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Terms & Conditions Apply. \*Ex-showroom price all India. Segment is defined as vehicle with length between 3 990 mm - 3 999 mm and height - 1 680 mm. \*\*Kia Connect 2.0 comes with 3 years free subscription. Kia Connect 2.0 features may vary depending on the variant, device compatibility, software and network availability in vehicle. †Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS) is not a substitute for human eye and driver vigilance. It is an assistance feature that enhances driving experience and safety. Effectiveness of ADAS may vary based on actual situation and all objects around vehicle may not be detected. The driver shall remain responsible for safe, vigilant, and attentive driving. \*My Convenience Secure available with My Convenience/ My Convenience Plus at the time of sales at additional cost, covers wear and tear of selected parts only. †3 Years standard warranty and 2 years extended warranty. ††Scratch Care Program coverage includes repair of 1 scratch free of cost in an ownership period of 12 months from the date of sale, applicable on the new Syros retailed up to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025. ††IoT based workshops for live vehicle tracking for digital experience. †Upto 6 years extendable RSA coverage. Applicable across India except Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep. ††Kia Connect Diagnosis has limited set of functionalities. Customers may be required to visit Kia workshop for issue resolution. The product & feature images shown in this brochure is for representation purpose only. Features and specifications as shown may not be part of standard fitment and may vary. The colors shown are subject to availability and may not be available across all variants and may differ slightly from those shown in this brochure. The specifications and features may vary depending on models/ variants. Kia India Pvt. Ltd. (Formerly known as Kia Motors India Private Limited) reserves the right to make any changes with respect to the trims, colors, specifications. Kia Connect 2.0 features and other details of any model as mentioned or to discontinue any model without prior notice. For more details visit your local Kia dealership. Kia India Pvt. Ltd. urges you to follow traffic rules, these are meant to keep you safe on roads. We do not endorse vandalism or illegal activities related to road safety. Safety is a top priority, and we urge responsible behavior regarding traffic regulations and road safety.

# leisure



## HE-MAN VOICE ACTOR ERWIN PASSES AWAY

The legendary voice actor John Erwin, best known for bringing 'He-Man' to life in the 1980s animated series *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, has sadly passed away at the age of 88. His representative confirmed that Erwin died of natural causes.

## AFFLECK, GARNER REKINDLE BOND

Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner have been growing closer after his divorce from Jennifer Lopez. Although their relationship remains strictly friendly, they prioritise their bond for the well-being of their family. Their recent public appearances highlight their strengthened connection and cooperative approach to parenting.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Your day is packed full. There are negotiations, commitments, plans and decisions to wade through. You may feel low on energy and swamped due to lack of information and inputs from others. But clarity will return gradually as matters conclude, says Ganesh.

**TAURUS**  
Ganesh sees you in a very romantic mood today. Your thoughts, tender and dreamy, will keep drifting towards someone special; someone of the opposite sex. Come evening and you will, in all likelihood, be sitting closely together, arm in arm, with your spouse or your sweetheart. The magic of love will raise your spirits and get you in a light and lively mood.

**GEMINI**  
Your entire attention will be concentrated on the work-front today. You will be on the lookout for new projects and contracts to spur on your earnings. Opportunities for changing your job will come knocking on your door. You will be afforded the full co-operation of your colleagues today. Make the most of the day, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
Control your anger, counsels Ganesh. Or else, it will sadden your near ones. Writers may display creative output of high order. The day augurs well for artists, too. This is the time to take up new challenges, says Ganesh.

**LEO**  
You will not be in the mood to take up significant tasks today. You will want to throw your responsibilities to the wind and pursue leisurely activities. However you will still need to tackle some pressing issues. It is easier to swim with the tide, than against, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
You will be bubbling with ideas today. You may face a dilemma between your obligations and present duties, which could prove to be very perplexing. New contacts turn out to be very useful. Ganesh says blood is thicker than water, and family and friends will cement their relationship with you.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says you will learn a lot from your past experiences for a shining future. You will be slightly possessive about some costly item that you own. There will be small concerns during the day about different matters, which will give you mental stress.

**SCORPIO**  
No matter how rich and successful you become, it is very important to stay grounded. Never let your success go to your head, advises Ganesh. Rudeness and overconfidence may take away everything from you and may leave you empty handed. So be kind and spread kindness.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Life is bubbling within you and you shall be in a hyper-elevated state of bliss today. Your high-spirits and energy will inspire you to perform at your best. Moreover, your inner voice will be loud and bellowing. Make the most of this superb day, says Ganesh.

**CAPRICORN**  
Mounting pressure of work and responsibilities during the day may drain your energy, but not your enthusiasm, feels Ganesh. The second half of the day will be tiring, as you will be fighting a tough battle with your competitors. You'll come out triumphant from the fight as you perform smartly and get your acts right.

**AQUARIUS**  
You need not always put up a brave face, feels Ganesh. You can ventilate your emotions and speak your heart out in front of your loved ones. It will make the pain bearable and you'll probably get a way out of your problems. You will feel better by the evening, and a sweet smile will brighten up your face.

**PISCES**  
You need to nurture your personal relationships carefully today, and give them the attention they are due. You need to control the outbursts of your temper and stop arguing with your partner or spouse over insignificant matters. Personal life will be smooth sailing as long as neither of you attempt to dominate over the other, says Ganesh.

## Khushi's mystery man

**Mumbai:** Actress Khushi Kapoor, who is gearing up for the release of her upcoming film *Loveyapa*, has posted a picture with a mystery man.

Friday, the *Archies* star took to her Instagram handle and dropped a photo showing her embracing a guy dressed in a hoodie, with his face hidden from view in the picture. Khushi captioned the post, "He made it to the grid, will make it to your hearts soon."

Although the identity of the guy remains a mystery, fans are already speculating that it could be either Vedang Raina or Ibrahim Ali Khan. One user

chimed in with, "No way, @vedangrainna, is that you?" while another commented, "Wait, is that @iakpataudi?"

A third user wrote, "Ayyyeeeee it's definitely vedang cause the body personality is of Vedang but may be khushi wants to show this as a nadaniyaan promotion."

Ibrahim's name has come up in the speculation due to his upcoming collaboration with Khushi Kapoor. The two are set to star together in Karan Johar's production, reportedly titled *Naadaniyaan*. Directed by Shauna Gautam, the film is expected to have a direct-to-OTT release.

Meanwhile, Khushi's next offering, *Loveyapa*, stars her alongside Aamir Khan's son, Junaid Khan.



## Tamannaah's self-love ritual

**Mumbai:** Tamannaah Bhatia has always been a strong advocate for body positivity and in a recent conversation; she shared insights into her evolving relationship with her body. The *Babli Bouncer* actress revealed a unique self-care ritual that has helped her cultivate self-love.

"I truly appreciate my body. After a long day at work, I take a shower and express gratitude to every part of it. It might sound unusual, but why not? I recognise the effort it takes every single day, so I touch each part of my body, thanking it for its strength and resilience," she shared.

Reflecting on her past struggles with body image, the *Aranmanai 4* actress admitted that, during her childhood, she equated being skinny with being fit. "There was a time when I believed that being thin made me beautiful. But over time, I realized it only served a certain utility and didn't truly make me feel good about myself," she said.

Tamannaah shared that her perspective on beauty has only recently shifted. She credited her journey with dance and performances like *Aaj Ki Raat* for helping her embrace her body.

"The moments I actually started feeling beautiful had nothing to do with how thin I was. It took me a long time to understand that," she added.

## Outrage over Udit's lip-kiss to fan

**Mumbai:** Veteran singer Udit Narayan stirred controversy after an undated video of him kissing a female fan on the lips while taking a selfie during his performance started doing the rounds on social media.

In the undated video, Udit was seen performing the iconic track *Tip Tip Barsa Paani* picturised on Akshay Kumar and Raveena Tandon, when a female fan turned around and kissed him on the cheek. The singer then kissed her on her lips. The singer kissed the female fan on the lips, as per viral videos from the show, which are now doing the rounds.

