

MAJOR ALLOCATIONS

- Capital expenditure hiked by 33% to ₹10 lakh crore for infrastructure development for 2023-24 and will be at 3.3% of GDP
- Defence gets ₹5.94 lakh crore in Budget 2023-24, a jump of 13% over previous year
- Allocation for education hiked to ₹1.13 lakh crore, up by 8.3% from last year
- Health sector allocated ₹89,155 crore, a hike of around 13%
- Capital outlay for railways increased to highest-ever ₹2.40 lakh crore
- Allotment for agriculture and farmers' welfare stands at around ₹1.15 lakh crore, a hike of around 4.6%

Nothing big, no bang



- 1 Allocation for the flagship Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme cut by whopping 30%
- 2 Personal income tax rebate limit increased to ₹7 lakh under new tax regime from previous ₹5 lakh
- 3 Highest rate of income tax reduced to 39% from 42.74% at present, by reducing surcharge applicable on high net-worth individuals

AGENCIES
New Delhi, Feb 1: The Union government Wednesday unveiled a ₹45.03 lakh crore Budget for the next fiscal year starting April to boost economic growth, while aiming to lower fiscal deficit before elections due next year.

In Modi government's last full Budget before general elections, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled tax rebates and saving plans to woo the middle class, women and pensioners, and announced massive spending on housing and infrastructure, while reduced allocations for rural development, MGNREGS and food security.

The personal income tax rebate limit has been increased to ₹7 lakh from the fiscal year starting April 1 under the new tax regime, from the previous ₹5 lakh. Tax slabs have been cut to five from seven earlier. Also, the maximum income tax rate has been reduced to about 39 per cent from 42.7 per cent after a reduction in the highest surcharge to 25 per cent from 37 per cent.

Besides, the deposit limit for senior citizen savings schemes has been doubled to ₹30 lakh and for Monthly Income Account Scheme

to ₹9 lakh. A new small savings scheme for women, offering 7.5 per cent interest rate on deposits of up to ₹2 lakh for a tenor of 2 years, has also been announced.

But the Budget has capped tax exemption on maturity amount for policies exceeding ₹5 lakh annual premium.

Sitharaman's fifth straight Budget comes at a time when the economy is slowing due to global headwinds and there is a need for increased spending on social sectors as well as ramping up incentives for local manufacturing.

She also announced customs duty relief on mobile phone components, as well as on capital goods for lithium batteries and other such items to boost green energy and exports.

For 2023-24, the capital investment outlay has been increased

steeply for the third year in a row by 33 per cent to ₹10 lakh crore, which would be 3.3 per cent of the GDP. This will be almost three times the outlay in 2019-20. Also, the outlay for affordable housing has been increased by a massive 66 per cent to ₹79,000 crore.

"This is a Budget which has beautifully balanced both growth considerations because the capital investment has never before seen double digit investment announcements of ₹10 lakh crore which includes ₹1.3 lakh crore being given to states," Sitharaman said at a post-Budget press conference.

"This Budget hopes to build on the foundation laid in the previous Budget, and the blueprint drawn for India@100," Sitharaman said in her Budget speech in Lok Sabha.

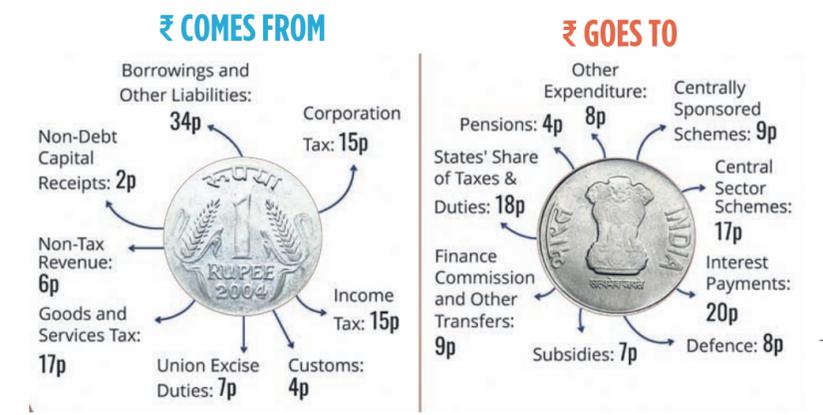
The Indian economy, she said, is

a 'bright star' with the current 7 per cent GDP growth being the highest among all major economies.

Sitharaman said that despite a global slowdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, the Indian economy is 'on the right track'.

Total expenditure is seen rising 7.4 per cent to ₹45 lakh crore. The government would target a budget deficit of 5.9 per cent of GDP in 2023-24, down from 6.4 per cent for the current year. That would entail a gross borrowing of ₹15.43 lakh crore.

Sitharaman said the Budget for 2023-24 (April 2023 to March 2024), adopts seven priorities - inclusive development, reaching the last mile, infrastructure and investment, unleashing the potential, green growth, youth power and financial sector. **Contd... on P4**



'AMRIT KAAL' VS 'MITRA KAAL'

AGENCIES
New Delhi, Feb 1: The ruling BJP Wednesday hailed the Union Budget as an 'all-inclusive' document which reflects PM Narendra Modi's 'far-sighted' leadership to make a new India, while the Opposition dismissed it as 'anti-people' and mere rhetoric lacking the vision for creating jobs and taming inflation.

The Budget proposals triggered an 'Amrit Kaal' versus 'Mitra Kaal' debate between the BJP and the

Opposition, with the PM saying it provides a strong base to fulfil the dreams of an aspirational society, including the poor and the middle class, and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who has been accusing PM Modi of making policies to benefit his 'friends', slamming the government, claiming the 'mitra kaal' Budget has no vision to create jobs or tackle inflation.

The BJP often describes the period between the country's 75th year of Independence in 2022 to the

100th in 2047 year as 'Amrit Kaal'. BJP president JP Nadda said the first general Budget of India's 'Amrit Kaal' is a public welfare and pro-poor document which will empower and uplift villagers, Dalits, tribals, farmers, backward and the oppressed classes.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged the budget was "big on announcements and short on delivery," and accused the BJP government of making the life of common man difficult. **MORE P9**

Naveen concerned over cut in NREGS allocation

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday expressed concern over the reduction of funds for MGNREGS and food security scheme in the Union Budget for 2023-24.

Patnaik said the Budget has some good aspects which need to be appreciated and there are some concerns which need to be looked into, and addressed.

"I have concerns regarding the drastic reduction of funds for MGNREGS. This will hit the poor people. The reduction in food security budget along with reduction in procurement will hit the poor people as well as farmers," he said.

About ₹80,000 crore was spent on procurement in 2021-22 while only about ₹60,000 crore is kept in this budget. This will cause serious

problems in selling crops at MSP, he said. While in 2021-22 an amount of ₹2 lakh crore was spent under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), in this budget only ₹1.37 lakh crore is kept for this purpose, the CM said.

Patnaik also said that there has been a decrease or no growth in health and education sectors.

He further said that the budget provision for Ayushman Bharat scheme is ₹7,200 crore for the entire country while Odisha spends almost about ₹2,400 crore on Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) in private facilities alone.

"If we include government facilities, it would be around ₹6,000 crore annually under the BSKY. Health is an important priority for our state and we believe in investing and in sincere efforts," he said. **Continued on P4**

TOPSY-TURVY TRADE IN D-STREET



- WHAT GETS COSTLIER**
- Cigarettes
 - Kitchen chimney
 - Imported bicycles, toys
 - Fully imported cars, EVs
 - Imitation jewellery
- WHAT GETS CHEAPER**
- Domestically-made TV sets
 - Shrimp feed
 - Seeds for lab-grown diamonds
 - Mobile phone parts
 - Raw material for EV industry

NI ₹N BUDGET 2023-24 KEY TAKEAWAYS

Government will target a budget deficit of 5.9% of GDP for FY24 as compared to 6.4% for current fiscal year. Fiscal deficit would be brought down to below 4.5% by 2025-26

The government plans to borrow a record ₹15.4 lakh crore from dated securities in FY24 to meet its expenditure requirement to prop up the economy

'Mahila Samman Saving Certificate' new savings scheme for women with 7.5% fixed interest rate for 2 years

Govt doubles deposit limit for Senior Citizen Savings Scheme to ₹30 lakh

₹1.96 lakh crore allocated to the Ministry of Home Affairs with a majority of the spending on Central Armed Police Forces such as CRPF and intelligence gathering

66% hike in Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana outlay to ₹79,000 crore

₹35,000 crore outlay to achieve energy transition, net zero objectives

Startups incorporated till Mar 2024 to get income tax benefits

30% TDS on net winnings in online games, existing threshold limit of ₹10,000 for TDS levy removed

“This Budget will fulfil the dreams of the poor, villagers, farmers and middle class”

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

“'Mitra Kaal' Budget has: NO vision to create Jobs. NO plan to tackle Mehngai. NO intent to stem Inequality. 1% richest own 40% of the wealth, 50% poorest pay 64% of GST, 42% youth are unemployed -- yet, PM doesn't Care!”

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

“I have concerns regarding the drastic reduction of funds for MGNREGS. This will hit the poor people. The reduction in food security budget along with reduction in procurement will hit the poor people as well as farmers”

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER, ODISHA

Ambani back as richest Asian as Adani tumbles out

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, Feb 1: Ports-to-energy tycoon Gautam Adani has tumbled on the world's top billionaire ranking and is no longer the richest Asian or Indian.

Rival business magnate Mukesh Ambani, who was richest Indian before Adani's eye popping gains in company stock prices catapulted him to top spot in April last year, has regained that position.

Adani, who ranked third richest

in the world on the Forbes billionaire list just a week back, dropped to 15th position Wednesday as his group stock continued to tumble in the aftermath of a damning report by a US short seller.

Ambani with USD 83.7 billion wealth is ranked No.9 on the list, according to Forbes website.

Adani, who has seen all of the USD 44 billion wealth gain he made last year vanish in one week, was ranked on 15th position with USD 75.1 billion wealth.

Since US-based short-seller Hindenburg in its January 24 report alleged that the group was "engaged in a brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud

Adani Enterprises calls off ₹20k-crore FPO

NEW DELHI: Adani Enterprises Wednesday said it has decided to withdraw its fully subscribed ₹20,000-crore follow-on public offer (FPO) and will return the proceeds to investors. The announcement came a day after the company's FPO was subscribed fully on the last day of the offer Tuesday. "The Board of Adani Enterprises Ltd., (AEL) decided not to go ahead with the fully subscribed FPO. Given the unprecedented situation and the current market volatility the company aims to protect the interest of its investing community by returning the FPO proceeds and withdraws the completed transaction," the Adani group's flagship company said in a statement. As many as 4.62 crore shares were sought as against an offer of 4.55 crore.

Adani companies have lost USD 90 billion market value. Adani group has dismissed the charges as lies, saying it complies with all laws and disclosure requirements.



leisure

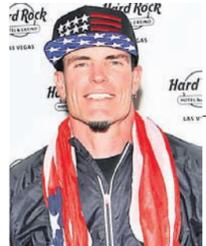


ALEC BALDWIN FORMALLY CHARGED WITH INVOLUNTARY MANSLAUGHTER

Hollywood star Alec Baldwin and armourer Hanna Gutierrez-Reed have officially been charged in the *Rust* fatal shooting case. The *30 Rock* actor and Hanna have been hit with one count of involuntary manslaughter following the death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, reports [aceshowbiz.com](https://www.aceshowbiz.com).

'I WAS WAY TOO YOUNG WHEN MADONNA PROPOSED TO ME'

Rapper Vanilla Ice has recalled the 'crazy' whirlwind of Madonna asking for his hand in marriage. He believes he was 'way too young' to get engaged to the 'Queen of Pop' in the early 1990s, reports [femalefirst.co.uk](https://www.femalefirst.co.uk).



FORTUNE FORECAST



ARIES
You will be in a tight fix as the day starts. However, that's exactly the kind of situation in which your skills are tested. In the evening you will draw a lot of praise for your excellent performance. If Ganesh chooses to shower his blessings on you, you will sign new deals.

TAURUS
This day is meant for taking some time out from your busy schedule, and seeking some fun and relaxation. So says Ganesh. It is possible that you will be getting together with your friends and family members for a fun filled evening followed by a great dinner and a late night movie.

GEMINI
You are likely to be in a romantic mood today. You may just end up falling in love today. A difficult situation will bring out the competitive streak in you and spur you on to physical and mental excellence. Your capacity and intelligence will be testified to by your work, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will focus on financial matters and plan accordingly. Compared to expenses, you will save more. A beneficial day for cashiers, money lenders and petty traders. Ganesh counsels hard work to achieve success.

LEO
You will be unable to express the feelings that rise up inside you in spite of wanting to. However, keep them close to your heart. You will be very serious about your work today. There is a possibility of some delay in your schedule today due to unforeseen problems, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
In all likelihood, you will be eager to grab the monetary challenges that come your way, as they only enhance your desire for success. You will bring up new ideas and better methods of tackling the challenges on hand. Ganesh gives you an assurance that your present business views will do you a world of good.

LIBRA
Ganesh advises you not to take stress about small issues or matters. To avoid tension and to gain mental peace it is advised you perform yoga or meditation. There will be pressure put on you regarding certain matters at the work-front. You should take decisions regarding critical matters only after carefully weighing the pros and cons.

SCORPIO
Thank Ganesh that you have the grace to handle pressure at work, because today, you are going to be bogged down with a lot of work pressure. By the end of the day, try some stress bursting activities like yoga, meditation or listening to soft music.

SAGITTARIUS
Ganesh predicts a day full of romantic developments today. Mushy talks and whispering sweet nothings in your beloved's ears may give you little joys of life. However, brace yourselves as there are times when relationships do not work-out, and you may experience this soon.

CAPRICORN
Your lover is in for many pleasant surprises today. You'll be in a completely romantic mood, making every wish of your sweetheart your command. Both of you will go shopping, and have fun. Extravagant expenditures will keep you charged up for the day. You will achieve what you had wanted, that is the happiness of your sweetheart.

AQUARIUS
Travelling is on the cards for you today, Ganesh advises you to travel alone, because if you take people with different tastes along with you, their preferences may dampen your mood and spoil the trips. But, once put in such a situation, you will try to adjust yourself and find enjoyment in that, too. Your biggest plus point is the ability to convert your shortcoming into strength.

PISCES
Your planetary configuration not being favorable, you are advised not to start any new projects today. The benefits accrued by any project you take up today might not justify the risks associated with it. Businessmen need to be extra careful in all their dealings. Personal life should be peaceful with Ganesh's blessings.

NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL PURVA RANGA -2023: DAY 1

Kuan Kuan: Lockdown tales come alive on stage

Bhubaneswar: Members of Natya Chetana, one of the top theatre troupes of Odisha, presented Odia play *Kuan Kuan* (Cry of a newborn) here at Rabindra Mandap, Wednesday.

The 90-minute drama was performed on the first day of Purva Ranga-2023, a national theatre festival, organised by Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi (OSNA) in collaboration with Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (EZCC), Ministry of Culture, Kolkata and Odisha Natya Sangh (ONS), Bhubaneswar.

Written and directed by troupe's founder Subodh Patnaik, the play narrated the plight of a poor couple and their newborn during coronatimes. The hardship of life was highlighted through the use of



A scene from the play Odia play *Kuan Kuan* staged at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar

rhythm instruments in a range of percussion.

Artists who performed on stage included Debasis, Sujata Priyambada, Smruti, Rahul, Dhananjaya, Puja, Sanjiv, Pratap, Ratikanta, Ayush,

Biplab and Chandan. Culture Secretary Satyabrata Sahoo, Director Ranjan Kumar Das, Additional Secretary Madhusudan Das, OSNA president Aruna Mohanty, vice-presi-

dent Manmath Kumar Satpathy, secretary Prabodh Ratha and ONS president Haren Sahoo were among the dignitaries present on the occasion. ONS secretary Subhakanta Padhi coordinated the event. PNN



When Alaya almost took up a profession out of acting

Mumbai: Actor Alaya F has said that she almost took a profession that was not acting, when asked about star kids exploring other professional fields.

Alaya F has said that she 'almost' opted for a profession that was not acting, adding that one must work hard at whatever profession one chooses. She was speaking in a new interview ahead of her new release *Almost Pyaar with DJ Mohabbat*.

Asked about her views on star kids choosing careers that are not part of showbiz, Alaya said, "It's great. I almost took up a profession outside of acting. The key is to work hard at anything that you choose to do and fight for your place in the world, whatever profession that may be."

While she made her debut with *Jawaani Jaaneman* in 2020 alongside Saif Ali Khan and Tabu, Alaya F had already signed films before that but they could not materialise. She had said in a recent interview that people would appreciate her audition reels but never get back with final offers.

Samantha talks about her 'homecoming'



Mumbai: Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu will be starring alongside Varun Dhawan in the Indian installment of the *Citadel* universe, the global-event series from Prime Video and the Russo Brothers' AGBO.

It's a homecoming for Samantha. "When Prime Video and Raj & DK approached me with this project, I decided to take it up in a heartbeat! After working with this team on *The Family Man 2*, it is homecoming for me," said Samantha.

She added: "The *Citadel* universe, the interconnected storylines between the productions across the globe, and most importantly, the script of the Indian installment really excited me. I am thrilled to be a part of this brilliant universe conceptualised by the Russo Brothers' AGBO."

The actress said that she is also looking forward to working with Varun Dhawan for the first time on this project.

"He is someone who is full of life and cheers when you're around him."

The untitled *Citadel* series based out of India is being helmed by renowned creator duo Raj and DK, who are the showrunners and directors. The local installment is written by Sita R. Menon, along with Raj and DK.



Want to shift gear constantly: Kriti

Mumbai: Actress Kriti Sanon, who is gearing up for her upcoming film *Shehzada*, likes to walk the fine line between high-content and high-entertainment films and the films in her pipeline for this year prove the same.

Talking about what audiences can expect from her in 2023, Kriti said: "The audience can probably look forward to far more versions of me. It starts with a very

glamorous one which is a family entertainer, followed by probably my biggest film, *Adipurush*, which I am extremely proud of. Then there is a lot of action coming in with *Ganapath*, something I have done for the first time. You will see me ride a dirt bike, throw kicks and punches and also use a weapon."

