneficial for a young industrial State like Uttarakhand. The provision of UPI linked credit card along with Rs 30,000 limit PM Svanidhi will enhance employment opportunities in a State like Uttarakhand," Bhatt said.

The BJP State president expressed hope that the budgetary provision under Urban Challenge will enable further development of cities in the State. Destinations in the State will also be included in the amended UDAN scheme under which air connectivity to new destinations across the nations is to be enhanced. The Gyan Bharat mission for the survey and conservation of manuscripts will also prove important for Uttarakhand. Further, the government has also focused on tourism as part of its Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign. The government will focus on developing tourist hubs along with hotels and infrastructural development. Home stays are also being linked with MUDRA loan. Considering the importance of tourism in Uttarakhand, the provisions in the Union budget-2025 will boost the efforts being undertaken in the State, Bhatt added.

## Union budget directionless, retrogressive and inflationary: Congress

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand Congress has termed the Union budget 2025 tabled by Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the parliament on Saturday as directionless, retrogressive and inflationary.

The Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Karan Mahara said that the Union budget is detrimental for the common man and Uttarakhand has been ignored completely in it.

He said that it appears as if the budget is only meant to save the coalition government in the Centre, adding that Bihar is the only beneficiary of the Union budget. He opined that the budget will not only increase inflation but will also increase the burden on the common man. The PCC president said that apart from giving tax benefits to the middle class, the budget is disappointing on all fronts.

"The people of Uttarakhand were expecting a special package for the State but they were left disappointed by the Finance minister. No provision has

been made in it to compensate for the loss of GST. No attention has been paid to the concerns of Uttarakhand in the budget and the railway budget. There is no mention of the green bonus for Uttarakhand for protecting the environment. The general budget will reduce employment opportunities in the country. There is nothing in this budget for the poor and the common man," he said.

Mahara has said that the budget benefits the capitalists and no relief has been given in it for the farmers who are being forced to commit suicide. He said that there is no mention of loan waiver for farmers in the budget.

Leader of opposition (LoP) in Vidhan Sabha Yashpal Arya said that the government has reduced the budgetary allocation to the health sector by Rs 1,255 crore. Similarly a reduction of Rs 11,584 crore has been made in the education sector allocation. He said that a reduction of Rs 10,992 crore in the agriculture budget will affect the farmers.

## Young adults in Doon show little interest in Union budget

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

While the Union budget holds significance in various aspects, it has been observed that young adults in Dehradun exhibit little interest in it. They attributed this disinterest to insufficient implementation at the grassroots level, along with other critical factors, which have contributed to their generation's lack of engagement with the budget. This sentiment was expressed following the Union budget 2025-26 presented by Union Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the parliament on Saturday.

Despite the importance of the Union budget, a segment of young adults has shown a notable lack of interest and knowledge concerning the Union budget as observed on Saturday.

When discussing his expectations from this year's Union budget, young adult Shivansh Nagpal stated, "I have been somewhat unaware of the political and financial affairs of the country, as I believe that effective implementation has been lacking at the ground level for many years. Each year, the government presents a budget for the fiscal year; however, it often seems to be valid only for a short duration, as the authorities do not consistently adhere to it in practice. Given these circumstances, individuals of my generation, like myself, have become disinterested in political issues and activities. Consequently, I also lack interest in the budget and have not actively monitored significant changes

or updates in the Union budget this year."

Another young adult, Sneha Mishra said that her parents have been keenly interested in the budget for many years. However, she expressed a lack of interest in the Union budget, noting that it has remained consistent year after year and is rarely reflected in reality. She opined that the budget should encompass factors that are beneficial to the citizens of the country and contribute to its development. She further opined that she has long recognised that the budget does not effectively serve the people, as it lacks genuine implementation by the authorities. She holds the conviction that once the budget truly caters to the needs of the people and the younger

generation, young adults will begin to take an interest in it in the future.

"The government discusses infrastructural development, education, health and various other sectors each year when presenting the budget. However, I have not observed any progress that aligns with the budget proposals so far. Consequently, I have refrained from monitoring and developing expectations from the Union budget annually. I have maintained this approach once again this year. I believe that this year's budget should prioritise young adults, and it is crucial to ensure the effective implementation of all proposed initiatives," stated another young adult, Anmol Narang.

## CM reviews progress of Sharda corridor project

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has said that the objective of the Sharda and Ganga corridor projects is to encourage religious tourism and strengthen the local economy. He reviewed the progress of the Sharda corridor project virtually from New Delhi on Saturday. Dhami said that with these projects, the government intends to provide facilities to the pilgrims. The CM said that work on separate designs will be undertaken in both these projects. In the meeting the CM directed the officers to expedite the work of Sharda corridor project. He said that a joint survey of land for the project should be done soon. The CM said that the area vulnerable to landslide should be studied in the survey and work should be undertaken on protective measures. He said that a river front will be constructed on the banks of the



Sharda river under the project to encourage religious and cultural tourism. Dhami said that beautification of Ghats will be done under the project and many facilities will be provided to the pilgrims and tourists.

The Tourism minister Satpal Maharaj, Rajya Sabha MP Naresh Bansal, secretary R Meenakshi Sundaram, resident commissioner Ajay Mishra and other officers were present in the meeting.

Bank of Baroda Branch: Bahadradab

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The under mentioned persons are hereby informed that they have failed to pay off the liability in the loan accounts. Notices sent to them by Registered Post (05.11.2024, 10.12.2024, 11.12.2024) have been delivered/returned undelivered to the Bank. They are therefore requested to pay off the liability and other charges and redeem the pledged securities on or before 14.02.2025 (date) failing which the said securities will be sold by the Bank in public auction at the cost of the borrower at the Bank's premises at 03:00 P.M. on 15.02.2025 or on any other convenient date thereafter without further notice at the absolute discretion of the Bank.

Sl. No.	Date of Loan	Loan Number	Name and Address of the Borrower
1.	03.08.2024	58230400000135	Village Bharapur, Tehsil Roorkee, District Haridwar 247667

Date: 01.02.2025 Branch Manager





# PM Modi terms Union Budget 2025-26 as "people's budget"

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday termed the Union Budget as a "people's budget" that fulfils the dreams of every Indian and said that it is a "force-multiplier" that will boost consumption, investment and growth.

In televised remarks after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Budget in the Lok Sabha, Modi highlighted a host of measures for different sectors and noted that budgets generally look to fill the government's treasury but this one seeks to put more money in people's pockets and increase their savings.

This Budget focuses on making people a partner in India's development journey, he said, describing it as a historic and important milestone on the

road to the country's progress. It lays the foundation for attaining these goals, he added.

"The Budget lays a strong foundation to increase savings and make citizens partners in development," Modi said, adding that its welfare initiatives for gig workers underscore the government's commitment to the dignity of labour.

He said the measures presented in the Budget for the manufacturing sector will allow Indian products to shine globally.

The tax relief will provide big benefits to the middle class and salaried employees, he said, adding the Budget announcement that those earning up to ₹12 lakh will have to pay no income tax will present those entering the job sector with a big opportunity.

The prime minister praised the "historic" decision to pro-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi reacts on the Union Budget 2025-26, in New Delhi

mote the private sector in nuclear energy, saying civil nuclear energy will ensure a sig-

nificant contribution to the country's development in the future.

Stressing that the Budget has prioritised all employment generating sectors, he highlighted

two key reforms, including granting infrastructure status to shipbuilding that will boost the construction of large ships in India and accelerate the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' programme. Including hotels in 50 tourist destinations under the infrastructure category will provide a major fillip to tourism, Modi said, noting that the hospitality industry is the largest employment sector. He said the country was progressing with the mantra of 'Vikas bhi, Virasat bhi' (development as well as heritage).

He asserted that the announcements for farmers will lay the foundation for a revolution in the agricultural sector and the entire rural economy, as he highlighted that under the PM Dhan-Dhanya Krishi Yojana irrigation and infrastructure development will take place in 100 districts. Increasing the

limit of Kisan Credit Card from Rs three lakh to Rs five lakh will provide greater assistance to farmers, he added.

"The Budget has a 360-degree focus on manufacturing to strengthen entrepreneurs, MSMEs and small businesses, creating new jobs," the prime minister said, underlining that sectors like clean tech, leather, footwear and toy industries have received special support under the National Manufacturing Mission. He stressed that the goal is to ensure that Indian products shine in the global market.

Modi said the Budget places special emphasis on creating a vibrant and competitive investment environment in the states. In this context, he mentioned the announcements to double the credit guarantee for MSMEs and startups besides the introduction of a scheme to provide

loans up to ₹2 crore without guarantee for SCs, STs and first-time women entrepreneurs.

The prime minister said the announcements for gig workers, including their registration on the e-Shram portal for the first time, and enabling them to access healthcare and other social security schemes reflect the government's commitment to the dignity of labour. He said regulatory and financial reforms, such as Jan Vishwas 2.0, will strengthen the commitment to minimum government and trust-based governance.

This Budget not only addresses the current needs of the country but also helps in preparing for the future, Modi asserted, highlighting the initiatives for startups, including the Deep Tech Fund, Geospatial Mission and Nuclear Energy Mission.

## Purvodaya: Budget pushes for Bihar Ministry of Education allotted ₹1.28 Lakh Crore

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

With almost one-third electorates in the poll bound Delhi are people hailing from Bihar, the Union Budget on Saturday made several announcements for Bihar, including setting up of a Makhana Board, financial support for the western Koshi canal project, and support for enhancing the capacity of IIT Patna. Bihar, currently ruled by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), will go to polls later this year.

In her budget speech in the Lok Sabha, the finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman also announced that the Centre will set up a National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship, and Management in Bihar, besides facilitating greenfield airports in the state to meet future needs, in addition to the expansion of the capacity of the Patna airport and a brownfield airport in Bihta.

"In line with our commitment towards 'Purvodaya' (rise of eastern states), we will establish a National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management in Bihar, the institute will provide a "strong fillip" to food processing activities in the entire eastern region, the minister said. "This will result in enhanced income for the farmers through value addition to their produce, and skilling, entrepreneurship and



employment opportunities for the youth," she added.

A Makhana Board will be established in Bihar to improve production, processing, value addition, and marketing of the nut, Sitharaman said in her Budget speech.

The finance minister also said the Centre will provide financial support to Bihar for the western Koshi canal project, benefiting a "large number of farmers" cultivating over 50,000 hectares of land in the Mithilanchal region of the state. The Centre will create additional infrastructure in five IITs and provide support for enhancing the capacity of IIT Patna, she said. "The total number of students in 23 IITs has increased 100 per cent from 65,000 to 1.35 lakh in the past 10 years. Additional infrastructure will be created in the five IITs started after 2014 to facilitate education for 6,500 more students," Sitharaman said, adding,

"Hostel and other infrastructure capacity at IIT Patna will also be expanded." Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar lauded the Budget 2025-26 as one that was "positive" and would help in accelerating development of the state. Kumar, whose JD(U) is a key constituent of the ruling BJP-led NDA at the Centre, also thanked Prime Minister and Finance Minister.

He also said greenfield airports proposed in the budget will go a long way in improving flight connectivity, which would give a fillip to the state's economic growth. While Union Minister for Food Processing Industry and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan hailed the budgetary announcements, JD (U) working president Sanjay Jha hailed the announcement of setting up of a Makhana Board in Bihar, saying it will unlock new opportunities for farmers and entrepreneurs.

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Infrastructure expansion at the five new IITs to accommodate 6,500 more students, 10,000 new medical seats and an allocation of ₹500 Crore to set up a Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence for education. These are among the big announcements for the education sector in the 2025-26 budget.

The Ministry of Education has been allocated more than ₹1.28 Lakh Crore in the Union Budget 2025-26, higher than the revised estimate of ₹1.14 Lakh Crore in 2024-25.

While the Higher Education department has been allocated an amount of ₹50,067 Crore, the school education department has received ₹78,572 Crore.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who presented her eighth straight Union Budget, also said the government will launch 'Bharatiya Bhasha Pushtak' scheme to provide digital form of Indian language books for schools and higher education. She announced the government will create additional infrastructure at five Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and expand IIT Patna.

"The total number of students in 23 IITs has increased by 100 per cent from 65,000 to 1.35 lakh in the past 10



years. Additional infrastructure will be created in the five IITs started after 2014 to facilitate education for 6,500 more students. Hostel and other infrastructure capacity at IIT Patna will also be expanded," she said. The five new IITs are at Jammu, Bhubaneswar, Dharwad, Palakkad and Tirupati.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan welcomed the announcement, saying it will lead to "leapfrogging" in various parameters. "Additional 6,500 seats will be added in these IITs over a period of five years and infrastructure will be upgraded to cater to them. The budget emphasises on investing in people and facilitating all-round development of India's human capital. "With poor, youth, farm-

ers and women as the pillars, this is a budget that will uplift sentiments of the poor and middle class, accelerate spending, catalyse investments, spur growth, remove regional imbalances, build rural prosperity, nurture research, innovation and entrepreneurship, invigorate our education and skilling landscape, lead to employment-led development and unlock the tremendous potential of Brand India," Pradhan told reporters.

The IITs have been allocated an amount of Rs 11,349 Crore in the union budget, up from a revised estimate of ₹10,467 Crore in the current financial year.

Sitharaman announced that 10,000 additional seats will be added in medical colleges and hospitals next year

towards the goal of adding 75,000 seats over the next five years.

"Our government has added almost 1.1 Lakh undergraduate and postgraduate medical education seats in 10 years, an increase of 130 per cent. In the next year, 10,000 additional seats will be added in medical colleges and hospitals towards the goal of adding 75,000 seats in the next five years," she said.