Social media users have strongly criticised the gesture, with many expressing disappointment. One user remarked that they wished the video was AI-generated, while another commented that Udit Narayan had tarnished his legacy with his behavior.

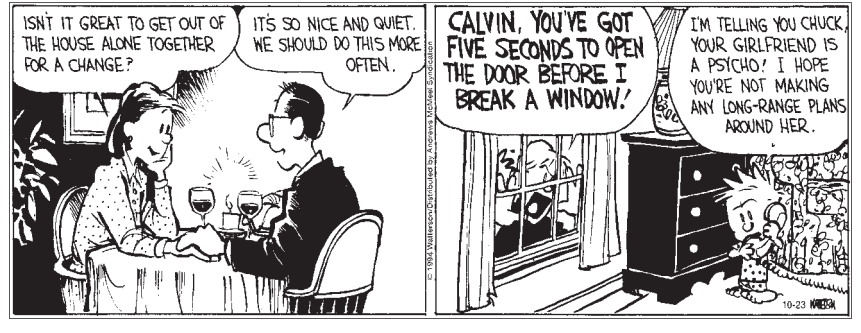
Amid the growing criticism, Udit Narayan has responded to the controversy. Addressing the backlash, he stated, "There is a deep, pure, and unbreakable bond between me and my fans. What you saw in that scandalous video is a manifestation of love between me and my fans. If you see something dirty in an act of pure affection, then I feel sorry for them. I am not at all ashamed or apologetic."



### PEANUTS



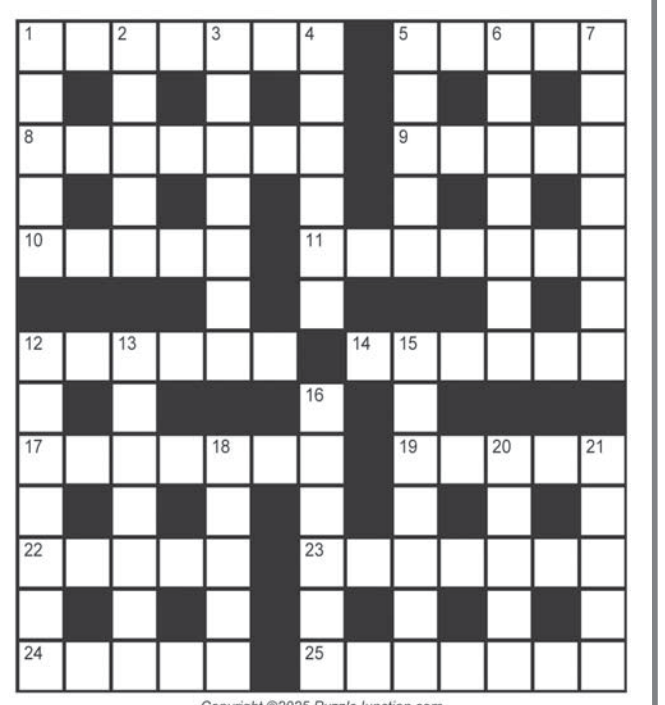
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



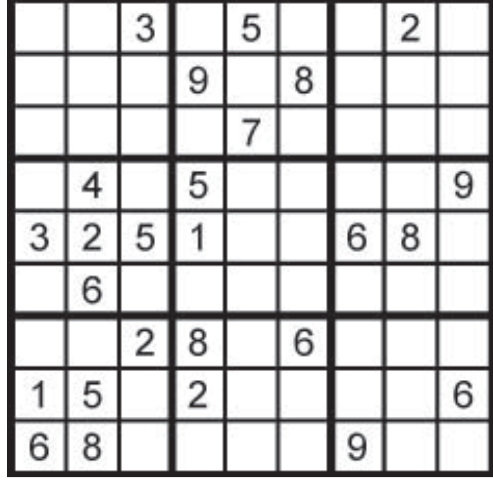
### FUN POST CROSSWORD



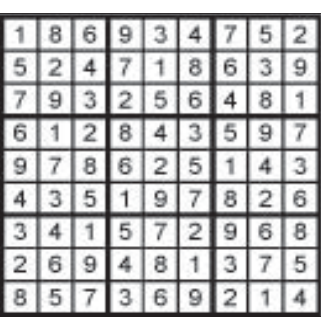
- Across**
- 1 Candidate
  - 5 Major artery
  - 8 Fragrance
  - 9 Short trip
  - 10 Kind of nut
  - 11 Train
  - 12 Monasteries
  - 14 Aura
  - 17 Banderas of *Desperado*
  - 19 Break open
  - 22 Earthy colour
  - 23 Humiliation
  - 24 Peers
  - 25 The daily grind (3,4)
  - 6 Pie plant
  - 7 Sophia Loren, e.g.
  - 12 Mother-of-pearl source
  - 13 Man with a cleaver
  - 15 Blink of an eye
  - 16 World Cup sport
  - 18 Exigencies
  - 20 Cocoon contents
  - 21 Uptight
- Down**
- 1 Wealthy one
  - 2 Purple shade
  - 3 Risqué
  - 4 Admirer
  - 5 Winter pear

### 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

## UNION BUDGET 2025-26

**₹50.65L-cr**  
PROJECTED TOTAL EXPENDITURE

**₹34.96L-cr**  
PROJECTED TOTAL RECEIPTS OTHER THAN BORROWINGS

**₹11.21L-cr**  
PROJECTED CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

**4.4 %**  
PROJECTED FISCAL DEFICIT

**6.3 to 6.8%**  
PROJECTED GDP GROWTH



The Budget lays a strong foundation to increase savings and make citizens partners in development

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER



Amid global uncertainty, solving our economic crisis demanded a paradigm shift. But this government is bankrupt of ideas

RAHUL GANDHI | LEAD OF OPPOSITION

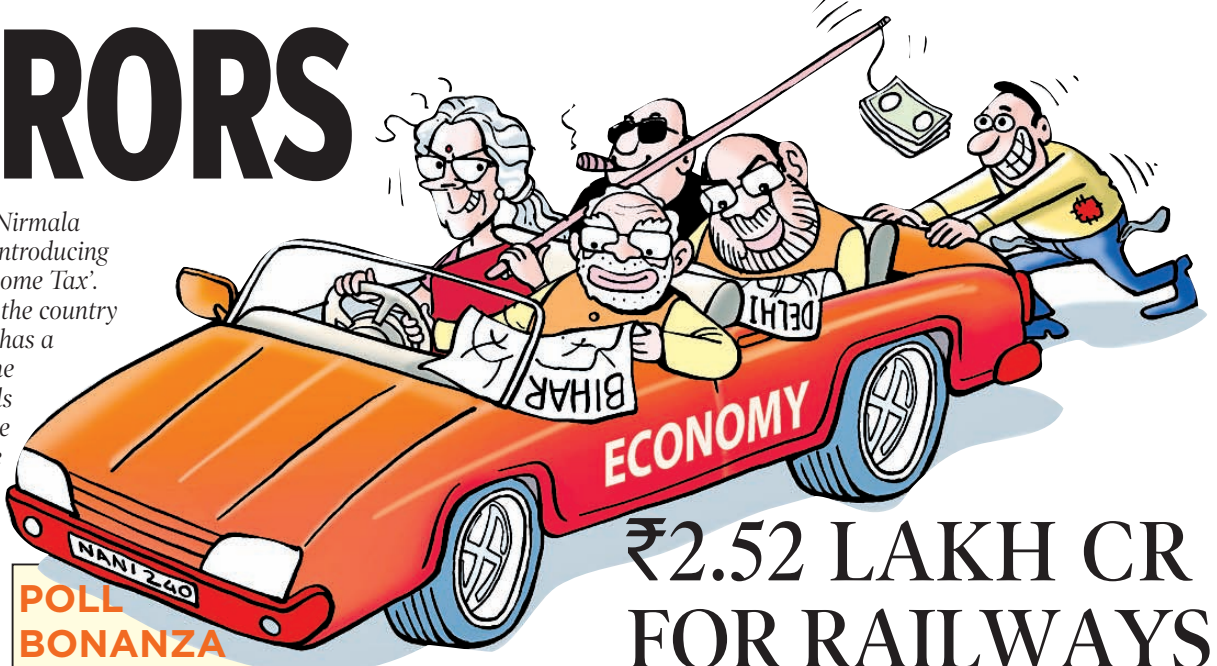


We commend the 2025 Union Budget for its continued support of robust consumption growth through changes in the tax structure, effectively placing more disposable income in the hands of the Indian consumer.