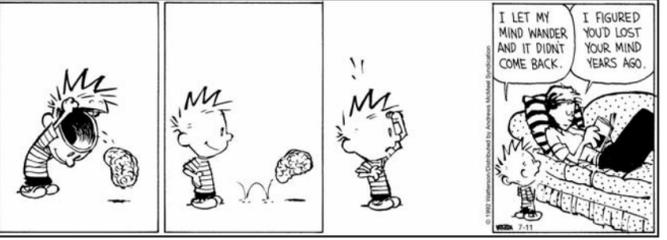
She added: "I am also doing a quirky love story with Shahid Kapoor. We are teaming up on screen for the first time, so you will see fresh chemistry. Then there is *The Crew*, which has three women (Tabu, Kareena Kapoor Khan and me) coming together, having a lot of fun and creating something amazing."

The actress, who is at the top of her game, hopes to surprise audiences with some exciting projects that showcase different sides of her persona and talent in 2023. IANS

PEANUTS



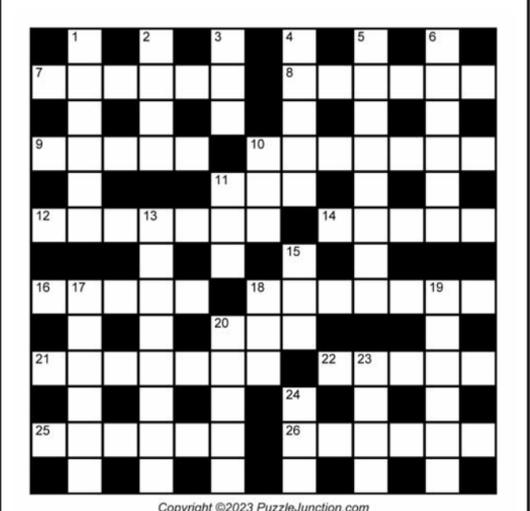
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



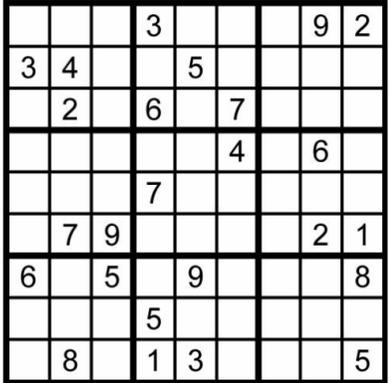
FUN post CROSSWORD



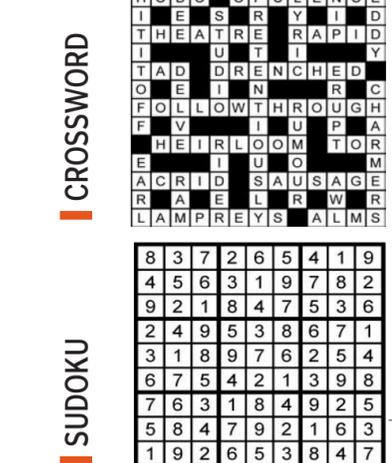
- Across**
- 7 Zephyr
 - 8 Withstand
 - 9 Eskimo abode
 - 10 Seaport
 - 11 Container
 - 12 Close in, like fog
 - 14 Peptic problem
 - 16 Frighten
 - 18 Slicker
 - 20 Droop
 - 21 Former Venezuelan statesman
 - 22 True heath
 - 25 Final climactic stage
 - 26 Song of devotion
 - 5 Eccentrics
 - 6 Ballet company, for instance
 - 10 Pelvic arch
 - 11 Male child
 - 13 Wage
 - 15 Peruke
 - 17 Like the sea at times
 - 18 Scull
 - 19 Irritates
 - 20 Salvaged
 - 23 Grooves
 - 24 Writing tablet
- Down**
- 1 Work shoe
 - 2 Note
 - 3 Not many
 - 4 Edible nut

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



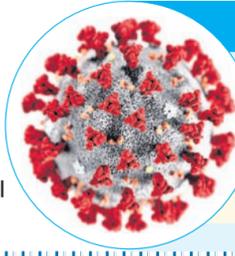
SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

REVIEW MEET

CDA chairperson Anil Samal and CMC commissioner Nikhil Pavan Kalyan, along with other officials, review the rejuvenation of Petanal in Cuttack, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	67,53,27,014	64,76,92,781	67,63,027
India	4,46,82,895	4,41,50,372	5,30,740
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

Thumbs down to rural spending; edu thrust hailed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: The Union Budget 2023-24 Wednesday evoked a mixed bag of reactions from people across the strata with some appreciating the allocations made in health and education sectors while some others gave a thumb down to the tricky tax reforms and significant reduction in funds for programmes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

Sutapa Das, a physician by profession, said, "The much-needed thrust on Research and Development (R&D) in healthcare by ramping up facilities in some of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) labs is a welcome move. The FM has also announced establishment of 157 nursing colleges in core locations of the country. This will lead to increased skilled healthcare personnel."



In this Budget, the Centre has set a target to completely eliminate sickle cell anaemia by 2047, which may turn out to be a herculean task. Yet, I feel healthcare sector could have been given a greater push through tax exemption, revision or reduction of GST in the sector, she added.

Dushmant Kesh, a tax consultant & auditor, said, "As far as the Budget speech is concerned, there is an apparent effort to wean the taxpayers off the old tax regime to the new one. For taxpayers, the old tax regime is arguably better



as there is room for availing deductions through investments, housing loans and insurance and many more. For the highest I-T bracket, the finance minister has proposed to reduce the highest surcharge rate from 37 per cent to 25 per cent in the new tax regime which was very much expected.

Sovan Biswal, an MBA student, welcomed the proposal in the Budget for setting up a national digital library for children and adolescents along with physical libraries at panchayat levels.



The Finance minister announced plans to boost artificial intelligence in India and to establish three centres of excellence (CoEs) in some of the country's top educational institutes. Besides, 100 labs will be set up in engineering institutions that will work on developing applications using 5G services. This would be great

for students pursuing professional courses.



According to **Prasant Prusty,** a betel shop owner, "The hike in customs duty on tobacco products will push the cigarettes prices. The chewing tobacco (gutka) will also be costlier. This will have a dampening impact on sales of the small vendors like me. I was expecting a cut in customs duty on tobacco items.

Aurohis Mohanty, a service manager at a multi-national



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with other leaders leaving North Block office to present the Union Budget 2023-24 before the Parliament in New Delhi, Wednesday

company said. "The railway budget is what excites me the most. The Finance Minister has allocated around ₹2.40 lakh crore this year as compared to ₹1.40 lakh crore in the previous fiscal - an increase of over ₹1 lakh crore. I expect a substantial improvement in the quality of the railway services. As far as income tax is concerned, the new tax regime may not be very much beneficial.

Suresh Panigrahy, All India Kisan Sabha general secretary, said, "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment



Guarantee Scheme allocation has been slashed by 33 per cent, while subsidy on food, fertilizer and petroleum products has been reduced by ₹90,000 crore, ₹ 50,000 crore and ₹6,900 crore respectively in this Budget. This in turn will contribute to the rise in prices of essential commodities. The tall claims of doubling farmers' income seem falling flat. Reduction in government expenditures to reduce fiscal deficit while allowing further tax concession to the rich are sufficient to conclude that it is an anti-people and anti-poor Budget.



Ranjan Panda, an environmentalist, said, "The Budget gives a mega push to green energy. However, the government should also promote community involvement in conservation of wetlands.

Silpi Sahoo, an educationist & SAI International Group chairperson, said, "The allocation of ₹1,12,898 crore for the Ministry of Education, the highest ever provision to education sector, is a giant leap in terms of educational reforms in India." It



BJP lauds Budget; Cong terms it a 'grocery list'

New Delhi: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Wednesday hailed the Union Budget for financial year 2023-24 as inclusive and people centric while saying that this budget is for a developed India.

He said the budget has special focus on artisans, women and youth. Appreciating the Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman (PM-VIKAS) scheme, the Union minister said that it would enable the artisans to improve the reach of their products. Pradhan thanked Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for the highest-ever allocation to the Education Ministry - ₹1.12 lakh crore. The Union minister said that this budget strengthens the foundation of developed India.

BJP Bargarh MP Suresh Pujari said that this is the most remarkable budget of the decade and the first budget of the 'Amrit Kaal'. He said the budget envisages making India a developed country in the next 25 years. The budget gives emphasis on infrastructure and connectivity. This year, the highest ever allocation was made to the Railways sector - ₹2.41 lakh crore, Pujari said. The budget has given special emphasis to the youth and women. The announcement of interest-free loans to the states will benefit the state of Odisha in boosting the infrastructure, Pujari said.

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan thanked the Finance Minister for the highest-ever allocation to the education sector - ₹1.12L crore

Congress MP Saptagiri Ulaka termed the Union budget a "grocery list" and said it is totally an election oriented budget. The budget doesn't address the core issues of the economy. It lacks a road map for better GDP growth, generation of employment and to curtail inflation. He said the Union government has also reduced the allocation for people centric schemes. He said a special financial package was expected for Odisha but it was not announced. However, the Union government announced a package for the state of Karnataka. Speaking on allocation for Railways, Ulaka said there should be a substantive allocation to Odisha for better Rail connectivity in areas like Koraput, Bolangir etc.

The Congress MP welcomed the increase in income tax exemption limit and changes in tax slabs under the new tax regime. The Union government has extended the I-T exemption limit to ₹7 lakh from the current ₹5 lakh.

will go a long way transforming the country into a world-class educational hub, she added. **Bhabaranjan Behera,** a student, said that this Budget has something to cheer



about for the skilled youths. The decision to set up a national digital library for children and adolescents will help improve the accessibility to quality books.

Lab technician held for graft

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Vigilance sleuths Wednesday apprehended a senior laboratory technician of Subarnapur while demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹9,000 for laboratory medical test report.

Vigilance sources here said Akshaya Kumar Pattnaik, the senior laboratory technician, Tarva CHC, of Subarnapur has been apprehended while demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹9,000 from a complainant and 60 other villagers at ₹150 per test for laboratory medical test report.

The medical tests are done free of cost in the CHCs on behalf of the government. But Pattnaik used to demand money for such tests from poor villagers, it was alleged.

Following the trap, simultaneous searches were on at two locations of Pattnaik till the last report came in.

A case under section 7 of the PC (Amendment) Act, 2018 has been registered and an investigation is on against accused Pattnaik.

Justice JP Das to monitor minister's murder probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: A former Orissa High Court judge will monitor the Crime Branch investigation into the murder of Health minister Naba Kishore Das, an official said Wednesday.

The Home department had earlier requested the Orissa High Court to name a judge to monitor the investigation being carried out by the Crime Branch of the state police.

The administration had made such a request to the high court to 'maintain transparency in the investigation' in the wake of a demand for an impartial inquiry into the incident, a Home department official said.

"The high court suggested the state government to engage Justice (Retd) JP Das to supervise and monitor the probe," he said.

The state government had earlier announced the Crime Branch inquiry into the incident immediately after the state Health minister was murdered.

Das, 60, breathed his last January 29 evening, hours after he was shot by a policeman at Gandhi Chhak in Brajaraj Nagar area of Jharsuguda district, where he had gone to attend an event.

Earlier, the opposition BJP had demanded a CBI probe into the incident, claiming that the 'Odisha Police could not deliver justice as a policeman was the prime accused in the case'. The Congress also demanded a judicial inquiry into the assassination.

Meanwhile, the Odisha Assembly informed the Election Commission that the Jharsuguda Assembly seat fell vacant after the death of Das Sunday. According to norms, an Assembly or Lok Sabha constituency cannot remain vacant for more than six months, the official said.

"As the election to the Odisha Assembly is due next year, a bypoll to Jharsuguda seat may be held. The EC will take a final call in this regard," he added.



BJD MPs condole the death of Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das, at the party office in Parliament House, Wednesday

NHRC seeks report from DGP in 8 weeks

New Delhi: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the Director General of Police (DGP) of Odisha to take action on a complaint filed by a human rights activist seeking independent inquiry in the death of former Health Minister Naba Kishore Das by police firing.

The NHRC directed its registry to forward the complaint to the Odisha DGP and directed him to take action as deemed appropriate within a period of eight weeks by associating the complainant. Seeking intervention of the apex rights panel, Supreme Court lawyer and human rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy, alleged that the former minister



was killed by an assistant sub-inspector in Jharsuguda district due to the failure of the Odisha government.

"Neither the mental health nor the physical parameters have been taken into account while assessing the efficiency, performance of duties of the

PSO suspended

Bhubaneswar: Odisha police Wednesday suspended slain minister Naba Kishore Das' personal security officer (PSO) on the charge of dereliction of duty.

Brajaraj Nagar police station inspector-in-charge Pradyumna Kumar Swain and Gandhi Chhak outpost in-charge Sashibhusan Podha were also transferred from their place of posting, an official said. The move comes after the state government had Tuesday transferred Jharsuguda superintendent of police (SP) and Brajaraj Nagar sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) following the killing of the minister.

Das, 60, breathed his last January 29 evening, hours after he was shot by a policeman at Gandhi Chhak in Brajaraj Nagar area of Jharsuguda district, where he had gone to attend an event.

The Odisha police had Monday dismissed Assistant Sub Inspector Gopal Das from service after arresting him for allegedly gunning down Das.

"Slain minister Naba Kishore Das' PSO Mitrabhanu Deo has been placed under suspension on the charge of dereliction of duty. Deo was on duty when the accused policeman opened fire at Das. The security officer did not react immediately and also failed to follow standard operating procedure during the VVIP visit," the official said.

Das' PSO was interrogated by the Crime Branch team Tuesday

Swain, who registered an FIR and was also the complainant of the minister murder case, was transferred to Sambalpur district police headquarters, while Podha was shifted to nearby Subarnapur district police headquarters, the official said.

Jharsuguda SP Rahul Jain was transferred to the state police headquarters in Cuttack.

Brajaraj Nagar SDPO Gupteswar Bhoi was also shifted to the state police headquarters.

The suspension and transfer of police personnel came in the wake of the opposition parties' attacks on the Naveen Patnaik government over the killing of former health minister.

The Crime Branch will soon seek the help of experts in Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) to conduct Forensic Psychological Assessment and Layered Voice Analysis test of accused Goapl. Meanwhile, the ASI was brought on remand for four days and crime branch team continued marathon interrogation to elicit vital clues.

Another team of the premier investigation wing of state police is examining the documents regarding medical treatment aspect and financial behavior of accused. "PM report suggests that the death is caused due to cardiogenic shock as a result of Fire arm injuries and is homicidal in nature. Further, Collection, collation and analysis of evidence collected so far is being done by a CID-CB team," informed CB sources.

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	59708.08	↑ 158.18
NIFTY	17616.30	↓ 45.85
DOLLAR	81.54	↑ ₹0.03
EURO	89.28	↑ ₹0.50
GOLD	₹57819	↑ ₹577
SILVER	₹69936	↑ ₹1107

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	32.3°C	30.8°C
MIN	29.2°C	19.5°C
Humidity	61%	67%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	

3 held for assaulting inmate at city de-addiction centre



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: The Commissionerate Police Wednesday arrested three staffers of a de-addiction centre at Bhopapada area under Mancheswar police limits for brutally assaulting an inmate here Tuesday. The accused were identified as Anirudha Ray, 30, of Unit-III area under Kharvela Nagar police limits, Bhubaneswar, Ankit Rout alias Papuni, 25, of Baluria under Pattamundai police limits in Kendrapara district and Antaryami Mishra, 25, of Jalanga village in Simulia area of Balasore district. Police arrested the accused in a case (37/23) registered on the basis of a complaint lodged by the vic-

Police arrested the accused in a case (37/23) registered on the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim's wife, Urmila Behera

tim's wife, Urmila Behera, Monday. The victim, Sarbeswar who originally hails from Nayagarh district has been residing at Patharabandha Basti in Saheed Nagar area along with his family members for the last several years. Urmila, in her complaint, revealed that Sarbeswar is excessively addicted to liquor and psychoactive drugs.

The worried family members admitted Sarbeswar to the de-addiction centre, "Sai Kripa" located in Mancheswar area January 27, 2023. Owner of the de-addiction centre, Anirudha, present during the admission assured the family members that the centre would take good care of the addict and provide him all the facilities. Anirudha also told the complainant that they would supply all the information regarding any problem caused by Sarbeswar at the centre. Urmila also deposited ₹7000 at the centre for her husband's admission Tuesday. Meanwhile, when the complainant came to know that her husband was brutally assaulted by the staffers, she rushed to the de-addiction centre. Urmila found that her husband sustained severe injuries with wound marks on different parts of his body. The victim was later admitted to Capital hospital from where the family later shifted him to Hi-tech medical college for advanced treatment. Sarbeswar is currently undergoing treatment in the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital.



PULLING CROWD: Heavy rush at the ongoing Khandagiri Mela in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

Pintu Nanda serious, seeks financial help

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Odia film actor Pintu Nanda was rushed to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, due to critical health condition. The family members informed that the actor is suffering from liver-related ailments and the doctors have advised to forward him to Delhi for advanced treatment. As per the sources, a whopping amount of ₹50 lakh is required for the treatment.

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Pintu Nanda is currently staying with his elder brother Abhiram Nanda. The actor has sought financial help for his treatment. Earlier, Actor Pintu Nanda has been discharged from a private clinic in Odisha's Cuttack city, where he was admitted due to liver cirrhosis.

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ECoR GM reviews rly devpt works

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: East Coast Railway (ECoR) General Manager Manoj Sharma along with other senior officials inspected the Railway Developmental Works in Cuttack-Paradeep and Paradeep-Haridaspur Railway Section and took stock of various developmental activities of railways in connection with traffic facilities and hassle-free train operations. He also reviewed the developmental works of Railways in Paradeep area. Divisional Railway Manager of Khurda Road Railway Division Rinkesh Roy and other Principal Heads of the Departments of ECoR were present on the occasion.