The Finance Minister also announced 10,000 fellowships will be provided for technology research in IITs and IISc over the next five years. "Five national centres for excellence for skilling with global expertise and partnerships will be set up and 50,000 Atal Tinkering Labs will be set up in government schools in the next five years to cultivate scientific temper in young minds," she said. Sitharaman said broadband connectivity will be provided to all government secondary schools and primary healthcare centres in rural areas. "I had announced three centres of excellence in AI for agriculture, sustainable cities, and health in 2023.

Now, a Centre of Excellence in AI for education will be set with an outlay of Rs 500 crore," she said, in a big push in education. From University Grants

Commission (UGC) to National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT), most bodies under the Ministry of Education have received an increased allocation.

Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), the country's top business schools that witnessed consistent cut in their allocated budget in a push to make them self-reliant, have also received an increased allocation of ₹251 Crore against a revised estimate of ₹227 Crore last year.

However, the budget granted to Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research (IISERs) has seen a drop of ₹137 Crore. Similarly, the allocated amount for World Class Institutions, has been reduced by more than 50 per cent. Last year, the amount allocated was ₹1000 Crore which has now been reduced to ₹475 Crore. The Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS), which runs residential Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas across the country, have got a reduced allocation of ₹5,305 Crore from the revised estimate of ₹5370 Crore this fiscal.

However, there has been a notable increase in the allocation for the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, which runs Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs), from ₹8,727 crore to ₹9,503 crore.

## ₹1 Lakh Crore, Urban Challenge Fund announced to boost city growth

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

In a significant move aimed at accelerating urban development and addressing key housing and infrastructure needs, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday unveiled a series of bold proposals as part of the Union Budget 2025-26. Among the major announcements was the creation of an Urban Challenge Fund worth ₹1 lakh crore, designed to help transform India's cities into vibrant growth hubs, promote creative redevelopment, and improve urban water and sanitation systems.

Presenting the Union Budget 2025-26, Sitharaman explained that the Urban Challenge Fund will play a pivotal role in the



government's mission to enhance urban infrastructure. The fund is set to finance up to 25% of the cost of bankable urban development projects. To encourage collaboration and wider financial participation, the fund has specific stipulations: at least

50% of the project cost must come from other sources, such as bonds, bank loans, and public-private partnerships (PPPs). This model aims to leverage both private and public sector contributions to ensure the efficient and sustainable

development of urban areas. For the fiscal year 2025-26, the government has allocated Rs 10,000 Crore to the Urban Challenge Fund.

These funds will be directed towards enhancing urban infrastructure in cities across India, with a focus on developing cities as growth hubs, creative redevelopment, and improving water and sanitation facilities. Through these targeted investments, the government intends to address several critical issues facing urban centres, including inadequate infrastructure, poor sanitation, and rapid urbanisation.

This initiative is expected to play a key role in the development of sustainable, liveable cities. By focusing on improving essential services

and creating more efficient urban spaces, the Urban Challenge Fund aligns with the government's broader goals of promoting economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social equity.

The finance minister also said that under the Special Window for Affordable and Mid-Income Housing (SWAMIH), 50,000 dwelling units have been completed in the stressed housing projects, with keys handed over to the homebuyers.

Another 40,000 units will be completed in 2025, further helping middle-class families which were paying EMIs on loans taken for apartments, while also paying rent for their current dwellings, she said. "Building on this success, a SWAMIH Fund 2 will be

established as a blended finance facility with contributions from the government, banks and private investors.

This fund of ₹15,000 Crore will aim for expeditious completion of another one Lakh units," Sitharaman said.

The finance minister also announced that the PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) will be revamped with enhanced loans from banks, UPI-linked credit cards with ₹30,000 limit, and capacity-building support. The scheme has benefited more than 68 Lakh street vendors, giving them respite from high-interest informal sector loans, she said.

PM SVANidhi is a special micro-credit facility for providing affordable loans to street vendors.

## Ministers allotted higher budget for hospitality and entertainment

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Union Budget 2025-26 has allocated ₹1,024.30 Crore for expenses incurred by the Council of Ministers, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Prime Minister's Office, and for hospitality and entertainment of state guests. The allocated amount is slightly higher than the ₹1,021.83 Crore earmarked in 2024-25.

A total of ₹619.04 Crore has been allotted for the expenses of council of ministers in the coming fiscal. It was ₹540.95 Crore in 2024-25. This allocation is for expenditure on salaries, sumptuary and other allowances and travel by Cabinet ministers, ministers of state, and former prime ministers. It also includes a provision for special extra session flight operations for VVIPs.

The National Security Council Secretariat has been allocated ₹182.75 Crore, against ₹270.08 Crore allotted in 2024-25. The provision is for meeting the administrative expenses and space programme of the National Security Council Secretariat.

A total of ₹70.12 Crore has been allotted to the office of the principal scientific advisor (₹65.72 Crore in 2024-25) for meeting the administrative expenses of the office and the National Research Foundation. The Cabinet Secretariat has been allocated ₹75.68 Crore, against ₹73.98 crore in 2024-



25, for meeting the administrative expenses of those of the Cabinet Secretariat and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has been allocated ₹70.91 Crore (₹65.30 Crore in 2024-25) for meeting administrative expenses. The Budget also allotted Rs four crore for hospitality and entertainment expenses, the same as that allocated in 2024-25.

This provision is for expenditure on government hospitality and entertainment of foreign state guests, official entertainment arranged at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on behalf of the vice-president and the prime minister, reception on national days, and investiture and ceremonies for presentation of credentials, among others.

The Budget also allocated Rs 1.80 crore for expenditure on payments of secretariat assistance to former governors, the same as that allocated in 2024-25.

## Major boost to defence spending, focus on might and modernisation

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Keeping up the momentum of modernization and operational readiness, ₹6,81,210 Crores is allocated to defence for next fiscal. It is a hike of 9.53 per cent over current year's allocation of ₹6,21,940 Crore. The allocation for the defence budget is estimated at 1.91 per cent of the projected GDP in 2025-26.

The government has assured that funds will not be a constraint and if need be additional finance will be available to ensure to meet any challenge in the back drop of



fast evolving regional security scenario, sources said here on Saturday. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated Finance Minister Sitharaman for presenting a budget towards

fulfilling the Prime Minister's resolve of Viksit Bharat. "This budget will promote the development of youth, poor, farmers, women and all other sections of society. Recognising the contribution of the middle class, the budget has brought an unprecedented gift," he said. As regards procuring state of the art weaponry including aircraft, warships and systems, a total of ₹1,80,000 Crore crore has been allocated for capital outlay for 2025-26. The capital outlay in 2024-25 was ₹1.72

Lakh Crore. Moreover, ₹1.12 lakh crore is earmarked for 2025-26 for procurement from domestic industries. ₹1,11,544.83 Crore i.e. 75% of modernisation budget has been earmarked for procurement through domestic sources and 25% of domestic share i.e. ₹27,886.21 Crore has been provisioned for procurement through do 1,60,795 Crore i.e. 23.60% and balance ₹28,682.97 Crore i.e. 4.21% is for civil organisations under defence ministry.

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has been allotted ₹9,676.70 Crore under Capital and Revenue Head which is 26.50% more than the allocation for FY 2024-25 at Budget Estimate (BE) stage. This increase is primarily in line with the focus of the Government on capability development of ICG and equipping them with modern equipment. ICG not only strengthens coastal security, but also provides assistance to neighboring countries and commercial ships during emergency through faster response. A jump of 43% in Capital Budget i.e. from ₹3,500

Crore for FY 2024-25 to ₹5,000 Crore for FY 2025-26 will provide adequate financial space for acquisition of Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH), Dornier Aircraft, Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs), Training Ships and Interceptor Boats. On revenue head, the allocation has been increased from ₹4,151.8 crore for FY 2024-25 to ₹4,676.70 Crore for FY 2025-26 which shows an increase of 12.64%. The increase will be utilised to fund the expenditure to be incurred on additional deployments of manpower and resources in addition to addressing the inflation.

## Major boost to defence spending, focus on might and modernisation





# Budget promotes rural industrialisation and export growth



DR VIJAY G KALANTRI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Budget 2025-26 can be described as well-balanced and progressive, emphasising growth and development by boosting consumption, rationalising taxes, introducing compliance reforms, and promoting the 'Make in India' initiative. It caters to all sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing,

and services by introducing 8 National Missions across these sectors, while also fostering research and innovation. One of the key highlights of the budget is the enhanced access to credit for MSMEs and startups, along with technical and technological upgradation support. The increase in investment and turnover limits for MSME classification will broaden the scope of MSME schemes, improving access to credit and bringing a wider range of businesses under the micro and small enterprise categories, thereby strengthening domestic manufacturing. To further support exporter MSMEs, the credit guarantee cover for term loans has been increased to INR 20 crores.

Additionally, a customised credit card with a limit of INR 5 lakh has been introduced for micro-enterprises registered under the Udyam Portal. Significant enhancements have also been made to credit cover for startups, with a moderated guarantee fee for 27 priority sectors, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. The budget places a strong emphasis on rural industrialisation, particularly through the expansion of logistics via India Post. This initiative is expected to drive industrial development in rural areas, helping shift the labor force from agriculture to more productive manufacturing and service sectors. Additionally, the introduction of special national missions, such as



'Aatmanirbharta in Pulses,' high-yielding seeds, and cotton, aims to improve crop productivity through investments in infrastructure, research and development, and export promotion. Several provisions have also been made to promote skill development and employment generation. A key focus has been placed on labor-intensive manufacturing sectors, including leather, footwear, toys, and food processing. The announcement of a National Mission for Manufacturing aims to drive growth through five key focus areas such as ease of doing business, workforce development, MSME growth, technology advancement and

quality production. A National Mission for Exports has been introduced to strengthen India's export ecosystem. The mission focuses on improving export credit, supporting MSMEs in overcoming non-tariff barriers, and simplifying tariff structures. The budget also rationalises import duties and taxes across several industries, including electronics, IT, marine products, textiles, leather, and minerals. These measures are expected to significantly reduce operational costs for domestic manufacturers, thereby enhancing their global competitiveness. Another major reform in the budget is the enhancement of the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limit in the insurance sector to 100%, specifically

for companies that reinvest 100% of their premium earnings. This move is expected to attract significant investments in the insurance sector while also stimulating domestic economic growth. Additionally, the budget outlines targeted investment initiatives to spur growth, including the establishment of fund of funds that focus on deep tech, artificial intelligence (AI), innovation, and electronics. A renewed thrust on infrastructure development has also been introduced, particularly through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). The budget encourages state governments to adopt similar initiatives, ensuring widespread infrastructural expansion and economic advancement.

The budget seems to have delivered on industry expectations. There has been a long-standing demand to reduce compliance costs and rationalise taxation, which has been fulfilled to a large extent. However, the execution of these policy reforms holds equal importance, and it must be ensured that these initiatives are implemented unconditionally and in the true spirit of their announcements. The tax relief provided to the middle class is one of the significant features of the budget, as it is expected to boost consumption and stimulate economic growth in the short to medium term. (The writer is Director, World Trade Centers Association (WTCA), NY)

## Budget full of rhetoric, old announcements repackaged: Tejashwi



PNS ■ PATNA

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Saturday charged the NDA government at the Centre with indulging in "rhetoric" in the Union Budget, and presenting announcements made in the past with "repackaging". The former Bihar deputy CM, who addressed a press conference in Vaishali district, also slammed Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, whose JD(U) is a crucial ally of the BJP, for his inability to secure a fair deal for the state. "Just look at TDP supremo Chandrababu Naidu, who has secured benefits to the tune of Rs 1 lakh crore for Andhra Pradesh. The Budget presented today is silent on any such help for Bihar. We also do not know where the Rs 59,000 crore promised last year has been spent," said Yadav, who is now the leader of the opposition. Training his guns at Kumar, who dumped RJD last year to realign with BJP, Yadav said, "We could not expect the CM to secure a better deal, since he no longer seems to be in his senses and has lost the ability to discern where not to clap his hands." The allusion was to an incident of January 30, when at the government function organised on the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Kumar, who is in his 70s, had started clapping. The inadvertence has provided fresh ammunition to detractors of the JD(U) supremo who have been

claiming that the longest-serving CM had grown mentally unstable and was, therefore, unfit for the top job. Yadav alleged, "The CM seems to have already abandoned the demand for special status, on which Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman did not speak a word while presenting the budget. There is not even a special economic package for the poor state which is being cheated by Modi government as all good things are being done for the prime minister's home state Gujarat." When his response was sought on announcements in the budget for Bihar, like setting up of greenfield airports, the young leader dismissed these as "rhetoric (jumlebaazi)" and asked, "Where is the budgetary allocation?" "These are all old things with some repackaging. Why is the Centre silent on projects like a new airport at Bihta, on the outskirts of Patna? When we were in power, we had acquired land for the purpose and handed it over to the Airports Authority of India," said the RJD leader. Yadav, whose father Lalu Prasad, the RJD president, is a former railway minister, also said that "the Modi government has done away with a separate Rail budget, which the people used to wait for as announcements used to be made on passenger fares in trains. The budget is silent on that."

