



**Maha Kumbh 2025:**  
45 crore take holy dip at Prayagraj  
PAGE 3



**Fest-O-Comm 2025:** Celebrating Eras In Motion  
PAGE 6

**Karnataka leads 38th National Games tally**  
PAGE 4



PUNE

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## INK Briefs

### Rajnath Singh: Confluence of Border and Internal Security

During a meeting of defence ministers, Rajnath Singh indicated that with cyber security and terrorism threats emerging, they rarely remained distinct, requiring worldwide coercive measures against them.



### VP Dhankhar Advocates Authentic Text of Constitution

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar expressed that one needs to realize why he should uphold the original Constitution lest it would be misinterpreted. Preservation of constitutional integrity needs vigilance, he urged, along with using appropriate legal references.

### JP Nadda Pays Tribute to Deendayal Upadhyay's Legacy



The President of the BJP, JP Nadda, commemorated the 62nd death anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, remembering his commitment to a self-reliant India and urging all members of the party to observe and strive to embody Upadhyay's ideals in nation-building.

Compiled by Krishika Rathod

# Delhi: Aam Aadmi sweeps AAP out; BJP Returns to Power after 27 Years

Key AAP Leaders Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, and Saurabh Bhardwaj lose

By Kashifa Wisal & Disha Gupta

**PUNE:** In a surprising outcome in the 2025 Delhi Assembly Elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured a decisive victory with 48 seats, leaving the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) with only 22. While the seat difference was clear, the real story lies in the narrow vote share margin—45.56% for the BJP compared to AAP's 43.57%. This suggests a major shift in voter support, particularly in constituencies where AAP had previously held strong influence.

A significant portion of AAP's traditional middle-class base appears to have moved toward the BJP, playing a crucial role in sealing AAP's fate in the elections.

A key factor behind AAP's loss was growing disillusionment among its traditional supporters, particularly in the middle class. Dr. Vikas Pathak, Associate Editor of The Indian Express, noted, "The core reason for AAP's defeat stemmed from the ongoing conflict between the Lieutenant Governor (Vinay Kumar Saxena) and the state government, which led to the withholding of party funds. This conflict prevented the allocation of promised schemes, resulting in visible neglect of infrastructure, such as garbage dumps and broken roads. The middle class, AAP's major voter base, grew frustrated, which led to a shift in their support towards BJP."

Political analysts noted that this demographic, once a major pil-



lar of AAP's success, shifted its allegiance to the BJP due to mounting frustration with AAP's governance. Dr. Sajjan Kumar, a political analyst, commented, "The middle class, which had once strongly supported AAP, became disillusioned due to unfulfilled promises, unresolved corruption issues, critical problems like public infrastructure and rising costs of living."

AAP's early promise of good governance and transparency had initially garnered widespread support, but its inability to deliver on these promises left many voters feeling betrayed. As governance stagnated, the perception of mismanagement grew, contributing to a weakening of trust, particularly among those who had hoped for transformative change. The middle class, once hopeful for a new political approach in Delhi, began to feel that AAP had failed to live up to its aspirations.

The "Sheesh Mahal" controversy, which revolved around

### Who will be new Delhi CM?

After its splendid show in Delhi assembly election, the next big challenge for the BJP top leadership is to pick the next chief minister. There are several names doing the rounds, including Pravesh Verma, who defeated Arvind Kejriwal; Ramesh Bidhuri, who lost to current CM Atishi; MP Manoj Tiwari, Kapil Mishra, Ashish Sood, Rekha Gupta and Vijendra Gupta. However, many speculate that BJP may go for a low profile leader as it did in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh recently.

AAP leaders portraying themselves as common citizens while living in luxury, further damaged the party's credibility. This hypocrisy deeply resonated with voters who had seen AAP as a champion of the ordinary man. The party's failure to distance itself from this controversy, combined with a lack of tangible improvements in governance, left many of its core supporters disenchanted.

Compounding AAP's troubles was its decision not to form alliances with Congress, leaving it more vulnerable to BJP's strategic advances. Analysts believe that this, along with AAP's failure to replace incumbents who had lost local support, contributed to the party's weak performance in key constituencies. Several AAP candidates lost by narrow margins, indicating a significant portion of their traditional voter base either abstained or turned to the BJP.

One of the most closely contested races was in Jangpura,

Continued on Page no. 5



## Budget 2025-26: Balancing Growth, Taxes & Welfare

By Savikalpa Thapa, Shweta Jena, Swastika Chowdhury & Shreyanka Nandan

**PUNE:** The Union Budget brings a huge relief to salaried employees and the middle class while focusing on promoting economic growth and solidifying the rural infrastructure. Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Finance presented the Union Budget in the Parliament on the February 1, 2025. The budget focuses on important sectors including agriculture, MSMEs, investment, and exports contributing to the vision of inclusive growth for India. With the theme "Sabka Vikas," the budget favors reforms that together uplift the middle class, rural areas, and entrepreneurs.

A new tax regime exempting tax up to Rs 12.75 Lakhs per annum income has been introduced. The government has planned to make significant investments to enhance agricultural productivity, MSMEs and encourage innovations through large-scale initiatives like the Atal Tinkering Labs and National Centres of Excellence in AI.

Continued on Page no. 4

# PIFF kicks off in city today; dedicated to Raj Kapoor on his centenary

By Aditi S. Bade

**PUNE:** Cinephiles, get ready for an exciting cinematic experience! The Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) 2025 is set to enthral audiences from February 13 to 20, featuring a rich array of over 150 films from 81 countries. Organized by the Pune Film Foundation and the Cultural Affairs Department of Maharashtra, in partnership with Dadasaheb Phalke Chitranagari, Mumbai, the festival promises an engaging atmosphere with thought-provoking screenings, enlightening discussions, and a worldwide celebration of storytelling.