DR. ANISH SHAH | GROUP CEO & MD, MAHINDRA GROUP

# SMOKE & MIRRORS

Amid slowing economic growth and sluggish consumption, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's eighth consecutive Budget has attempted to appease the middle class by introducing new Income Tax slabs. Now, people earning up to ₹12.75 lakh will be subject to 'No Income Tax'. While there is some relief in the form of lower direct taxation, the indirect tax system in the country continues to remain regressive, with high GST on a host of products and services. This has a disproportionate effect on low-income groups, who unfortunately have to pay the same amount of tax as the rich. Similarly, while the collection of Income Tax from individuals has been pegged at ₹14.38 lakh crore (14.3%) in FY26, the corporate sector continues to be pampered with a mere 10.4% growth in corporate tax, estimated at ₹10.82 lakh crore. The economic policy pursued by the government has again overlooked the social sector while being silent on major issues like job creation and inflation



## ₹2.52 LAKH CR FOR RAILWAYS

### POLL BONANZA

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman kept the focus on poll-bound Bihar and Delhi in the Budget. From a Makhana Board and Western Kosi Canal Project, to new airports and IIT Patna expansion plans, the announcements were focused on farmers, the youth, and the middle class. They will be the key when Bihar goes to polls later this year. The announcements, catering to farmers to the middle class, are important as the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) looks to keep the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)-led Mahagathabandhan at bay and win Bihar late this year. ₹1,348 crore has also been allocated to the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, reflecting an increase of ₹100 crore in loans and advances ahead of polls.

duty cuts on intermediaries and certain life saving drugs. To balance the revenue lost, she budgeted a modest increase in capital spending at ₹11.21 lakh crore in the next financial year compared to a lowered ₹10.18 lakh crore in current fiscal. Besides, an increase in dividend expected from the Reserve Bank and other government-owned financial institutions will also help to contain the losses. The budget comes against the backdrop of the Indian economy growing at its weakest pace since pandemic and rising geopolitical risks particularly with the new US President Donald Trump threatening to impose widespread tariffs including on India.

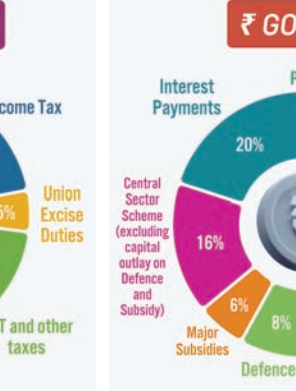
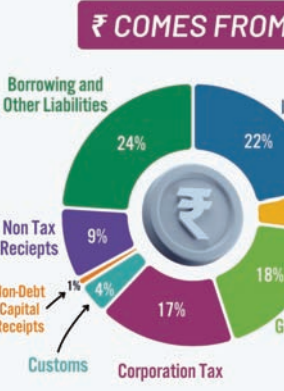
NEW DELHI, Feb 1: Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Saturday said the Budget 2025-26 maintained the government's continuous push to improve Railways by allocating ₹2.52 lakh crore to it and approving projects such as manufacturing 17,500 general coaches, 200 Vande Bharat and 100 Amrit Bharat trains, among others. "New projects worth ₹4.6 lakh crore have been included in the budget which will be completed in four to five years. These are related to laying of new lines, doubling, quadrupling, new constructions, station re-development, flyover, under-passes among many others," the Railway minister told reporters at Rail Bhawan here. He added that 100 Amrit Bharat, 50 Namo Bharat and 200 Vande Bharat -- both sleepers as well as chair car variants -- will be manufactured in the next two to three years.



leads to 1 crore people not having to pay any tax, she said. The overall tax slab reg will benefit 6.3 crore people, or more than 80 per cent of taxpayers. "The new structure will substantially reduce taxes on the middle class and leave more money in their hands, boosting household consumption, savings and investment," Sitharaman said presenting what was dubbed as 'reformist' budget for the next fiscal in Lok Sabha. The Budget for April 2025 to March 2026 fiscal (FY26) proposed to raise foreign investment limit in insurance sector to 100 per cent from current 74 per cent and continued spending spree on infrastructure while raising allocations for social sectors as well as providing for measures for poor, youth, farmers and women. All this she did while

managing to stick to the fiscal consolidation roadmap, projecting a fiscal deficit of 4.4 per cent of the GDP in FY26 as against an estimated 4.8 per cent in the current year ending March 31. Commenting on the announcements, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said it is a "people's budget" that fulfils the dreams of every Indian and said that it is a "force-multiplier" that will boost consumption, investment and growth. "The Budget lays a strong foundation to increase savings and make citizens partners in development," he said. Sitharaman's budget has proposals aimed at boosting both consumption and investment, which in turn are expected to give a flip to domestic economic activity, promoting the growth outlook amidst global uncertainties. While maintaining

the thrust on infrastructure development, it also continued to provide increasing support to the MSME and the agricultural sector. Also announced were



Income	Tax on Slabs and Rates	Benefit of	Rebate Benefit (for those earning below ₹12 lakh)	Total Benefit	Tax after benefit
	Present	Proposed	Rate Slab	Full rebate upto ₹12 lakh	
Up to 9 lakh	30,000	20,000	10,000	20,000	30,000
9 lakh	40,000	30,000	10,000	30,000	40,000
10 lakh	50,000	40,000	10,000	40,000	50,000
11 lakh	65,000	50,000	15,000	50,000	65,000
12 lakh	80,000	60,000	20,000	60,000	80,000
16 lakh	1,70,000	1,20,000	50,000	0	50,000
20 lakh	2,90,000	2,00,000	90,000	0	90,000
24 lakh	4,10,000	3,00,000	1,10,000	0	1,10,000
50 lakh	11,90,000	10,80,000	1,10,000	0	1,10,000

- ### CHEAPER
- Life-Saving Drugs
  - Medicine
  - Electronic Goods
  - Headphones
  - EV Vehicles
  - Mobile Phones
  - Critical minerals exemption
  - Leather products
  - Shipbuilding raw material
  - Handicraft exports
  - Carrier-grade ethernet switches
  - Marine products
  - Imported motorcycles

## I-T rejig a visionary step: CM

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Saturday said the 'zero income tax' up to ₹12 lakh per annum, as proposed in the Union Budget 2025-26, is a transformative initiative and a visionary step that will empower citizens and strengthen the economy. The Budget gave a relief to the middle class with regard to tax incidence and rejigged slabs. Taking to X, Majhi said, "A heartfelt thank you to Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi ji and Hon'ble Finance Minister @nsitharaman ji for this transformative initiative of Zero Income Tax till ₹12 Lakh under the New Tax Regime. This visionary step empowers citizens, strengthens the economy, and paves the way



## No cheer for market

MUMBAI: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended flat in a special trading session Saturday as investors saw little coming in from the FM for retail investors and the overall markets in the Union Budget. The markets were open on Saturday due to the presentation of the Union Budget. In a day market with heavy volatility, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex eked out a marginal gain of 5.39 points or 0.01 per cent to settle at 77,505.96. During the day, it hit a high of 77,899.05 and a low of 77,006.47, gyrating 892.58 points. The NSE Nifty dipped 26.25 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at 23,482.15. Intra-day, the benchmark scaled a high of 23,632.45 and a low of 23,318.30. The BSE midcap gauge declined 0.49 per cent while smallcap index climbed 0.28 per cent.