## Promising Budget accelerating the path for Viksit Bharat



DINESH JOSHI ■ NEW DELHI

The Budget 2025 delivered by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is a well-balanced and inclusive budget, ensuring economic growth, ease of doing business, and empowerment across multiple sectors. A major highlight is the significant relief given to the middle class through direct

tax exemptions. By exempting income tax up to Rs 12 lakh, the government has provided much-needed liquidity, allowing people to spend and save simultaneously. With an estimated Rs 1 lakh crore flowing into the hands of the middle class, consumption is expected to rise, benefiting key industries like FMCG, automobiles, and banking. This boost in demand will create a ripple effect across the economy, strengthening domestic growth. Additionally, this influx of liquidity is expected to drive positive sentiment in the stock market, leading to a rally in key sectors such as infrastructure, consumer goods, banking, and

manufacturing. However, despite these positive measures, the stock market remained volatile on Budget day, with the Sensex closing nearly flat at 77,505.96 (+5.39 points) and the Nifty 50 dipping slightly to 23,482.15 (-26.25 points). While the market initially reacted with enthusiasm, it later stabilised as investors assessed the long-term impact. Sectors like FMCG, real estate, media, and automobiles saw gains, while PSU banks, metals, pharma, and oil & gas declined. Beyond tax relief, the budget emphasises manufacturing, infrastructure, and ease of doing business. Measures such as compliance relaxations and simplified

KYC norms will make it easier for businesses to operate, attract investments, and scale efficiently. A stable and growth-oriented framework is essential for long-term sustainability, and this budget effectively addresses it. The National Manufacturing and Export Promotion Missions are another significant step. As global markets focus on self-reliance and resilient supply chains, these initiatives will boost India's competitiveness in global trade. Reforms aimed at industrial growth and export enhancement will strengthen the 'Make in India' movement, positioning India as a key player in the international market.

The budget also maintains an inclusive approach, addressing diverse stakeholders. It caters to startups, women entrepreneurs, farmers, MSMEs, and the common citizen. Key measures include support for small businesses, skill development programs for youth, and incentives for women-led enterprises, ensuring economic growth benefits all sections of society. Infrastructure development has received a significant push, with investments in roads, highways, and smart cities expected to improve connectivity and create employment opportunities. The focus on renewable energy and sustainability highlights the government's

long-term vision for green growth, aligning with India's commitment to a sustainable future. Overall, Budget 2025 strengthens economic foundations while prioritising inclusive growth. It lays a strong path for Viksit Bharat, ensuring industries, businesses, and individuals benefit from progressive reforms. With a forward-looking approach, this budget is set to drive economic momentum, reinforce investor confidence, and position India as a global economic powerhouse in the coming years. (The writer is Chairman & MD, SatyaGiri Group, and Co-Chair of FICCI Maharashtra State Council)

## Himanta hails new urea plant in Namrup as 'game changer' for NE

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday hailed the announcement of a urea plant in the state in the Union Budget for 2025-26, stating that it would be a "game changer" for the entire Northeast. He said it was a long-standing demand of the people of the state. "What a historic day for Assam! #UnionBudget2025 has announced a 12.7 lakh MT urea plant in Namrup, a long standing demand of the people of Assam," he said in a post on X. It will not only help the state achieve self-sufficiency in fertiliser availability but also better channelise the natural gas resources, he added. "After the semiconductor plant in Jagiroad, this urea facility will be a game changer for the entire North East. On behalf of the people of Assam my heartfelt gratitude to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi Ji and



Hon'ble Finance Minister Smt @nsitharaman Ji," Sarma said. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget speech said that for self-sufficiency, the government had reopened three dormant urea plants in the eastern region. "To further augment urea supply, a plant with annual capacity of 12.7 lakh metric tons will be set up at Namrup, Assam," she added. PSU Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corp Ltd (BVFCL) is the only urea-making facility in the entire eastern

India. The facility started production in January 1969 as a part of the Hindustan Fertilizer Corp Ltd (HFCL). BVFCL was formed in April 2002 after hiving off the Namrup Unit of HFCL. It is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers with 100 per cent shareholding by the Government of India. It is the first factory of its kind in India to use associated natural gas as basic raw material for producing nitrogenous fertiliser.



## Budget more about political interests than people: Mayawati

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Saturday said that the BJP government's Budget, like that of the Congress previously, seems to be more about political interests and less about the people and the country. In a post on X in Hindi, Mayawati said, "Due to the tremendous impact of inflation, poverty, and unemployment in the country, along with lack of basic amenities like roads, water, and education, people's lives in India which has a huge

population of about 140 crore are quite troubled, which needed to be resolved through the Union Budget." But the Budget presented by the BJP government, like those by the Congress previously, seems to be more about political interests and less about the people and the country, she said. "If this is not the case, why are the lives of people continuously troubled, miserable and unhappy under this government? The dream of a 'Viksit Bharat' should also be in the interest of the Bahujans," she said.

## Telangana Minister Surekha calls Union Budget disappointing



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Minister Konda Surekha on Saturday said she was completely "disappointed" with the union budget. "I have no words to express the sadness of not receiving enough allocation to the younger state of the country, Telangana, from India's Finance Minister, @nsitharaman," she said, in a post on X. Surekha further claimed that the requests from southern states were "overlooked," and "Telangana's promises were 'harshly ignored'."

## Jharkhand as State, its people neglected completely in Union Budget, alleges JMM

PNS ■ RANCHI

The ruling JMM on Saturday claimed that the Union Budget 2025-26 has nothing for Jharkhand as the state and its people were "neglected completely" by the Centre. Earlier in the day, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the budget for the 2025-26 fiscal in Parliament. "Nothing has been proposed for Jharkhand in the budget. The neighbouring Bihar has been given many projects but Jharkhand and its people have been neglected completely," JMM spokesperson Manoj Pandey said. Bihar remained in focus in the presentation of the Union Budget for the 2025-26 fiscal with Sitharaman making several announcements for the state, including setting up of a makhana board, financial assistance for western Kosi canal and support for enhancing the capacity of IIT Patna. Jharkhand's minerals



contribute significantly to the country's economy but a "step-motherly treatment has been meted out" to the state, the JMM leader alleged. "We had expected that the Centre would announce payment of its due of Rs 1.36 lakh crore to the state. But, there is no mention of it in the budget. We want to ask why such an ignorant approach was taken towards Jharkhand," he said. The state BJP, however, claimed that the union budget has taken care of all sections of society, particularly women, youth, students, entrepreneurs and middle-class families. "The development-oriented budget further boosts Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas' and it will help achieve the dream of 'Vikshit Bharat' by 2047," Jharkhand BJP president Babul Marandi said. He said that salaried class and small entrepreneurs were given a major relief in the budget by increasing the income tax exemption limit to Rs 12 lakh. "This is not a small thing but a big jump," he said. Asked about what Jharkhand got in the budget, he said that the benefit of infrastructure development would help the state. "Many investors want to come to Jharkhand. It is the Jharkhand government's responsibility to create an environment for them," he said. BJP leader Champai Soren said that the "holistic, all-encompassing and inclusive" budget is the blueprint of the vision of the Narendra Modi government at the Centre towards building a self-reliant India.

## Punjab once again ignored in Union Budget: CM Mann

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann expressed disappointment over the Union Budget on Saturday, claiming that the border state has been "ignored" once again and not given anything. Describing it as an "election budget", the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said it only made announcements for Bihar. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her eighth budget in Parliament on Saturday. Reacting to the budget, Mann alleged that Punjab has once again been "ignored" in the budget presented by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre. "The Union government has not given anything to the farmers and youngsters of Punjab," he said in a post on X. The chief minister criticised the Centre for not announcing a minimum support price (MSP) for crops or any



package for the state's industry. "The Centre has neither given an MSP to farmers nor has the state been given any package for any industry. Punjab has not been given anything that can improve its economy and future," he said. "This budget is only an election budget, in which there are announcements only for the state of Bihar," Mann added. Once again, the Centre has meted out step-motherly treatment to Punjab and Punjabis in the budget, he said, adding, "But we will make Punjab stand on its own feet."

## Budget announcement on MSMEs will greatly benefit Manipur: CM N Biren

PNS ■ IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Saturday said the enhancement of investment and turnover limits for the classification of MSMEs proposed in the Union Budget will be highly beneficial for the state. He also hailed the zero tax on income up to Rs 12 lakh per annum as a significant step towards alleviating the "financial burdens of hardworking families". "The New Classification Criteria for MSMEs will be greatly beneficial to Manipur which has been a major contributor to the MSME business registration among the North East states," the CM said in a post on X. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that to help MSMEs achieve higher efficiencies of scale, technological upgradation and better access to capital, the investment and turnover limits for classification will



be enhanced to "2.5 and 2 times, respectively". "I thank Hon'ble PM @narendramodi and Finance Minister, Smt @nsitharaman ji for the expansions in the investment limit & turn over limits which will further boost entrepreneurship, local businesses, trade and commerce," Singh said. He said the announcement made on income tax was a testament to the government's commitment to the aspirations and welfare of the middle class. "The announcement to exempt income tax on earnings up to Rs 12 lakh is a

significant step toward alleviating the financial burden on hardworking families. This initiative is part of a broader income tax bill, which is scheduled to be introduced next week. The reform is a testament to the government's commitment to the aspirations and welfare of the middle class, reflecting a step towards a more inclusive and prosperous future," he said. Singh also lauded the enhancement of regional connectivity under the UDAN scheme. "Manipur and the rest of the North East region have already seen a transformative change in air connectivity under the UDAN scheme which has boosted travel, tourism, and trade & commerce, contributing to the growth of the entire region. With additional airports across the country, the middle class will realise their aspirations for faster and more affordable travel," he said.



ODISHA STATE CO-OPERATIVE MARKETING FEDERATION LTD. MARKFED-ODISHA. Old Station Road, Bhubaneswar-751006. Bid Identification No. MARKFED/01/2024-25. CAD-2444

ITL FINLEASE & SECURITIES LIMITED. CIN: L65910DL1991PLC045090. Registered Office: B-08, GD-ITL Tower, Top Floor, Netaji Subhash Place, Pitampura, Delhi-110034. Un-Audited Financial Results for the quarter and nine months ended on December 31, 2024.

Format C-1 (for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV). Declaration about criminal cases: (As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.))

PUBLIC NOTICE. The general public is hereby informed that the Freeze Strength of the Padmini CGHS Ltd. (Regd. No. 1282dated 12.08.1983) registered office at Regd. Office at 216, Vardhman Star City Mall, Sector-7, Dwarka, New Delhi-75105 members. The society enrolled total 277 members since inception onwards.

List of 105 valid Members as on date. Table with columns: Sr. No., M.S. No., Name of the Member, Father's/Husband's Name, Date of Enrolment.

PUBLIC NOTICE. Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client i.e. ICICI Bank Ltd that Mrs. Sherida Ahuja and Mr. Manu Ahuja are claiming to be owners of Property (Plot bearing No. 31, area measuring 130.50 sq. mtr., Block-G, in sector 41, situated in New Okhla Industrial development area, Gurgaon, Haryana, U.P.

PUBLIC NOTICE. This is to inform the general public that Murad Ali or his business being run under the name & style of M/S G. C. TRAVEL AGENCY having its registered address as 27B Part-2nd, 4th Floor, Khirzabad, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110025 is not associated with or authorized by M/S GLOBAL CONNECT TRAVELS PRIVATE LIMITED in any capacity whatsoever.

PUBLIC NOTICE. This is to inform the public at large that my client (KCI) Bank is advancing a loan to Mr. Sagor Saini for purchasing the Freehold Entire First Floor without roof right, Ball on Plot No.93 in Block-B, situated at Sector 12, THA, Residential Colony known as Ramprastha, in the area of Village-Mahapur, Pargana Loni, Tehsil & Distt. Ghazabad, (U.P.) from Mr. Jui Ahya.

PUBLIC NOTICE. If anybody has any claim or objection upon the said property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, licence, gift, possession legal heirs, partners, encumbrance however or otherwise is required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice with supporting documents.

CORRIGENDUM NO. 02. Corrigendum of Works against E-Tendering of works contract vide DRM(Works)/Katihar Notice No. KIR/Engg/55 of 2024 dated 23-12-2024 (Item No. 2) against the work - Katihar - Renovation of ORH Suit No. A, B, E & F and Room No. 1 & 2 including outside painting etc. treated as cancelled on administrative ground, due to reason of One work for the construction of Rest House Building near construction Suite at Total cost Rs.21900 (Figure in Thousand) has been shortlisted by GM/NFR. Further, ADMR/Katihar verbally instructed to cancel this instant tender and will be floated again by clubbing it with this shortlisted work after sanctioning.

PUBLIC NOTICE. It is known to all that the Allottee of RESIDENTIAL FLAT NO. C-7/8, SECTOR-71NOIDA, GAUTAM BUDDH NAGAR U.P. has executed a Regd. General Power of Attorney in favour of PREMCHAND VERMA VIDE BAHU/NN04/JLD/NO288/PAGE NO-639 TO 644 DOCUMENT NO-2165 DATED 28/12/1999 IN SR NOIDA and there is no agreement to sell have not been executed between both the parties. So with the help of this notice it is informed that the transfer of the above FLAT NO. C-7/8, SECTOR-71NOIDA, GAUTAM BUDDH NAGAR U.P. goes in favour of PREMCHAND VERMA if any one has/have any objection he/she can submit his/her/their objection in the RESIDENTIAL Division, No/da Authority alongwith proof within 15 days of the Publication of this Notice. (MR. PREMCHAND VERMA)

PUBLIC NOTICE. Reg. Upper Ground Floor, area measuring 60 sq. yds. 'As is', falling in Kharsa No. 630, Abaha No. 45, area measuring 60 sq. yds. 'As is', falling in Kharsa No. 630, A/S and W/L, dated 16.08.2000 executed by Mr. Vimal Chopra in his favour. The Attorney holder has further informed that the said floor is not mortgaged anywhere and there is no charge or dispute or any litigation pending regarding the said floor.

PUBLIC NOTICE. It is known to all that our clients, Mr. Amit Kumar & Mrs. Sumitra (hereinafter called the 'Purchaser') intend to purchase the said floor from Mr. Anoop Kumar Sarkar, Attorney of Mr. Vimal Chopra (hereinafter called the 'Attorney-holder'). In this connection, the Attorney-holder has informed the purchaser that he is the sole and absolute attorney holder in respect of the said portion of the said property vide POA documents viz. GFA, A/S and W/L, dated 16.08.2000 executed by Mr. Vimal Chopra in his favour. The Attorney holder has further informed that the said floor is not mortgaged anywhere and there is no charge or dispute or any litigation pending regarding the said floor.