As PIFF enters its 23rd edition, it remains a leading platform for global cinema, bringing together filmmakers, critics, and



Gloria 2024 is the first film to be screened in the festival. Source: piffindia.com

movie enthusiasts in one vibrant space. The festival this year will roll out a grand tribute to the incomparable Raj Kapoor on the occasion of his centenary birth anniversary.

It will be the theme from "Celebrating the Showman" which will be bringing a selection of his most famous films allowing audiences to relive magic through his story-



SCREENINGS AT THREE MAIN VENUES IN PUNE

- PVR Icon, Pavilion Mall, Senapati Bapat Road (6 screens)
- INOX, Camp (3 screens)
- Cinopolis, Westend Mall, Aundh (2 screens)

telling and cinematic brilliance.

Dr. Jabbar Patel, Director of PIFF, speaking to Pune Pulse said, "The 23rd edition of PIFF will fit into the tribute to Raj Kapoor, the cinematic genius who left

everlasting impressions in Indian cinema and will now dazzle for people of a different generation."

It is to be noted that the inauguration ceremony will be held on February 13, 1 PM at Shri Ganesha Kala Krida Rangmanch, Swargate. The chief guest of the event will be Maharashtra's Minister of Cultural Affairs, Ashish Shelar.

According to Dr. Patel, Gloria (Italy, Switzerland), directed by Margherita Vicario, will be screened for the first time at the festival. "The Room Next Door" (Spain), which was directed by Pedro Almodóvar at Balgandharva Rangmandir, will be the festival's last film

PIFF 2025 will include a contest of World cinema.

Continued on Page no. 5



# Pune's GBS Outbreak Escalates Due to Suspected PMC Inaction

*Residents Remain Unaware of the Increasing Health Risks Despite the Deteriorating Situation Amid Lack of Action by PMC*

By Ishita Malakar & Sidhima Choudhary

**PUNE:** Pune is battling an outbreak, of the Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), with over 158 cases as of February 2, and 5 suspected deaths. The prime suspect of the cause of the rising cases of GBS in Pune seems to be the presence of E.coli contamination in the water sources. Despite the worsening situation, the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has yet to regulate private water tankers, leaving a critical oversight in ensuring a safe water supply.

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) is a rare neurological disorder in which a person's immune system attacks its nervous system causing symptoms like weakness in arms, face and breathing trouble with sensation changes in muscles along with various other symptoms too. According to the recent water quality tests in Pune's Khadakwasla Dam, the city's main water reservoir revealed higher E.coli contamination, making it dirty and contaminated.

Further investigations by PMC revealed contaminated water at the Parvati Water Treatment Centre and 15 private tanker filling stations found to be tainted with *Campylobacter jejuni* and norovirus, both known to cause severe gastrointestinal infections. Amid the surge



Critical gaps in water safety infrastructure | Source: Pune Times Mirror

of rising cases in water-related concerns, Pune Municipal Corporation announced a licensing policy for Private water tankers and as per the policy, the private tanker operator will be required to provide details of the water source along with the societies they supply the water, along with their personal information.

However, in a contradictory statement, while the INK reporters were talking to Prasanna Joshi, Senior Superintendent of PMC Water department about the license

policy, he claimed, "No license will be issued to the private tankers right now," painting a completely different picture.

He claimed that a list of private water tankers primarily supplying water in the 23 villages including areas like Nanded, Khadakwasla, Nandoshi, Bavdhan, Sus etc all of which are under PMC will be provided 'bleaching powders' to kill the bacteria and the water will be further tested by PMC. Whereas, the government tankers have

already been chlorinated. He also mentioned that each of these private tankers, which provide water mostly around the 23 villages in Pune are being registered and surveys are also being held for these areas, but not in the main cities since it is the government tankers which supply water there.

Moreover, he also mentioned that although the water provided by these private tankers is usually not used for drinking purposes, precautions are still being

taken to ensure safety. Subsequently, Prasanna further touched upon the necessity of painting the private Sewage treatment plant to be painted green with 'not for drinking' and claimed it is happening properly.

However while speaking to some of the private water suppliers around Kothrud, Nanded and Hadwapsar they mentioned that no such bleaching powder has reached them nor have they been informed of the same. Rajendra Manas Dhaulik, the owner of Manas Water Suppliers Hadapsar mentioned that the water they supply comes from bore wells and is safe enough to be used for drinking purposes.

While speaking to residents residing around Bavdhan, they seem to be reluctant as long as the water that comes to their houses is from RO UV-filtered purifiers. They also mentioned that most of the water around the Bavdhan and Kothrud area comes from Pashan Lake where thorough chlorination is being done by the Government.

There has been miscommunication within the PMC and the private water suppliers have not yet received any notices, nor any notifications about the testing process of these water tankers. People of Pune are still in hopes of new changes being implemented in the city with strict rules & regulations.

## First Phase of the Pink E-Rickshaw Scheme to begin in Maharashtra Soon

*The new scheme aims to empower women by providing employment and will enhance the safety of female passengers*

By Nethra Sailesh & Vidhi Thacker

**PUNE:** This year, the Maharashtra government plans to introduce the first phase of the Pink E-Rickshaw Scheme, a daring move towards women empowerment and safer urban mobility. These brand-new electric rickshaws, which are just for female drivers, are intended to give female passengers safe transit choices and create new job opportunities. The effort is starting in eight important districts, including Pune, Kolhapur, Solapur, Nashik, Nagpur, Amravati, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, and Ahilyanagar, with the ambitious goal of providing work for 10,000 women in 18 districts. The program represents an important step towards safe and inclusive public transportation in the state by fusing empowerment with sustainability. This will also promote women jobs at vocational workplaces.