- ### DEARER
- Knitted fabrics
  - TVs
  - Smart meter
  - Solar Cells
  - Imported footwear
  - Imported Candles and tapers
  - Imported Yachts and other vessels
  - PVC Flex Films, PVC Flex Sheets, PVC Flex Banner

## FM's speech: Key takeaways

- The fiscal deficit for FY25 is set at 4.8%, while the estimated fiscal deficit for FY26 stands at 4.4%.
- Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 to be introduced to decriminalise over 100 provisions. Investment friendly index of States to be launched in 2025.
- Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana to be launched in partnership with states, covering 100 districts, to benefit 1.7 crore farmers.
- Proposal for removal of 7 tariff rates over an above those in removed in earlier budget. Only 8 tariff rates to remain after the new move.
- An outlay of ₹1.5 lakh crore for 50-year interest free loans to states for capex and infrastructure.
- 36 live savings drugs and medicines fully exempted from basic customs duty.
- Customised credit cards with ₹5 lakh limit for micro-enterprises registered on Udyam portal, 10 lakh cards to be issued in 1st year
- 50,000 Atal Tinkering Labs to be set up in Government schools in next 5 years
- Nuclear Energy Mission for research and development of Small Modular Reactors (SMR) with an outlay of ₹20,000 crore to be set up, 5 indigenously developed SMRs to be operational by 2033
- Modified UDAN scheme to enhance regional connectivity to 120 new destinations and carry 4 crore passengers in next 10 years.

## MAJOR ALLOCATIONS

- DEFENCE**  
The government has allocated ₹6.81 lakh crore to the defence sector, marking a major increase from the ₹6.2 lakh crore assigned in the current fiscal year
- ROAD TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS**  
The government has allocated ₹2,873.33.16 crore for the road transport and highways ministry for 2025-26, about 2.41 per cent up from the outlay of ₹2,805.18.80 crore in the current financial year
- FOOD AND FERTILISERS**  
Government subsidies on food and fertilisers has been pegged at ₹3.71 lakh crore for 2025-26, marginally higher by 0.70 per cent than the estimated outgo in the current fiscal year
- EDUCATION**  
The Ministry of Education has been allocated more than ₹1.28 lakh crore in the Budget, higher than the revised estimate of ₹1.14 lakh crore in 2024-25.
- HEALTH**  
The Union Health Ministry has been allocated ₹99,858.56 crore in the Budget 2025-2026, an around 11 per cent hike over the ₹89,974.12 crore in the budget (revised estimates) of 2024-2025

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**Bronchom, Swasari Vati, Swasari Gold, Swasari Pravahi and Swasari Avaleha**

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# BUDGET 2025-26: WHO SAID WHAT

## AI PUSH, INFRA EXPANSION AT 5 NEW IITs

AGENCIES

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 1:** People and personalities from various walks of life reacted in varying degrees to the Union Budget 2025-26 which was presented in the Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Saturday.

While Opposition leaders and urban planners were critical of, what they said, complete omission of Odisha in the Budget document and its failure to address critical issues like job creation and price rise, educationists, environmentalists and various industry stakeholders termed the Budget as progressive and growth oriented.

Leader of Opposition (LoP) **Naveen Patnaik** said the Centre has not only failed to address the issues of unemployment and price rise but also overlooked Odisha's demand for special category status.

"Today, the youth of the country are in the dire need of jobs and common people are bearing the brunt of unchecked #PriceRise of essential commodities. It is unfortunate that two of the most pressing challenges the country is facing have not been addressed in the #Budget2025. #Unemployment. Odisha has been rightfully demanding for special category status in view of numerous natural calamities it faces every year. While other states are getting special provisions in the budget, yet again #Odisha's genuine demand has been completely overlooked by the Central Government," the LoP said in a post on X.

Koraput MP and Congress leader **Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka** flayed the Union Budget stating that the much awaited Budget has once again failed to address the critical concerns of Odisha.

He said Bihar has enjoyed special attention in the Budget due to political compulsions in view of the upcoming Assembly elections in that state.

He, however, welcomed the increase in tax rebate to ₹12 lakh which was long overdue, but criticised the Budget as it does not address the deeper crisis of unemployment, inflation and price rise which continue to cripple common citizens.

"The Budget appears to be a long term vision document rather than action plan to resolve the unemployment, inflation and price rise in the country. It also does not provide a clear roadmap for job creation. The Budget is also silent on pressing issues like Polavaram dispute, Mahanadi water sharing issue, Kotia border dispute, distress migration and rice allocation for Odisha under PDS. This apart, while including new railway projects, there is nothing exclusive or region specific for Odisha," he said.

According to Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) Odisha State Council Chairman **Pankaj Lochan Mohanty**, the Union Budget has laid a strong foundation for growth, inclusion and investment.

"The PM Dhan Dhanya Krishi Yojana and the six-year mission for pulses will boost agricultural productivity and farmer income. Increased Kisan Credit Card limits will further support rural credit access. The government's focus on 'Ease of Doing Business', skilling and critical minerals will drive industrial growth and innovation," Mohanty said, adding that the ₹10,000 crore 'Fund of Funds' to boost startups will encourage entrepreneurship and strengthen innovation ecosystem.

Tax relief measures will enhance disposable income, boosting household spending

and driving the consumer economy, he pointed out. Hotel and Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) Chairman **JK Mohanty** welcomed the Budget, saying it will boost the travel and tourism sector in the country.

"The announcement to provide long-term loan for developing tourism infrastructure in rural areas is a commendable step as it will encourage the industry to focus more on rural tourism. This apart, the announcement to develop 50 tourist destinations across the country, 120 destinations under the UDAN scheme, 400 new Vande Bharat Express trains, e-visa on arrival for select destinations, and healthcare-focused travel is also praiseworthy," Mohanty said.

He, however, expressed concern that the Budget does not address measures to boost the arrival of foreign tourists.

**Mitesh Khimji**, Director, Khimji Jewellers said the Budget is a major boost to the middle class. "We sincerely thank the honourable Finance Minister for presenting a robust Budget. The effort to boost overall consumption and long term nation building in the Union Budget

is appreciable. There is no change in the Customs duty of gold and silver and is good for the business to have continuity. Overall a very positive Budget," he said.

Educationist and SAI International Education Group Chairperson **Dr Silpi Sahoo** hailed the Union Budget, saying it is a transformative leap in the education sector with focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven learning, skill development, and digital inclusion.

"The announcement for establishment of Centre of Excellence for AI in education with an allocation of ₹500 crore is a transformative step for integrating technology into learning, encouraging innovation and access to education. This apart, the commitment to make broadband available to each government secondary school, establishment of 50,000 Atal Tinkering Labs, and Bharatiya Bhasha Pushtak scheme for digitisation of Indian language books would bring education closer to all," Sahoo said.

**Bindu Bhutiya**, a homemaker from Bhubaneswar, said, "Under this government, I don't see any hope this year either. The rich are getting richer, and the poor poorer. Household food prices are increasing every day—prices of dal, mustard oil, vegetables, and gold are skyrocketing. It doesn't seem like things will improve for us under this government. We, the middle class, continue to suffer regardless of who is in power."

Centurion University Vice Chancellor **Supriya Pattanayak** said it is an encouraging sign that the government has continued to put adequate focus on the need for skill development.

"We also request the government to consider policies that promote and enhance skill-integrated higher education at existing public as well as private institutions, especially in regions outside the metro cities," Pattanayak said.

**Dr Amrit Pattojoshi**, a top health expert, welcomed the Union Budget.

"Rs 98,311 crore allocation for healthcare, Customs duty exemption for life-saving drugs and setting up of cancer day care centres will go a long way in saving lives. Allowing 100 per cent FDI in insurance is also a welcome move," Pattojoshi said.

Climate expert **Ranjan Panda** said the Budget gives an important focus on green energy in order to take steps towards achieving the net-zero emissions target aimed to



be achieved by 2070.