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Hamas frees 3 hostages, Israel begins releasing Palestinian prisoners

PTI ■ KHAN YOUNIS (GAZA STRIP) Hamas militants released three male hostages being held in the Gaza Strip on Saturday and Israel began releasing 183 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails, part of a ceasefire deal that has halted 15 months of intense fighting. Militants handed Yarden Bibas and French-Israeli Ofer Kalderon to Red Cross officials in the southern city of Khan Younis, while American-Israeli hostage Keith Siegel, looking pale and thin, was released to the Red Cross later Saturday morning in Gaza City to the north. All three were abducted during the Hamas-led attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, that sparked the war. Their release brings to 18 the number of hostages released since the ceasefire began on January 19. Both of Saturday's events were

quick and orderly, in contrast to chaotic scenes that unfolded on Thursday when armed militants appeared to struggle to hold back a crowd during a hostage release. In both of Saturday's releases, masked and armed militants stood in lines as the hostages walked onto a stage and waved before being led off and handed over to the Red Cross. In Tel Aviv's Hostages Square, thousands of people gathered to watch the releases being transmitted live on a large screen, waving signs and cheering. Shortly after Siegel arrived in Israel, a bus departed Ofer Military Prison with some 32 prisoners bound for the West Bank. About 150 other prisoners were being sent to Gaza or deported. According to Palestinian authorities, a total of 183 Palestinian prisoners are to be released Saturday, including dozens serving lengthy sentences or life sentences, and 111 people from the Gaza Strip who were arrested after October 7, 2023

and held without trial. Crowds of well-wishers greeted the bus, cheering and hoisting the released prisoners on their shoulders in scenes of jubilation. The ceasefire is aimed at winding down the deadliest and most destructive war ever fought between Israel and Hamas. The deal has held for two weeks, allowing for increased aid to flow into the tiny coastal territory and for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to return to the remnants of their homes in the north of the strip. During the truce's six-week first phase, a total of 33 Israeli hostages are to be freed in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. Israel says it has received information from Hamas that eight of those hostages were either killed in Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack or have died in captivity. Also on Saturday, a group of 50 sick and wounded Palestinian children left Gaza for treatment through the

Rafah border crossing to Egypt, in the first opening of the enclave's sole exit since Israel captured it nine months ago. A European Union civilian mission was deployed Friday to prepare for the reopening. The reopening of Rafah marked another key step in the first phase of the ceasefire. Israel and Hamas are set next week to begin negotiating a second phase of the ceasefire, which calls for releasing the remaining hostages and extending the truce indefinitely. The war could resume in early March if an agreement is not reached. Israel says it is still committed to destroying Hamas, even after the militant group reassigned its rule over Gaza within hours of the latest ceasefire. A key far-right partner in Netanyahu's coalition is calling for the war to resume after the ceasefire's first phase. Hamas says it won't release the remaining hostages without an end to the war and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

PUBLIC NOTICE. Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client i.e. ICICI Bank Ltd that Mrs. Sherida Ahuja and Mr. Manu Ahuja are claiming to be owners of Property (Plot bearing No. 31, area measuring 130.50 sq. mtr., Block-G, in sector 41, situated in New Okhla Industrial development area, Gurgaon, Haryana, U.P. 'the said property' by virtue of Transfer Deed Cum Sale Deed dated 20.09.2023, Registration No. 8359, executed by Mr. Soman Dhar. All persons are hereby informed that above mentioned owners want to mortgage the said property to our client i.e. ICICI Bank Ltd. If anybody has any objection upon the said property, its title & mortgage, & any kind of litigation etc. and ownership of Mrs. Sherida Ahuja and Mr. Manu Ahuja, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 10 days of the present.

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PUBLIC NOTICE. This is to inform the public at large that my client (KCI) Bank is advancing a loan to Mr. Sagor Saini for purchasing the Freehold Entire First Floor without roof right, Ball on Plot No.93 in Block-B, situated at Sector 12, THA, Residential Colony known as Ramprastha, in the area of Village-Mahapur, Pargana Loni, Tehsil & Distt. Ghazabad, (U.P.) from Mr. Jui Ahya. Mr. Sagor Saini is purchasing the property from Mr. Jui Ahya, who is the owner of the property, and acquired a complete and sole interest in the property by virtue of a Registered WILL, dated 18.08.2016 executed by Mr. Jui Ahya (deceased), bearing number 1309 dated 12.04.2024, has been issued by Sub District officer District Magistrate, Ghazabad in this regard. If anybody has any claim or objection upon the said property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, licence, gift, possession legal heirs, partners, encumbrance however or otherwise is required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice with supporting documents.

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PUBLIC NOTICE. Reg. Upper Ground Floor, area measuring 60 sq. yds. 'As is', falling in Kharsa No. 630, Abaha No. 45, area measuring 60 sq. yds. 'As is', falling in Kharsa No. 630, A/S and W/L, dated 16.08.2000 executed by Mr. Vimal Chopra in his favour. The Attorney holder has further informed that the said floor is not mortgaged anywhere and there is no charge or dispute or any litigation pending regarding the said floor.

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# Team India focuses on form of Surya, Samson

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The series already in their pocket, India would look to address their nagging batting woes against an England team gunning for revenge after feeling hard-done by a debatable concussion substitute when the two teams clash in the fifth and final T20 International here on Sunday. The hosts will hope that struggling skipper Suryakumar Yadav and Sanju Samson are back among runs and adding spice to the otherwise inconsequential match is the resentment that England is carrying after the 15-run loss in the fourth game.



India's 15-run win in the fourth T20I at Pune on Friday gave the hosts an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match affair, but left England exasperated over the choice of the concussion replacement who played an impactful role.

England captain Jos Buttler remembered thinking "who's Harshit on for" as he strode out to bat but his team was also guilty of succumbing to pressure and squandering a perfect start on a flat deck at the MCA Stadium to concede the series. England were 65/1 in the seventh over chasing 182 and lost wickets in a heap once again to Indian spinners Varun Chakravarty (2/28) and Ravi Bishnoi (3/28), with the former stretching his tally in the series to 12.

However, despite the series in bag, India's concerns remain the same - Samson and Suryakumar's lean patch with the bat. Samson, who missed the Vijay Hazare Trophy for Kerala, came into the series evidently lacking match practice and has struggled against the express pace of Mark Wood and Jofra Archer who have troubled the Indian opener consistently. With only 35 runs in four matches so far, Samson's returns have been disappointing but it is unlikely that India would want to tinker with their opening combination at the top given that an all-out approach is a core principle of their T20 cricket. World number four Suryakumar has gone without a significant score since his 75 against Bangladesh eight matches ago. The Indian skipper has two ducks and scores of 12 and 14 to show in this series even though luck has favoured him during the toss.

'Sky' will be keen to shrug off the string of poor performances when he returns to his home ground Wankhede Stadium here, a venue which has played an indomitable role in building his reputation as a T20 specialist.

Rinku Singh's 30 on Friday settled a lot of concerns around the swashbuckling left-hander, whose form and fitness were both in question going into the fourth match.

Hardik Pandya and Dube's fifties powered India's charge in the fourth T20I with the all-rounders filling in for the batters' failure but another batting-friendly wicket here will give the Indians a chance to make amends one last time in the shortest format.

Spoilt for choices in the bowling department, India could rest and play both their front-line pacers Arshdeep Singh and Mohammed Shami through the course of this series. But Sunday's contest could be another opportunity for the team management to test the readiness of Shami who is back after a lengthy injury-forced lay-off.

For England, it has been a series of more misses than hits but they have been outplayed generally across departments. Harry Brook finally got a big knock on the board on Friday but his struggles persist against spin and particularly Chakravarty, while young guns like Jacob Bethell and Jamie Smith have had their struggles on their maiden Indian sojourn.



## Gukesh draws with Wei Yi, Praggnanandhaa outwits Caruana in Tata Masters

PTI ■ WIJK AAN ZEE

World champion D Gukesh maintained his half-point lead with an easy draw against Wei Yi of China, while R Praggnanandhaa outwitted top seed Fabiano Caruana of the United States to come within striking distance of the leader after the 11th round of Tata Steel Masters here.

Playing the white side of an Italian game, Gukesh went for a relatively new plan by pushing his central pawn in the opening that just helped Wei Yi maintain parity after the trade of queens.

The Indian was up a pawn when the endgame surfaced but the position was level and the peace was signed in 30 moves.

The draw helped Gukesh jump to eight points out of a possible 11 in the first major tournament of the year, while Praggnanandhaa stunned Caruana with black pieces to move to 7.5 points. Sharing the second spot is Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan, who played out a draw with German Vincent Keymer.

It was a Queen's gambit declined by Praggnanandhaa and Caruana went for one of the complex variations to show his intent after getting some mediocre results in the tournament thus far.

Praggnanandhaa has seldom had trouble fighting complicated positions with loads of tactical possibilities, and Friday was no different as he went for an attack quickly against the white queen after the players had castled on opposite wings.

As it happened, Caruana's 32nd move was a huge blunder giving Praggnanandhaa another victory five moves later.

On a good day for other Indians too, P Harikrishna

accounted for Alexey Sarana of Serbia while Leon Luke Mendonca put it across Vladimir Fedoseev of Slovenia. Arjun Erigaisi, meanwhile, played out another draw with Jorden Van Foreest of Holland. In the penultimate round now, Gukesh is set to meet Forest with black pieces and chess buffs expect some fireworks as the world champion will be keen to push ahead of the field. Praggnanandhaa will play his last white game in the tournament against Sarana while Nodirbek has to play another black against Erigaisi, who is yet to win a game having lost four and drawn seven.

In the Challengers' section, Divya Deshmukh got a much-needed victory over Irina Bulmaga of Romania but R Vaishali found the going tough and lost to Aydin Suleymanli of Azerbaijan. Divya, on three points, still has a lot of catching up to do while Vaishali remained on five points.

Meanwhile, Dutchman Erwin L'Ami regained the sole lead in this section after a finely-crafted victory over Chinese teenager Mioyi Lu. L'Ami, on eight points, benefitted as the overnight sole leader Nguyen Thai Dai Van was outdone by Svane Frederik of Germany.

**Results Round 11:** Masters: Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 4.5) drew with Arjun Erigaisi (Ind, 3.5); D Gukesh (Ind, 8) drew with Wei Yi (Chn, 6); Fabiano Caruana (USA, 5.5) lost to R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 7.5); Vincent Keymer (Ger, 4.5) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 7.5); Anish Giri (Ned, 6) beat Max Warmerdam (Ned, 3.5); Alexey Sarana (Srb, 5) lost to P Harikrishna (Ind, 5.5); Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 6) lost to Leon Luke Mendonca (Ind, 4).

## Batting has always been close to my heart, says Hardik Pandya

PTI ■ PUNE

Hardik Pandya may be an all-rounder but he holds his batting exploits close to his heart because it gives him a "wonderful feeling" every time he scores big runs and guides India to victory. Pandya produced another sterling performance with the bat in the fourth T20I against England on Friday, emerging as the joint-highest scorer with Shivam Dube on 53 runs in the match here.

His half-century not only guided India to a 15-run win but also helped the hosts take an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series. "Batting has always been my number one (love) or close to my heart. That's a very satisfying day (on Friday), and at the same point of time before sleeping (it) gives me a wonderful feeling and I've



always had a good sleep post that," the all-rounder said in a video posted by BCCI on 'X', formerly twitter. Pandya, who played a pivotal role with the ball in helping India defeat South Africa to lift the T20 World Cup in the West Indies last year, said cricket is a way of life for him and he prioritises it over everything else.

"For me, I love this sport way too much; it's been my life, it's been my priority, it's been my first love. The sport does not wait much, your first love always gives you the kiss back," he said. "The sport has given me so much love that I always feel like I have to turn up and be very, very honest and very loyal to the sport," said



## Either Dube has become fast or Rana a batter: Jos Buttler

PTI ■ PUNE

England skipper Jos Buttler didn't hide his displeasure at how India used specialist fast bowler Harshit Rana as a like-for-like 'Concussion Sub' for all-rounder Shivam Dube, who bowls military medium, in the fourth T20I here which the hosts won by 15 runs to take an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series.

Dube, who scored 53 off 34 balls on Friday, was hit on the helmet by a Jamie Overton delivery in the second-last ball of India's innings, leading to the concussion protocol being followed.

Although Dube faced the last ball, but when India came out in defence of 181, Rana walked out to field instead of him. The concussion protocol allows a like-for-like replacement and Rana was a tearaway quick replacing medium pacer Dube, who the Chennai Super Kings uses as an Impact Player in the IPL. Rana took 3/33, each wicket at a critical juncture, as India won by 15 runs. But the move by the Indian team management (read head coach Gautam Gambhir) left the England team high and dry.

Buttler claimed that his team wasn't consulted and they would seek clarity from match referee Javagal Srinath about

what exactly constituted a like-for-like replacement in case of concussion. "Yeah, I don't think it was like-for-like replacement. We don't agree with that. I think either Shivam Dube put on 25 miles per hour with the ball or Harshit has really improved with his batting," Buttler said in as many words, and the sarcasm wasn't lost on anyone. As for Rana's credentials as an all-rounder, he has a hundred and a couple of fifties at the first-class level, and averages 34.

Buttler, however, admitted that even with Rana as a concussion substitute, England should have still gone on to win the match.

"I still think we should have gone on to win the match, but yeah, we disagree with the decision. We had our chances to win the game, which we could have still taken, but I'd like to just get a bit of clarity around that."

Asked if rival captains are kept in the loop about possible replacement, the stylish batter replied in the negative.

"Well, there's no consultation. I think that's something, actually, as I came out to bat. I was thinking, 'who's Harshit on for?' And they said he's the concussion replacement, which I obviously disagreed with; it's not a like-for-like replacement," added Buttler.