Last year, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar announced this initiative when he presented the supplementary budget for the year 2024-2025. According to the Maharashtra government website, Rs 80 crore has been allocated for executing the scheme. The primary perk of this scheme is the financial support that the government provides to its beneficiaries. Ashok Chavan, Dis-



Pink E-Rickshaw Scheme to Commence in Maharashtra | Source: Nagpur Trends

trict Coordinating Officer at Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal, said, "The total cost of the rickshaw is Rs 3,73,000. 70% of this cost is a bank loan, 10% will be paid by the beneficiaries which will be around Rs 12,300 and the remaining 20% will be the government subsidy."

As reported by the Indian Express, in Pune, a committee was formed chaired by the district collector, members from the

RTO, women and child development office, and the Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal (MAVIM).

In a phone interview with INK reporters, Manisha Biraris, Pune district women and child development officer stated, "This new scheme aims to empower women, as it will help them earn money. They will get to talk to people, and learn how to manage finances such as saving and spending mon-

ey." She also added that to apply for such schemes, interested people must submit the application form offline with all additional documents ready. This will include documents such as AADHAR card, PAN, voting, schooling certificate, bank account details, etc.

To spread awareness about the scheme and gain more beneficiaries, Biraris stated that they're hosting demos for the e-rickshaws

in certain areas like Lonavala and Baramati. Moreover, Anganwadi workers across Pune have been asked to inform people about the benefits of the scheme. When asked about the success of gaining more applicants, Biraris said, "Through the demos and informing people in person, we have let the news about this scheme reach the people who we want to reach." While talking about areas where such e-rickshaws will function, Biraris said, "For now the routes will operate along the metro lines as they're the more heavily populated areas in Pune. Additionally, we'll also try to ensure that the rickshaws work in areas with security cameras available on the roads."

Saroj Potphode, a female rickshaw driver from Thane, when asked about why has such a scheme been implemented now, stated that, "The Government is trying to increase women's population in the workforce to become fully independent. I don't know much about this new scheme but this sounds like a good idea, we'll see how it functions once fully implemented." When asked when passengers can access these facilities in the city, Chavan noted, "We're currently in the final stages of inculcating this plan. Mostly, the autos will be seen on the road by the end of February this year in Pune."



# Maha Kumbh 2025: 45 Cr have already visited Sangam

*The grand festival at Prayagraj Sangam witnesses devotion, unity and heightened security measures following a tragic stampede*



Rush of devotees at the Sangam during the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025

By Anushka Rajvedi & Prachi Mishra

**PUNE:** On February 3, 2025, over two crore pilgrims gathered at the holy Sangam for the third and final Amrit Snan of the Maha Kumbh Mela, creating a breathtaking scene in Prayagraj. The air was filled with chants and the spiritually vibrant atmosphere embodied the essence of this pilgrimage that occurs only once every twelve years.

Designated by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage,

the Maha Kumbh Mela symbolizes the victory of good over evil as Jupiter completes its cosmic cycle. The event reaffirmed its reputation as the largest spiritual gathering on the planet, attracting devoted followers, seekers from around the globe, and sadhus clad in saffron who took the sacred dip.

The Maha Kumbh Mela from January 13 to February 26, 2025 will have approximately 400 million pilgrims visiting the Triveni Sangam, where Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati come together. Politicians, corporate owners, film stars,

and sports personalities from around the world have participated in this festival. The stampede on January 29 resulted in the death of 30 people and many more injured. Social media has been full of posts and stories covering different aspects of the event. The Uttar Pradesh government has made drastic changes after this tragedy to ensure safety. VVIP arrangements were cancelled, and National Security Guard (NSG) commandos were deployed to manage security effectively. The authorities have been emphasizing crowd control measures to avoid such incidents during this massive gathering. The air was filled with spiritual fervor as devotees participated in rituals honoring Goddess Saraswati during Basant Panchami. Visuals were published on social media platforms which presented the enormous crowd at Sangam. Additionally, ANI posted a video shot from drones that recorded a massive congregation of pilgrims, who have flocked here for their Holy dip on this pious day.

Celebrities and influencers have flooded social media platforms with posts regarding their experiences at the Mela. This digital engagement has amplified the

reach of the festival, allowing followers to partake in the spiritual journey virtually. Influencers have shared visuals of the vast crowds at the Sangam and personal reflections on their experiences, creating a sense of connection among those unable to attend in person. One of the popular videos appearing online is a Muslim person opening the gates of a mosque for Hindu pilgrims to rest and share food with them. The social media visibility further gets enhanced because of the popularity of the hashtags used concerning Maha Kumbh Mela, so it is in fact trending there.

Celebrities such as Coldplay's Chris Martin have made a brief visit there, displaying interest from people across the world.

This further emphasizes the Kumbh Mela as a platform for unity among diverse cultures and religions. The presence of such high-profile figures encourages people from various backgrounds to engage with Indian traditions and spirituality. Their involvement underscores the Kumbh's significance as not only a religious gathering but also a celebration of India's cultural heritage on a global stage. The event will continue until February 26, authorities are ensuring a safe and secure environment for the large number of devotees visting the sacred site.

The variety of devotion and harmony in the group outmatches the conception of the event, making Maha Kumbh Mela one of the world's largest religious conventions.



