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HEADLINES

- ❖ World Telugu Conferences at Guntur: “Teluguvāri Anurāga Sangamam”
- ❖ Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar
- ❖ Dr. Mandaviya Announces Major Upcoming Reforms for EPFO
- ❖ Bharti Enterprises and Warburg Pincus Acquire 49% Stake in Haier India to Boost Growth and Innovation
- ❖ VSK Chakravarthi Appointed as Andhra Pradesh State Information Commissioner
- ❖ Nation Remembers Shaheed Udham Singh on His 126th Birth Anniversary
- ❖ 25th Anniversary of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)
- ❖ Sand Artist Sudarsan Pattnaik Sets World Record With Giant Santa Claus Made From Apples In Odisha
- ❖ NIFTEM-K Signs MoU with Ministry of Minority Affairs to Implement PM VIKAS Scheme
- ❖ SBI Launches YONO 2.0, Unifying Mobile and Internet Banking to Boost Digital Scale and Security
- ❖ Canara Bank Launches ‘Canara ai1Pe’, Unified Next-Gen UPI App for Seamless Digital Payments
- ❖ R Praggnanandhaa and Anish Giri Lead Alpine SG Pipers to Maiden Global Chess League 2025 Title

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- ❖ **Tripura Assembly Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen dies at 72**
- ❖ **West Bengal crowned as overall champion in Finswimming championship**

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World Telugu Conferences at Guntur: “Teluguvāri Anurāga Sangamam”



- The World Telugu Conferences aim to bring Telugu people settled in nearly 52 countries onto a single platform and strengthen emotional and cultural bonds among them.
- The three-day literary and cultural festival will be held at **Guntur, Andhra Pradesh**, from **January 3 to 5**, under the aegis of the **Andhra Saraswata Parishad**.
- The theme/slogan of the conference is “**Teluguvāri Anurāga Sangamam**” (**Confluence of Telugu Affection**).
- The event is chaired by **Dr. Ghazal Srinivas**, President of the Andhra Saraswata Parishad, with **P. Ramachandra Raju** serving as the Chief Coordinator.
- **President of Mauritius, Mr. Dharam Gokhool**, will attend as the **Chief Guest on January 4**, reflecting the strong presence and influence of Telugus in Mauritius.

- A **special book exhibition and handicrafts pavilion** is being set up in memory of **late Ramoji Rao**, founder of the Eenadu group, with his statue as a major attraction.
- The main stage has been named the “**NTR Stage**”, accommodating **up to 5,000 participants at a time**.
- Platforms for poets’ meets are named after **Gurram Jashuva and Karunasri**, while a separate stage for **Avadhana** is dedicated to the **Kopparapu poets**.
- Dining halls have been named after **Dokku Seethamma and Pingali Venkayya**, paying tribute to their contributions to social service and nation-building.
- The conference is **not directly organised by the government**, but is conducted by the historic **Andhra Saraswata Parishad** with government support.
- Beyond cultural celebration, the event seeks to **reconnect the Telugu diaspora with their motherland**, while promoting tourism and attracting investments to the Telugu states.
- The history of World Telugu Conferences dates back to **1975 in Hyderabad**, followed by events in **Malaysia (1981), Mauritius (1990), Tirupati (2012), and Hyderabad–Telangana (2017)**.
- Telugu was accorded **Classical Language status in 2008**, and the World Telugu Conferences have played a key role in strengthening **Telugu identity, cultural pride, and the concept of “Telugu Talli.”**

Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar



- The **President of India** presented the **Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar** to **17 children** (7 boys and 10 girls) selected from **14 States and Union Territories**.
- The **Government of India** observes **Veer Bal Diwas** every year on **December 26** to commemorate the martyrdom of **Sahibzada Zorawar Singh Ji** and **Sahibzada Fateh Singh Ji**, the sons of **Guru Gobind Singh Ji**.
- **Keya Hatkar**, **Ayaan Sajad**, and **Vyas Om Jignesh** were honoured for excellence in **art & culture**, **music**, and **Sanskrit literature** respectively.
- In the **bravery category**, **Saurav Kumar** saved three girls from drowning, while **Loanna Thapa** rescued **36 people** from a **fire**.
- Under **innovation**, **Sindhoora Raja** created self-stabilising devices for Parkinson's patients, and **Risheek Kumar** launched **Kashmir's first cybersecurity firm**.