## Ranji Trophy: Three fans breach security to get near Virat Kohli

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A major security lapse occurred at the Feroz Shah Kotla ground in a mad rush to get near Virat Kohli as three over-enthusiastic fans barged into the field of play on day three of the Ranji Trophy game between Delhi and Railways despite a large presence of security personnel.

It is normal for fans to breach security in a desperate attempt to be up and close to their cricketing heroes but those scenes are usually reserved for international games. However, Kohli's return to Ranji Trophy after 13 years

has turned the country's attention towards the first-class game which would have been otherwise played in front of empty stands.

A heavy security cordon around the field of play was breached when three fans managed to hoodwink a group of more than 20 guards to make their way into the middle.

The private security force was caught-off guard but got hold of the overzealous Kohli fans just in time to ensure no harm was done.

"It is just Virat bhैया's craze that this happened. It shouldn't have happened. Someone could have come in carrying anything. Virat



bhैया said to security that 'kisi ko maarna mat' (Don't beat up anyone)," Delhi off-spinner Shivam Sharma said on the incident. Kohli was fielding at cover

when the incident took place in the penultimate over before lunch. The DDCA (Delhi and Districts Cricket Association) closed the Bishan Bedi Stand,

which was open for public on the first two days.

This was done after around 500 fans stood perilously close to the grill separating the stand and the dressing room where Kohli was sitting after being dismissed for six runs off 15 balls.

Those who showed up to watch Kohli bat in the second innings left disappointed as Delhi completed an innings and 19 runs win, ensuring that the superstar batter did not get to bat in the second essay.

On day one, a fan managed to touch Kohli's feet with the Indian superstar requesting the security officials to go easy on the intruder.

As many as 12,000 had turned up on the opening day to see Kohli in flesh and blood. He only got to bat on day two.

Pacer Himanshu Sangwan took the prized wicket of the former India captain as he uprooted his off-stump. Kohli will now be linking up with the Indian team for the ODI series against England starting February 6 in Nagpur, followed by the Champions Trophy from February 19.

He showed up for the Ranji fixture following a BCCI diktat, which made it mandatory to play domestic cricket whenever the international calendar allows.

## Neymar returns to his boyhood club

PTI ■ SANTOS

A tearful Neymar was welcomed back to his boyhood club on Friday by thousands of Santos fans and a concert in the home stadium beneath an electronic sign saying, "The prince is back."

The 32-year-old signed a six-month contract, which he said could be extended. Neymar later admitted his return was also due to his feeling unhappy at Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal earlier this year as he struggled to get playing time. He said he would be ready to play for Santos at least 30 minutes in a match scheduled for Saturday if he was given the go-ahead by local soccer authorities.

About 20,000 raucous Santos fans filled their Vila Belmiro Stadium in the rain outside Sao Paulo to celebrate the Brazilian's return. His evening arrival highlighted by fireworks



capped a three-hour fiesta which also featured local singers.

"I am very happy. We lived great moments here. There's still a lot that could come," Neymar said at the pitch. Neymar said at a media conference that he and his family had adapted well to Saudi Arabia, but his lack of playing time since his return from an ACL injury — he hasn't played since November

— forced his move. "Some decisions are not about soccer logic," Neymar said. "I started getting sad in training sessions (at Al-Hilal), and it wasn't good for my head. So there was the chance to come back and I did not think twice. Since the first day I decided I wanted to come back, I told my father (and agent) and it all worked."

The striker signed his contract upon arrival and

added it is "too soon to speak" about extending his deal until the 2026 World Cup, which he says will be the last he will play in his career. He also said his return home is a "rescue" for his own soccer soul. "Santos gave me the chance to come back. I gave away a lot of things to be here. It was a perfect marriage at an unimaginable moment for both parts. Still, it happened," Neymar said. "We have a six-month contract that can obviously be extended. Two weeks ago I didn't even think I would be here."

Neymar also said he has "one more thing to win, a mission that will be the last." "I am going after this World Cup trophy in any way I can. I have goals," said Neymar, who is Brazil's all-time top goal scorer with 79 goals in 125 matches. Shortly before, Neymar greeted his future teammates and club executives at the

Santos training ground. Neymar's private jet landed in the Sao Paulo state countryside from Saudi Arabia in the morning but he requested a few hours of rest before being flown into Santos by helicopter. Banners reading "The prince is back" were selling for 10 reais (\$1.50) outside the 20,000-seat Vila Belmiro Stadium. Graffiti inspired by artificial intelligence outside the stadium showed Neymar looking more mature and with a crown on his head — a small feat in a city where Pelé was king for decades until he died in December 2022 at age 82.

Video posted by Santos on social media showed Neymar not wearing the No. 11 that was his during his first spell from 2009-13. He will wear Pelé's No. 10. "It will be an honor to wear this sacred jersey," Neymar said in the video.

## India eye second consecutive Women's U19 T20 World Cup

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Unbeaten so far in the tournament, a dominant India will start as overwhelming favourites to win their second consecutive title when they take on South Africa in the final of the Women's U19 T20 World Cup here on Sunday. India have had a flawless campaign so far, winning all their six matches in the tournament.

The Niki Prasad-led side has been in red-hot form across departments. India registered dominating wins over the West Indies (9 wickets), Malaysia (10 wickets), Sri Lanka (60 runs), Bangladesh (8 wickets), Scotland (150 runs) and England (9 wickets in the semifinal).

In-from opener Ongadi Trisha has been in gongodi form with the bat, and is the highest run-getter in the



tournament with 265 runs in six innings at an average of 66.25. She is followed by her left-handed opening partner G Kamalini, who is third in the list with 135 runs in six innings at an average of 45.

But the worrying factor for India would be the lack of time and opportunity at a crease for the middle-order, as most of the runs have been scored by the openers. On the bowling front too, the Indians are ruling the roost,

with the slow left-arm orthodox duo of Vaishnavi Sharma and Ayushi Shukla occupying the top spots on the wicket-takers' list.

While Vaishnavi is leading with 15 scalps at an average of 3.40, her team-mate Ayushi has picked up 12 wickets in the competition so far at an average of 5.91. The duo is expected to play a crucial role in the final as well on the slow, turning wickets here.





PHOTOS : PANKAJ KUMAR

# SILENT TEARS of SACRIFICE

Surya Ki Antim Kiran Se Pehli Kiran Tak portrays the struggle against societal expectations, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**



Some plays stay with you, not just because of their story but because of how they make you feel. *Surya Ki Antim Kiran Se Pehli Kiran Tak*, performed at *Bharat Rang Mahotsav*, is one such production that draws the audience into its world with raw emotions and a compelling narrative. Directed by *Satyendra Parmar* and written by *Surendra Verma*, this powerful drama from *Upasana School of Performing Arts, Gujarat University*, takes the audience into the depths of personal struggles shaped by social customs.

### A Story That Demands Reflection

Set in the 10th century BCE, the play follows Queen Sheelavathi, a woman of strength and dignity, who is forced into the ancient practice of *Niyog*, a tradition that allows a woman to conceive with a man other than her husband if the king is unable to father an heir. Sheelavathi, despite her unwavering devotion to her husband, finds herself bound by this custom. What follows is an emotionally charged night where both Sheelavathi and King Okkak struggle with their inner conflicts, she with the burden of an unwanted fate, and he with the helplessness of being unable to protect the woman he loves.



The narrative explores personal loss, sacrifice and the weight of expectations. Sheelavathi's silence is heavy with emotion, her pain evident in every scene. The dialogues are sharp and thought-provoking, forcing the audience to question societal norms that impose restrictions on individual choices. The emotional depth of the play is enhanced by its powerful direction and script, which leave no room for

distractions. The focus remains entirely on the characters and their struggles, making the audience feel their turmoil. The pacing of the play is steady, allowing each scene to breathe and impact the viewers.

### A Performance That Stays With You

The success of a play like this depends on its performances, and the cast delivers with conviction. The actress portraying Sheelavathi captures her emotional turmoil with piercing intensity. Every expression, every hesitation, and every unspoken plea adds depth to her character. The actor playing Okkak is equally compelling, portraying a man torn between love and duty with

remarkable restraint.

The stage design is minimalistic and allowing the focus to remain on the performances. The lighting is particularly striking, deep shadows heighten the tension, while golden hues symbolise the hope that still remains. The use of silence is just as powerful as the words spoken, making the audience feel the weight of Sheelavathi's suffering.

The play's strength lies in how it connects with the audience, evoking empathy and prompting reflection. Every moment is carefully crafted, ensuring that the emotions feel real and raw.



### WHY SHOULDN'T YOU MISS

If theatre that challenges societal norms and provokes thought is what you seek, *Bharat Rang Mahotsav* is where you need to be. Hosted by the National School of Drama (NSD) at Mandi House, Delhi, this prestigious theatre festival is showcasing some of the most compelling productions from across the country. Running until 16th February, the festival promises a new play every day,

bringing fresh narratives and unforgettable performances to the stage.

Whether you're a theatre enthusiast or just looking for a meaningful experience, this festival is a celebration of storytelling in its purest form. Make sure to catch a play, immerse yourself in a new world and witness the magic of live theatre.

# GAZE WITH GRACE



By **TEAM VIVA**

In the world of fashion, eyewear has moved from being a simple necessity to a bold statement of style and personality. It's no longer just about protecting your eyes, it's about framing your face with pieces that reflect your individuality. *John Jacobs* captures this transformation with frames that embody individuality and confidence.

The *Gilded collection*, celebrates elegance and inner strength. Crystal embellishments and timeless designs create a refined look, reflecting a journey of self-expression and resilience. Inspired by the gripping series *Squid Game*, the collection brings the iconic symbols and distinct green of the contestants' jerseys into a unique eyewear design. Each frame merges pop culture with striking aesthetics.

*The Break The Frame collection* dares to defy norms, offering bold shapes and vibrant colors for those who embrace their multifaceted identity. It's a call for authenticity in a world that often asks us to conform. In collaboration with *Outhouse Jewellery*, this collection takes eyewear into a futuristic realm, blending avant-garde design with luxury. This collection features innovative materials and sharp, modern silhouettes.

Each frame tells a story, offering the wearer the opportunity to express their unique style and view the world through a bold lens.

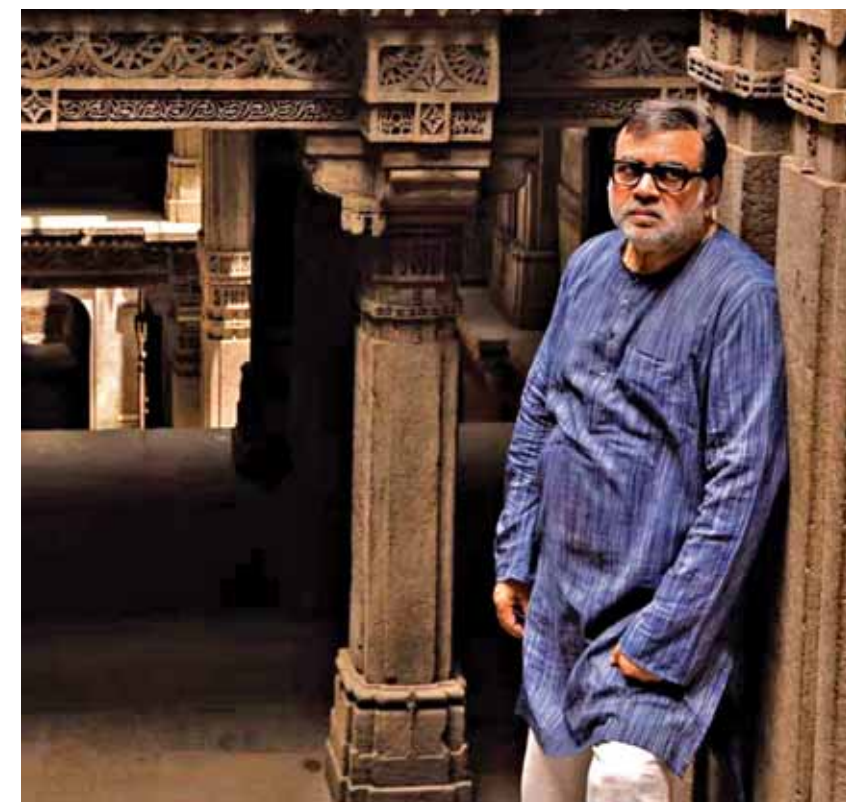


# The Essence of Satyajit Ray



The *Storyteller* comes to life with *Paresh Rawal's* masterful performance turning out as a clash between artistry and commercialism, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

RATING  
★★★★



He sells cotton; I spin yarns - The dialogue made me start my sayings from this as it showed a powerful impact of brilliant acting by the protagonists.

*The Storyteller* streaming on *Disney Plus Hotstar* is an adaptation of *Satyajit Ray's* short story *Golpo Boliye Tarini Khuro*. The story follows a storyteller hired by a wealthy businessman suffering from insomnia to narrate bedtime tales so that the businessman can sleep peacefully.

Set with the backdrop and vibes of Kolkata and Ahmedabad, with the essence of Bengali language in each line, *The Storyteller* will take

you back to the old times of *Satyajit Ray* and his classics. The movie is made with all of today's technology but still feels like every scene takes you back in time.

*Tarini Bandopadhyay* played effortlessly by *Paresh Rawal* as a gifted storyteller from Kolkata who has never penned down his tales, fearing criticism and rejection. An eccentric socialist, he has held 75 different jobs, changing every six months. After



bidding farewell to *Amrit Publication*, he comes across an unusual newspaper ad of *Ratan Garodia* played by *Adil Hussain*, a business tycoon from Ahmedabad who is in search of a storyteller to narrate original bedtime stories, having failed to cure his insomnia.