People turned out in huge numbers for the Maha Kumbh Mela

## Is the 'Green Kumbh' a Reality or a Hoax on Ground?

*Yogi-led govt's biggest project tries to deal with sustainable waste management & sanitation at Maha Kumbh*

By Swastika Chowdhury & Shweta Jena

**PUNE:** The Maha Kumbh, a monumental event attended by 400-450 million people at the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj, is recognized as a unique experience occurring after a 144-year cycle of Jupiter's full orbital revolution around the Sun. To manage a population as big as this would also require management teams and sanitation workers to keep the area sanitized and clean.

With several questions on the waste-management system at the Maha Kumbh Mela and the river Ganga being safe for a dip, the devotees, pilgrims, ascetics, and as well as tourists have expressed a mixed judgement..

With 1600 crore investment on sanitation, including 10,000 plus sanitation workers, 12000 plastic toilets, 16100 steel toilets, 20,000 trash bins, and 24/7 water supply through 200 water ATMs and 6500 tap stands, Prayagraj tries to follow the idea of Swachh Bharat while catering to the estimated 40 crore devotees visiting the Kumbh Mela.

With numerous teams of workers deployed to collect wastes and maintain hygiene at various areas and roads leading to the mela, devotees are puzzled with cleanliness index in Prayagraj. Madhusmita Tripathy, a visitor from Odisha, highlights the effective sanitation management she observed while traveling by road. "In every half



Sanitation workers cleaning the ghats early morning Source: organiser.com

km there are sufficient bathrooms provided. Even enough taps are installed and everything is well maintained regularly," she remarked.

Another visitor from Madhya Pradesh, Vidhushi Sankhla, a student from Amity University, further added how even on a one-day visit she could see the cleanliness sustained in Kumbh with such a huge population, from instant hand-pickers collecting waste to proper treatment of waste and clean toilets. "On practical grounds to manage such huge population and also sustain cleanliness is not an easy task yet I saw the continuous efforts of sanitation workers to manage both and there were plenty of water tanks supplying clean water," she said.

The Ganga River where

thousands of devotees take a dip is continuously cleaned and disposed of sludge wastes by the waste management teams. Govind Kumar, who heads the control room of Jal Sang Vibhag in Prayagraj, shared the system of disposal implemented in Kumbh, "The unclean sewer waters of the rivers are sent to SDPs (Sludge Dewatering Plant) for treatment."

These sanitation and clean water services are made possible with thousands of workers and state corporations coming together and working to make Maha Kumbh Swachh for millions of people. He further added how actively they have been working, sometimes three days in a stretch to make sure the water supplies are met and the public doesn't face any sanitation or water issues.

The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 tries to combat water and waste management, with large-scale investments, dedicated sanitation workers and advanced waste treatment to create a clean and hygienic environment for millions of devotees.

But on the flip side many visitors have repeatedly complained about unsanitary living condition. Open-defecation, waste management, garlands and water bottles being one of the most important contributing factors in littering. Even though a segment of population believes that Kumbh is achieving its aim of 'Green Kumbh', many people are disappointed at the arrangements making this issue subjective and differently for different populations.

## Kumbh Briefs

**More than 10 million devotees take holy dip on Magh Purnima.** Yesterday, over 10 million pilgrims arrived at Prayagraj to take a sacred dip at the Triveni Sangam. Authorities assured a peaceful Maha Kumbh Mela this year, supplemented by additional security and availability of air ambulances considering the previous incidents.

**PM Modi Joins Maha Kumbh Rituals**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended Maha Kumbh on February 5, 2025, performing holy dips at Triveni Sangam with CM Yogi Adityanath during his short trip one week after a tragic stampede took place, which emphasized the national importance of the event, as well as safety measures. .

**Maha Kumbh Adapts To New Technologies aiding safety**

The Digital Maha Kumbh 2025 has some of the most advanced security measures in history, that includes 2,760 CCTV cameras, underwater drones and AI-based chatbots to manage the crowds. Authorities expect that such a high level of security will ease everything for around 400 million visitors to the spectacle.

Compiled By Aditi S Bade





## 38th Edition of National Games Wraps Up Tomorrow; PM Modi Pushes for Sustainability & Athlete Growth

By Somya Panwar & Prachi Mishra

**PUNE:** This decade belongs to Uttarakhand, and the twenty-first century is India's century! Prime Minister Narendra Modi showed his admiration for the state's increased prominence by bowing down at Baba Kedarnath's feet. With a record number of pilgrims arriving this season, Uttarakhand is a popular destination for adventure and spirituality. In anticipation of the 2025 national games, he urged athletes to seize the chance to compete in this sacred region and enjoy Devbhoomi Uttarakhand's distinctive hospitality.

The 38th National Games of India was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 28th January, 2025 which is being hosted in Dehradun, Uttarakhand till 14th of February. The National Games are known for their multiple sports and participation of athletes from different states and Union territories of India. After two years of wait the 38th National Games are being held, to provide exposure to the youth and the rising athletes of the country. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Indian Olympic Association and Government of Uttarakhand Department of Sports along with Uttarakhand Olympic Association are the organisers of the event. The event this time is featuring 32 competitive sports and 4 demonstration events, including traditional disciplines like Mallakhamb, Kalaripayattu, Yogasana and Rafting. The different sports have been scheduled in different venues, showcasing the diversity, athletic talent and cultural heritage of the nation across the multiple cities such as Maharana



PM Modi at the inauguration ceremony in Uttarakhand | Source: PTI

Pratap Sports Complex, FRIMA Golf Course in Dehradun, Roshnabad Sports Complex-Haridwar, Shivpuri Adventure Sports Centre-Shivpuri, Raj Bhavan Golf Course-Nainital and Haldwani District Sports Complex-Haldwani.