- In sports, **Hembati Nag** won silver in judo at the **Khelo India National Games**, and **Anish Sarkar** became the **youngest FIDE-ranked chess player** at just three years old.

Eligibility for Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar :

- A child should be an Indian Citizen.
- Age: A child above the age of 5 years and not exceeding 18 years (as of 31st July of respective year).
- The act/incident/achievement should have been within 2 years of the last date of receipt of application/nomination for the year of consideration.
- The number of Awards will be 25, however, any relaxation to this maximum number may be permitted at the discretion of the National Selection Committee.
- Each awardee will receive a medal, certificate and citation booklet

Dr. Mandaviya Announces Major Upcoming Reforms for EPFO

- All upcoming and several existing **EPFO offices will be redeveloped** into modern, technology-enabled, **single-window service centres** on the lines of Passport Seva Kendras.
- A **pilot project is underway in Delhi**, after which beneficiaries can resolve EPF-related issues at **any EPFO regional office**, regardless of their original office.
- The Government will introduce **EPF Suvidha Providers** authorised facilitators to help workers, especially first-time and digitally unfamiliar users, access EPFO services.
- EPFO will launch **mission-mode KYC verification** for inoperative accounts to unlock workers' funds and ensure smooth claim settlement.
- A **dedicated digital platform** will be introduced for simplified claim filing and **hassle-free settlement** to rightful claimants.
- Future **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)** will include **social security protection provisions** so Indian workers abroad can retain PF benefits (as in the India-UK FTA).
- EPFO reforms include **automatic settlements up to ₹5 lakh**, easy withdrawal of **up to 75% of EPF balance**, seamless account transfers, and nationwide grievance resolution.
- The Minister highlighted India's **8.25% post-pandemic growth** and **3.2% unemployment rate**, and noted that **PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana** aims to create **3.5 crore jobs** in the next two years.



Bharti Enterprises and Warburg Pincus Acquire 49% Stake in Haier India to Boost Growth and Innovation

- **Bharti Enterprises and Warburg Pincus** announced a **strategic investment in Haier India**, acquiring a collective 49% stake in the Indian subsidiary of China's Haier Group; the deal size was not disclosed.
- Post-transaction, Haier Group will retain 49% ownership, while the remaining stake will be held by Haier India's management, ensuring continued operational continuity and local leadership.
- The partnership aims to strengthen Haier India's "Made in India, Made for India" strategy by expanding local sourcing, manufacturing capacity, product innovation and market penetration.