*Tarini* relocates to Ahmedabad, embarking on a new chapter in his life. The story line is a cult classic with deep message and dialogue writing. The story explores the clash between commercialism and

artistry, touching upon themes of plagiarism, self-discovery, and overcoming self-doubt.

I wouldn't be wrong in saying that *Paresh Rawal* consistently surpasses his own performances with each film, embodying the depth and composure of his characters. His portrayal of *Tarini* leaves a lasting impact on the story. Meanwhile, *Adil Hussain* delivers a standout performance as *Ratan Garodia*, exuding sharpness and cunning, revealing it only when necessary.

The only soft background music changing at times bringing emotions on the screens and the audience's mind enhances the feels of the film. Despite their brief appearances, *Revathy*, *Jayesh More* as *Garodia's* house help *Manikchand*, and *Tannishtha Chatterjee* as the librarian *Tarini* befriends, make a strong impact.

### SUGGESTED BINGES



**The Recruit Season 2**  
IMDB Rating - 7.4/10  
OTT - Netflix  
Cast - Noah Centineo, Teo Yoo, Young-Ah Kim, Felix Solis



**Pushpa 2: The Rule**  
IMDB Rating - 6.3/10  
OTT - Netflix  
Cast - Rashmika Mandanna, Allu Arjun



**The Storyteller**  
IMDB Rating - 7.3/10  
OTT - Disney+ Hotstar  
Cast - Paresh Rawal, Adil Hussain, Revathi



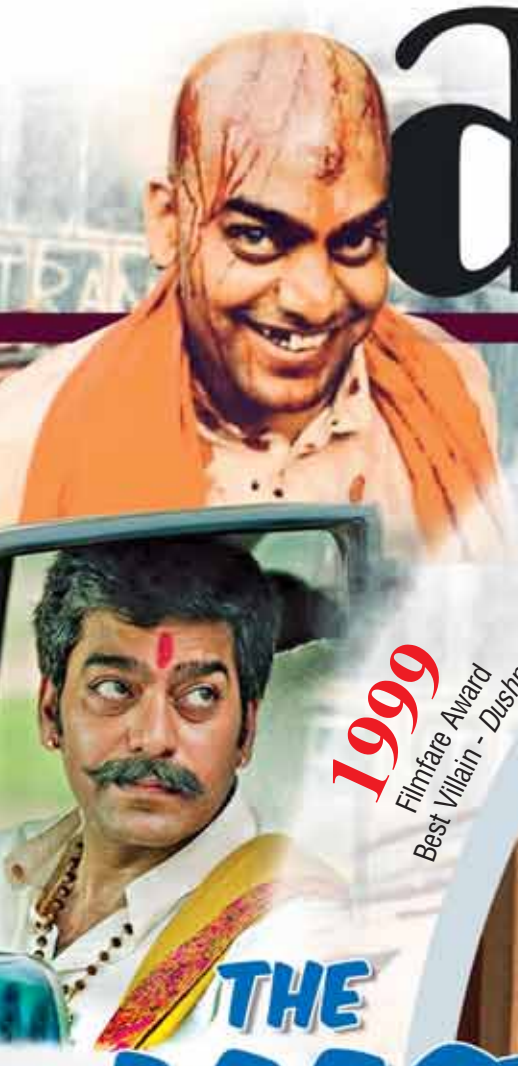
**Mythic Quest Season 4**  
IMDB Rating - 7.7/10  
OTT - Apple TV  
Cast - Rob McElhenney, Charlotte Nicdao, David Hornsby, Danny Pudi



**You're Cordially Invited**  
IMDB Rating - 5.5/10  
OTT - Amazon Prime Video  
Cast - Will Ferrell, Reese Witherspoon, Geraldine Viswanathan



"Don't stop when you're tired, stop when you're done"  
— David Goggins



**2000**  
Filmfare Award  
Best Villain - Sangharsh

**1999**  
Filmfare Award  
Best Villain - Dushman

# THE MASTER OF VILLAINY

From *Dushman* to fanaticism of *Sangharsh*, to the courtroom intensity of *Mulg*, **Ashutosh Rana** has mastered every shade of villainy with effortless ease, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Indian cinema has always celebrated its heroes, but some actors have carved their legacy by embracing roles that challenge conventions. **Ashutosh Rana** is one such artist who has left an indelible mark with his fearless choice of characters. Known for his spine-chilling performances in films like *Dushman* and *Sangharsh*, **Rana** redefined villainy in the Hindi film industry. His performances were not just menacing but deeply impactful, leaving audiences captivated and disturbed in equal measure.

With a career spanning decades, **Rana** has mastered the art of bringing authenticity to every role, whether it's the calculated cruelty of a villain or the depth of a vulnerable, layered character. Films like *Raaz* and *Shorgul* showcased his ability to connect with audiences on an emotional level, proving that his craft is rooted in versatility.

Recently, **Rana** has been performing in 'Humare Ram,' where he plays the role of **Ravan**. In this portrayal, he brings a fresh perspective to the character, showing **Ravan** as not only a figure of ambition and power but one with deep emotional layers.

**Rana** reflected on his journey, his thoughts on storytelling and the challenges of balancing cinema and theatre. Here's what he shared.

### Breathing Life into Villains

"Even with negative characters, the aim is always to go beyond the expected. Take *Dushman*, for instance. The character is negative, but it operates in a different emotional space than, say, my role in *Sangharsh*. These characters may share the label of being 'negative,' but they each carry unique baggage, emotions and complexities.

The idea is to bring something new every time. If you watch my work, my goal is that you shouldn't see traces of my past performances in the current role. You come to watch **Ashutosh Rana** in a new avatar, not as a repetition of something you've already seen."

### Choosing the Road Less Taken

"All the characters you have seen, I have always selected roles I have not done or explored before. As an actor, you must decide whether you want to be an actor or an artist. If you are an actor, you repeat yourself. But if you are an artist, you must break yourself in each and every performance. This diversity is what defines an artist. My effort has always been not to repeat a character I've already portrayed."

### The Evolution as an Actor

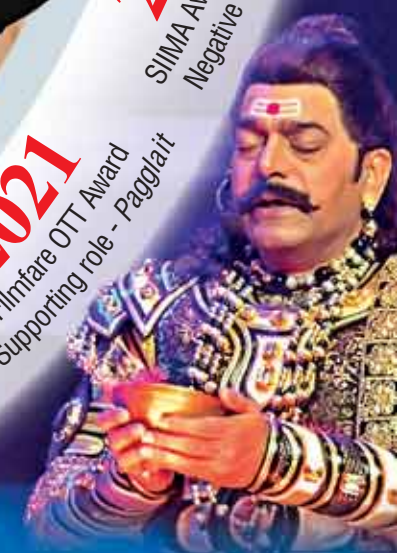
"I do not do any film in which I am not involved. Acting is not only my passion; it is my profession and my education. My education is acting, my profession is acting and my learning is acting. I do not take up any work in which I am not involved from within. Whether it is a full-length central character or just two scenes in a film like *Fighter*, I do not play any role unless it allows me to evolve as a person and as an actor. Every character I play must push me forward."

### Becoming Ravan

"Before doing this, I had written a book, *Ramrajya*, which became a bestseller and won awards. That process itself was a form of preparation. **Ravan** is not a character bound by a single emotion; he operates on multiple levels. He has divinity, aggression, wisdom, purity and even impurity. Like the seven notes of music, to embody **Ravan**, I did not need to build him; I had to break myself. It is not a role where you add layers to create drama; it is one where you strip away everything until the essence of **Ravan** emerges. The process is not about constructing a persona; it is about deconstructing **Ashutosh Rana** so that **Ravan** can come through."

**2021**  
Filmfare OTT Award  
Supporting role - *Pagglait*

**2014**  
SIIMA Award (Nominated)  
Negative Role - *Tadakkha*



### Do you feel that a role as iconic as Ravan leaves something within you?

"No, I believe everything is already within us. If we refer to the Gita, it teaches that all emotions come from within. Whether it is love, anger, or wisdom, they exist inside us, we just express them differently."

### Drawing a Line Between Performance and Reality

"But it depends, do you see yourself as a player or a spectator? If you remain a spectator, the role will not consume you. But if you allow it to, it may shape your thoughts, whether it's **Ravan's** wisdom or dominance. That is why I have set clear boundaries. I do not take my home to the market, nor do I bring the market into my home. If you carry your emotions everywhere, they will consume you. My performance happens in the green room. The moment I wear **Ravan's** attire, I become **Ravan**. But the moment I remove my makeup, **Ravan** stays behind and **Ashutosh** walks out."

### RAVAN: A HERO IN HIS OWN STORY?

### Do you think Ravan could be considered the hero of his own story?

"Yes, absolutely. If you look at it from his perspective, he had his own beliefs, his own dharma. Every story has two sides. Even the gods had to take birth on Earth for a reason. That in itself shows the complexity of his character."

### On Playing Mythological Characters

"I want to widen my spectrum in terms of mythology and historical roles. I would love to play **Krishna**. I would love to play **Chanakya** because that is also a very versatile character."

### No Regrets

"I have no regrets in life. Whatever decisions you made were the only ones possible at that moment, which is why you made them. Life is not about correcting the past; it is a process of evolving. You either grow with age or simply grow old. I believe I am growing."

### A New Perspective on Ravan

"My portrayal of **Ravan** in *Humare Ram* also challenges clichés. Traditionally, we view **Ravan** through a set image, an archetype that doesn't emotionally connect or move us. The characters I choose, whether negative or otherwise, have a wider horizon. They challenge the audience to look beyond the surface. When you engage with the story, the character naturally resonates. But my goal is never to create a character so overwhelming that you forget the story."

### On Performing Across Different Mediums

"I have had the opportunity to perform in all mediums and I believe that every medium is just a means of expression. If your expression is true, it will connect with people, regardless of the medium, whether it is theatre, film, or television."

### UNFORGETTABLE PRESENCE

For **Ashutosh Rana**, acting is not about playing a character, it is about becoming, breaking and rebuilding. With every role, he steps into uncharted emotional depths, revealing not just a character but fragments of life itself. Be it a formidable villain, a layered mythological figure, or a storyteller who makes us pause and reflect, **Rana's** performances do not just entertain, they resonate. Long after the lights dim and the curtains fall, his stories remain, echoing in the minds of those who dare to look beyond the screen. Recently, **Rana** has been performing in the theatre production 'Humare Ram,' where he plays the role of **Ravan**. In this portrayal, he brings a fresh perspective to the character, showing **Ravan** as not only a figure of ambition and power but one with deep emotional layers.





# Where Ambience Meets Flavour

Delhi NCR gets an aesthetic addition of a new  
culinary scene with the launch of CAMO -  
Modern Cookhouse, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**



**C**AMO - Modern Cookhouse, has opened its doors promising to transform the way food is experienced in the city. Blending bold flavours, artistic presentation, and a thoughtfully curated ambience, CAMO sets the stage for a culinary adventure that is equal parts comforting and sophisticated.

**INVITING AMBIANCE:** With greenery inside the place, which is rare to see, makes the ambience aesthetic with lights. CAMO stands out with its unique design that seamlessly integrates indoor and outdoor spaces, creating an environment that is both dynamic and welcoming. The skylight bathes the space in natural light, making it an ideal venue for both casual outings and refined gatherings.

**MODERN INDIAN & PAN-ASIAN DELIGHTS:** The menu at CAMO is a testament to innovation, bringing together the richness of modern Indian and Pan-Asian cuisines in a way that both honours tradition and pushes creative boundaries. Standout dishes include the *Matar Hummus & Lavash Chaat*, the *Parmesan Charred Broccoli*, and the playful yet intriguing *Mushroom Chai*—a dish that encapsulates CAMO's commitment to reimagine classics.

**SMALL PLATES THAT PACK A PUNCH:** CAMO's small plates selection is designed for those who love to sample and share, offering a



range of exciting flavours and textures. The *Puchka Tray* is a refreshing take on the classic street food favourite, served with mint guava water and anaar corn salsa for a sweet, tangy twist. The *Basil Spring Rolls*, packed with roasted peanuts and accompanied by Thai sweet



chili sauce, bring a crunchy delight with every bite. Meanwhile, the *Cheddar Soya Tikka* impresses with its smoky flavours, complemented by a rich tomato chutney and pickled onions. For non-vegetarian aficionados, the *Katsu Chicken Tenders* are a must-try. These crispy, golden-fried delights are served with burnt citrus and togarashi mayo, adding a depth of umami that lingers on the palate.

**SUSHI SELECTIONS FOR EVERY PALATE:** CAMO's *Uramaki Sushi* menu offers a mix of vegetarian and non-vegetarian options that cater to diverse tastes. The vegetarian selection includes the *Avocado and Cream Cheese*, as well as the *Korean Kimchi Kimbab*, which delivers a fiery, tangy punch. For seafood lovers, the *Citrus Salmon Mousse* and the *Loaded Crispy Dynamite* provide a perfect balance of



flavours, with fresh ingredients and expert craftsmanship evident in every roll.



**SWEET ENDINGS WITH DECADENT DESSERTS:** No meal at CAMO is complete without indulging in its delightful dessert offerings. The *Milk Cake Khurchan* is a rich and creamy homage to traditional Indian sweets, while the *Gulab Jamun & Pista Rabri* brings together two beloved classics in a harmonious fusion. For those who crave a taste of nostalgia, the *Purani Dilli Ka Kulfa* is a must-try, featuring flavours of mango, akhrot anjeer, and jamun that transport diners to the bustling streets of Old Delhi.

**A VISION TO REDEFINE DINING IN NOIDA:** Vikas Khurana, the mind behind CAMO - Modern Cookhouse, is passionate about reshaping Noida's dining culture. "Noida is rapidly evolving into a gastronomic hub, with diners seeking experiences that go beyond the ordinary. At CAMO, we've embraced this change, introducing a menu that pays tribute to tradition while pushing creative boundaries. Familiar dishes are reimaged with ingenuity, passion, and love, delivering something truly distinct. Our mission is to create moments that stay with our guests long after their meal. CAMO isn't here to follow trends; we're here to reshape how dining is perceived in this dynamic city."