We have come a long way with the participation of 11,354 athletes representing 29 states as compared to initial surge of the National Games 1985, when Indian Olympics Association launched the renovated National Games with participation from 26 states and Maharashtra emerging as the champion of that year's national games.

The theme this year is 'Green Games' which includes local games. The event will be organized with environment-friendly items. The Prime Minister during the inauguration mentioned that medals and trophies are made of e-waste and in the name of every medal won by an athlete, a tree would be planted.

Sustainability being the highlight of this year's National games, Sports Forest, a special park will be developed near the venue and the guests and athletes will

plant more than 10,000 saplings. "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha" to celebrate India's diversity is the motto for the National Games 2025. Focusing on two of the most important things, exercise and diet, the Prime Minister encouraged people during the event to make some time for their personal health care and stressed on the importance of having a balanced diet.

In a telephonic conversation with The INK reporters, HariSwaroop Sai, Senior Handball Coach at Haryana State Handball Association, said, "I am very elated and proud as our girls team won the gold medal in Women's Beach Handball competition. They defeated Kerala in the finals and displayed sheer dominance in the entirety of the match, with the scores of 22-7 and 32-5. Moreover, we are expecting medals in the indoor games as well. Our Men's Rugby team also won the gold medal for the fourth consecutive year. Last year we were placed third on the medal tally list, we are expecting a similar kind of show this year as well."

The legacy policy is being developed by Uttarakhand's

Sports Department which aims to ensure the long-term maintenance and utilization of sports infrastructure established for the National Games 2025. This policy will include the setting up of sports academies at enhanced facilities, which will not only preserve these venues but also promote ongoing sports activities of Uttarakhand.

Sports Minister Rekha Arya emphasized that the policy will facilitate national and international competitions, providing a platform for local athletes to excel. Additionally, lessons learned from other states will inform the maintenance strategies to prevent infrastructure from falling into disrepair post-Games. The improved facilities are expected to boost local athletes' confidence and provide them with state-of-the-art training resources. By maintaining these venues, the government hopes to foster ongoing sports activities, benefiting future generations of athletes in the region.

As the 2025 National Games is currently ongoing in Uttarakhand, states like Maharashtra, Services, Kerala, Manipur, and Punjab and Haryana are poised to showcase their athletic prowess once again. Historically dominant in Indian sports, these states have consistently contributed to the medal tally and are expected to maintain their competitive edge in this edition. Their success is attributed to significant investments in sports development and the emergence of local talent. This ongoing performance not only sets a high standard but also inspires newer states and athletes to aim for excellence in the multi-sport event, fostering a spirit of competition across the nation.

## Sports Briefs

### Badminton Asia Mixed Team C'ship: India Faces Tough Test Without Sindhu

With PV Sindhu sidelined due to injury, India faces a daunting challenge at the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships in Qingdao on February 11, 2025. The team hopes to improve on its bronze finish from the previous edition, but Sindhu's absence is a major setback.

### Odisha Govt Seeks Answers on Barabati ODI Blackout

After a floodlight failure disrupted the India-England ODI in Cuttack, the Odisha government issued a show cause notice to the Odisha Cricket Association, demanding a report within 10 days on the cause and accountability.

### India Seals ODI Series Win Against England, Rohit Shines in 2nd Match

India defeated England 3-0 in the ODI series, with Rohit Sharma's 119-run knock in the second match securing the series. Shubman Gill's century sealed a dominant 142-run win in the final game.

Compiled by Sucheta Roy



Source: LiveHindustan

## Budget 2025-26: Balancing India's Growth, Taxes and Welfare

Continued from page 1

Notable schemes mentioned under Union Budget 2025-26 are: Prime Minister Dhan-Dhanya Krishi Yojna, Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (for Kishan Credit Card loans).

36 lifesaving drugs and medicines for treatment of cancer and rare diseases have been fully exempted from Basic Customs Duty (BCD) along with specified drugs and medicines under Patient Assistance Programmes run by pharmaceutical companies, only if the medications are supplied free of cost to patients. The Budget has also made space to support domestic manufacturing companies especially MSMEs by fully exempting Basic Custom Duty (BCD) on critical minerals that are not easily available in India.

Under MSMEs development initiative, the Government will provide a loan up to Rs 2 crore to women, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe who are first time entrepreneurs. In the SWAMIH

fund 2.0, an additional amount of Rs 15,000 crore has been allocated to quickly facilitate the completion of stalled housing projects for the middle-class families.

"The new tax regime will lift the burden of taxes from the shoulders of the middle class, increasing their disposable income, boosting consumption, savings, and investment," said Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman in the 2025 Union Budget introduction. FM kept her word on improving the income tax law, which she had hinted at her last Budget presentation in July 2024. With no income tax payable for annual incomes up to 12 lakhs, the Budget provides big reliefs to the middle class. Bimal Pan, a railway serviceman from West Bengal, expresses his relief, saying, "I really felt happy with the exemption limit now at rupees 12 lakhs, many of us in the middle-income bracket will have more disposable income. With more money in hand, I might consider purchasing things

that I had postponed earlier." The tax slabs will give more purchasing power to the middle class, increasing consumption and thus increasing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country, strengthening the economic base.

The second important reform was made in the removal of tariff rates on customs duty on industrial goods and address duty inversion. "This tariff structure will support domestic manufacturing, promote exports, facilitate trade and provide relief to common people", said FM. Industrial products will have only 8 tariff rates containing zero rate, as seven others were already removed in the previous Budget. The FM also suggested applying proper cess (Central Excise and Service Tax) to preserve the effective duty incidence generally, with the exception of a few products where it will slightly decrease and only impose one surcharge or cess.