VSK Chakravarthi Appointed as Andhra Pradesh State Information Commissioner

RIGHT TO INFORMATION



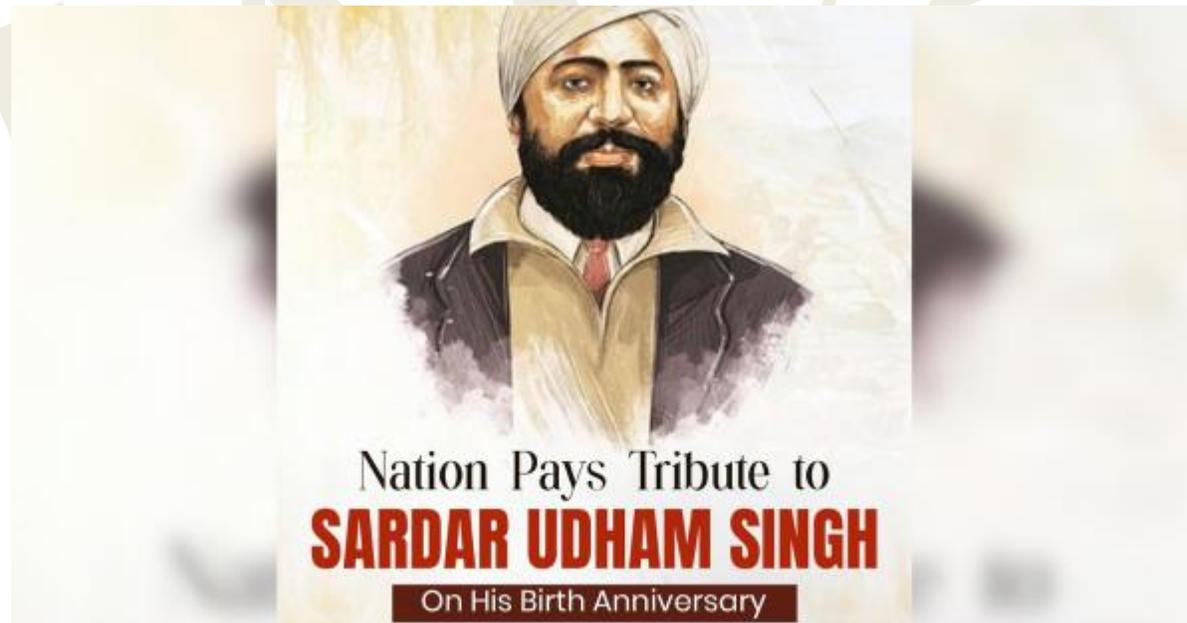
- Senior journalist **VSK (V.S.K.) Chakravarthi** has been appointed as the **Andhra Pradesh State Information Commissioner**.
- The decision was taken by a **selection committee chaired by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu**.
- He has **21 years of experience** as a professional journalist.
- VSK Chakravarthi holds a **Post-Graduation in Journalism** from **Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University**.
- His native place is **Bikkavolu in East Godavari district** of Andhra Pradesh.
- He has earlier received the prestigious **Nandi Award as Best Film Critic**.
- The **State Information Commission (SIC)** is constituted under **Section 15 of the Right to Information Act, 2005**; it is a **statutory body**, not a constitutional body, and has powers of a civil court.
- The SIC consists of a **State Chief Information Commissioner** (currently **R. Mahboob Basha**) and **not more than 10 Information Commissioners**.

- Information Commissioners are appointed by the **Governor** based on the recommendation of a committee comprising the **Chief Minister (Chairperson), Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, and one Cabinet Minister nominated by the Chief Minister.**
- As per current rules under the **RTI (Amendment) Act, 2019**, the **tenure is 3 years or up to 65 years of age (whichever is earlier)**, and removal is possible only on grounds of proven misbehaviour or incapacity after a **Supreme Court inquiry.**

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Nation Remembers Shaheed Udham Singh on His 126th Birth Anniversary

- Udham Singh, born on 26th December 1899, in Sunam, Sangrur district of Punjab.
- Singh survived the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 13th April 1919, where British Brigadier General Reginald Dyer's troops killed over 400 unarmed civilians under the regime of Michael O'Dwyer, Punjab's Lieutenant Governor.
- He joined the Ghadar Party in 1924 to mobilize Indians overseas against British rule. He was imprisoned in 1927 for five years for possession of firearms.
- On 13th March 1940, Singh assassinated Michael O'Dwyer during a meeting at Caxton Hall in London, avenging the massacre.



25th Anniversary of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

- Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) completed 25 years in December 2025, marking a major milestone in India's rural infrastructure journey
- Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) is a centrally sponsored scheme aimed at providing all-weather road connectivity to eligible, previously unconnected rural habitations, thereby integrating villages with markets, schools, and healthcare facilities.
- Launched in Year: 25 December 2000
- Implementing ministry: Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India

Key features: Phased implementation:

- PMGSY-I: Universal rural connectivity to unconnected habitations.
- PMGSY-II: Upgradation and consolidation of existing rural road networks.
- PMGSY-III: Strengthening through routes and major rural links connecting markets, schools, and health facilities.
- PMGSY-IV (2024–29): Connectivity to 25,000 habitations via 62,500 km of roads.
- Technology-driven monitoring: Use of e-MARG, GPS-based tracking, and geo-tagged inspections for real-time monitoring and transparency



Sand Artist Sudarsan Pattnaik Sets World Record With Giant Santa Claus Made From Apples In Odisha