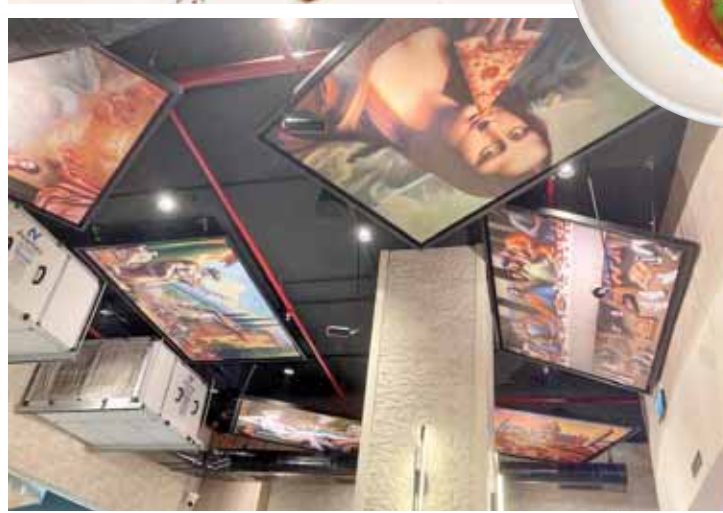
**FACT SHEET**

**ADDRESS:** CAMO, SH 02 & 03, Near Embassy Oxygen Business Park, Sector 144, Noida  
**COST FOR TWO:** 2000 + taxes (exclusive of drinks)  
**OPERATIONAL TIME:** 12pm to 11:30 pm

## ITALY'S BEST, SERVED HERE

*Pizza Pazzi* offers a delectable Italian dining experience, serving authentic pizzas, pasta, and fresh salads, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

**W**hether you're a fan of classic Margherita or adventurous gourmet combinations, *Pizza Pazzi* caters to diverse palates, ensuring a satisfying dining experience. *Pizza Pazzi* at *Select Citywalk Mall*, Delhi, is a hidden gem for Italian food lovers. While their pizzas are the star attraction, the restaurant also serves delicious pasta and fresh salads that deserve just as much praise. Inspired by the charm of Naples and the Italian phrase "Pazzi" meaning "crazy about pizza", founder *Utsav Khaitan* envisioned *Pizza Pazzi* as a place where the essence of Italian dining could be cherished in a modern, accessible way. At the heart of the concept is a menu designed by *Chef Riccardo*, whose expertise brings Italian flavours to life with authenticity and flair. Guests can look forward to a selection of masterfully prepared *Neapolitan pizzas*, celebrated for their airy bases, and thin-crust options that strike the perfect balance between lightness and crunch. Beyond pizzas, the menu also boasts fresh salads, expertly grilled specialties, and desserts that capture the spirit of a true Italian feast. The pasta dishes are well-prepared, with perfectly cooked al dente pasta coated in rich, flavourful sauces. Each dish is satisfying and well-balanced. The salads are fresh



and crisp, with high-quality ingredients that add a refreshing contrast to the indulgent main courses. To end the meal on a sweet note, the *tiramisu* is a must-try. Light, creamy, and infused with just the right amount of coffee flavour, it's the perfect way to wrap up a delightful Italian feast. The service at *Pizza Pazzi* is equally impressive, with attentive and friendly staff ensuring a smooth dining experience. Whether you're visiting for a quick bite or a leisurely meal, this spot delivers great food and warm hospitality in a cozy setting. Orders are served promptly, ensuring that diners can enjoy their meals without unnecessary delays. The ambience of the restaurant is inviting, making it a suitable spot for both casual outings and special occasions.

**FACT SHEET**

**ADDRESS:** Select Citywalk Mall, Saket, New Delhi, Delhi 110017  
**COST FOR TWO:** ₹2,000 + taxes  
**OPERATIONAL TIME:** 12pm to 11:00pm







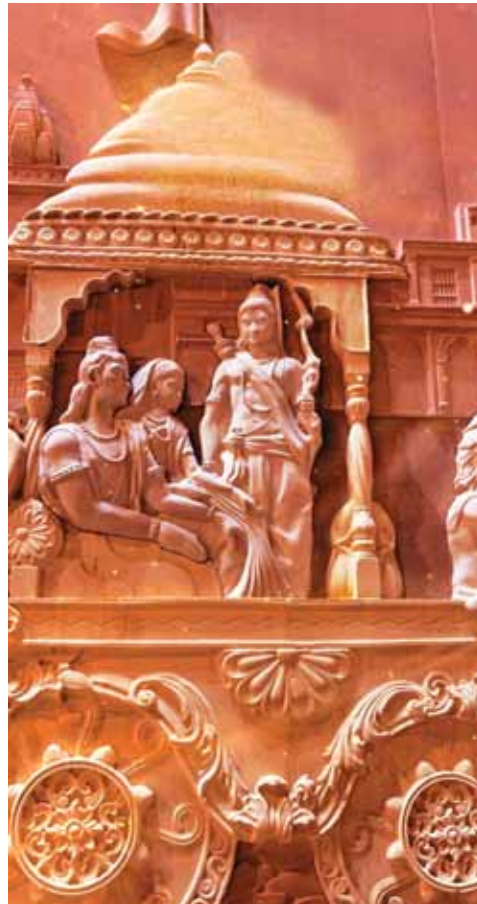
**A**yodhya, the birthplace of Lord Ram, offered Hemant Shukla a divine experience with its serene Saryu River, vibrant ghats, and the grandeur of Ram Mandir amidst spiritual awakening. As soon as the semester break began, I packed my bags, filled with excitement and patience, for a 23-hour train journey from the Temple City of India, Bhubaneswar, to the birthplace of Lord Shri Ram, Ayodhya. Since there is no direct train to Ayodhya, I boarded the Puri-Gwalior Express from Bhubaneswar to Prayagraj (Sangam City), arrived at midnight, and then took another train early in the morning, reaching Ayodhya around 9 a.m. As I entered the Ayodhya Dham Station amidst a trail of morning mist, I could feel an aura of spirituality. The station itself resembled a temple,

## THE DIVINE GLOW OF AYODHYA

Ayodhya's spiritual essence, sacred sites and vibrant ghats offer a deeply immersive and divine experience



beautifully adorned with carved paintings, banners, and lights, with a temple-like structure on top. Modern facilities ensured effective crowd management, blending tradition with convenience. After stepping out, I made my way to the nearby Neeraj Tea Stall, a beloved spot among locals. A hot cup of tea for ₹10 and a plate of pakoras for ₹20, accompanied by a free-of-cost cheerful chat with the locals. They advised me to beware of the



mischievous monkeys, notorious for snatching food items. Accommodation options ranged from economical dormitories and Dharamshalas for under ₹500 to mid-range hotels for ₹2,000 and even luxurious stays. After freshening up, I hopped onto a city electric bus to Naya Ghat. A short walk led me to the serene banks of the Saryu River. The sacred river welcomed many devotees. Despite the winter chill and fog, I mustered the courage and plunged into



the sacred waters, feeling an inexplicable connection with the divine. Next, I visited the Nageshwar Nath Temple, established by Kush, Lord Ram's son, to honour Lord Shiva with sacred Saryu water. Ram ki Paidi is a series of ghats on the bank of the River Saryu. The riverfront presents an outstanding landscape, especially on floodlit nights. Every year on Diwali, Ayodhya's Deepotsav is celebrated on these ghats with lakhs of diyas and laser shows. The vibrant

energy surrounding the ghats during the festivities is truly blissful. From there, I walked to the road and took a ₹10 e-rickshaw to Choti Devkali Mandir, where Goddess Parvati is worshipped as Sita Mata's family deity. Near the main road, I treated myself to some delicious dahi jalebi at Maurya Mishthan Bhandar for ₹50—a delightful experience for both my taste buds and spirit.

Before visiting the grand Ram Mandir, I headed towards the Hanuman Garhi Temple. This temple, dedicated to Lord Hanuman, had a long queue of devotees, but the wait was worth it. With 1 kg of prasad—besan laddoos made in desi ghee—for ₹480, I was ready for my next destination. After that, I visited the Ram Mandir, which is within walking distance. I was amazed by the sight of the temple. Although it is still under construction, the energy and emotions I felt there are beyond words. It was a deeply spiritual experience. The temple has proper arrangements and facilities for pilgrims, including a dedicated facilitation centre to assist visitors. One can also pre-book a slot for the Ram Mandir Aarti Darshan online. By 4 p.m., I had completed all these activities and had lunch at Chandra Restaurant, which cost ₹500. Afterwards, I took some rest, preparing for another surreal experience yet to come.

### AYODHYA'S HEARTBEAT

**A**s the clock struck 7 p.m., Ayodhya dazzled in vibrant lights. The symbolic streetlights, soulful bhajans blending with city sounds, and the lively yet peaceful atmosphere felt surreal. Walking through the illuminated streets, I reached Kanak Bhawan, believed to have been gifted by Kaikeyi to Sita after her marriage to Lord Ram. The temple's architecture, reminiscent of Rajasthani palaces, left me in awe. The idols of Lord Ram and Sita exuded divine charm. As I sat in the temple's courtyard, time seemed to stand still. Attending the Shayan Aarti at 9 p.m. was a transcendent experience, with devotees singing bhajans in reverence. After the aarti, I had dinner at Kanak Rasoi for ₹150 before heading back to my stay. The next morning, I caught my train back to Bhubaneswar, but a part of my soul remains in Ayodhya, especially in the divine embrace of Kanak Bhawan. This journey to the sacred land was not just a travel experience but a spiritual awakening that will forever resonate in my heart.

— Hemant Shukla

## EXPLORE GOA LIKE NEVER BEFORE!

**N**estled in the heart of Curtorim, a tranquil village in South Goa surrounded by lush landscapes, Mansão Curtorim is a 236-year-old Indo-Portuguese heritage villa that seamlessly blends the region's cultural and architectural facets with modern comforts.

I was fortunate to experience this meticulously restored heritage property which offers a serene retreat, inviting guests to immerse themselves in Goa's hidden gems, its timeless charm, and the tranquil pace of life in a peaceful village setting.

For me, sitting in the garden early morning with my precious cup of tea created an unforgettable revelry. The garden overlooks the lake which is lovely with several egrets playing perfect hosts to migratory birds. As I sip my tea, looking at pretty ducks gliding over the water of the lake, a gentle whisper of a cuckoo lures me to her charm, I can't stop looking at the sky in pretty hues of dawn while Coucal manages to steal the spotlight in the nearby gorgeous Champa tree with its deep resonant notes. Here the air hums with vibes that are beautifully soothing and invigorating.

**THE STUNNING VILLA - HERITAGE MEETS MODERN COMFORT:** With its Indo-Portuguese architecture, Mansão Curtorim blends colonial-era charm with modern luxury. Every corner of the heritage villa set on a 1.5-acre estate, speaks of finer details embracing elements of elegance and comfort. Truly, it's a haven for the discerning traveler. The villa is a testament to Goa's rich colonial history, with its striking red-hued façade, colonial-era furniture, and intricate details like rosewood beds and ornate mirrors. When you enter the villa, you are transported to a bygone era, where traditional Portuguese design



meets modern-day amenities. Spacious living areas, breezy balconies, and carefully preserved vintage elements like patterned cement tiles and vintage ceilings highlight the villa's colonial heritage, making it a place where history is honored without compromising on comfort. Mansão Curtorim features six elegantly appointed bedrooms, each offering a perfect balance of comfort and charm, blending the charm of traditional Portuguese architecture with modern comforts.

**CULTURAL HERITAGE:** Beyond its aesthetic beauty, Mansão Curtorim offers



a rich cultural experience rooted in the local community and culinary traditions. Tucked away in Curtorim, a serene village adorned with sprawling paddy fields, coconut groves, and historic water bodies, the villa provides the perfect setting for those seeking both relaxation and a deeper connection with Goa's heritage. The nearby Church of St. Alex, dating back to 1597, and the peaceful



flow of the Zuari River enhance the area's charm, making it a haven for birdwatchers, history enthusiasts, and those simply looking for tranquility. **CURATED IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES:** Guests at Mansão Curtorim can explore the area through curated experiences that showcase the essence of traditional Goan life. Guided village walks, scenic

cycling trails, and visits to heritage sites like Chandor and Rachol offer a glimpse into Goa's rich cultural fabric. The villa's serene surroundings are also ideal for creative pursuits, making it the perfect retreat for artists, writers, or anyone looking to unwind in an intimate and restorative environment. Whether you're looking to paint, write, or simply relax in nature's embrace, Mansão Curtorim aligns perfectly with CGH Earth Saha's philosophy of providing meaningful, intimate, immersive experiences.

**CULINARY DELIGHTS:** A key highlight of Mansão Curtorim is its culinary offerings, which provide a delightful

journey through Goa's rich and diverse food culture. The villa's chef has carefully crafted a menu that combines traditional Goan delicacies with popular Western favorites, catering to both vegetarians and meat lovers. The enticing aroma of Chorizo Pilaf, the delicate flavors of Cauliflower Caldine, and the rich, spicy notes of Pork Sorpotel and Bharlelim Aimi exemplify the depth of Goan cuisine. Guests can embark on a flavourful journey with iconic dishes like Bebinca, Sol Kadi, Xacuti, and Vindaloo, all rooted in Indo-Portuguese culinary traditions and enhanced by the region's distinctive spices and fresh ingredients. For me every meal was a memorable event in a relaxed outdoor setting overlooking the lush courtyard. Right from cooking every dish to highlight the vibrant flavors of South Goa to impeccable presentation, the team takes Gastronomy to another level.