Budget was the reason for the sigh of relief for an entire strata

of the middle class population in India. The new income tax rate under the new regime declares no tax for any citizen up to the income of 12 lakh, yet there is a certain tax bracket attached to the slab which shows up to 10% for salaried employees up to 12 lakh.

To bust this confusion, Sayalee Jog, an economist clarifies the bracketed percentage saying, "Every salaried person, who are up to the 12 lakh bracket would still have to file their Income Tax Returns (ITR's), at the end of the fiscal year with the Income Tax Department. But what they (here, the government) are saying is that you file the tax and you get the rebate."

In layman terms, consider yourself to be a salaried employee whose tax gets deducted at source (TDS), does not exceed the 12 lakh bracket for which you have the right set of investments to show the Income Tax Department with which you can claim an exemption from the ATC (Application for Tax Cer-

tificate), the deducted TDS amount will then be rebated at the end of the fiscal year.

Citizens being worried about having to pay extra taxes even if you earn a single penny higher than the 12 lakh bracket can breathe because of the concept of marginal relief, which allows an individual earning up to 12.75 lakh an exemption from paying taxes. This is a progressive tax regime which has been really thoughtful about the middle class where debt management actually seems like a possibility.

The Finance Minister has briefed and allocated sector specific initiatives for the development of the infrastructure of India, keeping in mind the suggestions provided by the Annual Economic Review on 31st January, 2025. The Ministry of Railways has been allocated Rs 2.72 lakh crore for its modernization and expanding railway networks. With the aim to develop road transport and highway connectivity an amount of Rs 2.52 lakh crore has been fixed.



## China Bans Export of Key Machinery to India, IT Sector Faces Major Delay

As China bans products in India, will India be able to overcome this challenge?

By Anushka Rajvedi & Chanakya CH

PUNE: China has declared a trade war against India, affecting the geo-political tensions between the countries. The solar and electric firms in India have experienced delays due to the restrictions of the Chinese government on exports of key inputs and machinery, an economist and the founder of Global Trade Research Institute, Ajay Srivastava said in an interview. He said that these curbs could be China's response to India's restrictions on Chinese investments and visas.

China has reached a new stage especially in developing the economy with greater innovation capabilities in its universities and many global companies. The combination of low costs and growing innovation capability, records an increasing number of Chinese companies, among the formidable global competitors. China's current export restrictions are part of its broader strategy to retaliate against United States sanctions on Chinese tech firms.

In a conversation about the effect that is created on the IT sector due to the bans imposed by China on the exports of the products, an



Source: Business Standard

economics scholar from Osmania University, Bharat Ram said, "India imports mainly electronic goods such as headphones and household appliances from China and with the ban being imposed the people cannot use electronic gadgets and appliances which will result in increased living costs and higher inflation."

Another economist from University of Hyderabad, Subramnyam said that "About 92% of raw materials of pharma raw materials come from China, all micro processors come from there, we assemble the parts in India and call it 'Made in India.' Right now we do not have the capability to make new processors for mobile gadgets. Neither does Russia, the United States of America, Germany or France. The reason being, all these countries outsource these products from China." He further added that, "The

impact is not only on our country, but also on China, as it will be a big market loss like India where the manufacturing cost is much lesser compared to any other country, the demand is really high."

While talking about how these decisions will boost or destroy the economy, he said, "There are two sides to this issue and if we take into consideration the second side India does have a benefit in it. Chinese investments in roads, railways and ship equipment will be a major boost to the economy of China and infrastructure of India will take a back seat due to strained relationships between the two countries." Although India has stated that it will start manufacturing these products and will strengthen its relations with South Korea and Japan, this decision of China will either negatively impact the entire IT sector of India or make us self-reliant.

## Delhi Elections 2025: BJP Triumphs over Aam Aadmi

Continued from page 1

where former Education Minister Manish Sisodia lost by just 675 votes to BJP's Tarvinder Singh Marwah. Sisodia, once a key AAP figure, reflected on the loss by acknowledging the broader trend of voter discontent. In an emotional message, he thanked the people of Delhi for the opportunity to serve but recognized that the party faced an uphill battle in the elections. BJP's victory can largely be attributed to its ability to capture this disillusioned voter base. Vijender Gupta, BJP MLA from Rohini North-West Delhi, highlighted the shifting dynamics in his constituency: "The middle class, which was once AAP's base, felt let down by unfulfilled promises. We offer a fresh approach and are committed to im-

proving the lives of Delhi's people." BJP's success in consolidating AAP's disillusioned base signals a shift in Delhi's political landscape. With AAP losing the trust of its core supporters, especially from the middle class, the party faces a difficult road ahead.

The 2025 election results serve as a reminder that voter loyalty can be fragile, and a failure to meet expectations can lead to a dramatic change in allegiance. In conclusion, while BJP celebrates its victory in the 2025 Delhi Assembly Election, the results reveal a deeper story of shifting loyalties.

AAP's once-solid base among the middle class has now moved toward the BJP, reshaping Delhi's political dynamics. This change is likely to influence the city's political future for years to come.



Arvind Kejriwal loses the Delhi Assembly Elections | Source: NDTV

## PIFF 2025: What to expect?

Continued from page 1

PIFF 2025 will include a contest of World cinema where 14 finalist films will be screened and judged by an esteemed international jury. The festival will end with the endorsement of Maharashtra government for which he will receive the Sant Tukaram Best International Film Award that has a cash prize of ₹10 lakhs. Speaking on the prestigious awards of the festival, Dr Patel added: "Our competition section is a crucial part of PIFF, bringing some of the most extraordinary films from around the world to Pune.