"I am yet to analyse the details of the provision but would like to urge the government to prioritise expenses on 'just transition' to a green energy-based economy that promotes equitable distribution of employment opportunities, skill development of youths in green jobs, humane infrastructure and ecosystem restoration of mining areas that help the rivers, water bodies, forests and soil systems in coming back to their natural state," he said.

Panda said the water conservation agenda in the Budget looks promising. "However, in this case also, I am yet to analyse the detailed provisions. I would urge upon the government to finalise the new water policy that's in the slumber for years now and take forward the water conservation agenda in line with it."

Also, he added, the MGN-REGA needs to be prioritised if the government is serious about water conservation.

According to urban planner **Piyush Ranjan Rout** the Budget has lots of promises like monsoon predictions until it melts the soil on ground.

"Well there is more expected for urban development keeping in mind demographic transitions bending towards urbanisation. However, urban sector got some intervention with market links that might benefit bigger cities than smaller and medium towns. This includes programmes like the City Challenge Fund (created during the UPA government). It's good but depends how much professional our municipal bodies and their leaders and babus are," he said.

Calling the Budget as progress oriented, Rout said, "It is based on capitalism with riders - means an Income Tax exemption will benefit only when people have income. That means the country needs job. Startup is good but the amount allocated for it is like a mug inside drums," he said.

Rout said he felt disappointed as Odisha, despite contributing 20 MPs to the NDA government, didn't find mention in the Budget. "Odisha needs special attention to double its growth pattern. Simplified, neither the cities nor are the towns of the state stand to benefit much from Union Budget as against the expectations," he said.

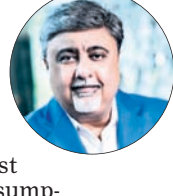
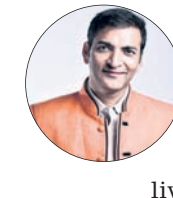
She announced the government will create additional infrastructure at five Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and expand IIT Patna.

"The total number of students in 23 IITs has increased by 100 per cent from 65,000 to 1.35 lakh in the past 10 years. Additional infrastructure will be created in the five IITs started after 2014 to facilitate education for 6,500 more students. Hostel and other infrastructure capacity at IIT Patna will also be expanded," she said.

The five new IITs are at Jammu, Bhilai, Dharwad, Palakkad and Tirupati.

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

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



## Pvt players in nuclear power sector soon

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 1:** Ushering in reforms, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday proposed to open up the nuclear power sector for private players and announced a ₹20,000 crore Nuclear Energy Mission for research in the field, with an aim to set up five small and modular reactors by 2033.

Presenting the Union Budget for 2025-26, Sitharaman said producing at least 100 GW of nuclear power by 2047 was essential for India's energy transition efforts.

"For an active partnership with the private sector towards this goal, amendments to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act will be taken up," she said.

"A Nuclear Energy Mission for research and development of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) with an outlay of ₹20,000 crore will be set up. At least five indigenously-developed SMRs will be operationalised by 2033," Sitharaman said.

India currently produces 8.1 GW of nuclear power through 24 atomic power plants across the country and hopes to increase it to 20 GW by 2032.

The state-run Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) is the operator of nuclear power plants in the country.

The Atomic Energy Act does not allow participation of private sector investment in the nuclear industry.



The NPCIL has started joint venture companies with the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) and the Indian Oil Corporation to build nuclear power plants.

"In terms of reforms, many important steps have been taken in this Budget. Encouraging the private sector in nuclear energy is historic. It will ensure a big contribution of civil nuclear energy in the development of the country," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his remarks on the Union Budget.

Former Atomic Energy Commission chairman Anil Kakodkar welcomed the announcement to launch the Nuclear Energy Mission, saying such a focussed approach was required to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat.

Kakodkar, who played a key

role in negotiating the civil nuclear deal with the US, said 100 GW of nuclear power generation by 2047 was required for India to achieve its declared goal of net-zero emission.

He said NTPC could drive the SMR mission as it hosted the maximum coal-fired power plants, which would have to be retired in the near future.

Union Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh had told Parliament last year that India's long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategy recognised a significantly greater role of nuclear energy in achieving the net zero target.

"Nuclear energy has a vital role in the country's energy transition to net zero as it is a base-load source of clean electricity, available 24x7," he had said.

Singh, who is also in charge of the Department of Atomic Energy, added that the nuclear sector also

had huge potential to provide the country long-term energy security in a sustainable manner.

"In this regard, a nuclear power expansion programme is being implemented to increase the installed nuclear power capacity to 22,480 MW by 2031-32 from 8,180 MW at present," he had said.

Last year, NPCIL invited proposals from the private sector to set up 220 MW Bharat Small Reactors to replace coal-fired captive power plants in the energy-guzzling steel, aluminium, copper and cement industries.

SMRs refer to a newly-developed and upcoming class of land-based nuclear fission reactors, which can be built and fabricated in specialised factories and be assembled on site.

**A Nuclear Energy Mission for research and development of Small Modular Reactors (SMR) with an outlay of ₹20,000 crore will be set up. At least five indigenously-developed SMRs will be operationalised by 2033**

**NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | UNION FINANCE MINISTER**

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According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, there are more than 80 SMR designs and concepts globally. Most of them are in various developmental stages and some are claimed as being near-term deployable.

IN loving MEMORY

**SHRI BIJAY KUMAR SWAIN, IFS (RETD.)**  
Dedicated Forestry Professional | Heritage Enthusiast | Researcher

**In Fond Remembrance**  
Jayanti (Wife),  
Roma and Debashish,  
Roopa and Anup,  
Rajin, Ridhi and Kuhu











**CV ANANDA BOSE | BENGAL GOVERNOR**

## PAR PANEL ON WAQF AMENDMENT BILL TO BE TABLED IN LS TOMORROW

The report of the joint committee of Parliament examining the Waqf (Amendment) Bill will be tabled in the Lok Sabha Monday. A bulletin issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat said Committee Chairman Jagdambika Pal and member Sanjay Jaiswal will table the report in the Lok Sabha Monday



### of the day uote

Modi ji has provided (in the budget) schemes worth crores of rupees for Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttrakhand. He has freed the middle class from paying tax if they earn upto ₹12 lakh annually



AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

The Congress should not criticise the Union Budget at all. They should know how much relief they had offered to the middle-class people. After 60 years of rule, they did not give relief of up to even ₹5 lakh



HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

Grateful to Hon'ble Finance Minister Smt. @nsitharaman for a growth-oriented budget focused on agriculture, MSMEs, connectivity, and youth opportunities. Initiatives like PM Dhan Dhanya Yojana, enhanced MSME credit, and UDAN will transform Meghalaya



CONRAD K SANGMA | MEGHALAYA CM

## POST OF THE DAY

Markets did not rise despite the tax cut announcement. why? This particular tax cut is a popularity move, not a sensible economic move. This does not solve the growth problem, it simply solves the popularity problem. It gives the feeling that at least "something" is being done for the middle class. What we miss is: - Roughly 6.5% of our population files taxes - Roughly 2% actually pays some tax - Now with this change: roughly 1% would pay taxes effectively This does not build any kind of investor confidence.

@Akshat\_World

# Eight MLAs who quit AAP join BJP

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 1:** With just four days to go before the Delhi Assembly elections February 5, eight legislators who resigned from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Friday joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Saturday.

The legislators who resigned from AAP and joined BJP include Girish Soni (Madhipur), Bhavna Gaur (Palam), Madan Lal (Kasturba Nagar), Pawan Sharma (Adarsh Nagar), Rajesh Rishi (Utam Nagar), B.S. Joon (Bijwasan), Rohit Mehrolia (Trilokpuri), and Naresh Yadav (Mahrauli). Former MLA Vijender Garg and Municipal Councillors Ajay Rai and Sunil Chadda also joined the BJP. Significantly, AAP did not allocate election tickets to any of these individuals this time. They were said to be upset with the party leadership over this.