**GOAN FENI AND TAPAS FOOD TRAIL:** For those seeking a true Goan culinary adventure, the Goan Feni and Tapas Food Trail is an exciting opportunity to savour Goa's iconic spirit, paired with delectable tapas. This immersive food trail adds an extra layer of authenticity to the experience, giving guests the chance to taste the best of Goan cuisine in a truly unique setting.

**TO CONCLUDE:** Whether you are seeking a quiet retreat to reconnect with loved ones, indulge in creative pursuits, or explore Goa's cultural and natural wonders, Mansão Curtorim offers the perfect escapade. With its blend of history, beauty, and modern comfort, it is more than just a place to stay—it is an invitation to experience Goa in its truest, most immersive form.

— She is an author and independent writer





**YOUR WEEK AHEAD**

MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

The week begins on a high note with your efforts being recognized and celebrated, boosting your spirits immensely. You'll find yourself successfully wrapping up a significant endeavor, earning well-deserved accolades for your hard work. This period marks a time of joy and heightened achievement, exceeding your own expectations. Additionally, you might find yourself preparing for a journey, so it's wise to be ready for travel. However, amidst this success, stay grounded as getting overly carried away could lead to less cautious decisions. Some moments this week will call for decisive action, especially in personal relationships, where clear choices will be necessary. Emotionally, the week might present some challenges, including potential disappointments in personal connections, possibly leading to separations or the culmination of ongoing disputes in legal settings.

**Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour** Lemon Yellow  
**Lucky day** Saturday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

Awaken and break free from the chains of limiting beliefs and unhealthy habits that may be subtly influencing your life. Currently, the atmosphere around you is rife with misunderstanding and deception, making it easy to be misled. This period is fraught with caution; impulsive actions could lead to unwelcome consequences. Engaging in uncertain ventures or succumbing to deceptive tactics could prove detrimental. Embrace sincerity and authenticity, as these qualities will enrich your life in the long term. You are destined for greatness and deserve to uphold your dignity and status. Stay alert, as new opportunities and projects are on the horizon, which will require your unique abilities and dedication. As the week concludes, prepare to relish moments of joy, celebration, and significant life events.

**Lucky number 1 | Lucky colour** Rose  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

It's essential to find harmony between various aspects of your life such as family, career, and personal finances, especially as you face new challenges. Sometimes, unexpected hurdles may appear, making it difficult to achieve your goals and potentially leading to stress or awkward social situations. It's important to maintain a balance in your physical, mental, and spiritual health and reconcile conflicting interests and desires. Avoiding responsibilities or commitments can lead to more complications. Engaging in acts of kindness and participating in community or spiritual activities can provide a sense of fulfillment and resilience. Be mindful of the honesty of your actions and consider if some difficulties might be of your own making. Working on eliminating negative behaviors can pave the way for smoother interactions and personal growth.

**Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour** Orange  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

Your home life will bring you joy and stability, fostering a nurturing environment where discussions about upcoming events or plans may take center stage. Should a family member have travel plans, they might find themselves needing to adjust their itinerary due to unforeseen circumstances, perhaps even returning home earlier than anticipated. This period will highlight the value of cherished family traditions and the wisdom passed down through generations. Professionally, you seek a role that provides fulfillment, stability, and a sense of connection with others. Leveraging your intellectual abilities will be key in advancing your objectives. Your thoughtful, perceptive nature will be instrumental in facilitating significant changes in your life. You'll find yourself in a financially stable position, enjoying the fruits of your efforts and the leisure to savor life's comforts.

**Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour** Sky Blue  
**Lucky day** Thursday



**VRIGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

The upcoming period brings a significant boost in your ability to complete tasks with confidence, self-discipline, and patience. You're likely to experience a noticeable improvement in your financial situation, leading to increased comfort and greater self-awareness about what truly matters in life. Expect peace and happiness in your home environment, perhaps marked by new additions or changes like purchasing furniture or spending tranquil moments in the garden. A successful outcome in your endeavors will bring you joy, and you'll find comfort in the support and protection offered by longstanding relationships and family traditions. Your activities this week may revolve around shopping, dining, gardening, and financial transactions, highlighting a theme of prosperity and security. A significant celebration, possibly a wedding, may also be on the horizon.

**Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour** Olive  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

You may feel constrained by your current circumstances and encounter resistance from those around you, hindering your progress toward your objectives. You might be seeking an escape from a burdensome situation or contemplating a change in your career path. The issues you face primarily stem from external sources rather than yourself, as others may not be fulfilling their responsibilities, contributing to challenges you encounter. If you feel trapped or exposed, it's crucial to address these challenges without delay. Start by liberating your thoughts from any fixed ideas to achieve a broader perspective. Once you gain more clarity and openness in your thinking, dedicate time to reflect deeply on your true aspirations. Additionally, a supportive individual could provide valuable guidance and encouragement, helping you navigate through these times.

**Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour** Lavender  
**Lucky day** Friday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

This week brings a surge of energy and creativity, pushing you to initiate and drive new projects forward. Your desire for recognition and a deeper understanding of your capabilities is prominent. This period challenges you to embrace tasks that test your abilities, fostering a sense of self-realization. An air of creative unrest signals a significant shift, opening doors to transformative opportunities. Your innate curiosity propels you to showcase your unique talents and perspectives with vigor. A business-related journey might be on the horizon, hinting at promising professional ventures, possibly including a new job or a significant shift in your career path. Additionally, a change in living situations could arise, adding to the week's dynamic changes. However, some might experience restless nights, disturbed by anxiety or unsettling dreams.

**Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour** Cherry Red  
**Lucky day** Monday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, aim to maintain a composed demeanor and avoid conflicts, as tensions could escalate into disputes or more serious altercations. Embrace the true essence of competition by understanding its demands, respecting others' viewpoints while confidently asserting your own. Let go of past burdens and avoid worrying about the unpredictable future; focus on achieving inner peace and self-reliance. Concentrate fully on present tasks to prevent being swamped by too much information. Employ sharp insight and a rational approach to navigate through complexities effectively. Be cautious, as you may encounter rigid, emotionless thinking that could challenge your perspectives. Strive for balanced interactions and thoughtful responses to maintain harmony in your environment.

**Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour** Beige  
**Lucky day** Monday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

This week is shaping up to be quite promising, especially in terms of career advancements and personal connections. Unexpected opportunities for professional growth, such as a promotion or a significant increase in income, may appear. Prepare for potential business travel, which is likely to yield beneficial results for your future. You might find yourself considering a change in your workplace or even your home if you're renting. Emotionally, the week brings a wave of romance and passion, enhancing your relationships. You may encounter some indecision concerning a particular relationship or scenario. Trust your instincts during these moments. As the week concludes, a sense of emotional stability will emerge, allowing you to manage your feelings more effectively. Look forward to expanding your perspectives as new opportunities arise, possibly linked to personal milestones or innovative ideas that inspire greater achievements.

**Lucky number 18 | Lucky colour** Mint  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

Your hard work, dedication, and resilience are paving the way for your aspirations to come to fruition. Expect an uptick in your accomplishments, potentially through advancements in your career, educational achievements, or profitable ventures using your skills. Your balanced approach to dealing with supporters and challengers alike will prove beneficial. Be aware, your success may draw envy this week. Consider making strategic investments, such as in real estate or other substantial assets, which could also contribute to your personal growth. You have all the tools needed to thrive in your endeavors. Towards the week's end, take some time for introspection. Although solitude can be challenging, it's essential for rejuvenating your energy and will ultimately enhance your inner fortitude and confidence.

**Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour** White  
**Lucky day** Thursday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

You find yourself at a crossroads, sensing the need to transition from your current state to a more fulfilling path to enhance your effectiveness. Your drive and vitality are peaking, propelling you towards achieving ambitious goals. A male figure in your life may extend support, potentially enriching your personal connections with depth and creativity. However, your current pace may lead to impulsive actions. If triggered, your responses could be explosive, potentially harming your progress or relationships. Concerns about financial or business support may arise, leading you to question past decisions. Nonetheless, maintaining a hopeful outlook and awaiting outcomes is advisable. Reconnect with the simple joys reminiscent of your youth by engaging with the younger generation, reviving the spirited child within.

**Lucky number 20 | Lucky colour** Navy Blue  
**Lucky day** Friday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

This week involves a thorough review and reflection on recent efforts, providing a chance to learn from past missteps. Despite considerable effort, you may feel you haven't fully reaped the benefits of your work. Some doubts could cloud your thinking during this time. However, a sudden and promising opportunity could arise mid-week—perhaps a business prospect or a new role—bringing satisfaction and potential financial gains. It's a promising period for financial activities, like investments or launching ventures. Several options will emerge; careful selection is crucial to align with your goals. Watch your spending closely to avoid financial strain. Toward the week's end, travel might be appealing. Consider planning a getaway or a special outing with a loved one to rejuvenate and connect.

**Lucky number 30 | Lucky colour** Coral  
**Lucky day** Thursday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331

# The Sacred Waters of Devotion

THOUGHTFUL INSIGHTS



Dr. Tanu Jain

The Sadhus, those mystical figures who populated my dreams, present themselves in all their contradictory glory

My hands tremble as I pack my bags for Mahakumbh, each item I place inside carrying the weight of generations of spiritual seekers before me. The anticipation burns in my chest like sacred incense, filling me with both excitement and trepidation. Years of listening to my grandmother's stories about this divine gathering have created a tapestry of expectations in my mind – visions of enlightened sadhus with eyes that pierce through the illusions of everyday life, of holy waters that shimmer with ancient blessings, and of an atmosphere so pure it could lift one's soul closer to the divine. In the weeks leading up to my journey, sleep becomes elusive. I lie awake; my mind painting pictures of what awaits me. I imagine myself sitting cross-legged at the feet of wise Sadhus, their words flowing like honey into my eager consciousness, transforming my understanding of existence itself. In these pre-dawn reveries, I see the mighty Ganges, her waters carrying centuries of devotion, prayers, and tears, ready to embrace me in her sacred flow. My heart races at the thought of joining millions of seekers, all united in their quest for spiritual elevation. But oh, how reality strikes with the force of a temple bell's resonance! The Kumbh that greets me is a beautiful paradox – a swirling hurricane of humanity where the lines between the sacred and the mundane blur into something entirely unexpected. My carefully constructed mental image shatters



like a clay pot on stone steps, only to be reformed into something far more complex and, surprisingly, more meaningful. Here I stand, my feet planted in the same sacred soil as celebrity stars and famous personalities. I have only seen on television. The sight of them stripped of their glamour, dressed in simple white cotton, their faces bare of makeup, stirs something profound within me. There is an raw beauty in watching a famous personalities wait patiently for their turn to take a dip, their usual entourage replaced by the company of ordinary devotees. In these moments, I realise that fame and fortune are but floating leaves on the eternal river of spirituality. The Sadhus, those mystical figures who populated my dreams, present themselves in all their contradictory glory. Some sit in deep meditation, their dreadlocks touching

the ground, their eyes closed to the material world, exactly as I had imagined. Others, to my initial shock and subsequent amusement, chat on smartphones while blessing devotees, their ancient wisdom finding new channels of expression in the digital age. My heart struggles to reconcile these contrasts, but gradually, I begin to understand that spirituality doesn't require a rejection of the present but it demands finding the sacred within it. The crowds – oh, the crowds! They overwhelm my senses like a tidal wave. Bodies press against bodies, moving like a living, breathing organism with its own consciousness. The air is thick with the scent of incense, sweat, and flowers. Sometimes, the press of people triggers a primal panic in my chest, but then, mysteriously, moments of profound peace emerge from the chaos.

When the evening aarti begins, and thousands of diyas set the river aglow, time seems to stand still. In these precious moments, all differences dissolve into the gathering darkness, and I feel connected to every soul around me in a way that transcends physical discomfort. The presence of VIP zones and special arrangements initially fills me with a bitter disappointment that tastes like ash in my mouth. How can true spirituality coexist with such worldly distinctions? But then I witness a prominent politician sitting barefoot in the mud, listening intently to a sadhu's discourse, his security detail maintaining a respectful distance. I see a famous cricket player queuing up with common devotees, his celebrity status surrendered to his role as a seeker. These sights soften my judgment, teaching me that the path to spiritual understanding takes many forms. As days pass, my expectations continue their dance with reality. The Kumbh reveals itself not as a perfect spiritual haven untouched by modernity, but as a living, breathing manifestation of India's soul – complex, contradictory, and utterly magnificent in its ability to embrace both tradition and change. My heart swells with unexpected joy when I see young influencers promoting ancient Sanskrit shlokas on their social media, or when a group of international tourists joins a traditional bhajan session with genuine devotion in their eyes. The transformation I experience is not the

one I anticipated. Instead of finding escape from the modern world, I discover something far more valuable – the ability to sense the divine pulsing within the heart of our contemporary reality. Each dip in the holy waters teaches me that spirituality isn't about escaping life's complexities but about finding meaning within them. As I prepare to leave, my heart full and my soul stirred, I understand that the true miracle of Mahakumbh 2025 lies not in its adherence to ancient ideals, but in its power to remain relevant while honouring tradition. I carry home not just holy water in a copper pot, but also the profound realization that in our quest for spiritual connection, we are all equal – celebrities, saints, and common seekers alike. The Kumbh has taught me that divinity does not require isolation from the modern world; it thrives in our ability to maintain faith and seek meaning within the beautiful chaos of contemporary life, regardless of who we are or where we come from. My journey may not have matched my expectations, but it has given me something far more precious – a deeper understanding of both spirituality and humanity, intertwined like the sacred threads that bind our ancient traditions to our evolving present. —The author's views are personal. The author is a civil servant at the Ministry of Defence and a spiritual speaker

Now you can write to us at [agendapioneer@dailypioneer.com](mailto:agendapioneer@dailypioneer.com)