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CLASSIFIED LOST

ପୁସ୍ତକ ଉପହାସକ ସାହୁ, ପିଲା-ଅଖିଳ ରଠ୍ଟ ସାହୁ, ପା/ପୋ- ଉତ୍କଳ, ଜିଲ୍ଲା-କେନ୍ଦୁଝର । ମୋର ଘର ପଟା ଖାତା ନଂ- ୨୫୭, ପୁର ନଂ.୮୮୮ର କବଳା ଚି ହଜିଯାଇଛି । ଯେଉଁ ସହୃଦୟ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ପାଇଛନ୍ତି ସେ ଫୋନ୍ ନଂ. ୯୭୭୭୯୫୫୮୮୮୫, ୬୩୭୯୦୫୫୫୫୫୦ ରେ ଯୋଗାଯୋଗ କରିବାକୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ ।

337 cases disposed of on 1st day of Promotion Adalat

Chief Secretary directed the administrative departments to take immediate actions to dispose of the cases

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar Feb 1: A total number of 337 cases were heard and disposed of on the first day of Promotion Adalat held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra at six different places. The promotion cases relating to the departments of Revenue and Disaster Management, Planning & Convergence, Higher Education, Science & Technology, Skill Development and Technical Education, Fisheries & Animal Resources Development, Commerce and Transport, Women and Child Development, Finance, Agriculture, Parliamentary Affairs, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water were enlisted and being heard in those Adalats. A total of 396 applications were received for Adalat Wednesday, out of which 337 petitions got introduced.

The second day of the Promotion Adalat will be held Thursday and cases relating to the departments of Rural Development, Steel & Mines, School & Mass Education, Public Enterprises, Excise, Information & Public Relations, Water Resources, Works, Energy, Handloom, Textiles & Handicrafts, Health & Family Welfare, Scheduled caste and Scheduled Tribe Development, Housing & Urban Development, Electronics and Information Technology will be introduced in these Adalats.

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Presiding over the Adalat at Chief Minister's grievance cell, Chief Secretary Mahapatra directed the administrative departments to take immediate actions to dispose of the cases. Further, Mahapatra directed to prepare graduation list of the restructured cadres to ensure promotion.

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Tech driven training for differently-abled teachers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Technology driven training for handicapped teachers started off Wednesday at Integrated Infrastructure Complex, Jajati in the presence of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) minister Ashok Chandra Panda. The first phase of the programme involves 27 visually impaired (VI) teachers in which minister Panda addressed that such technology intervention in the sector of special education could add more strength to the objectives of inclusive education.

The Department will collaborate and cooperate to fulfill the pedagogic needs of the VI students and to enhance digital literacy and capacity building of the teachers. "Vision Empower", a non-profit organisation of Bengaluru with support of Microsoft Research Lab and IIT, Bengaluru have undertaken the training programme at Jajti which will be extended further. A digital device (equivalent to kindle/tab) for visually impaired got introduced by "Vision Empower" in which all the text books (Class 1 to 10) will be stored along with other story and reference books. A single device can hold 15000 to 20000 books. About 20 such devices will be installed at the proposed experience centre.

clusive education. "An experience centre at the complex will be established very soon to avail required facilities to train the teachers," he added. Subrato Bagchi, Odisha Skill Development Authority chairman said, "the latest educational aids and teaching learning materials will empower the teachers while appreciating the Department of SSEPD for gearing up such activities for the VI students."

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Denizens lost ₹1.87cr to cyber fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Unknown cyber criminals have siphoned off the hard-earned money to the tune of ₹1.87 crore from citizens in the Capital city. According to the monthly data released by the Cyber Crime and Economic Offence (CC&EO) police station, the gullible citizens lost ₹1, 87, 52,918 to the cyber fraudsters last month. The CC&EO police station has received 403 complaints related to cyber crime through its helpline number 7440006709. As many as 194 victims who were duped through UPI related issues sought the help of police in January. Similarly, cyber fraudsters duped 113 persons of their savings citing different credit and debit card related services. The police also received 41 cases in connection with social media related crime in January. As many as 13 cases have been registered in connection with cyber fraud complaints during last month. The police also managed to retrieve and return fraud amount to the tune of ₹7, 41,934 to the victims. Police have also blocked ₹19, 50,086 withdrawn by the criminals from the accounts of victims in January.

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ORMAS organises Buyer Seller Interface

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 1: To uplift the socio-economic status of rural women entrepreneurs, Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society (ORMAS) organised the Buyer Seller Interface Wednesday in the presence of Poonam T Guha IAS, CEO, ORMAS, Bhabani Shankar Chayani OAS (SS), Collector & DM, Cuttack, Ambar Kumar Kar OAS (SAG), CDO-cum-EO, ZP, Cuttack, Bipin Behari Rout, Joint CEO, ORMAS Cuttack and other officials. 80 women entrepreneurs from rural and urban Cuttack participated in the Buyer Seller Interface. Apart from the women entrepreneurs the corporates house like ITC, Pidilite, Sabat Exports Private Ltd, DD Textiles, Jagdish Textiles, Jaya Bharat Spices, OditaTrust, TataTrust, Mahalaxmi Enterprises, Santosh Ayurvedic, Laxminarayan Store, R.S. Agency, Prime Enterprises, Oditribe & Sibani traders also participated. The sessions included presen-

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tation from Sabat Exports, OditaTrust, Oditribe to make the producers aware regarding the constraints and opportunities in the current market. The presentations focused on the current trend in consumer demands and scope for product development and diversification as well as focused on developing salespersonship ability to better sell the products. A MoU was signed with Sabat Exports Private Ltd for handloom products, Odita Trust for GI tagging of individual manibandha weavers, Oditribe for handloom, handicrafts and farm items, Prime for farm produces and spices, DD Textiles and Jagdish Textiles for expanding the market outreach of handloom sarees. Apart from this, a MoU was signed with Mahalaxmi Agency, Santosh Ayurvedic, Laxminarayan Stores, R.S. Agency and Shibani Traders for OTC and consumable items so as to strengthen the existing market linkage. The traders who participated in the Buyer Seller Interface were also felicitated.

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Pani Panchayat Pakhya kicks off



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Observance of Annual Pani Panchayat Pakhya, has started Wednesday across 117 divisions, which will continue till February 15, to acknowledge the importance of Pani Panchayats to enhance water governance, participatory irrigation management and ensure quality pure water at the grassroot level. The Pakhya, which will be observed at three levels (division, district and state) Wednesday, February 8, and February 15 respectively, has been flagged off by Ministers, in the presence of local MLA Wednesday in Cuttack. Activities such as debate, essay, painting, quiz competitions for school children and Pani Panchayat Samabsha along with Information Education Communication & Social Behavioural Change Communication (IEC & SBCC) activities were organized to promote the event. Ranendra Pratap Swain, minister, Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment and Fisheries & ARD flagged off the event at Cuttack. Similarly Jagannath Sarka, Minister ST & SC Development and Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare at Rayagada and Rajanikant Singha, Deputy Speaker at Angul inaugurated the events. Also, the Collectors & District Magistrates of Ganjam, Cuttack, Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh, Nuapada, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Balasore, Kalahandi, Koraput, Jagatsinghpur, Balangir initiated the event at their respective places.

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Naveen concerned...

Continued from P1

Slamming the Odisha BJP leaders, who are pressing hard for implementation of the Ayushman Bharat scheme in Odisha, Patnaik said he now hopes that the BJP state leadership will stop hoodwinking the people of Odisha. Speaking about the good steps taken by the Centre in the budget, he said the increased capital investment, support to drinking water initiatives, and increasing rural housing will accelerate growth as well as have social impact in rural areas. He also welcomed the Prime Minister's thrust on millets. "The focus on new world technologies like artificial intelligence, internet of things is appreciable. These are some of the good aspects of the budget. The focus on primitive tribal groups is a welcome step," he added.

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Although the gradual fiscal consolidation trend is intact and will help to stabilise the government's debt burden relative to nominal GDP, the high debt burden and weak debt affordability are constraints that offset India's fundamental strengths, including its high growth potential and deep domestic capital markets, it said.

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Nothing big, no bang

Continued from P1

While the agriculture credit target has been increased to ₹20 lakh crore with focus on animal husbandry, dairy and fisheries, the increased investment in infrastructure and productive capacity is aimed at having a multiplier impact on growth and employment. Additional ₹9,000 crore has been provided toward credit guarantee for medium and small enterprises. Railways has been provided a capital outlay of ₹2.40 lakh crore - the highest ever and about 9 times the outlay made in 2013-14. An Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (UIDF) will be established for the creation of urban infrastructure in tier 2 and 3 cities. The Budget has also provided ₹35,000 crore for energy transition and Net Zero objectives. Battery Energy Storage Systems with capacity of 4,000 MWh will be supported with viability gap funding, and ₹20,700 crore will be spent in building a transmission system to evacuate 13 GW renewable energy from Ladakh. The outlay for the affordable housing scheme, PM Awas Yojana, has been increased 66 per cent to ₹79,000 crore. Other highlights of the Budget include reviving 50 additional airports, heliports and water aerodromes, and establishing a National Digital Library to make available quality books across languages, geographies and genres. The income tax relief provided for individual taxpayers would mean a 25 per cent reduction in tax outgo of an individual with an annual income of ₹9 lakh as he or she would be required to pay only ₹45,000 as against ₹60,000. Similarly, an individual with an income of ₹15 lakh would be required to pay only ₹1.5 lakh or 10 per cent of his or her income as tax, a reduction of 20 per cent from the existing liability of ₹1,87,500, Sitharaman said. "The personal income tax has had substantial changes (in the Budget) which will benefit the middle class," Sitharaman said at the post-Budget press conference. "The ultimate interest is to make the simpler (new) regime more attractive." Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra said the majority of individual taxpayers would find it more attractive to shift to the new regime but did not give details on the number of taxpayers who have migrated to the new tax regime since 2020-21. Also, the ₹50,000 standard deduction provided in the old tax regime has now been extended to the new tax regime. The limit of ₹3 lakh for tax exemption on leave encashment on retirement of non-government salaried employees will be increased to ₹25 lakh. The total revenue foregone from the reduction in direct and indirect taxes after accounting for a small gain from additional mobilisation will be ₹35,000 crore annually. "The narrower deficit forecast in the Union government budget for 2023-24 underscores the government's commitment to longer-term fiscal sustainability and supports the economy amid high inflation and a challenging global environment," Moody's Investor Service said in its initial comments on the Budget. Although the gradual fiscal consolidation trend is intact and will help to stabilise the government's debt burden relative to nominal GDP, the high debt burden and weak debt affordability are constraints that offset India's fundamental strengths, including its high growth potential and deep domestic capital markets, it said.

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Leopard hide seized again in Mayurbhanj; 8 arrested

Seizure of three leopards' hides within a span of 45 days, which have been poached in Similipal wildlife sanctuary, has sparked surprise



The breakthrough came when a wildlife activist posing as a decoy customer negotiated with the accused persons to purchase the hide

over to the Forest department for registration of a case under Wildlife Act and further investigations, Mayurbhanj SP Rishikesh Dnyandeo Khilari said.

Police said that a wildlife activist Abhishek Acharya posing as decoy customer expressed his interest to buy the hide. He lured the accused and offered them a premium of Rs 7 lakh to purchase the hide. The accused persons believing him came to the dhaba when policemen in hiding pounced on them and nabbed them. Several wildlife activists and former honorary wildlife warden Bhanumitra Acharya assisted the police during the raid.

Local residents have demanded to intensify security measures in and outside the Similipal wildlife sanctuary and protect the wild animals from being killed by wildlife smugglers and poachers. Forest officials have failed to get any inkling of poaching activities and smuggling inside the sanctuary, they alleged. They also demanded to take the unscrupulous forest officials off the task and warned of an agitation if their demands are not met.



TUSSAR EXPO: Collector Monisha Banerjee accompanied by ORMAS CEO Rajgopal Dash and other officials take stock of harvested coconuts at a Tussar Farmers' Mela held at Sana Amlipali village under Bhatli block in Bargarh district, Wednesday

After Kotia, Andhra eyes Rayagada village

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Feb 1: After Kotia in Koraput district, the Andhra Pradesh government has launched fresh attempt to grab land in Rayagada district.

The matter came to the fore after Andhra officials were found constructing a road under Sadar block by encroaching upon a land in the area.

On being informed, officials rushed to the spot and called the Andhra officials for a discussion. However they did not turn up, following which Odisha officials stopped the road works.

Sources said that Andhra officials had encroached upon land and constructing a road 500 metres in-



side the border at Palam Tulasi village under Durgapadu panchayat of Sadar block.

On being apprised, tehsildar Tapas Rout, block development of-

ficer (BDO) Lakshminarayan Sabat and members of Chasi Ekta Parishad rushed to the spot. They informed the Andhra officials that land should be demarcated first

before carrying out any type of construction work. They also informed that the land would be demarcated Tuesday and asked them to remain present for the work. However, the Andhra officials did not turn up following which they stopped the road works.

Later, the Odisha officials put up cement poles to identify the patch of land. When contacted, BDO Lakshminarayan Sabat confirmed the development stating that the Andhra officials were constructing a road by encroaching upon land in Rayagada district 10 days back.

The land was demarcated with the help of a revenue map of the area and put up cement poles to prevent entry of outsiders, he added.

Nabakalebara play staged in Rourkela

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 1: A play highlighting the 'Nabakalebara', the ritualistic recreation Lord Jagannath and his siblings as well as Sudarshan was staged at Bhanja Bhawan auditorium at Sector-5 in Rourkela, Wednesday.

Rourkela MLA Sarada Prasad Nayak, Rourkela Steel Plant director in-charge Atanu Bhowmik, municipal commissioner Subhankar Mohapatra and SP Mukesh Bhama joined as guests on the second day of the play.

The play showcases over 15 attacks on Srimandir by the then Mughal rulers and how the Gajapati and the servitors managed to shift the idols to undisclosed locations and protect the honour of scores of Odias.

The play is produced by Bini Samal, the managing director of Sai Sradha production trust,



written by Shankar Tripathy and directed by Dhira Mallick. Malaya Mishra has composed the music of the play while Nirmal Nayak has penned the lyrics.

Unknown explosive goes off at school; 3 students critical

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani, Feb 1: Three students suffered serious injuries after an explosive allegedly brought by a student went off at a private English medium school at Rutungia under Baliguda police limits in Kandhamal district, Wednesday.

The incident occurred during the recess at noon. Two of the injured students stated to be critical have been admitted to the district headquarters hospital in Phulbani. However, it remains to be ascertained how and where the concerned student found the explosive. The incident has sparked tension and a shockwave among the parents and guardians.

All the injured were immediately rushed to Baliguda sub-divisional hospital but as the condition of two of them deteriorated, they were later shifted to the district headquarters hospital in Phulbani.



According to sources, one of the injured students who was residing in the school hostel and studying in Class-VII had brought an explosive to the school. During recess, he was showing it to his friends when it exploded, leaving all three of them injured. Police launched an investigation but the schools

authorities were tightlipped on the issue refusing to speak.

The school authorities were clueless as to what the explosive was and how the incident occurred. They were learnt to have questioned the students but the kids failed to speak anything on the issue as they were shocked and terrified.

3 held for robbing, molesting woman

POST NEWS NETWORK

Digapahandi, Feb 1: Police arrested three persons Monday on charges of molesting a woman and robbing her of a gold necklace at Chaitanyapur village under this police limit in Ganjam district, Sunday. The miscreants also assaulted the victim's husband and villagers who tried to rescue her from the attack.

The arrested were identified as S Rama Reddy, M Kalita Reddy and Santosh Reddy of Managarajpur village. A case was registered in this connection and the accused produced in the court. The three were remanded to judicial custody after their bail pleas were rejected. They will be housed at the sub-jail here.

Police said that the accused barged into the woman's house at Chaitanyapur village Sunday and molested her. They snatched away her gold necklace weighing 20 gram when she resisted. Hearing the

woman scream, her husband and villagers rushed to the spot. The miscreants attacked them also. However, the villagers overpowered them before informing the police. Police arrived at the spot and registered a case over a complaint.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No.: eT-M-Staffreq-PUI-03-2023

Name of the Work : OUTSOURCING OF THE STATISTICS, DATA MANAGEMENT & MATERIAL HANDLING WORK OF COACHING DEPOT, PURI FOR A PERIOD OF 03 YEARS.

Advertised Value : ₹ 2,47,42,116.30, EMD: ₹ 2,73,700/-, Tender document cost: ₹ 11,800/-, Period of Completion : 36 months.

Bidding start date : 06.02.2023, Tender closing date & time : at 1500 hrs. of 20.02.2023.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Complete details & tender documents will be available at website www.reps.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Mechanical Engineer/ PR-960/N/22-23

Khurda Road

BOMBS HURLED ON TRADER'S HOUSE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chikiti, Feb 1: Panic gripped people after miscreants hurled bombs on the house of a trader at Chikitipentha, Nua Bazaar under K Nuagaon police limits in Ganjam district in the wee hours of Wednesday.

The trader was identified as Surya Sahu of the area. However, no major casualty was reported

during the incident as the two bombs damaged only the main shutters of the house and some portions of a motorcycle parked inside. The incident has come at a time when people are yet to recover from the trauma of a group clash which recently occurred in Pitatali village under Chikiti Assembly segment due to political rivalry.

On being informed, Chikiti SDPO

Krushna Chandra Bhatra and K Nuagaon IIC Mrutyunjaya Swain reached the spot and launched an investigation by collecting the fragments of the exploded bombs.

People fear that the two back-to-back incidents might endanger their lives as Chikitipentha is the main commercial hub of the area which is daily visited by lakhs of people from 17 panchayats to buy and sell goods.

Rayagada college, school start annual sports meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Feb 1: The two-day annual athletic meet of Rayagada Autonomous College and Rayagada Higher Secondary School was kick-started Wednesday.

The sports meet was inaugurated by former principal Kumuda Chandra Mishra. Principal Prasanna Kumar Gantayat sought blessings at Goddess Maa Majhi

Gouri temple and carried the torch to the college. The vice-president of the sports association K Sashi and associates P Gireesh Patnaik, Manoj Kumar Pattanayak, Ashok Kumar Sahu, Niti Minyalk, Damayanti Bag, Snehanjali Pandey, Manmath Rao Toika, Subhasini Panda, PET Ashis Kumar Pujari and senior staff members BL Shroff and AK Khadanga took all the initiatives to organise the sports meet.



FIRE FIGHTING LESSONS: A fire personnel gives a demonstration on fire fighting measures at a programme organised for Anganwadi workers at its K Nuapalli office on Aska outskirts in Ganjam district, Wednesday

Central Bank of India

Regional Office: Plot No.: 108-B, 1st Floor, Unit - VII, Surya Nagar, Near Gopabandhu Square, Bhubaneswar-751003

TENDER FOR SALE OF BANK'S VEHICLE

Central Bank of India, Bhubaneswar Regional Office invites offers from interested parties/ individuals to purchase the Bank's Vehicle details are mentioned below on "As is where is basis". An Application fee of ₹1,000/- (Rupees One Thousand Only) per vehicle for general public by means of Demand Draft (DD) or pay order in favour of Central Bank of India payable at Bhubaneswar must be submitted along with the bid. The forms & details can be downloaded from Bank's website www.centralbankofindia.co.in under tender section.