The legislators had sent their resignation letters to AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal and to the Speaker of the Delhi Legislative Assembly.

Naresh Yadav, who was previously the Mehrauli candidate for AAP, was convicted by a Punjab court in December in a Quran desecration case and sentenced to two years in jail. Following this, when AAP released its fifth list of candidates for the upcoming Delhi election February 5, the party announced Mahender Chaudhary as the new Mehrauli candidate, replacing Naresh Yadav.

Naresh Yadav in his resignation letter said the AAP abandoned its founding principle of "honest politics." He alleged the party, instead of fulfilling its pledge to reduce corruption, had "become entangled in the

## Remain vigilant: EC tells Delhi poll officials

**New Delhi:** Ahead of the February 5 assembly polls, the EC on Saturday asked its election machinery in Delhi to hold meetings with top police officials to handle law-and-order situations in the most critical 72 hours before voting concludes. In its directions to the Delhi chief electoral officer, the Election Commission (EC) also said close tracking should be maintained by all enforcement agencies for all forms of misuse of money power and inducement to voters. Proper investigation is essential to establish linkages between the election process and the supply of inducements such as liquor, it said. The EC made it clear that flying squad officers should file complaints or FIRs immediately against persons receiving and giving bribes and any other person from whom contraband items are seized.

swamp of corruption itself", alluding to the Delhi liquor policy case in which former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his former deputy Manish Sisodia were jailed for several months.

The voting for the 70-member Delhi Assembly will take place February 5, with the results expected February 8. The 2025 Delhi elections could see a triangular contest among AAP, BJP, and Congress. Welcoming the legislators and leaders into the BJP fold, BJP leader Baijayant Jay Panda described the day as "historic" as they were now free from the "disaster" of AAP, expressing hope that Delhi would be liberated from it after the February 5 elections.



Newly-initiated sadhvis of 'Shri Panchdashnam Juna Akhara' perform rituals at the bank of the Ganga river during the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

# Farmer groups slam Budget

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 1:** Farmer organisations Saturday slammed the Union Budget for "cruelly" neglecting their longstanding demand for a legally guaranteed Minimum Support Price for all crops and farm loan-waiver, and announced a protest on February 5 against the "anti-farmer, anti-worker, anti-poor and pro-corporate Budget".

In a statement issued here, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) said the Budget 2025-26 proposals for more deregulation and liberalisation, including a 100 percent privatisation of the insurance sector, are dangerous when the economy is facing serious challenges in the context of the intensifying corporate hegemony on all sectors including agriculture, manufacturing and services.

"The budget has cruelly neglected the long-pending demand for legally guaranteed MSP at C2+50 percent for all crops. This needs to be criti-



SAMYUKTA KISAN MORCHA

cally viewed in the context of an unchecked increase in corporate profits that amounted to ₹10, 88,000 crore in 2022-23 and rose to ₹14, 11,000 crore in 2023-24," the SKM said.

They also said no loan-waiver was announced for farmers, even as a Parliamentary committee had recommended it.

"During the last two years, scheduled commercial banks have written off loans to the corporates amounting to ₹2,09,144 crore and ₹1,70,000 crore... When farmers' movement is raising the issue of 31 farmers daily committing suicide in India due to indebtedness, the prime minister prefers to keep silent," the

The budget has cruelly neglected the long-pending demand for legally guaranteed MSP at C2+50 percent for all crops. This needs to be critically viewed in the context of an unchecked increase in corporate profits that amounted to ₹10, 88,000 crore in 2022-23 and rose to ₹14, 11,000 crore in 2023-24

SAMYUKTA KISAN MORCHA

SKM said. The SKM and the Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions also said they will hold a protest on 5th February against the Budget. "The SKM calls upon the farmers and the entire working people to come forward and protest against the anti-farmer, anti-worker, anti-poor and pro-corporate Budget 2025-26 on 5th February 2025 across India and burn its copies demanding withdrawal of all the anti-people proposals in it. Farmers while protesting independently will coordinate with the workers to spread the protest to maximum villages and towns," the farmers' group said.

## Top Bhutanese Army commander begins 6-day visit to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 1:** Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army, Lieutenant General Batoo Tshering, began a six-day visit to India Saturday to further enhance the already close defence ties between the two countries.

Lt Gen. Tshering is scheduled to hold talks with Army chief General Upendra Divedi, National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh.

The visit is focused on fostering closer bilateral military cooperation and exploring new avenues for defence collaboration, an Indian readout said. The top Bhutanese military commander's trip comes around two months after Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck visited India.

The overall situation in the Doklam plateau may figure in Lt Gen. Tshering's talks with Indian officials. The Indian and Chinese armies were locked in a 73-day standoff at the Doklam tri-junction in 2017, after China tried to extend a road in the area that Bhutan claimed belonged to it.

The India-China standoff in the Doklam plateau even triggered fears of a larger conflict between the two neighbours. Bhutan had said the area belonged to it and India supported the Bhutanese claim. In the last couple of years, Bhutan and China were looking at an expeditious resolution of their festering boundary row.

Lt Gen. Tshering will spend the first day of his trip in Gaya, where he is scheduled to visit the Officers' Training Academy and a number of significant Buddhist cultural sites. From February 2 to February 5, he will be in Delhi.

## CBI cracks down on NAAC corruption scandal; 10 held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 1:** The CBI has arrested the chairman and six members of a National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) inspection committee, including a JNU professor, in a corruption case Saturday, officials said.

Those arrested also include the vice chancellor of the Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (KLEF) in Andhra Pradesh's Guntur and two more executives, they said.

President of the Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (KLEF) in Andhra Pradesh's Guntur Koneru Satyanarayana, NAAC former

deputy adviser L Manjunatha Rao, professor and director (IQAC-NAAC), Bangalore University M Hanumanthappa, and NAAC adviser M S Shyamsundar have also been named as accused in the FIR, the CBI said. However, they have not been arrested so far, it added.

In an operation, the CBI has arrested G P Saradhi Varma, the KLEF vice chancellor, Koneru Raja Hareen, vice president of the KLEF, A Ramakrishna, director of K L University, Hyderabad Campus for their alleged involvement in bribing the members of an NAAC inspection committee for getting A++ accreditation, they said.

## SNIPPETS

### SC to hear PIL alleging misuse of women-centric laws Feb 3

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear Monday a Public Interest Litigation, or PIL, alleging misuse of women-centric laws. The PIL names laws like the Dowry Prohibition Act, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, and the provision on cruelty to women in the Indian Penal Code to question their validity. The plea is scheduled to be heard by a bench of Justices BR Gavai and K Vinod Chandran. The plea filed by petitioner Rupshi Singh highlights the malice in law, the unreasonableness contained in the impugned provisions and the lack of semblance of law in the provisions.

### NIA chargesheets Akash Sahu in J'khand coal mine terror attack

**New Delhi:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a charge sheet against Akash Kumar, the younger brother of notorious gangster Aman Sahu, in connection with the 2020 Tetariyakhar coal mine terror attack in Jharkhand. The charge sheet, filed under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAP) Act, accuses Akash Sahu of playing a pivotal role in the criminal conspiracy behind the attack.

### 9 killed as Cruiser plunges into canal

**Chandigarh:** Nine people including five women died while three are still missing after a Force Motors Cruiser carrying 14 passengers plunged into the Bhakra canal in Haryana's Fatehabad district, police said Saturday. A man and an 11-year-old boy were rescued, police said, adding that a rescue operation is underway. The accident occurred at Sardarewala village in Ratia on Friday night, when dense fog engulfed the area, police said. The passengers, many of whom were from Mehara village, were returning after attending a wedding ceremony at a village in Punjab's Fazilka district, police said. When the Cruiser reached near Sardarewala village, the driver reportedly lost control of the vehicle because of low visibility caused by dense fog, and it fell into the Bhakra canal, they said.