- Renowned sand artist and Padma Shri awardee Sudarsan Pattnaik created a world record with a unique sand art installation at Niladri Beach in Puri, Odisha.
- Titled "World's Biggest Apple and Sand Installation of Santa Claus,"
- The magnificent sculpture was crafted using 1.5 tons of apples and sand.
- It measured 60 feet in length, 45 feet in width, and 22 feet in height



NIFTEM-K Signs MoU with Ministry of Minority Affairs to Implement PM VIKAS Scheme

- NIFTEM Kundli has been selected as a **Project Implementing Agency (PIA)** by the **Ministry of Minority Affairs** to implement the **PM VIKAS Scheme**.
- An **MoU was signed on 22 December 2025 in New Delhi** between NIFTEM-K and the Ministry.
- The **PM VIKAS Scheme** aims to enhance the capacity of youth from **minority communities** through **need-based skill training** and employment/livelihood support.
- Under the project, **NIFTEM-K will train 2,110 beneficiaries** from minority communities in three categories:
 - Multi Skill Technician (Food Processing)
 - Millet Products Processor
 - Assistant Baking Technician
- The training will be conducted across **7 locations in 4 states: Jharkhand, Bihar, Punjab, and Haryana**.
- The programme seeks to improve **employability and livelihood opportunities** through market and credit linkages and is expected to be **rolled out in January 2026**.



SBI Launches YONO 2.0, Unifying Mobile and Internet Banking to Boost Digital Scale and Security

- **State Bank of India (SBI)** launched **YONO 2.0**, a major upgrade of its digital banking platform, integrating mobile and internet banking on a single backend architecture to enhance scale, security and seamless customer experience.
- YONO 2.0 features include simplified KYC/re-KYC, improved personalisation and security, bilingual support (English & Hindi) with plans to expand to 15 regional languages, and sustainability tools like carbon footprint tracking and green score.
- SBI Chairman C S Setty highlighted that technology-led distribution lowers customer acquisition costs, while enabling personalised services; SBI currently has 50+ crore customers and around 9.6 crore YONO users.



Canara Bank Launches 'Canara ai1Pe', Unified Next-Gen UPI App for Seamless Digital Payments

- **Canara Bank** launched its **unified UPI app Canara ai1Pe**, enabling users of any bank to link accounts for fund transfers, QR payments, bill payments and auto-debit of recurring payments.
- Canara ai1Pe is part of the Canara ai1 Mobile Banking Super App, which offers 300+ features, including deposits, insurance and everyday banking services, providing a seamless digital payment experience.
- The app supports all UPI services such as UPI Lite, Autopay, UPI Circle, IPO/Mandate services, along with enhanced security features like device binding and UPI PIN authentication.
- Developed in collaboration with NPCI BHIM Services Limited (NBSL), the app aims to deliver a next-generation UPI payment experience while also complementing Canara Bank's separate Canara ai1 Corporate app for business customers.



R Praggnanandhaa and Anish Giri Lead Alpine SG Pipers to Maiden Global Chess League 2025 Title

- R Praggnanandhaa and Anish Giri's team, Alpine SG Pipers, won the Global Chess League 2025 Season 3 title, defeating defending champions Triveni Continental Kings in Mumbai.
- The finals were dominated by Pipers with scores of 4-2 in the first match and 4.5-1.5 in the second match, marking their maiden GCL title.
- Anish Giri was named the Finals MVP, winning both his games with Black, while Praggnanandhaa secured a crucial victory against Vidit Gujrathi in the second match.



Tripura Assembly Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen dies at 72

- He was serving as the Speaker of the Tripura Legislative Assembly since March 24, 2023.
- He was a four-time MLA representing the 56-Dharmanagar constituency in North Tripura.
- Sen also served as the Deputy Speaker of the Tripura Legislative Assembly from 2018 to 2023.



West Bengal crowned as overall champion in Finswimming championship

- West Bengal bagged the title of overall champion in the fifth National Finswimming Championship-2025.
- This is the fifth consecutive year that the State has won the title.
- The competition was held at the International Swimming Pool in Yemmekere, Mangaluru, on December 20 and 21.
- The West Bengal team bagged 165 medals, which included 61 gold, 59 silver, and 45 bronze.
- The host Karnataka team were runners-up.