Sl. No.	Registration No.	Make and Model	Reserve Price below which bid will not be accepted (Excluding GST)	Parked at / Date & Time of Inspection of Vehicle
1.	OD 33 L 2662	MARUTI SWIFT VXI	₹2,00,000/-	Regional Office: Bhubaneswar, Plot No.: 108-B, 1st Floor, Unit - VII, Surya Nagar, Near Gopabandhu Square, Bhubaneswar-751003 / Between working hours (10.00 to 15.30 hrs) upto 16.02.2023

Earnest Money Deposit of ₹10,000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand Only) for General Public and ₹5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand Only) for Staff and Ex-staff shall be paid along with the offer. The Bid must be submitted for in an enclosed envelope that must be super scribed as "For Purchase of Bank's Vehicle, Registration No.: OD 33 L 2662".

The Last Date of submission of offer: 17.02.2023 up to 15.00 hrs & Application will be opened on 17.02.2023 at 15.30 hrs.

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 01.02.2023

Sd/- Chief Manager

FOCUS UNION BUDGET

SENDING RIGHT SIGNALS



The big news was increasing the minimum threshold for paying income tax. Since high inflation in the past three years has eaten away real purchasing power, it was expected that the slabs which are nominal would be revised. But raising the minimum level to 7 lakh rupees, which is 350 percent of the per capita income of the country (as mentioned by the FM herself) makes India an outlier among peer nations

which is the highest it has been. This too should help increase farm productivity, value addition in agro-processing and farmers' incomes. As such the PM KISAN scheme of direct cash transfers continues to go to more than 11 crore farm households.

As was pointed out in an earlier column, that one big macro backdrop to the budget is the continuously widening income and wealth inequality. Hence a bigger emphasis on social security was expected. But the Budget disappoints by drastically cutting down on the rural employment guarantee scheme (a proxy for unemployment insurance which does not exist in India) and also less allocation on national health and education missions. Perhaps the Centre believes that these are in the domain of states' budgets and hence is left to the states. Of course the Finance Minister reminded us about impressive achievements in financial inclusion via no frills bank accounts, subsidised cooking gas cylinders, toilets and such like. Even the dramatic expansion in

low cost housing scheme is in that direction, and it has the additional aspect of being an asset creating public spending. In that spirit the increase in capital outlay, especially on road and rail is quite welcome. It constitutes one fourth of the budget, the highest share so far. The budget has also substantially increased credit flow to agriculture, which too will lead to more capital formation.

The big news was increasing the minimum threshold for paying income tax. Since high inflation in the past three years has eaten away real purchasing power, it was expected that the slabs which are nominal would be revised. But raising the minimum level to 7 lakh rupees, which is 350 per cent of the per capita income of the country (as mentioned by the FM herself) makes India an outlier among peer nations. None of the G20 countries give such a generous exemption to income tax payers. The Economic Survey a few years ago had pointed out that India has only seven taxpayers for every 100 voters. This is in sharp contrast to

developed nations, or in Scandinavia where the ratio is nearly 1 to 1. So widening the tax base is an absolute imperative, something that every budget seems to ignore. Indeed the share of indirect taxes in total tax is at 55 percent now, and has been rising. This is regressive, and cannot be justified because indirect taxes like GST are easy to administer and collect. The Centre's share of GST is now at nearly 10 trillion in addition to still high excise duties on petrol and diesel. All of this is extra and disproportionately burdensome to the poor. The budget is not populist but is certainly expansionist. In that respect it will create inflationary pressures, which too hurt the poor more.

Apart from the enhancement to capital outlays, there is a welcome focus on green growth and sustainable development. India has committed to a net zero emission economy in the next fifty years, so our GDP must be greener. Hydrogen has the promise of an ideal fuel which when burnt produces just clean water vapor. All forms of renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, biofuels, agro-waste and hydrogen must coexist to achieve our ambitious climate targets. Hence on this the Budget sent the right signals.

The Budget is merely a plan. Achieving the plan depends on not just domestic business, consumer sentiments and political winds but also the global situation. The Ukraine war is now in its second year, and America is sending tanks. Oil prices might still jump despite recessionary winds. China is waging a cold war in technology with the West and fighting new challenges like a shrinking workforce and effects of a zero covid policy. How the year plays out is very uncertain, but India's domestic thrust and momentum should ensure a fast-growing economy. And if that happens all the budget targets will be met.

*The writer is a noted economist
SYNDICATE: THE BILLION PRESS*



Ajit Ranade

THE BUDGET IS MERELY A PLAN. ACHIEVING THE PLAN DEPENDS ON NOT JUST DOMESTIC BUSINESS, CONSUMER SENTIMENTS AND POLITICAL WINDS BUT ALSO THE GLOBAL SITUATION

This is Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's fifth budget, and the last full plan before the general elections of 2024. There was an expectation that it would be a full throttle populist budget. And that any fiscal deficit limit would be thrown to the winds. Thankfully it is not the case. The fiscal deficit target of less than six percent of expected GDP next year is reasonably restrained, although it could have been a more stretched target. Fiscal austerity is a must for several reasons. The debt to GDP ratio has already climbed to 90 per cent. High deficit adds to the borrowing requirement which in turn adds to the debt mountain. As the mountain grows so does the cost of servicing the debt i.e., interest payments. The interest burden next year is a whopping 10 lakh crore, equal to the entire capital spending of the Centre. In fact, much of the deficit is eaten away by interest payment obligations. It is as if the interest burden and the deficit mutually reinforce each other, and soon we might be in a debt trap, i.e. simply borrowing to pay for interest alone. Hence fiscal consolidation is a must. High fiscal deficits are also a penalty imposed on future unborn generations. Hence the FM promised to bring down the deficit steadily in the next few years. That needs economic growth to pick up, so that tax revenues are buoyant and then the government does not have to depend on borrowings.

The other reason to be cautious about excessive fiscal expansion is that it is counter-productive to tackling inflation. It acts against the monetary policy of tightening money supply. On this count the budget plan has done a reasonably good job of fiscal restraint and growth inducing fiscal expansion.

The biggest example of fiscal push for growth is the 33 per cent increase in capital outlay which lays the foundation for future growth. This is at 10 lakh crore, and one fourth of all spending. The credit allocation to the farm sector will also rise to 20 lakh crore

In each world, in each being, in each thing, in each atom is the divine presence and it is man's mission to manifest it.

THE MOTHER



New Strategic Vision

The gusto with which Japan has embraced rearmament has surprised its allies and international partners. In December, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida unveiled detailed plans to double defence spending over the next five years, leaving no doubt about the country's determination to expand its military capabilities to deter China's expansionist ambitions.

Japan's new strategic vision represents the culmination of a long-term shift that began under Kishida's predecessor, Abe Shinzō, who was assassinated last July. During Abe's tenure, which lasted from his return to power in December 2012 until his resignation in September 2020, Japan revamped its military doctrine and significantly increased defence expenditure. Abe also created a cabinet-level National Security Council, established the National Security Secretariat to support it, streamlined military procurement by forming the Acquisition, Technology & Logistics Agency (ATLA), and, last but not least, sought to amend Japan's pacifist constitution, though in vain.

Taken together, Abe's policies marked a historic shift in Japan's defence policy and regional standing. No longer would Japanese security be a matter of wishful thinking, willful blindness, and dependence on the United States. Before Abe, if China had attacked a US warship near Japan's territorial waters, the Japanese military would not have gotten involved. Abe rejected this absurd approach and pushed Japan to assume a central role in the Indo-Pacific. Now, if the US and China were to go to war over Taiwan, Japan could cooperate with the US military. In a role reversal of sorts, the Japanese military is now protecting US ships and planes in the region.

Kishida's ambitious defence policies, which include increasing military spending to ¥43 trillion (\$330 billion) by 2027 and revising Japan's national security strategy to allow for counterstrike capabilities, implement many of Abe's ideas. They also expand on them in four meaningful ways.

First, the new security doctrine calls a spade a spade. When Japan published its first-ever national security strategy in 2013, China's incursions into Japanese waters and airspace near the Senkaku Islands were described as "an issue of concern to the international community, including Japan." The revised strategy, however, refers to China - in line with US rhetoric - as "an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge" to Japan. As this change makes clear, Japan's military build-up aims, first and foremost, to deter Chinese expansionism.

Second, the new strategy seeks to build up fuel and ammunition supplies, thereby addressing a problem that Abe repeatedly warned about. While Japan has purchased many fighter jets, ships, and combat vehicles over the past decade, it still lacks the strategic stockpiles and secure storage facilities needed to sustain a long war.

To be sure, stocking up on munitions and fuel is far less glamorous than purchasing F-35 fighter jets or long-range Tomahawk cruise missiles from the US. But while massive arms purchases will certainly help Japan face the triple threat of Russia, China, and North Korea, the truth is that its strategic position is far more precarious than that of any other G7 member. Unless it builds and maintains adequate strategic reserves, Japan will not be able to defend itself.

Third, the US-Japanese defence pact used to have an unwritten rule that all new military assets should be under the Americans' control. Recently, however, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Italy announced a joint effort to develop a next-generation fighter jet. The US Department of Defence immediately put out a statement in support of the new partnership, reflecting the growing military cooperation between the US, Japan, European countries, Australia, and India.

Lastly, the revised national security strategy states that "Japan will actively accept displaced people due to war." This allusion to a possible Chinese invasion of Taiwan, together with the implied willingness to accept the many Taiwanese citizens who would surely flee if that happened, did not attract much attention, but it is groundbreaking.

Had Abe lived, he would have been pleased that Kishida's government is pursuing many of the goals he wanted to achieve. While the new national security agenda stops short of amending the existing restrictions on the deployment of offensive weapons, it does emphasise the need to develop counterstrike capabilities that would enable Japan to hit targets in other countries in the event of an attack.

But while the proposed increase in military spending seems to enjoy broad public support, the question of how to pay for it will most likely be the subject of fierce parliamentary debate. Kishida's plan to fund the additional expenditures by raising taxes has already provoked strong opposition, even within his own party. Kishida's competence will undoubtedly be put to the test over the coming months, as will Japan's newfound strategic resolve.

The writer is professor at Keio University's Graduate School of System Design and Management. @PROJECT SYNDICATE



Taniguchi Tomohiko

While massive arms purchases will certainly help Japan face the triple threat of Russia, China, and North Korea, the truth is that its strategic position is far more precarious than that of any other G7 member

SPECTRUM UKRAINE WAR

US weapons for Russia, courtesy Taliban

Indeed, war and political circumstances can make you sleep with your enemy, and despite different ideologies, they can also make opponents strange bedfellows. As per reports in the British media, Russia is eyeing weapons left by the hastily-withdrawing US forces in Afghanistan in 2021. To secure these arms, Russian diplomats are reportedly wooing Taliban elements.

British tabloid The Sun reported last week, citing a Telegram channel 'Kremlin Insider', that Russia is seeking weapons from Afghanistan, including those left behind by the US forces in 2021. Though Moscow has denied these claims, Ukrainian and Western officials said Russia is facing a shortage of arms.

Reports claimed that amid planning for an expected spring offensive, Russia has reportedly turned to the Taliban for weapons. As per a US Department of Defence report, the American troops had left more than \$7 billion worth of weapons and equipment when they pulled out of Afghanistan, CNN reported.

The Sun, citing a Telegram channel, 'General SVR', reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin has asked the Taliban for equipment left by the US. The General SVR channel claimed, citing the Kremlin Insider, that in exchange for arms,

Putin will 'recognise' the Taliban government.

If indeed these reports are true, then it may come as a shot in the arm for the Taliban, as finally they'll be able to get at least one former super power to recognise them and additionally they also might get some financial package from Russians, money which is desperately needed by the Taliban government to function properly.

Reportedly, the Russian presidential envoy for Afghanistan - Zamir Kabulov - met with Pakistani officials in Islamabad on January 25 and apprised them about his meetings with the Taliban in Kabul earlier last month. Official Pakistani sources in the know of the meeting told Voice of America (VOA) that Kabulov said Russia will continue to engage with the Taliban, but it is not considering granting formal recognition to the rulers "for the time being."

The Russian envoy "advised" the all-male Taliban to create a "politically inclusive" government and ease restrictions on women in order to move forward on the issue of their legitimacy, VOA reported citing sources.

As the US troops withdrew from Afghanistan amid the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021, 70% of American weapons as well as \$48 million worth of ammunition pro-

vided to Afghan forces were left in the war-torn country. Foreign Policy had reported in April last year. The military equipment included 23,825 Humvees and around 900 combat vehicles. As many as 42,000 pieces of night vision, surveillance, biometric and positioning equipment were also left behind in Afghanistan, as per the report.

The officials familiar with the defence department report had said that it was unlikely for the Taliban to use the US weapons, which require technical support and specialised maintenance. But they had also expressed concerns about the Taliban fighters using small arms, including automatic rifles.

The big question is whether Russia is actually short of weapons. No, claims former Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev, the newly-appointed head of the military-industrial commission that is monitoring weapons production for the war. Hitting out at Western media reports that Russia is facing a paucity of missiles and artillery, Medvedev had said last week that Moscow's weapons stocks are adequate to continue the fight in Ukraine.

In December last year, Britain's armed forces chief - Admiral Sir Tony Radakin - had said that Russia had planned for a "30-day war" and is now facing a "critical shortage" of artillery shells.

The Guardian had reported him as saying that Russia faces a critical shortage of artillery munitions. This means that their ability to conduct successful offensive ground operations is rapidly diminishing. When Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine in February last year, it was planned to be a blitzkrieg-like operation that would sweep the capital Kiev. However, the fierce resistance by the Armed Forces of Ukraine pushed Russian troops to the fringes and made it a war of attrition. The war has essentially proved to be a double whammy for Russia. Not only has the country lost a massive number of men and material, Moscow has also been unable to manufacture weapons at pre-war levels due to crippling sanctions. Going by daily estimates published by Ukraine's Ministry of Defence, Russia has so far lost more than 3,100 tanks, over 6,300 armoured vehicles, more than 2,100 artillery, over 1,900 drones, and almost 300 military jets, to name a few.

Meanwhile, there are also reports that NATO is going to supply Ukraine with more superior tanks to counter the hotly-predicted pre-spring Russian offensive.

The writer is a political commentator based in New Delhi. @IANS



Asad Mirza

AMERICAN TROOPS HAD LEFT MORE THAN \$7 BILLION WORTH OF WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT WHEN THEY PULLED OUT OF AFGHANISTAN

WISDOM CORNER

- Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning. **ALBERT EINSTEIN**
- We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can understand the Universe. That makes us something very special. **STEPHEN HAWKING**
- One never notices what has been done; one can only see what remains to be done. **MARIE CURIE**

WORDSWORTH

Widget

A widget is often a term for some small manufactured item, otherwise not particularised. It has long been used in business studies, and sometimes in advertisements, as a generic name for an item. It also turns up in computing as an example of a generic product, for example in tutorials explaining how to write and use databases, and also as an element of at least one operating system. In recent years in Britain it has become the name for a specific thing: a plastic device in the bottom of a can of beer that introduces nitrogen into the liquid to give it a creamy head, in order to make it look more like draught beer. HG Wells invented a family called the Widgets in Ann Veronica in 1909. It would be nice to think that this was the source of the word, but it looks - alas - like a coincidence, since the word's debut is otherwise in America more than a decade later. It appears in the play Beggar on Horseback, by George Kaufman and Marc Connelly, which was first performed in 1924. The character Neil McRae is a struggling young composer, engaged to the daughter of a rich but philistine businessman. His possible future father-in-law explains that his firm is in the widget business. But the joke is that the young composer never finds out what these widget things really are.

Tiger tale

Sir, There were 2967 tigers in 2018 in India as compared to 2226 in 2014. The government has told the Supreme Court that the good work of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has borne fruit. Be that as it may, tigers are solitary animals and are known to trudge long distances. In the process, invasion of human habitat is a foregone conclusion, and that is worrying because human-animal conflict is a major reason for killing of tigers apart from poaching and road accidents. "Survival of the fittest," consequent to infighting over territorial domination, too, is one important reason why tigers die. It is also known that flourishing ecotourism has not only pushed the majestic animals out of their own territories but have also had an impact on their reproduction ability because of the resultant stress. One reassuring aspect is the competitive spirit among states like Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka to save tigers and earn the "tiger state" tag.

Hyperloop tech

Sir, If you want to travel at a lightning speed, you can take the help of a plane that flies at a speed of about 600 km per hour. But now a technology is being developed that will go faster than airplanes and maglev trains, and that technology is called hyperloop technology. Hyperloop is an underground transportation technology in which a low-pressure tube is placed on the column and inside this tube there is a bullet-like buggy, also called a pod, which floats in the air. Passengers can board this pod and travel to their destination at a speed of 1200 km/h. The concept of this technology was first introduced by Elon Musk in 2013. Hyperloop technology is created by combining the tubes and pods, in which 90% of the air inside the tubes is removed and the pods move at lightning speed without contact on the tracks inside the tubes. Work on the first hyperloop project in India will be started by Virgin Hyperloop, a company owned by Richard Branson. The Mumbai-Pune route has been selected for the Virgin Hyperloop project in the state. Virgin Hyperloop has partnered with Bangalore airport for the Hyperloop project and is currently in talks with the Punjab government about the project. This technology will completely change the transportation system in the near future.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

OrissaPOST
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Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR



Jammu, once considered as the economic hub of the erstwhile state, is the worst victim of BJP's political gimmick. People in Kashmir always suspected the intentions of BJP but Jammu gave a huge mandate to the party (in 2014 assembly polls) on the assurances of political and economic empowerment

STORMY WINDS IN TN, PONDY

The Indian Meteorological Department Wednesday said that the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry would be lashed with stormy winds, and has also advised fishermen not to venture into the seas



of the day quote

The budget talks about the vision for New India, the country's prosperity and aims to serve 130 crore Indians



YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

The challenge to build brand India continues because it is world's perception about the country that matters, not what we are trying to sell about ourselves



SHASHI THAROOR | CONGRESS LEADER

Many students are not getting a chance to study as they are not tip-toeing the line of the university authorities. I have met seven suspended students and feel they have been victimised. A professor has been terminated from service. A student is not allowed to complete PhD. Atrocities are taking place in different forms in this esteemed institution. I condemn those



MAMATA BANERJEE | WB CM

SHORT TAKES

Woman dies in fire at garment units

Mumbai: A 62-year-old woman died after a fire broke out at some garment units located in the Dharavi slum colony in Mumbai Wednesday, a Fire Brigade official said. At least four to five units located on the ground floors of two adjacent two-storey buildings in Ashok Mill compound were affected by the blaze which erupted at around noon, he said. The fire was confined to the electric wiring, electric installation, machinery, and clothes in the garment units, the official said.