The Sant Tukaram Best International Film Award reflects our commitment to honoring cinematic excellence." Film buffs can register through the official PIFF website beginning January 15. Onsite registration will also be open at the screening venues from February 3, apart from being a delegate pass that costs ₹800. The pass is valid for all screenings and events.

PIFF 2025 will comprise more than just film screenings; it will have workshops, panel discussions, and exhibitions to further offer insights into the art and craft of filmmaking.

The festival will also be honoring three legends from falling under Indian cinema: Shubha Khote, Kavita Krishnamurthy, and Anupam Kher, for their lifetime contribution to the industry.

Dr. Patel put forth his thoughts on this subject: "Cinema is beyond mere entertainment. It is art, it is culture, and it reflects society. So, through workshops and discussion forums, we inspire the next generation of filmmakers and film aficionados."

Pune is gearing up for the grand celebratory fiesta of cinema, the 'Pune International Film Festival 2025', symbolic of the rich artistic heritage within the city and more, its commitment to the world cinema.

This is to say, with a lineup of meticulously curated films, discussions, honors for legendary artists, and so on; PIFF 2025 promises to become a breathtaking experience for both cinephiles and filmmakers.



Closing film of PIFF | Source: PIFF

## As Waqf Eyes Their Land, Locals in Kerala District Pin Hope on Waqf Bill

By R. Rakendu & Shubhangi Chauhan

PUNE: As Waqf Board continues to stake its claim on 400 acres of land in Kerala's Ernakulam, locals are hopeful that the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which is under consideration in the Indian Parliament, will bring them relief.

In Ernakulam, the Waqf Board claims rights over 400 acres of coastal land in Manambam, which is home to a large population of fisherfolks with a majority of them being Christians. Over 600 families have been living in the area for over 100 years. Ancy, a longtime resident of the area, said: "We have been paying taxes for all these years because we hold this property. We have a possession certificate for the same. They would not let us pay the tax from 2022. Now, they claim that this land belongs to Waqf Board."

The land in question was purchased in 1902 by Siddique Saith from the King of Cochin. Later in 1950, Siddique gifted this property to Farook College in Kozhikode, with all the right to use or sell this property. This caused tension between the college and the tenants, who were majorly Christian fishermen. In 1975, the High Court of Kerala ordered that this land be-



long to the Farook College. In an out-of-court settlement, the tenants purchased the land from the college in 1987.

Father Antony Xaviour, the priest of Velamkanni Matha Church, Manambam said to India Today that about 400 Christian families and 210 Hindu families live here peacefully. In 2022, the village office said that these people could no longer pay their land tax and now the claim is that they do not own this land. "The new amendment in the Waqf Bill is something that we will be looking forward to. It gives up hope," he added.

Shadab Shams, Chairman of a Waqf Board in Uttarakhand, said the board supports reforms in the Waqf Act for improved governance standards. "Our team ac-

knowledges the challenges that exist in the management of Waqf properties which need resolution. The board maintains detailed property records for all Waqf properties and conducts frequent audits and ensures open access to management procedures for scrutiny," he said.

Talking to Frontline, M R Shamshad, a senior Advocate of the Supreme Court, said there is no justification for diluting the different powers of Waqf Boards and mandatorily introducing non-Muslim members in the Board, which is the custodian of most waqf properties.

A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), led by BJP MP Jagdambika Pal, submitted its evaluation on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 to the Lok Sabha speaker on February 3, 2025, adopt-



# Awards in Artistry: Virasat Karigar Haat that Showcases National Awardees' Crafts in Pune

*Monalisa Kalagram hosted Virasat Karigar Haat that included artists who showcased handicrafts*

By Naysa Shrivastava & Janhvi Ahuja

**PUNE:** Experience the rich heritage and artistry at Virasat Karigar Haat, a lively five-day bazaar taking place at The Monalisa Kalagram in Koregaon Park from January 31 to February 3, 2025. Featuring over 30 national award-winning artisans, the haat presents an array of textiles, paintings, heirloom jewelry, and handcrafted treasures.

The event offered a chance for visitors to see and acquire masterpieces crafted by some of talented artisans, with tradition, skill, and artistry.

The owner of Monalisa Kalagram, Lisa Pingale, emphasised on the importance of the event and said, "This is for the first time that we have organized and hosted this bazaar completely on our own, we have hosted similar bazaars in the past as well but it was planned and executed by other organizations, this space created its own demand. We have collaborated with these traditional artists, coming from different backgrounds and villages all over India and gave them a platform to showcase their work. Niranjana, one of the artists here,



Exhibitors showcase their art at the exhibition. Photo: Naysa & Janhvi

is a Unesco award winner and the saree I am wearing is his work."

Jonnalagadda Niranjana, a Unesco award recipient from Andhra Pradesh exhibited his Kalamkari work. He talked about the textile intricacies and legacies, "We design kalamkari sarees and stalls and, recently we have started creating kalamkari cushion covers and bedsheets too. I will continue to advocate and bring my family legacy forward." Niranjana said.

Apart from an eye catching collection of textiles, the Virasat Karigar Haat also hosted a detailed exhibition of handcrafted

paintings that depicted the scenes of Hindu mythology along with carefully crafted pieces of jewellery that are a generational practice.