# More medical seats to boost doctor-patient ratio: Experts

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 1:** The government's announcement, in the Union Budget 2025-26, to add 10,000 seats next year and 75,000 seats in the next five years heralds a significant boost to India's healthcare sector and will boost the doctor-patient ratio in the country, said public health experts Saturday.

The Union Budget was tabled in the Parliament today by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Presenting her eighth consecutive budget and the NDA government's second full Union Budget of its third term, Sitharaman said that India has seen remarkable growth in medical education

in the last 10 years.

"The decision to add 10,000 seats per year -- an increase of nearly 5 per cent of the current capacity -- will help improve the doctor-patient ratio and make both secondary and tertiary care more accessible and affordable. Every additional seat also translates to the addition of four beds to the medical college and hospital. In five years, this initiative would add 300,000 more beds, nearly one-third of the current capacity in the public sector," said Satyam Shivam Sundaram, Partner Strategy and Transactions, Govt Advisory Services, EY India.

The government may consider expanding existing medical colleges wherever possible to



optimize expenditure. The plan to add about 200 day care cancer centres in all district hospitals this year, "will strengthen cancer care infrastructure, reducing mortality rates and improving patient outcomes. The impact would be even

greater if screening infrastructure is strengthened and care pathways are well-defined," Sundaram said.

"The government would do well to reskill the hospital teams to run the daycare cancer centres. We also hope

that the budget would pave the way for the affordability of robotic surgery," Mahendra Bhandari, CEO of the Vattikuti Foundation, a champion of robotic surgery.

"Adding 75,000 medical college seats over the next five years will place much-needed emphasis on producing medical graduates who have access to advanced, new-age tools and have demonstrated mastery in the use of AI and other novel techniques that transcend traditional approaches to deliver better patient outcomes," he added.

The Finance Minister also announced exemptions on basic customs duty on 36 life-saving drugs, providing relief to patients, particularly those

suffering from cancer, rare diseases, and other severe chronic diseases.

This is especially a boon considering that India ranks third in cancer cases worldwide, after China and the USA, according to the Global Cancer Observatory (GLOBOCAN). In addition, the budget for Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0 (Rs 21,960 crore) increased by 9 per cent from last year's ₹20,071 crore.

However, while financial outlays for economic support have increased, critical health investments for women remain grossly inadequate, she said, calling for effective implementation and monitoring of these schemes.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has unveiled an annual Budget for 2025-26 focused on appealing to the country's middle class and spurring economic growth by boosting agriculture and manufacturing amid uncertainty over the global economic outlook due to potential new tariff barriers. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced measures to counter slowing growth, rising prices and lagging consumption among the middle class in Asia's third-largest economy. After a period of world-beating growth of more than 8%, India is set for its slowest economic expansion in four years as stagnant wages and high food prices hit consumer spending and corporate profits



## A ₹50.65L-CR BUDGET

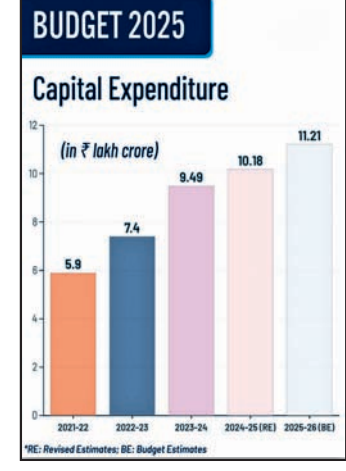
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 1:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday presented Union Budget 2025-26, envisaging an expenditure of ₹50,65,345 crore, an increase of 7.4 per cent over the current fiscal. The 2024-25 expenditure (Revised Estimates) is ₹47.16 lakh crore. According to Budget documents, ₹5,41,850.21 crore has been earmarked for Centrally Sponsored Schemes for financial year starting April 1, 2025. This compares with ₹4,15,356.25 crore for the current financial year. For central sector schemes, ₹16.29

lakh crore have been earmarked for FY26 as compared to ₹15.13 lakh crore for 2024-25. Budget estimates of expenditure for 2025-26 has increased due to several reasons, including rise in payment of interest on market loans, treasury bills, external loans, small savings and provident funds; higher requirements of Armed Forces including capital expenditure; and more provisions for employment generation scheme.

Total resources being transferred to states, including devolution of states' share, grants/loans and releases under Centrally Sponsored Schemes, in Budget 2025-26 are ₹25,01,284 crore, a rise of ₹4,91,668 crore over actuals of 2023-24. If resources of public enterprises are included, the total expenditure in Budget rises to ₹54.97 lakh crore.

Capex at ₹11.21L-cr, target missed in FY25



**New Delhi:** Having missed the target for the current financial year, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday proposed to spend ₹11.21 lakh crore towards capital expenditure (capex) for FY26. However, the capex target is going to be missed by about 93,000 crore for the current financial year. Against the Budget estimates of ₹11.11 lakh crore for capex, the government is expected to spend ₹10.18 lakh crore in Revised Estimates for FY25. The shortfall in capex is attributed to 2024 being an election year resulting in no activity for 2-3 months. So, there was limited activity for one quarter due to this. The government had hiked capex by 37.5 per cent to ₹10 lakh crore for FY24. Against this, the government expected to spend ₹9.5 lakh crore in the financial year ending March 2024. In the previous two years as well, the government had to increase the capex for infrastructure development by over 30 per cent to do heavy lifting as private investment was muted.

### Duty relief on 36 life-saving drugs



**New Delhi:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday proposed to fully exempt customs duty on 36 drugs used in the treatment of cancer, rare diseases and other severe chronic diseases. The government had earlier cut customs duties on Trastuzumab Deruxtecan, Osimertinib and Durvalumab from 10 per cent to nil. "To provide relief to patients, particularly those suffering from cancer, rare diseases and other severe chronic diseases, I propose to add 36 lifesaving drugs and medicines to the list of medicines fully exempted from Basic Customs Duty (BCD)," Sitharaman said while presenting 8th consecutive Budget. She also proposed to add six life-saving medicines to the list attracting concessional customs duty of 5 per cent. "Full exemption and concessional duty will also respectively apply on the bulk drugs for the manufacture of the above," Sitharaman stated.

### Census, NPR unlikely to be held in 2025 too



**New Delhi:** If budgetary proposals are anything to go by, the decadal census is unlikely to be carried out in 2025 as well with a meagre ₹574.80 crore allocated for the exercise in the Budget. A meeting of the Union Cabinet on December 24, 2019 had approved the proposal for conducting census of India 2021 at a cost of ₹8,754.23 crore and updating the National Population Register (NPR) at ₹3,941.35 crore. The house listing phase of the census and the exercise to update the NPR were scheduled to be carried out across the country from April 1 to September 30, 2020 but were postponed due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The Budget 2025-26, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday, allocated ₹574.80 crore for Census, Surveys and Statistics Registrar General of India (RGI), a significant reduction from the Budget 2021-22 when ₹3,768 crore was allocated, and an indication the decadal exercise may not be carried out even after this significant delay.

### BOOSTING CAPITAL FLOW

## FDI limit for insurance sector hiked to 100%

The Union government raised the foreign direct investment (FDI) limit for the insurance sector from 74 per cent to 100 per cent. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made the announcement while presenting the Union Budget 2025.

She said that the enhanced limit will be available for those companies which invest the entire premium in India.

"The FDI limit for the insurance sector will be raised from 74 to 100 per cent. This enhanced limit will be available for those companies which invest the entire premium in India. The current guardrails and conditionalities associated with foreign investment will be



reviewed and simplified," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said while presenting the Union Budget 2025.

Welcoming this reform, Bandhan Life Insurance MD & CEO Satishwar B said this move will attract capital and expertise, boosting market competitiveness.

"The Union Budget 2025 introduces significant reforms, particularly with FDI in insurance raised to 100%. India, with its rapidly growing economy and middle class, offers immense opportunities for global investors. This move will attract capital and expertise, boosting market competitiveness, driving innovation, and offering consumers more choices," Satishwar said.