DCPCR launches WhatsApp chatbot

New Delhi: The Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights launched its WhatsApp chatbot Wednesday, with Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia calling it an important initiative. The chatbot will help citizens and commission to interact in more effective manner, said an official. Some of its uses include complaint registration, searching information and tracking complaint status. It will be used by the commission for nudge-based awareness communications to children, women, anganwadi workers, etc.

Thief breaks into Goa court's evidence room

Panaji: A thief broke into the evidence room of the district and sessions court building in Goa's capital Panaji and fled with cash seized as part of proof in various cases, police said Wednesday. The incident took place on the intervening night of Tuesday-Wednesday in the court located in a Portuguese-era building where a guard was on duty on the front side, an official said. The thief entered the premises by breaking a window on the building's rear side, the police official said.

Maha: 4 killed as bus hits truck

Pune: Four people were killed and nearly 20 others received injuries after a bus hit a stationary truck on Pune-Solapur highway in Maharashtra Wednesday morning, police said. The accident took place near Yavat village in Pune district of Maharashtra at around 5 am, they said. "The private bus hit the stationary truck from rear side. Four people were killed and around 20 others were injured," Yavat police station's inspector Hemant Shedge said. The injured persons were taken to hospital, police said.

PRIVACY POLICY

SC asks WhatsApp to publicise undertaking given to Centre in 2021

In May 2021, WhatsApp, in a response to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's letter, had assured that the messaging service will not limit functionality for its users if they do not accept the new privacy policy update



36L MALICIOUS ACCOUNTS BANNED

New Delhi: Meta-owned WhatsApp on Wednesday said it banned over 36 lakh 'bad' accounts in India in the month of December 2022 in compliance with the new IT Rules 2021, which are being amended to put more responsibilities on social media platforms. Between December 1 and December 31, 3,677,000 WhatsApp accounts were banned, and 1,389,000 of these accounts were proactively banned before any reports from users, said the company. The messaging platform, which has more than 400 million users in the country, received 1,607 complaint reports in December in the country, and the records 'actioned' were 166.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 1: The Supreme Court Wednesday directed WhatsApp to give wide publicity in the media that users aren't bound to accept its 2021 privacy policy and also WhatsApp's functionality would not be affected till the new data protection bill comes into effect.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Justice KM Joseph observed that giving wide publicity to the WhatsApp undertaking would benefit those who have not agreed to the terms of its 2021 privacy policy. The top court asked WhatsApp to give advertisements in five newspapers regarding its undertaking given to the government.

The bench - also comprising Justices Ajay Rastogi, Aniruddha Bose, Hrishikesh Roy, and C T Ravikumar - said: "We further direct that WhatsApp will give publicity to this aspect to the customers of WhatsApp in five national newspapers on two occasions." The bench said it has

recorded the stand taken in the response to the government and "we record the submission of the senior counsel for WhatsApp that they will abide by the terms of the letter till next date of hearing".

The apex court noted that it Centre's counsel has brought to its notice that a digital personal data protection bill 2022 is about to be placed before the Parliament, and it is there contention that bill would cover most of the aspects which are subject matter of petitions before this court and the matter may be taken up at a later stage. This re-

quest was echoed by WhatsApp counsel too.

However, the petitioners' counsel vehemently contested this aspect and submitted that law should not come in the way of addressing issues raised in the petitions before the apex court. The petitioners' counsel said the stand by WhatsApp for its customers in Europe stands in stark contrast with its stand taken here, and urged the court to hear the matter. The petitioners' counsel stressed that the privacy policy should have an option to opt out from data sharing.

Air Marshal AP Singh takes charge as Vice Chief of IAF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: Air Marshal AP Singh, who has more than 5,000 hours of flying experience, assumed charge as the new Vice Chief of the Indian Air Force Wednesday.

He succeeded Air Marshal Sandeep Singh who retired Tuesday after more than 39 years of service. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Defence Services Staff College and National Defence College, the Air Marshal was commissioned into the fighter stream of the IAF December 21, 1984.

The officer is a qualified flying instructor and an experimental test pilot with more than 5,000 hours of flying experience on a variety of fixed and rotary wing aircraft. In the course of his career, the



officer has commanded an operational fighter squadron and a frontline air base.

As a test pilot, he led the MiG-29 upgrade project management team at Moscow. He was also the project director (flight test) at the National Flight Test Centre looking after the flight testing of the Light Combat Aircraft Tejas.

He has held important staff appointments of Air Defence Commander at South Western Air Command and Senior Air Staff Officer at Eastern Air Command.

Adani Group calls off FPO, says will return money to investors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: Adani Enterprises Wednesday said it has decided to withdraw its fully subscribed Rs 20,000-crore follow-on public offer (FPO) and will return the proceeds to investors.

The announcement came a day after the company's FPO was subscribed fully on the last day of the offer Tuesday. "The Board of Adani Enterprises Ltd., (AEL) decided not to go ahead with the fully subscribed FPO. Given the unprecedented situation and the current market volatility the company aims to protect the interest of its investing community by returning the FPO proceeds and withdraws the completed transaction," the Adani group's flagship company said in a statement. As many as 4.62 crore shares were sought as against an offer of 4.55 crore.

Non-institutional investors put in bids for over three times the 96.16 lakh shares reserved for them, while the 1.28 crore shares reserved for qualified institutional buyers (QIBs) was almost fully subscribed, according to BSE data.

There was, however, muted response from retail investors and company employees.

Gautam Adani, Chairman, Adani Enterprises Ltd said, the subscription for the FPO closed successfully Tuesday.

Despite the volatility in the stock over the last week, your faith and belief in the Company, its business and its management has been extremely reassuring



and humbling. Thank you". However, today the market has been unprecedented, and the company's stock price has fluctuated over the course of the day. "Given these extraordinary circumstances, the company's board felt that going ahead with the issue will not be morally correct.

The interest of the investors is paramount and hence to insulate them from any potential financial losses, the Board has decided not to go ahead with the FPO," Adani said.

The company said that its working with its Book Running Lead Managers (BRLMs) to refund the proceeds received in escrow and to also release the amounts blocked in Investors bank accounts for subscription to this issue.

The company also said that its balance sheet is very healthy with strong cash flow and secure assets, and has an "impeccable track record of servicing our debt".

"This decision will not have any impact on our existing operations and future plans. We will continue to focus on long term value creation and growth will be managed by internal accruals. Once the market stabilizes, we will review our capital market strategy," the statement noted.

Avalanche hits Gulmarg, 2 killed

A massive avalanche hit the upper reaches of Jammu and Kashmir's ski resort Gulmarg, killing two Polish tourists and trapping 21 skiers



Police and Army personnel carry the body of a foreign national

AGENCIES

Srinagar, Feb 1: A massive avalanche hit the upper reaches of Jammu and Kashmir's ski resort Gulmarg Wednesday, killing two Polish tourists and trapping 21 skiers who were rescued later, police said.

Three teams of 21 foreign nationals and two local guides were at the ski slopes in Hapatkhud Kangdori when the avalanche came rolling down around 12.30 pm, police officials said. The bodies of the two Polish nation-

als were recovered and moved to hospital for medico-legal procedures.

The other 19 people who were trapped in the snowy heights of Afarwat region, famous for its ski slopes and visited by hundreds of tourists every winter, were rescued by teams of the Baramulla district police.

They were taken to safe locations near Gulmarg. Several people saw the tragedy unfold.

"We saw the dance of death before our eyes. A 20 ft wall of ice fell on the skiers and they got buried under it. It's all about nature's fury," All India Congress Committee member Deepak Chinchore from Karnataka who happened to be at the spot told PTI.

Officials said the cable car which ferries tourists up the 14,000 ft Afarwat mountain was used for the rescue operations. Reports of some skiers being trapped are being corroborated. More details shall follow," a spokesperson of the Baramulla district police said on Twitter soon after the incident.



Farmers listen to the radio broadcast of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presenting the Union Budget 2023-24 in Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

Delhi losing forest cover, injustice to nature: HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: Delhi High Court Wednesday observed that the national capital was "drastically" losing its forest cover and "injustice" was being done to nature.

A bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad asked Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati to personally look into the matter. It also asked her about the status of a pending case before the Supreme Court with identical issues, including depletion of green cover.

"This is a case highlighting that the forest cover in Delhi is reducing drastically and buildings are being constructed around the central ridge area and that encroach-

ments around Asola sanctuary are not removed. Does the matter pending in the Supreme Court has taken care of the forest cover of Delhi too?," the bench asked Bhati.

To this, the law officer said the apex court's matter included everything and they were also waiting for the hearing before the top court. The bench further said, "Please personally look into this. Delhi is losing its forest cover like anything. We are keeping this (matter) after four weeks. The amicus curiae has done a great job and has brought all minute details to our notice. We feel that injustice is being done to nature. We should leave something for the generations to come - mountains, rivers and forests."

The high court was hearing a batch of public interest litigations on the problem of poor ambient air



quality in Delhi, an issue which it has taken up suo motu and in which it has also appointed an amicus curiae. The court also asked the authorities to explain the reason for defiance of its earlier orders passed in the matter and listed the matter for further hearing March 13.

It also asked the Centre, Delhi government, the Forest department and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to explain in an affidavit how a multi-storied building in the Ridge area got permission for the construction of flats.

Senior Advocate and Amicus Curiae Kailash Vasudev apprised the court of an advertisement on flats on sale in the Chattarpur area of south Delhi. "It is on THE

PROBLEM OF POOR AMBIENT AIR SOMEWHERE IN DELHI, AN ISSUE WHICH HAS TAKEN UP SUO MOTU AND IN WHICH IT HAS ALSO APPOINTED AN AMICUS CURIAE

THE COURT ALSO ASKED THE AUTHORITIES TO EXPLAIN THE REASON FOR DEFIANCE OF ITS EARLIER ORDERS PASSED IN THE MATTER AND LISTED THE MATTER FOR FURTHER HEARING MARCH 13

distributed to everyone.

He also showed certain photographs to the court to highlight the loss of forest cover, especially in the areas around Asola ridge area, you can't build it there as there is a prohibition. Somewhere some an- swer is needed, I can't say more. I think the court should issue a notice to the MCD to explain this. Ask for an affidavit from the MCD commissioner to answer what is there," he said, adding that the advertisement was freely being

THE HIGH COURT WAS HEARING A BATCH OF PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF POOR AMBIENT AIR SOMEWHERE IN DELHI, AN ISSUE WHICH HAS TAKEN UP SUO MOTU AND IN WHICH IT HAS ALSO APPOINTED AN AMICUS CURIAE

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THE COURT ALSO ASKED THE AUTHORITIES TO EXPLAIN THE REASON FOR DEFIANCE OF ITS EARLIER ORDERS PASSED IN THE MATTER AND LISTED THE MATTER FOR FURTHER HEARING MARCH 13



A passenger train moves on snow-covered Srinagar-Qazigund railway track in Srinagar

PTI PHOTO

Trinamool MLA's remark draws flak

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Feb 1: Controversial Trinamool Congress legislator Madan Mitra made an indecent comment about women, saying in Indian culture even five men can share a wife (in an indirect reference to Draupadi and her five husbands in Mahabharat).

Mitra said, "The Indian culture is where even five husbands can distribute one single wife among them".

He was referring to a finding by the central field inspection team from the Union Ministry of Education to review the implementation of the mid-day meal scheme in West Bengal where an irregularity was revealed where seven cooking assistants were paid equally out of the fund allotted as wage for five individuals.

Mitra's comment has drawn flak from the BJP and his own party as well.

The comments drew stark reactions from fashion designer-turned-politician and BJP legislator from Asansol (South)



assembly constituency Agnimitra Paul, who said Mitra's comments are proof enough that the state's ruling party does not hold any respect towards women.

"That is why so many persons accused of rape and molestation figure in the list of Trinamool Congress leaders," she said.

Mitra's comments had evoked sharp reactions from his own party as well. According to Trinamool Congress' state general secretary and party spokesman in West Bengal Kunal Ghosh, Mitra would have been more careful in his choice of words.

ANTI-ENCROACHMENT DRIVE

Mehbooba hits out at BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Feb 1: The anti-encroachment drive launched in Jammu and Kashmir is a new "weapon" for the BJP government to "persecute" people and uproot them from their homes, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti alleged Wednesday.

Talking to reporters here, the former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister called upon the people of the Union Territory to unite in order to fight against this "onslaught". "This is a new weapon being used by the BJP government, like they have the UAPA, PSA, NIA, ED and other agencies, to persecute the people of Jammu and Kashmir and uproot them from their homes," the People's Democratic Party (PDP) president said.

"Otherwise, China has occupied 20,000 square kilometres of our land, let the government take that land back first," she claimed. Mufti said some of the people who have been targeted through the anti-encroachment drive possessed their land since the time of Maharaja Hari Singh, like the Hotel Nedous here.

"First they created a wedge between Hindus and Muslims, then between Gujjars and Bakerwals and Shias and Sunnis. Now, they are creating a wedge between the rich and the poor by saying they are going against the rich, while the truth is that the houses of poor



The PDP chief said the Raj Bhavan and the Badami Bagh Cantonment area in Srinagar were built on state land and should be vacated first

The former Chief Minister alleged that the drive is a part of the corruption mechanism in Jammu and Kashmir

people are being demolished." "This is totally wrong and I request the people here to see how the people of Ladakh and Kargil have united. Till the people of Kashmir and Jammu do not unite, we will not be able to fight this onslaught.... Do not be a spectator, come forward and raise the issues," she said.

The PDP chief said the Raj Bhavan and the Badami Bagh Cantonment area in Srinagar were built on state land and should be vacated first. "Where is the Governor House and the BB Cantonment? If they are saying they are starting (the drive) against

influential people, then start it from the Governor House and the BB Cantonment. Why are they not doing that?" she asked.

The former Chief Minister also alleged that the drive is a part of the corruption mechanism in Jammu and Kashmir. "I want to tell you this with great responsibility that this is part of corruption. They want to take money from the rich and votes from the poor. They want to make the poor helpless so that they are called to the BJP office and asked to support the party. The rich are told to meet a specific official," Mufti said.

Twin rally of Shah in Bengal on February 12

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Feb 1: Keeping in mind polls for the three-tier panchayat system in West Bengal, Union Home Minister Amit Shah will attend two rallies in two districts in West Bengal on February 12. Out of the two rallies, the first one will be at Suri in Birbhum district and the second one will be at Arambagh.

State BJP sources said that the Union Home Minister will be arriving in Kolkata on the night of February 11.

"He will be staying at a hotel in Kolkata that night. On February 12 morning, he will be first attending a meeting with senior state BJP leaders in Kolkata. From there, he will first go to Suri in Birbhum district and attend the first rally there at around 11.30 a.m. After that, he will attend the second rally at Arambagh in Hooghly district at around 2.30 p.m. He will fly back to New Delhi that evening only," said a member of the BJP's state committee in West Bengal.

Commenting on the reason of choosing Suri, he said that organisational structure of Trinamool Congress in Birbhum district has received a setback following the imprisonment of the party's district president there for his alleged connection with the multi-crore cattle smuggling scam.

Youth draws praise for setting up library-cum-reading room

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, Feb 1: While the youth of Jammu and Kashmir are showcasing their talent in different fields like art, sports and others, some are also striving for a better future for other youth like them.

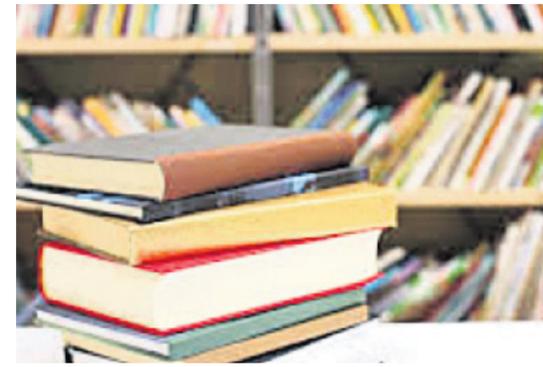
A good example of this is Irfan Ali from Budgam district in central Kashmir, who has established a library-cum-reading room in the district at an individual level.

The establishment of such a library at an individual level is a first of its kind initiative, where all the necessary books and other resources are provided to the youth to shape their future, and to prepare for the competitive exams.

Irfan, who himself is a civil service aspirant, does not want to let other aspiring youngsters face the difficulties he faced in preparing for competitive exams.

"I don't want other aspirants to miss out on the guidance and proper counselling which were not available to me. Due to lack of resources, I could not prepare properly. So I took this initiative so that the other youth can prepare better for the competitive exams," he said. Irfan got the inspiration for this initiative during his stay in Delhi where he went for coaching in 2019 after receiving a scholarship from the Zakat Foundation of India.

"During the few months I spent in Delhi, I saw beautiful libraries where all the necessary materials



The establishment of such a library at an individual level is a first of its kind initiative, where all the necessary books and other resources are provided to the youth to shape their future, and to prepare for the competitive exams

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were available to prepare for competitive exams. So I was inspired to start a similar library in my own hometown where the youth could study. The idea was to help those who cannot afford books or

other study materials," Irfan said. The year after he returned from Delhi, Irfan started his library from a small rented room in his hometown, where he got good response from the students. As the number of visitors grew, Irfan shifted to a bigger complex.

At present, the library consists of individual single cabins for reading purposes and has more than 300 books of UPSC alone. According to Irfan, he had to take a loan to fulfill his dream.

"I have named the set up 'Iqra Library-cum-Study Hall', and its salient features include IAS, KAS, JKSSB, SSC, NEET, JEE, and GATE materials. The library provides students with free books, study materials, notes, and daily newspapers, among others," Irfan said.