Vinay Kumar, a national award winner from Telangana talked about how his art was done on temple ceilings and walls during the 13th Century. He mentioned, "It depicts Ramayana and Mahabharata and all Hindu mythological stories like Krishna's Rasleela. During the 13th to 15th century this art was much popularized during the Vijayanagar Dynasty. When they were defeated in the 1540s by Tipu Sultan, my ancestors travelled to

Telangana and there were many stories, so as artisans we started creating visual paintings and the art was used for narrations. Until the 19th century this was very popular, however when the print media and movies started, slowly people became more interested in films and that's the reason storytellers lost their livelihood. This impacted artisans also."

Moving towards jewellery, Raghav Soni, the son of a Padma Shri winner, Raj Soni, discovered jewellery making is an intricate and time-taking process as he mentioned that, "Even a single piece of jewellery takes around 10 to 15 days to craft. This artwork originated around 400 years back when the kings used to give pieces of raw glasses to our ancestors and they would fuse gold and glass together to create delicate designs."

"The specialty about this craft is that it combines both glass and gold together so that they become one layer and the ornaments can be both jewellery and home decor items." Soni said. This exhibition included a vast array of intricate and unique artworks from different states of India that highlighted the importance of dedicated craftsmanship.

## Entertainment Briefs

**Ed Sheeran and Shilpa Rao surprise Bengaluru fans by crooning Devara song**

The British singer-songwriter, who has been in India for the past few weeks for concerts in different cities, delighted his fans at a concert in Bengaluru by performing the Telugu song Chuttamalla from the film Devara.

**Case registered against five YouTubers for 'obscene' family comments**

Assam CM has declared that the crime branch of Guwahati has filed an FIR against YouTubers Samay Raina, Ranveer Allahbadia, Ashish Chanchlani, Apoorva Makhiya, and Jaspreet Singh on charges of propagating obscenity in their online show 'India's Got Latent'.

**Sanam Teri Kasam beats Lovelya and Badass Ravikumar on re-release**

Nearly nine years after its original release, Sanam Teri Kasam made an unexpected comeback. The re-release opened with an impressive ₹5.14 crore, surpassing its total first-week earnings from 2016. The strong momentum continued on the second day, bringing in ₹6.22 crores which exceeded the film's entire lifetime collection.

Compiled by Sucheta Roy

# Singer-Songwriter Kakar Sisters Headline SIMC's Fest-O-Comm

*Students also experience changing media scenes, creative outlets, and insightful debates during Institute's yearly event*

By Ishita Malakar, Nethra Sailesh & Shreyanka Nandan

**PUNE:** Sited atop the beautiful Lavale hills, Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication (SIMC) sprang to life on February 7 and 8 with the exhilarating pulse of Fest-O-Comm, its annual flagship event. Hosted by the institute's Co-Curricular and Sponsorship Cell, this 2-day event brought together students from diverse institutes to have a thrill with the changing environment of media and communication.

This year, with the theme "Eras in Motion", the event celebrated the evolution of media and communication across time. The celebrations began with the opening ceremony and speech given



Stand-Up by Sahil Shah at FOC



Sukriti & Prakriti Kakar performing; Source: Branding Cell, SIMC Pune

by SIMC Deputy Director Dr. Sushobhan Patankar. The event featured diverse events ranging from marketing events like AD MAD and MarkQuest to cultural showcases like Battle of the Bands, Group Dance, Short Film, Solo Singing, Rap Battles, Poetry, and Journalism to even business events like Time Travel Pitch, Chronoquest, and finally, sports events like Tug of War, Badminton, Basketball, and FIFA. The fest saw participants not only from the college but from other Symbiosis branches and other external universities.

MarkQuest the flagship event of the institute's Marketing Society had four to five rounds of quizzes around topics like brands, logos and general knowledge. The short

film competition was also a stand-out, with the film "Jaison's Choice" winning first place. The cultural events gave a platform for students to show their skills and hone their hobbies, work in teams it facilitate an exchange of ideas and topics.

The fashion show was also a highlight with the senior and junior teams representing all the main four eras - the Digital, Renaissance, Tribal and Modern. INK reporters had the opportunity to speak to Chandni Sareen and Darshana Awasthi, fashion and lifestyle influencers who judged the fashion event. When asked about the importance of hosting events like these on a college level, Darshana Awasthi said, "Its good to have festive shows like these because thats how

students learn about the international market and how to bring it to India. Gen z take inspiration from the digital world and learn so quickly."

Chandini Sareen also added, "I feel everybody has a sense of wit & fashionista in them, whether it is someone in scraps or a really put together outfit, it is more about accepting and viewing people as people not as things. I feel this is the main reason to support and sort of keep the fashion going. It's the only way you can present yourself without even saying anything, this is what I love the most about fashion."

On day one, stand-up comedian Sahil Shah took to the stage and performed his witty jokes for the students. He also took the opportunity to thank the institute for supporting comedy. The second day was all about music, with events like the Battle of the Bands offering students the chance to showcase their instrumental talents. The fest concluded with high-energy performances from musicians like Ashwin Adwani, the talented duo Sukriti and Prakriti Kakar and DJ Aztec.

The sister duo Sukriti and Prakriti were the main highlight of this whole event who lit the stage on fire and made everyone groove to their new single like "Aa Zaara",

other songs like "Ladki Beautiful Kar Gayi Chull", "Pehle Bhi Main" and many more such crowd favourites.

The fest also included numerous food stalls including popular brands like Subway, Taco Bell, Belgian Waffle, Guruji Idli, and Burgeron, all of whom helped sponsor the event. And thus, Fest-O-Comm ended after two days packed with creativity, exchange of ideas, discussions and celebrations providing a platform for students to explore their interests and showcase their talents.



DJ Music by Aztec