DARJEELING POLITICS

Mamata, Anit Thapa to hold talks

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Feb 1: In wake of the newly-emerging political equation in north West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha (BGPM) chief and Gorkhland Territorial Administration (GTA) chief executive Anit Thapa will be having a crucial meeting this week.

The meeting will happen either on February 3 or February 4, immediately after the Chief Minister returns to the state capital from her current district tour, Thapa said on Tuesday.

The proposed meeting is viewed to be extremely crucial following the recent development in the hills where three arch-rivals, namely - Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM)'s Bimal Gurung, Hamro Party's Ajay Edwards and estranged Trinamool Congress leader, Binoy Tamang have come closer and resurrected the statehood demand. Even Trinamool's hill district Vice President, Pradeep Pradhan has also extended support to the trio on this count.

A source here said: "The meeting between the Chief Minister and Anit Thapa will be especially crucial against the backdrop of yet another crucial development where Bimal Gurung has withdrawing GJM as the party to the



tripartite GTA pact signed in July 2011 with the Union and state governments being the other two parties."

Gurung withdrew from the pact by forwarding a letter on this count on January 27 to President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Mamata Banerjee, the Union Home Secretary and the West Bengal Home Secretary.

State government sources said besides discussions on the emerging political situation, there might be discussions on the possibilities of setting up officers of West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) in the state. Possibilities of handover of the controlling authority of certain crucial services to the GTA might also be discussed. Regularisation of the employees of GTA might be another point of discussion.

Bears in north Bengal to be fitted with radio collars

In the recent past, the forest department has witnessed an increase in the population of Asiatic black bears in the region, which had prompted the state forest department to conduct a census on this count

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Feb 1: Asiatic black bears in the hills and jungles in north Bengal will soon be fitted with radio collars to track their movements, as per the state Forest department.

This is an extension of the department's decision in November last year to conduct a census of these Asiatic black bears, said a top forest official.

"For the last couple of years, it is being seen that with the advent of winter every November, a number of such Asiatic black bears come down from the hills to the plains and frequent the human habitations adjacent to the tea garden areas in the Terai and Dooars regions in the state. So, in view of their erratic be-



haviour it has become essential to track their movement and have an idea about the reasons prompting these animals towards an unconventional behaviour," said the state forest department official. He also said that once fitted with these radio collars, which is to be done in cooperation with the German firm expert in the field, the control room of the state forest department would be able to have details of their movement of these Asiatic Black Bears through satellite tracking.

"Once they reach the plains from the hills that will also be tracked. Accordingly, the forest department officials and the local administration would be alerted for precautionary measures," the state for-

est department official said.

In the recent past, the forest department has witnessed an increase in the population of Asiatic black bears in the region, which had prompted the state forest department to conduct a census on this count. As per records of the department, since the past one-year period Asiatic black bears have been spotted in the pockets adjacent to Malbazar, Dhupguri, Madarihat and Buxa in North Bengal.

During the single month of November last year, six bears were rescued by the forest department from these pockets. These unusual frequenting led to man-animal conflict in the region, in which one person was killed and some others were injured in bear attack.

J&K to revive wool sector

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jammu, Feb 1: Jammu and Kashmir's Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Production, Atal Dulloo has chaired a meeting to discuss roadmap for revamping wool sector in Jammu and Kashmir with the support of Central Wool Development Board (CWDB).

It was revealed that India is a major wool producing nation of the world, but much of its produce is of coarse nature. Regions like Jammu and Kashmir have a distinction of producing high quality, apparel grade wool but its potential is yet to be fully exploited.

The Central Wool Development Board is expected to provide support in the form of skill training,

human resource development, modern machinery besides other technical assistance.

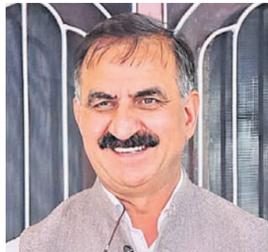
The UT administration has already approved plans and revolving funds for revival of the sector in J&K, Dulloo said. He said that the administration seeks support in wool collection, procurement, marketing and human resource development.

The meeting also had discussion on felt and fur production. Dulloo said that the infrastructure for establishing the necessary setup is already in place.

He suggested setting up of Common Incubation Centers to provide training to individuals in the sector besides establishing Common Facility Centers.

The Central Wool Development Board is expected to provide support in the form of skill training, human resource development, modern machinery besides other technical assistance





The Budget lacks the vision on the employment sector and no reasonable thinking has been made in this direction

MAN-EATER LEOPARD TRACELESS

The man-eater leopard for whom a hunt had been launched on the orders of the Jharkhand government has gone traceless for more than a week



BUDGET 2023-24

Common man ignored: Oppn

ACCORDING TO OXFAM INDIA, THE UNION BUDGET HAS MISSED YET ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE GROWING INEQUALITY IN THE COUNTRY

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 1: As the Union Finance Minister Wednesday announced, political leaders across the country began expressing their opinion regarding the same.

Opposition leaders slammed the Centre Wednesday for its "limited" focus on important sectors like health and education in the Budget for 2023-24 fiscal.

In the annual budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the health sector has been allocated Rs 89,155 crore, a hike of around 13 per cent over Rs 79,145 crore allocated in FY 2022-23.

The government also announced a mission to eliminate sickle cell anaemia by 2047. The budget allocation for school education saw an overall increase of Rs 9752.07 crore (16.51 per cent) while for higher education, Rs 44,094.62 crore has been made available compared to Rs 40,828.35 crore in 2022-23, which is an increase of 8 per cent.

Rajya Sabha member Priyanka Chaturvedi also slammed the Centre for a "limited focus" on education and



health in the budget.

"If the Centre does not spend on health and education infrastructure, it is putting that burden on states. You (Centre) don't send GST reimbursements on time."

the federal structure," Chaturvedi, a leader of the Uddhav Thackeray faction of the Shiv Sena, told PTI.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot also accused the Centre of "neglecting" important areas such as education, health, social justice and women and child development.

Regional parties such as the DMK and the Shiv Sena faction headed by Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday termed the budget disappointing and accused the Centre of "taking away states' resources and shortchanging them in their allocation, a view also shared by the Left.

Congress leader P Chidambaram Wednesday claimed that the Union Budget has "betrayed" the hopes of a vast majority of Indians and shows how far removed the government is from the people and their concerns about life, livelihood and the growing inequality between the rich and the poor.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said, "There are some good things in Union Budget 2023 but there was no mention of MNREGA, poor rural labour, employment & inflation. Some fundamental questions remained to be answered."

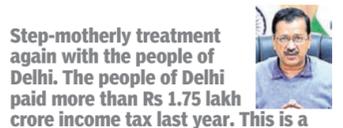
Samajwadi Party leader dimple Yadav said that the budget has been presented keeping the elections in mind, adding that some relaxations has also been given to the middle class.

Meanwhile, Mehbooba Mufti mentioned that it is the same budget that is being presented since the last 8-9 years. "Taxes increased, money not being spent on welfare schemes and subsidies. Tax being collected for some crony capitalists and big businessmen. Public should benefit from taxes but it's breaking their back," she stated.



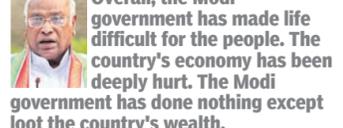
This Union Budget is not futuristic, totally opportunistic, anti-people and anti-poor. It will benefit only one class of people.

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM



Step-motherly treatment again with the people of Delhi. The people of Delhi paid more than Rs 1.75 lakh crore income tax last year.

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CM



Overall, the Modi government has made life difficult for the people. The country's economy has been deeply hurt.

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS PRESIDENT



The budget-2023 brought by the Modi government is a budget that lays a strong foundation of Amritkal

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER



Tax exemption limit being raised to Rs 7 lakhs is a people-friendly decision. Several other tax-related reforms will provide a huge relief to middle class, including salaried individuals and retired people

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Oreva MD sent in 7-day police custody

Morbi: A court in Gujarat's Morbi town Wednesday sent managing director of Oreva Group Jaysukh Patel in seven-day police custody in a case related to the Morbi suspension bridge collapse which claimed 135 lives last year.

Action against 5 pvt hospitals

Raipur: Chhattisgarh health department has taken action against five private hospitals for allegedly overcharging patients during treatment under a government scheme, officials said Wednesday.

Drugs, liquor worth ₹20 crore seized

Kohima: In poll-bound Nagaland, different enforcement agencies have seized cash, drugs and liquor with a total valuation of over Rs 20 crore since the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) January 18.

Delhi mayor election Feb 6

The capital city is yet to elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor after two previous meetings January 6 and 24 were adjourned without holding the exercise, following a ruckus between BJP and AAP councillors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena has approved convening of a MCD House session to elect the mayor February 6, Raj Niwas officials said Wednesday.

The date had been proposed by the Delhi government, an official added. The L-G has approved February 6, as proposed by the chief minister and the deputy chief minister, for holding the adjourned first meeting of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, and asked for the election of mayor, deputy mayor and the six-member standing committee to be held," his office said.

Monday: The Kejriwal government had suggested three dates -- February 3, 4 and 6.

The mayor could not be elected when the House met January 6 and January 24 after the sessions were adjourned amid acrimonious exchanges between AAP and BJP councillors.

Shelly Oberoi, the AAP's candidate for mayor, moved the Supreme Court Thursday to demand the mayoral election be conducted in a time-bound manner, party officials said.

Delhi BJP welcomed Lt Governor's decision to hold the meeting of the newly elected MCD House on February 6, but expressed apprehension that the AAP may again cause interruption.



Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ship and helicopter during the day-at-sea event as part of the its 47th Raising Day celebrations in Kochi, Kerala

'Normal rainfall' in northwest India in Feb

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: Northwest India is expected to witness "normal rainfall" in February while coldwave days in the region are less likely, the India Meteorological Department said on Wednesday.

Normal to below normal minimum temperatures are likely over most parts of the country except northeast and adjoining east India, the weather office said. Below-normal maximum temperatures are likely over most parts of peninsular India during February, India Meteorological Department (IMD) Director-General M Mohapatra said.

"Monthly rainfall over the country as a whole during February 2023 is most likely to be normal (82-119 per cent of LPA)," Mohapatra said during a press conference.

'Fizzy drinks, ready meals may be linked to increased risk of cancer'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi/London, Feb 1: Higher consumption of ultra-processed foods such as fizzy drinks, mass-produced packaged bread, many ready meals and most breakfast cereals, may be linked to an increased risk of developing and dying from cancer, a new study has shown.

According to the study by the UK-based Imperial School of Public Health, the researchers found that higher consumption of ultra-processed foods was associated with a greater risk of developing cancer overall, specifically with ovarian and brain cancers.

It was also associated with an increased risk of dying from cancer; most notably ovarian and breast cancers. The study states that every 10 per cent increase in ultra-processed food in a person's diet resulted in a 2 per cent increase in cancer overall, and a 19 per cent increase in ovarian cancer specifically. Moreover, each 10 per cent increase in ultra-processed food consumption was associated with a 6 per cent increase in cancer mortality overall, as well as a 16 per cent increase in breast cancer and a 30



The study states that every 10 per cent increase in ultra-processed food in a person's diet resulted in a 2 per cent increase in cancer overall, and a 19 per cent increase in ovarian cancer specifically

per cent increase in ovarian cancer. "This study adds to the growing evidence that ultra-processed foods are likely to negatively impact our health including our risk for cancer. Given the high levels of consumption in UK adults and children, this has important implications for future health outcomes," said Dr Eszter Vamos, lead senior author for the study, from the School of Public Health.

The researchers also discovered that higher consumption of ultra-processed foods was linked to an increased risk of developing obesity and type 2 diabetes in UK adults, as well as a greater weight gain in UK children from childhood to young adulthood. "The average person in the UK consumes more than half of their daily energy intake from ultra-processed foods. This is exceptionally high and concerning as ultra-processed foods are produced with industrially derived ingredients and often use food additives to adjust colour, flavour, consistency, texture, or extend shelf life," said Dr Kiara Chang, first author for the study from School of Public Health.

MONEY LAUNDERING

Court grants bail to Deshmukh's aide

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

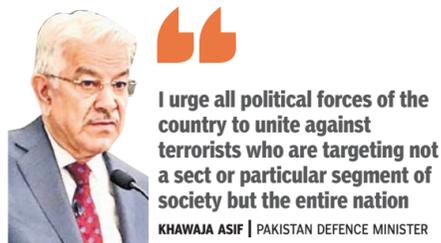
Mumbai, Feb 1: A special court here Wednesday granted bail to Kundan Shinde, an aide of former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh, in a money laundering case being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), saying the chances of "his conviction are bleak".

However, Shinde will remain in jail as he is also an accused in a corruption case being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Special Judge R N Rokade allowed his bail plea in the money laundering case. The court also noted there were inconsistencies in statements given by dismissed police officer and another co-accused in the case, Sachin Waze. The ex-police officer's state-



ments form crucial aspect of the 2021 case. In June 2021, the ED arrested Shinde, who worked as a personal assistant of NCP leader Deshmukh when he was the state home minister; for his alleged role in the money laundering case. The court, while granting bail to the accused, observed chances of "his conviction in the case are bleak". In the bail application, filed through advocates Inderpal Singh and Aniket Nikam, Shinde said his arrest and continued incarceration was a "gross abuse" of the process of law. The ED has claimed Waze, in his statements, stated Deshmukh introduced him to Shinde during a meeting at the then-home minister's official residence in Mumbai.

international



Urge all political forces of the country to unite against terrorists who are targeting not a sect or particular segment of society but the entire nation
KHAWAJA ASIF | PAKISTAN DEFENCE MINISTER

POPE APPEALS

Pope Francis urged Congo's people Wednesday to forgive those who have harmed them as he presided over a Mass before an estimated 1 million people in a country wracked by decades of violence



of the day quote

Sweden's government should "act differently" if it wants to clinch Turkish support for its bid to join NATO



The 15th amendment to the Constitution has strengthened the country's democracy and empowered people to choose public representatives without anyone grabbing of power illegally

The Israeli government is fully responsible for the current tension and violence in the Palestinian territories

Peshawar mosque blast: 17 suspects arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Peshawar/Islamabad, Feb 1: Pakistan's security agencies arrested 17 suspects in connection with the suicide blast in a high-security zone mosque in Peshawar that killed 101 people, including 97 policemen, as Army chief Gen Asim Munir vowed zero tolerance for terror groups and directed his generals to eliminate the threat of militancy.

A Taliban suicide bomber who was present in the front row during the Zuhr (afternoon) prayers on Monday blew himself up, causing the roof to collapse on the worshippers. Sources said that the security agencies have arrested 17 suspects involved in the devastating blast - the deadliest attack on the security personnel in decades in Pakistan.

The arrests have been made from close vicinity of the Police Lines area where the mosque is located and the suspects were shifted to interrogation cell for investigation, sources said.

In a statement, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday that the entire nation and institutions are united to eliminate the menace of terrorism. Describing police as a front line force in the fight against terrorism, the prime minister said that they will be further strengthened and equipped with modern weapons.

Speaking at a meeting of the federal cabinet in Islamabad on Wednesday, Sharif expressed serious concerns over the resurgence of terrorist elements especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, bordering Afghanistan.

The Prime Minister said that if immediate and effective steps were not taken, the despicable incidents



THE ARRESTS HAVE BEEN MADE FROM CLOSE VICINITY OF THE POLICE LINES AREA WHERE THE MOSQUE IS LOCATED AND THE SUSPECTS WERE SHIFTED TO INTERROGATION CELL FOR INVESTIGATION, SOURCES SAID

A TALIBAN SUICIDE BOMBER WHO WAS PRESENT IN THE FRONT ROW DURING THE ZUHR (AFTERNOON) PRAYERS ON MONDAY BLEW HIMSELF UP, CAUSING THE ROOF TO COLLAPSE ON THE WORSHIPPERS

might spread to other parts of the country. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), known as the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the Peshawar mosque suicide attack, saying it was part of a revenge attack for slain TTP commander Umar Khalid Khurasani who was killed in Afghanistan in August last.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's top generals have vowed that perpetrators of the Peshawar terrorist attack will be brought to exemplary justice. General Munir, who presided over the 255th Corps Commanders' Conference held at general headquarters in Rawalpindi on Tuesday, said that the military was determined to eliminate the threat of militancy from the country.

The army chief referred to the Peshawar mosque attack and said that "such immoral and cowardly acts cannot shake the resolve of the nation rather reinvigorate our determination to succeed in on-

going war against terror with zero tolerance for any terrorist entity," according to a statement issued by the army.

General Munir, who on Monday was in Peshawar along with Prime Minister Sharif following the suicide bombing, "directed all commanders to continue focus on anti-terrorism operations in a coordination with intelligence and law enforcement agencies with renewed resolve till the time we achieve sustainable peace," the statement said.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah told parliament on Tuesday that 97 policemen were among the dead. He said that past policies were responsible for terrorism plaguing the nation. "We created mujahideen but they have become terrorists," he said, referring to the Afghan war against the erstwhile USSR. The blast shocked residents in Peshawar - once known as "the city of flowers".

Radioactive capsule found in Western Aus



REUTERS

Sydney, Feb 1: Australian authorities Wednesday found a radioactive capsule that was lost in the vast Outback after nearly a week-long search along a 1,400 km (870-mile) stretch of highway, an emergency services official said.

The military was verifying the capsule and it would be taken to a secure facility in the city of Perth on Thursday, Emergency Services Minister Stephen Dawson said in a news conference. "When you consider the scope of the research area, locating this object was a monumental challenge, the search groups have quite literally found the needle in the haystack," Dawson said.

The radioactive capsule was part of a gauge used to measure the density of iron ore feed from Rio Tinto's (RIO.AX) Gudai-Darri mine in the state's remote Kimberley region. The ore was being taken to a facility in the suburbs of Perth - a distance longer than the length of Great Britain.

Officials from Western Australia's emergency response department, defence authorities, radiation specialists and others have been comb-

The radioactive capsule was part of a gauge used to measure the density of iron ore feed from Rio Tinto's (RIO.AX) Gudai-Darri mine in the state's remote Kimberley region

Officials from Western Australia's emergency response department, defence authorities, radiation specialists and others have been combing the stretch of highway for the tiny capsule that was lost in transit more than two weeks ago

ing the stretch of highway for the tiny capsule that was lost in transit more than two weeks ago.

Officials said the capsule apparently fell off a truck and landed on the side of the road, adding that it was unlikely there will be contamination in the area. The silver capsule, 6mm in diameter and 8mm long, contains Caesium-137 which emits radiation equal to 10 X-rays per hour.

People had been told to stay at least five metres (16.5 feet) away from the capsule if they spot it as exposure could cause radiation burns or radiation sickness, though driving past it is believed to be relatively low risk, akin to taking an X-ray.

Nikki to launch White House bid on Feb 15

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 1: Prominent Indian-American Republican Party leader Nikki Haley is poised to launch her 2024 White House (WH) bid on February 15 - positioning herself to be the first challenger to former US president Donald Trump.

Haley, 51, is the two-term Governor of South Carolina and the former US Ambassador to the United Nations. When she enters the race, Haley will be the first contender to join the contest against her former boss, who is currently the sole Republican seeking his party's 2024 nomination.



Trump, 76, launched his White House bid last year. Haley could release a video signalling her plans as soon as this week, according to the Washington Post. According to an invitation soon going out to her backers, Haley's advertised "special announcement" will come February 15 at the The Shed at the Charleston Visitor Center, a downtown gathering spot that could draw hundreds of supporters into the heart of the city's tourism district, The Post and Courier reported. "The confirmation that she is entering the race came on January 31 from a member of Haley's inner circle," the Charleston, South Carolina-based daily reported. Haley famously said previously that she would not seek to challenge Trump if he ran again, but there has been a shift in her stance in recent times as she said the US needs to look toward a different path.

SHORT TAKES

Fawad gets bail in sedition case

Islamabad: A Pakistani court Wednesday granted bail to former information minister and senior Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry in a sedition case and ordered his release. Chaudhry, 52, a close aide of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, was arrested from his residence in Lahore last week in a pre-dawn raid after a case was registered against him at Islamabad's Kohsar Police Station on the complaint of the Secretary Election Commission of Pakistan for "threatening" the electoral body's members and their families.

Pet dog kills 4-year-old girl

London: A 4-year-old girl has died in the UK after being attacked by her family's pet dog, the second such death this month, media reports said Wednesday. Alice Stones was attacked in her back garden on Tuesday by a dog that her family is reported to have bought six weeks ago in Buckinghamshire's Milton Keynes, The Sun newspaper reported on Wednesday. Police arrived shortly after the attack, but the girl was pronounced dead at the scene. The police evacuated the neighbours, in fear of the dog escaping, before gunning it down in the house.

Singapore detains IS supporter

Singapore: Singapore authorities have detained an 18-year-old radicalised Islamic State supporter, the ninth such case in the city-state, Home Affairs and Law Minister K Shanmugam said on Wednesday, describing it as a "concerning" trend. Muhammad Irfan Danyal Mohamad Nor, who was detained last month, had considered plans to attack targets such as an army camp and a gravesite at a mosque, Channel News Asia reported. Singapore has dealt with nine radicalised youths under the Internal Security Act (ISA) since 2015. Nor will now undergo rehabilitation, as did the other radicalised youths.

Earthquake hits Philippines

Manila: A 6.1-magnitude earthquake hits the southern Philippines on Wednesday with no immediate reports of damage or injury, local media said. Previously, the US Geological Survey (USGS) said an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.0 jolted 4 km SSW of Monkayo, the Philippines at 10:44:45 GMT, Xinhua news agency reported.

Armed TTP militants attack police station

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, Feb 1: Heavily-armed Pakistani Taliban militants opened fire at a police station in Mianwali in Pakistan's Punjab province, days after a member of the dreaded outfit blew himself up inside a mosque in Peshawar that killed over 100 people. District Police Officer Mianwali Muhammad Naveed said around 20 Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants armed with automatic weapons attacked the Makerwal police station on Tuesday night but were repulsed by the law enforcement agency, according to Geo TV.

The latest incident assumes significance because TTP, which hitherto targeted police stations and check posts in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, has now trained its guns in Punjab province.

According to social media reports, the attack started at around 9 pm on Tuesday after militants opened heavy fire at Makerwal police station using automatic weapons. This resulted in a heavy exchange of retaliatory fire by the police that lasted for more than two hours, the Dawn newspaper reported. Punjab Inspector General of Police Dr Usman Anwar said the militants belonged to the TTP, the report said.



People walk along the beach near Redcar, Britain

UK teachers, civil servants, train drivers join mass strike

REUTERS

London, Feb 1: Up to half a million British teachers, civil servants, and train drivers walked out over pay in the largest coordinated strike action for a decade on Wednesday, with unions threatening more disruption as the government digs its heels in over pay demands.

The mass walkouts across the country shut schools, halted most rail services, and forced the military to be put on standby to help with border checks on a day dubbed "Walk Out Wednesday" by unions.

According to unions, as many as 300,000 teachers are expected to be on strike, the biggest group involved, as part of wider action by 500,000 people, the highest number since 2011, when civil servants walked out en masse.

The PCS Union, representing about 100,000 striking civil servants from more than 120 government departments, warned Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government that further co-ordinated action was inevitable.

"If the government doesn't do something about it, I think we will see more days like today with more and more unions joining in," PCS



- UP TO 500,000 PEOPLE EXPECTED TO JOIN UK STRIKES
- GOVERNMENT SAYS BIG PAY RISES WILL FUEL INFLATION
- SCHOOLS SHUT, MOST TRAINS NOT RUNNING
- MORE STRIKES INVOLVING HEALTH WORKERS DUE NEXT WEEK

general secretary Mark Serwotka said. "We need money now," he added.

With inflation running at more than 10% - the highest level in four decades - Britain has seen a wave of strikes in recent months across the public and private sectors, including health and transport workers, Amazon warehouse employees and Royal Mail postal staff.

Education minister Gillian Keegan said the government would not budge, and that giving in to demands for large wage increases would only fuel inflation.

AI could help answer 'are we alone in the universe?': Study

The search for extraterrestrial intelligence looks for evidence of extraterrestrial intelligence originating beyond Earth by trying to detect technosignatures, or evidence of technology, that alien civilizations could have developed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Los Angeles, Feb 1: Researchers have applied deep learning techniques to previously studied dataset of nearby stars and uncovered eight previously unidentified signals of interest.

The team of researchers was led by an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto, Peter Ma, along with those from the SETI Institute, Breakthrough Listen and scientific research institutions around the world, the study said.

The research is published in the journal Nature Astronomy. When pondering the probability of dis-

covering technologically advanced extraterrestrial life, the question that often arises is, "if they're out there, why haven't we found them yet?" And often, the response is that we have only searched a tiny portion of the galaxy. Further, algorithms developed decades ago for the earliest digital computers can be outdated and inefficient when applied to modern petabyte-scale datasets, the study said.

"In total, we had searched through 150 TB of data of 820 nearby stars, on a dataset that had previously been searched through in 2017 by classical techniques but labelled as devoid of interesting

signals," said Peter Ma, lead author.

"We're scaling this search effort to 1 million stars today with the MeerKAT telescope and beyond. We believe that work like this will help accelerate the rate we're able to make discoveries in our grand effort to answer the question 'are we alone in the universe?'" said Ma.

The search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI) looks for evidence of extraterrestrial intelligence originating beyond Earth by trying to detect technosignatures, or evidence of technology, that alien civilizations could have developed.

The most common technique is to search for radio signals. Radio is a great way to send information over the incredible distances between the stars; it quickly passes through the dust and gas that per-



meate space, and it does so at the speed of light, about 20,000 times faster than our best rockets, the study said. Many SETI efforts use antennas to eavesdrop on any radio signals aliens might be transmitting, the study said. According to the study, it re-examined data taken

with the Green Bank Telescope in West Virginia as part of a Breakthrough Listen campaign that initially indicated no targets of interest. The goal was to apply new deep learning techniques to a classical search algorithm to yield faster, more accurate results.

After running the new algorithm and manually re-examining the data to confirm the results, the study found that newly detected signals had several key characteristics: 1) The signals were narrow band, meaning they had narrow spectral width, on the order of just a few Hz. Signals caused by natural phenomena tend to be broadband. 2) The signals had non-zero drift rates, which means the signals had a slope. Such slopes could indicate a signal's origin had some relative acceleration with our receivers, hence not local to the radio observatory. 3) The signals appeared in ON-source observations and not in OFF-source observations. If a signal originates from a specific celestial source, it appears when we point our telescope toward the target and disappears when we look away.



Money allocated for projects

₹19,518cr for all metro projects
The government has allocated a total of ₹19,518 crore to all metro projects across India in the Union Budget 2023-24. The allocation in 2022-23 was ₹19,130 crore.

₹1.23L-cr for postal, telecom
The government allocated ₹1.23 lakh crore for postal and telecom projects including ₹52,937 crore capital infusion in state-run BSNL. Total allocation includes ₹97,579.05 crore for the Department of Telecom and ₹25,814 crore for Postal projects.

Highways Authority gets ₹1.62L-cr
With the government betting big on infrastructure, govt increased allocation to state-owned National Highways Authority of India (NHA) to ₹1.62 lakh crore for 2023-24 from last year's revised allocation of ₹1.42 lakh crore.

₹12,544cr allocated for space
Finance Minister allocated nearly ₹12,544 crore to the Department of Space as India plans a human spaceflight — Gaganyaan — next year and sets out to explore the moon and neighbouring planets.



Budget 2023-24 was the last full budget of the Narendra Modi led-government before next year's parliamentary elections, slated for April-May 2024. Since taking office in 2014, Modi has ramped up capital spending including on roads and energy, while wooing investors through lower tax rates and labour reforms, and offering subsidies to poor households to clinch their political support. The finance minister has accorded the highest priority to rail, metro, national highways and roads, ports, logistics and shipping as state-of-the-art infrastructure is a prerequisite for building a globally comparable economy

In a nutshell

ECONOMY

- Capital investment outlay to be 3.3% of GDP in fiscal 2024
- Effective capital expenditure of centre to be ₹13.7 lakh crore

RAIL FINANCE

- ₹2.4 lakh crore to improve and maintain the railways

ENVIRONMENT

- Green Hydrogen Mission for reduced dependence on fossil fuel
- ₹35,000 crore for energy transition to net-zero emission goals
- New "green credit" programme under Environment Protection Act

HOUSING

- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana share to rise 66% to ₹79,000 crore

SOCIAL WELFARE

- ₹15,000 crore mission for safe housing, sanitation, drinking water and electricity for tribals
- 30 "Skill India" centres to be set up for young people

AGRI/FARMERS

- Open-source digital public infrastructure for farmers
- Computerisation of 63,000 credit societies with ₹2,516 crore
- 1 crore farmers to get assistance to adopt natural farming

EDUCATION

- 157 new nursing colleges to be set up
- Institutes of Excellence for mass teacher training
- New national digital library for children

HEALTHCARE

- Mission to eradicate sickle cell anaemia

PENSIONS

- Senior Citizens Savings Scheme increased from ₹15 lakh to ₹30 lakh
- Monthly income scheme limit increased

FISCAL DEFICIT

- Fiscal deficit expected to be 5.9% of GDP

INFRASTRUCTURE

- 100% mechanical sewage drudge from manhole to machine made in cities

EXCISE/CUSTOMS DUTY

- Basic customs duty cut from 21% to 13%
- Customs duty relief on mobile phone parts extended for another year
- Reduced customs duty on TV panel parts, cigarettes duty revised upwards

DIGITAL INDIA

- DigiLocker for use by businesses and charitable trusts
- 100 labs to develop apps using 5G services to be set up in engineering institutions
- 3 centres of excellence for artificial intelligence in top institutions

START-UPS

- Agriculture accelerator funds for startups in rural areas
- Carry forward of losses from 7 to 10 years since date of incorporation
- 100 joint commissioners for disposal of small appeals

BANKING/INSURANCE

- SEBI to oversee National Institute of Securities Markets
- Central processing centre for firms' applications on different matters

New taxation regime

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman Wednesday announced no tax for those with annual income of up to ₹7 lakh under the new tax regime but made no changes for those who continue in the old regime that provides for tax exemptions and deductions on investments and expenses such as HRA.

In what is being seen as push for salaried class taxpayer to switch to new tax regime where no exemptions on investments is provided, the finance minister in her budget for 2023-24 allowed a standard deduction of ₹50,000 under the new regime.

The old tax regime provides for a similar deduction and no tax on income up to ₹5 lakh.

Also, the basic exemption limit has been raised to ₹3 lakh from ₹2.5 lakh. A ₹2.5 lakh basic exemption limit is prescribed in old tax regime.

The move will lead to a saving of ₹33,800 for those earning up to ₹7



lakh annually and opting for new tax regime. Those with income up to ₹10 lakh would save ₹23,400 and ₹49,400 saving would accrue to those earning up to ₹15 lakh.

For high salary people, Sitharaman also reduced surcharge from 37 per cent to 25 per cent for high net worth individuals with income above ₹2 crore.

This would translate into a saving of around ₹20 lakh for those having a salary income of about ₹5.5 crore.

In her Budget speech, Sitharaman said currently individuals with total income of up to ₹5 lakh do not pay any tax due to rebate.

Under the revamped new tax regime, no tax would be levied for income up to ₹3 lakh. Income between ₹3-6 lakh would be taxed at 5 per cent; ₹6-9 lakh at 10 per cent, ₹9-12 lakh at 15 per cent, ₹12-15 lakh at 20 per cent and income of ₹15 lakh and above will be taxed at 30 per cent.

Currently, a 5 per cent tax is levied on total income between ₹2.5 lakh

UPDATED SLABS

Rebate limit increased from ₹5 lakh to ₹7 lakh a year

- Till ₹3 lakh - no tax
- ₹3-6 lakh - taxed at 5%
- ₹6-9 lakh - taxed at 10%
- ₹9-12 lakh - taxed at 15%
- ₹12-15 lakh - taxed at 20%
- Over ₹15 lakh - taxed at 30%

and ₹5 lakh, 10 per cent on ₹5 lakh to ₹7.5 lakh, 15 per cent on ₹7.5 lakh to ₹10 lakh, 20 per cent on ₹10 lakh to ₹12.5 lakh, 25 per cent on ₹12.5 lakh to ₹15 lakh, and 30 per cent on above ₹15 lakh.

With effect from April 1, these slabs will be modified as per the Budget announcement.

WINNERS

Taxpayers

As expected, Centre gave some relief to taxpayers. Individuals with income up to ₹700,000 won't have to pay tax under the new income tax regime. The number of tax slabs were reduced, while the maximum tax rate was cut to 39%. This will leave more money with the middle class that can also boost consumption demand.

Agriculture

The government has increased spending in the farm sector, which accounts for about 19% of the economy. The budget proposes to spend ₹22 billion on high-value horticulture and set up an agriculture accelerator fund to finance farm startups.

Tourism

To capture the surge in travel demand, India will select 50 destinations to promote domestic tourism. It will also develop an app to guide tourists on food streets, security, physical and virtual connectivity to lift their experience.

Infrastructure

Crucial to boosting last-mile connectivity, India has decided to build 50 additional airports, heliports and aerodromes and identified 100 fresh projects. Railways will benefit from a record capital outlay of ₹2.4 trillion.

Metal/Cement

Higher capital expenditure and investments for housing, infrastructure, railways announced in the budget are positive for steel mills and cement makers. Key gainers include Tata Steel Ltd, JSW Steel Ltd, Jindal Steel & Power Ltd.

LOSERS

Defence

Military budget got an increase of 7%, compared with a 33% increase in the nation's overall capital expenditure. That's a surprise given the rising tensions between India and China.

Cigarette Makers

Shares of ITC Ltd and Godfrey Phillips India plunged in early Mumbai trading after India increased a tax, effective February 2, on specified cigarettes by about 16%.

Jewellers

Jewellery stocks dropped after the government left the import taxes on gold unchanged despite demand from the bullion industry to reverse the hike announced in July. The government also increased the import tax on silver.

Oil Refiners

Indian state-run refiners Indian Oil Corp, Bharat Petroleum Corp, Hindustan Petroleum Corp are likely losers as the government didn't announce any compensation toward losses on keeping a check on diesel and gasoline prices.

Foreign Carmakers

Imported automobiles, including electric vehicles, will attract higher levies. The customs duty on cars and EVs priced above \$40,000 imported in completely-built units were increased to 70% from 60%.

India Inc speaks

The Budget is growth-oriented and fiscally prudent with continued focus on capex and inclusion. The Finance Minister delivered a growth-centric budget building further on the strategy of high capex. The first Budget of India's Amrit Kaal also lays strong foundations for a Viksit Bharat by 2047

CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE | DIRECTOR GENERAL, CII



A push to investment and consumption was required to keep the growth cycle in motion. We are happy to note that the government has continued the thrust on capital expenditure with a 33 per cent increase in the capital outlay to ₹10 lakh crore representing 3.3 per cent of GDP

SUBHRAKANT PANDA | PRESIDENT, FICCI



A 33 per cent jump in the capital expenditure to ₹10 lakh crore clearly demonstrates the government's resolve to help India remain the fastest growing economy in the world, despite global headwinds

SUMANT SINHA | PRESIDENT, ASSOCHAM



The Budget is demand sustaining, investment inducing and growth-oriented and it has been presented at a time when India finds itself in the bright spot as the growth of the Indian economy is highest among the leading economies

SAKET DALMIA | PRESIDENT, PHD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY



Capex hiked 33%

Finance Minister announced hiking the capital expenditure by 33 per cent to ₹10 lakh crore for infrastructure development for 2023-24 and will be at 3.3 per cent of the GDP. "Capital investment outlay is being increased steeply for the third year in a row by 33 per cent to ₹10 lakh crore, which would be 3.3 per cent of GDP. This will be almost three times the outlay in 2019-20," she said.

Disinvestment target lowered

The government has scaled down the disinvestment target for the current fiscal to ₹50,000 crore, from ₹65,000 crore budgeted last year, a finance ministry official said. For the next fiscal 2023-24, the Budget has pegged disinvestment revenue at ₹51,000 crore.

Farm credit target raised

The government Wednesday announced 11 per cent hike in agriculture credit target to ₹20 lakh crore for next fiscal year with focus on animal husbandry, dairy and fisheries. The agricultural credit target is ₹18 lakh crore for the current 2022-23 fiscal.

TIDBITS

Record borrowing

The government plans to borrow a record ₹15.4 lakh crore from dated securities in FY24 to meet its expenditure requirement to prop up the economy. This is higher than the total borrowing of ₹14.21 lakh crore for the current financial year ending March 31, 2023.

Subsidies announced

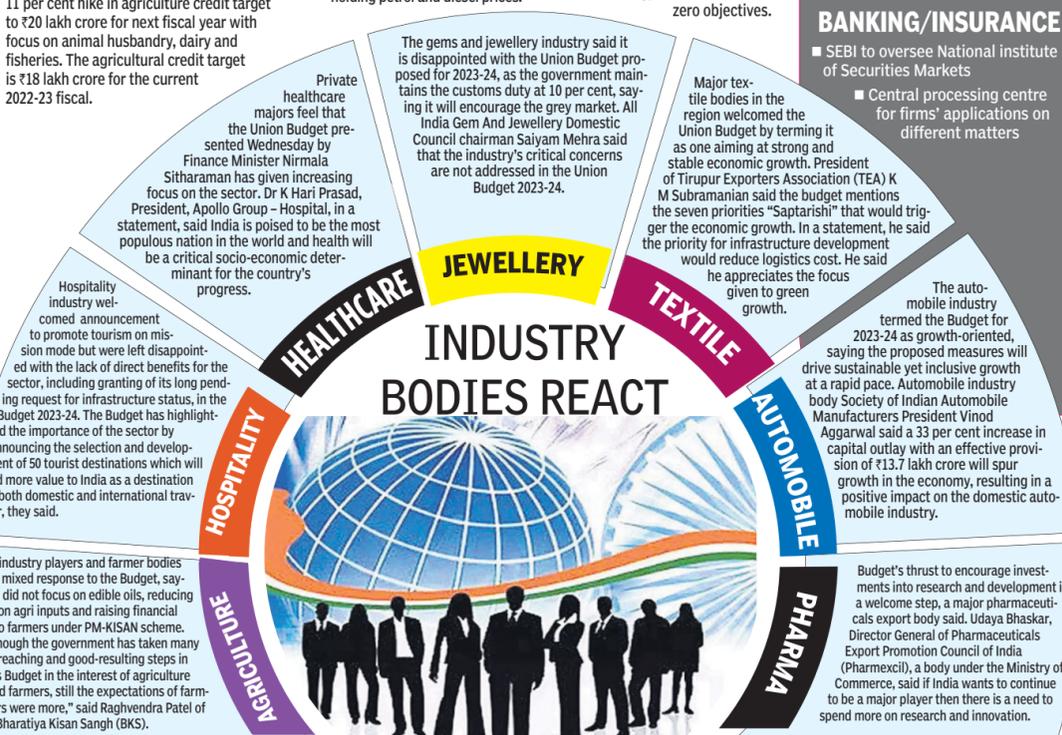
The government's subsidies on food, fertilisers and petroleum are estimated to rise 17 per cent this fiscal year to ₹5.21 lakh crore and have been pegged lower by 28 per cent to nearly ₹3.75 lakh crore in FY24. The Union Budget for 2023-24 will dole out ₹30,000 crore to state-owned fuel retailers to make up for the massive losses they ran because of holding petrol and diesel prices.

UIDF gets ₹10k-cr

A Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (UIDF) will be set up to ramp up infrastructure in tier-2 and tier-3 cities with an annual allocation of ₹10,000 crore, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced.

Green hydrogen production target

The government is targeting 5 million tonne (MT) of green hydrogen production by 2030. Nirmala Sitharaman announced Wednesday in her Budget speech. She also said that the Budget provides for ₹35,000 crore for priority capital investment towards energy transition and net zero objectives.



BUDGET TRIVIA

Shortest Budget

Nirmala Sitharaman concluded her speech in one hour and 27 minutes (87 minutes), marking her shortest Budget speech ever. Last year, she presented the Union Budget in one hour and 32 minutes (92 minutes) and in 2021, she spoke for one hour and 50 minutes (110 minutes). In 2020, Sitharaman broke her own record of making the longest-ever budget address while presenting the budget 2020-21 in two hours and 42 minutes (162 minutes).

Sitharaman: 6th FM to present Budget 5 times in a row

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is the sixth minister in independent India to present five consecutive Budget, joining a select league of legends likes of Manmohan Singh, Arun Jaitley and P Chidambaram. Sitharaman's bBudget for the fiscal year starting April 2023 is her fifth straight since 2019. Other ministers who have presented five straight annual financial statements include Arun Jaitley, P Chidambaram, Yashwant Sinha, Manmohan Singh and Morarji Desai. After taking charge of the Finance Ministry in the Modi Government in 2014, Jaitley presented five Budgets in a row from 2014-15 to 2018-19.

BUDGET BOOST FOR SPORTS



coaches and maintaining sports infrastructure, among others, has seen a ₹36.09 crore increase in its budgetary allocation from the previous year's revised expenditure of ₹749.43 crore. Their allocation for 2023-24 stands at ₹785.52 crore.

The National Sports Federations (NSFs) have received an increased allocation of ₹45 crore, from previous year's revised budget of ₹280 crore and will now get ₹325 crore. The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), affiliated to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), and the National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL), which earlier received funding from SAI, will now get it directly.

A provision has been made in this year's budget to provide NADA a funding of ₹21.73 crore, while NDTL, which conducts the tests, will receive ₹19.50 crore.

With countries across the world striving for sporting excellence and paying more attention to sports science and scientific training of athletes, this year's budget has also made a provision of ₹13 crore for National Centre of Sports Science and Research.

the previous financial year.

This is an increase of ₹439 crore and points to the government's commitment to the programme, which over the years, has shown the potential to produce athletes for major global events such as the Olympics, Asian Games and the Commonwealth Games.

The Sports Authority of India (SAI), which takes care of organising national camps for athletes, providing infrastructure and equipment to athletes, appointment of

AT A GLANCE (IN ₹)		
CATEGORIES	2023-24	2022-23
TOTAL	3,397.32 cr	2,673.35 cr
KHELO INDIA	1,045 cr	606 cr
SAI	785.52 cr	749.43 cr
NSFS	325 cr	280 cr
NADA	21.73 cr	-----
NDTL	19.50 cr	-----
NCSSR	13.00 cr	-----

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: In a year when the Indian athletes will compete at the Asian Games and prepare for 2024 Paris Olympics, the Sports Ministry has got a fillip with the government allocating ₹3,397.32 crore, an increase of ₹723.97 crore, in the Union Budget here Wednesday.

The amount is more than the revised budget of the previous financial year (2022-23) when the ministry received ₹2,673.35 crore, as against the actual allocation of ₹3,062.60 crore.

One of the reasons for the reduced revised allocation for 2022-23 could be the postponement of the Hangzhou Asian Games, which will be held this year.

The ministry's flagship programme, 'KheLO India - National Programme for Development of Sports' continues to be the government's priority, with it being allotted ₹1,045 crore as against the revised allocation of ₹606 crore during

Gill's maiden T20I ton lifts India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Feb 1: Shubman Gill smashed a whirlwind unbeaten maiden century (126 n o, 63b, 12x4, 7x6) in the shortest format as India thrashed New Zealand by 168 runs, their biggest ever win in terms of runs, in the third and final T20I to pocket the hard-fought series 2-1 here Wednesday.

India's second highest margin of victory was 143-run win over Ireland in Dublin in 2018. It was also the highest margin of victory between two full member teams.

Gill continued his fine form and showcased his array of shots, hitting the New Zealand bowlers to all parts of the Narendra Modi Stadium. Riding on Gill's brilliance, India posted 234/4 after electing to bat.

New Zealand never got going in the huge chase as Indian bowlers performed in unison to bowl out the visitors for a mere 66 in 12.1 overs, the third lowest score for the Kiwis in this format.

Skipper Hardik Pandya (4/16) led the bowling department, while Umran Malik (2/9), Shivam Mavi (2/12) and Arshdeep Singh (2/16) scalped two wickets each.

New Zealand lost Finn Allen in the fifth ball of the opening over bowled by Pandya, caught by Suryakumar Yadav. Left-arm pacer Arshdeep struck with his first delivery, as Devon Conway lobbed a fuller delivery to Pandya at mid-off.

New Zealand continued to lose wickets as Mark Chapman got a faint inside edge which went straight to Ishan Kishan off Arshdeep's last delivery of the over. Wickets kept on tumbling like a pack of cards for New Zealand with Glenn Phillips becoming the next victim, caught by Suryakumar at slips off Pandya.

Down at 13/4 after three overs, it was all but over for New Zealand. The situation became even worse for New Zealand when Michael Bracewell was cleaned up by a



fast delivery from Umran.

Kiwi skipper Mitchell Santner (13) and Daryl Mitchell (35) then added 32 runs for the sixth wicket before Shivam Mavi dismissed the former, caught by Suryakumar at deep midwicket fence as the left-hander tried to heave a short ball.

Mavi struck again a ball later, re-

moving Ish Sodhi (0) caught by Tripathi at backward point as New Zealand slumped to 53 for seven in nine overs. Thereafter, it was just a formality for India and the hosts romped home in style.

Earlier, the start was far from rosy for India after electing to bat as Santner made a master-stroke

decision by handing Bracewell the second over and the off-spinner reposed his captain's faith by removing an out-of-form Ishan Kishan, who was adjudged LBW with the second ball of the over.

Gill was at his ominous best, he pick up hits, drives or pulls to continue his onslaught. He hit Blair Tickner for three fours in the fifth over as India reached 44/1.

Young Rahul Tripathi (44, 22b, 4x4, 3x6), who has immense potential but yet to fire in the series, then struck Ferguson for a boundary and a six in consecutive balls to keep up the tempo.

Tripathi showed his attacking class and dispatched Ish Sodhi over extra cover but perished in the next ball in search of one too many, holing out at deep square leg to Ferguson.

Gill reached his maiden T20I fifty off 35 balls with a single off Santner. While Gill held one end, Suryakumar (24, 13b, 1x4, 2x6) showed glimpses of his class but fell in the 13th over, brilliantly caught by Bracewell at mid-off as the batter mistimed his shot.

Gill brought up his century with a four over the mid-off fielder off the bowling of Ferguson in the first ball of the 18th over. He broke free and clobbered Ferguson over mid-wicket for a mayhem in the next ball.

It was mayhem as skipper Pandya (30, 17b, 4x4, 1x6) too went ballistic. But it was Gill who stole the show as he continued with his attacking shots after the ton, finding the boundaries at will as New Zealand attack looked listless.

BRIEF SCORES

India 234/4 (Shubman Gill 126 n o, Rahul Tripathi 44, Hardik Pandya 30, Suryakumar Yadav 24; Daryl Mitchell 1/6, Michael Bracewell 1/8) beat New Zealand 66 (Daryl Mitchell 35; Hardik Pandya 4/16, Umran Malik 2/9, Shivam Mavi 2/12, Arshdeep Singh 2/16) by 168 runs.

Real Madrid out to rule Club World Cup again



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, Feb 1: Few would have expected Real Madrid to be competing for the Club World Cup title before the team's unlikely run to Champions League glory last season.

Carlo Ancelotti's team needed dramatic comebacks to defeat Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Manchester City before beating Liverpool in the final last May.

It was further proof of Madrid's ability to produce on the biggest stage, and it means the Spanish

powerhouse gets another opportunity to shine when the seven-team Club World Cup kicks off Wednesday in Morocco.

Real are aiming to be crowned club world champion for a record-extending eighth time. The 14-times Champions League winners are the overwhelming favorite to do just that with Copa Libertadores champion Flamengo the only team that looks capable of beating the odds in Morocco.

While the Seattle Sounders can dream of a historic victory, they have

already earned a place in the record books by becoming the first MLS team to qualify for the Club World Cup.

No other team can compare to Madrid's record in the Champions League and the same applies on the world stage.

Their recent dominance in Europe — lifting the Champions League trophy five times in eight years — has made it a regular at the Club World Cup, which it has gone on to win in 2014 and from 2016-18.

It is hard to see that sequence being halted in this year's tournament, even if Real's priorities are to successfully defend its Champions League and Spanish league titles.

If any team can topple Real, it's Flamengo, but the weight of history is against the Brazilians. The previous nine tournaments were won by European teams, with another Brazilian team, Corinthians, the last to take the title back to South America. That broke a five-year run of European victories.

Perhaps the hiring of a European coach in Vitor Pereira, from Portugal, can be the difference for

the Copa Libertadores champion. Pereira would make himself a club icon if he could.

This would only be Flamengo's second world championship title after beating Liverpool in the Intercontinental Cup final in 1981. In 2019, Flamengo came close to winning the trophy when it took Liverpool to extra time in the final.

The Seattle Sounders vs Real Madrid — that potential matchup is the stuff dreams are made of and it could become reality if the MLS team progresses to the semifinals. But Seattle has already made history, just by qualifying for the tournament after winning the CONCACAF Champions League last May.

It is an underdog in Morocco and few would give it any hope of overcoming Madrid if the two teams meet. But perhaps it can be inspired by the host nation, which confounded expectations by reaching the semifinals of the World Cup in Qatar last month.

Either way, it is a remarkable achievement for the Sounders, who before getting a shot at Madrid will face either Al Ahly or Auckland City.

While all the attention has been on Al Nassr in recent weeks because of Cristiano Ronaldo's arrival, it is another team from Saudi Arabia that will be mixing it up on the world stage.

Iyer's injury opens gates for Surya, Gill



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: The Indian team management could consider playing Shubman Gill in the middle order ahead of Suryakumar Yadav in the first Test against Australia after Shreyas Iyer was ruled out of the series opener due to a back injury.

Iyer failing to recover from back spasms will certainly open one spot in the Indian batting order and the choice will be between Surya, a career middle order batter who has the X-factor and Gill, who has mostly opened for the national team in Tests.

Iyer, who has been a consistent performer in his short Test career, was India's stand out batter in the 2-0 series win in Bangladesh in December.

"When New Zealand came to India in late 2021, Shubman Gill was being considered for middle order as KL Rahul was supposed to open with Mayank Agarwal. Then Rahul got injured and Gill opened. Then he got injured again. He was being considered for middle order in red ball," a BCCI source privy to development told PTI.

With skipper Rohit Sharma and vice captain Rahul being the first choice openers in the squad, followed by Cheteshwar Pujara and Virat Kohli at No.3 and 4 respectively, the No.5 slot becomes very important in the Indian context as that individual is expected to play the second new ball.

In case of Gill, being a Test regular and having originally started his red ball career as a middle order batter, certainly helps his case.

SKY remains at top of rankings

Dubai: Swashbuckling Indian batter Suryakumar Yadav continued his stay at the top in the ICC rankings released Wednesday. Suryakumar reached the rating of 910 points as the exciting right-hander maintained his healthy lead at the top of the T20I rankings for batters. Surya remains within striking distance of England batter Dawid Malan in the race to hold the highest rating of all time for men's T20I batters. Malan achieved a rating of 915 points in Cape Town back in 2020, but Suryakumar now holds the second highest rating of all time for T20I batters following his recent heroics with the willow. No other Indian featured in the top 10 of the batters or bowlers list while Hardik Pandya remained third among all-rounders. India's Mohammed Siraj continues to be the top-ranked bowler in the ODI rankings. Shubman Gill (sixth), Virat Kohli (seventh) and Rohit Sharma (ninth) remain static in the batters' list.

"When Rahul Dravid manned India A, Gill had played in middle order in a West Indies A tour where he had a double hundred in one of the Tests. To be fair, he was originally a middle order batter, who was converted into an opener," the former national selector said.

In case of Surya, his dominance against spinners on wickets of offering turn is a key factor. "In case Nathan Lyon gets to turn his off breaks big, then SKY can dismantle him with his footwork. But against Cummins, Hazlewood, Gill could be a better bet," he added.

KIIT joins hands with Alexander Waske, ATA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Keeping a bright future of Odisha tennis in mind, a tennis academy has been inaugurated at the KIIT Deemed-to-be-University here Wednesday. The academy has been set up in partnership with former German star Alexander Waske and Altevel Tennis Academy (ATA).

The academy was inaugurated by the Minister of Sports & Youth Services Department and Electronics & Information Technology Tusharkanti Behera and the Founder of KIIT and KISS Dr Achyuta Samanta in the presence of Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Sports & Youth Services Department R Vineel Krishna, Alexander Waske, Founder of Altevel Sports Academy Chirag Patel and others.

Samanta also expressed his gratitude to Waske who is considered one of the best tennis coaches in the world. The Founder said that he was touched by Waske who

could see the potential of KIIT and KISS students staying thousands of miles away in Germany

Waske opens up on the vision of the project, saying: "There are many talented budding tennis players in Odisha and other states. However, this venture will help a lot in creating more players to reach to Grand Slam level as it will help boys and girls with genuine interest in lawn tennis, especially from Odisha, with less cost."

Notably, Waske was a top level singles and doubles player from Germany and has competed at the highest level including Grand Slams. Waske also added that the sports culture of KIIT University has helped groom young tennis players.

This new institute will build a bridge between KIIT University, Altevel Ahmedabad and Alexander Waske Tennis University in Germany in order to help tennis talents do well in national and international tournaments from Odisha.

Sai Praneeth, Kiran George advance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, Feb 1: Indian shuttlers B Sai Praneeth and Kiran George advanced to the second round of the Thailand Open Super 300 badminton tournament with contrasting wins over their respective opponents here Wednesday. Praneeth beat Mads Christophersen of Denmark 21-13, 21-14 in a battle lasting 31 minutes. He faces Hyeok Jin Jeon of South Korea in second round.

George, on the other hand, staved off a tough challenge from Lee Chia Hao of Chinese Taipei before emerging 21-17, 19-21, 23-21 victorious. He is up against third seed Cheuk Yiu Lee of Hong Kong in the second round.

However, Sameer Verma, Priyanshu Rajawat and Mithun Manjunath lost their first round matches. While Verma suffered 14-21, 16-21 defeat against sixth seeded Chinese Shi Feng Li, Rajawat lost to Kwang Hee Heo of South Korea 21-14, 19-21, 25-27 and Manjunath was beaten 18-21, 12-21 by fifth seeded Kenta Nishimoto of Japan. In women's singles, Ashmita



B SAI PRANEETH

Chaliha beat compatriot Anupama Upadhyaya 21-16, 21-19 to reach the second round where she will face sixth seed Line Hojmark Kjaersfeldt of Denmark.

The pair of Simran Singhi and Ritika Thaker lost to sixth seeded Sheng Shu and Shu Xian Zhang of China 8-21, 10-21 in the women's doubles.