Last November, the government floated several proposals for the insurance

sector, including raising the FDI limit in Indian insurance companies to 100 per cent and enabling an insurer to carry on one or more classes of insurance business and activities.

The government had also sought comments on the proposed amendments to the Insurance Act of 1938, the Life Insurance Corporation Act of 1956, and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act of 1999.

The insurance regulator, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI), has committed to achieving "Insurance for All" by 2047.

### India Post transformation

India Post will be transformed into a large public logistics organisation, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said presenting Budget 2025 Saturday. "India Post, with 1.5 lakh rural post offices, and complemented by India Post payment bank and a vast network of 2.4 lakh dak sevaks, will be repositioned to act as a catalyst for the rural economy," the FM said. She elaborated that the measure would facilitate serving the needs of women, entrepreneurs, large business organisation, vishwakarmas, self-help groups as well as large business organisations. A few years ago, India Post had been digitised to provide banking services to the poor in rural regions and boost financial inclusion.



### Gig workers in focus

Finance Minister said the government will arrange identity cards and registration on the e-Shram portal to assist 1 crore gig workers. "Gig workers of online platforms provide great dynamism to the 'New Age' services economy. Recognising their contribution, our government will arrange for their identity cards and registration on the e-Shram portal," she said. Such workers will be provided health care facilities under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) and this measure is likely to assist nearly one crore workers, Sitharaman added.



### REFORMS IN TECH

**New Delhi:** New and emerging technologies were in focus in the Budget, as Finance Minister announced a national framework for Global Capability Centres (GCCs), ₹500-crore Centre of Excellence in AI for education, and said a deep tech 'Fund of Funds' will be explored to catalyse the next generation startups. A new Fund of Funds, with expanded scope and a fresh contribution of additional ₹10,000 crore is also on anvil. A national framework will be formulated as guidance to states for promoting Global Capability Centres in emerging Tier-2 cities. This will suggest measures for enhancing availability of talent and infrastructure, building byelaw reforms, and mechanisms for collaboration with industry.

# India Inc hails 'bold' Budget with 'heavy dose of reforms'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 1:** The Modi 3.0 government's first full Budget provides a comprehensive blueprint to boost economic growth and create jobs in the world's fifth-largest economy with a heavy dose of "bold" reforms to drive consumption and stimulate investment, India Inc said Saturday.

Industry bodies and corporate leaders said the Budget proposals, especially the slashing of personal income tax rates, will re-energise the economy by lifting the sentiments of the middle class and nudging the private sector to advance its investment plans, amid uncertainty over the global economic outlook and growing concerns due to potential new tariff barriers. "This is the biggest section

of the middle class. It has also significantly reduced the tax burden for incomes up to Rs 24 lakh. We have made a decisive move to a world-class tax system which will be simple, transparent and friendly to taxpayers," he added.

"The Union Budget 2025-26 provides a strong and convincing template for boosting growth and generating jobs, the twin imperatives for our economy today, with targeted interventions towards facilitating inclusive development," CII President Sanjiv Puri said.

The policy choices made to facilitate powerful engines such as agriculture, MSME, investment and exports by way of reforms in six domains, in collaboration with states, is welcome and has been CII's long-standing advocacy, Puri said.

FICCI President Harsha Vardhan Agarwal described it as a comprehensive, inclusive and forward-looking budget that encompasses a heavy dose of reforms, fiscal stimulus and a clear focus on the farm sector, MSMEs, youth and women.

"The Budget proposals will re-energise the economy by lifting the sentiments of the middle class and nudging the private sector to advance its investment plans as demand improves across sectors," he added.



**The finance minister has placed her confidence in the middle class for leading the consumption-led growth. At the same time, there is a clear focus on unleashing the potential of the MSMEs, startups and exports**

SANJAY NAYAR | PRESIDENT, ASSOCHAM

Vedanta Ltd Chairman Anil Agarwal observed that the Budget has hit the perfect note, providing great relief to

the middle class by making incomes up to ₹12 lakh per annum completely tax-free. Describing it as a "bold" Budget to boost consumption,

particularly from the vibrant middle-class families, ASSOCHAM said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has lived up to wider expectations by giving significant relief to individual taxpayers, maintaining the fiscal deficit of 4.4 per cent of GDP.

JSW Group Chairman and Managing Director Sajjan Jindal said this Budget provides more money in the hands of the middle class that will help boost consumption.

"A change in tax slabs is a welcome step. The government has maintained its thrust on capex though the spend of ₹11.2 lakh crore is lower than a spending of around ₹13 lakh crore that I was hoping for, based on the past trend. But still, capex spend is at a robust level and will give a boost to the core sectors," he added.

### Top Winners

#### Consumer Sector

**Urban Consumption Boost:** Reports highlight that the reduction in personal income tax slabs will significantly benefit urban consumption. Key beneficiaries include companies like Zomato, Swiggy, DMart, Titan, and various quick-service restaurants (QSRs) such as RBA, Jubilant, WDL, and Devyani. Within consumer staples, urban-focused companies like Nestle, Britannia, Varun Beverages, and Tata Consumer are expected to see positive impacts.

#### Automotive Sector

**Boost from Income Tax Cuts:** As per reports the income tax cuts will drive demand for two-wheelers (2Ws) and passenger vehicles (PVs). This is particularly beneficial for urban-focused segments like scooters, 125cc motorcycles, and entry-to-mid segment cars. Key beneficiaries include Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Motors, Bajaj Auto, Hero MotoCorp, Eicher Motors, and TVS Motor Company.

#### Insurance Sector

**Increased FDI Limit:** The increase in the FDI limit for the insurance sector to 100% is a significant development. This change allows foreign insurers to enter the Indian market without a local partner, potentially increasing competition.

#### Pharmaceutical Sector

**Increase in Medical Seats:** Reports point out that the addition of 10,000 medical seats in FY26 and a total of 75,000 seats over the next five years will lead to more prescribers and higher volume growth for Indian formulations, benefiting the pharmaceutical sector.

### Top Losers

#### Rural Consumption

**Limited Support:** The Budget has limited announcements to boost rural consumption, which is negative for companies like Hindustan Unilever that have a significant rural market presence.

#### IT Sector

**Slightly Negative Impact:** The budget's support for setting up Global Capability Centers (GCCs) in Tier-2 cities is slightly negative for the Indian IT sector. This move could divert potential market share from Indian IT companies to GCCs.

#### India Energy

The budget did not announce any subsidy for LPG losses incurred by oil marketing companies like IOC, BPL, and HPCL. This is a significant negative for these companies, which have faced substantial under-recoveries.

BUDGET 2025-26

# Khelo India gets lion's share

SPORTS AND YOUTH AFFAIRS BUDGET RAISED BY OVER ₹350 CRORE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 1:** The government's flagship Khelo India programme to scout and nurture athletes at the grassroots level was the biggest beneficiary as the allocation for sports and youth affairs was hiked substantially by Rs 351.98 crore in the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman here Saturday.

The ambitious scheme has been allocated Rs 1,000 crore for the financial year 2025-26. This is Rs 200 crore more than the grant of Rs 800 crore in 2024-25.

Overall, the Ministry for Youth Affairs and Sports was designated Rs 3,794.30 crore.

The increase is substantial considering there is no major sporting event like the Olympics, Commonwealth or Asian Games lined up in the next one year.

The assigned amount for assistance to National Sports Federations has also been hiked marginally from Rs 340 crore to Rs 400 crore.

The allocation for Sports Authority of India (SAI), the nodal body for the conduct of national camps and logistical arrangements for athletes' training, was enhanced from Rs 815 crore to Rs 830 crore.

SAI is also responsible for maintaining and utilising stadia across the country.

A similar hike was announced for the National Dope Testing Laboratory, which will receive Rs 23 crore this financial year. It had been given Rs 18.70 crore in 2024-25.

The National Anti-Doping Agency's budget was increased from Rs 20.30 crore to 24.30 crore.

The contribution to the National Sports Development



This will further strengthen sports infra, boost Khelo India and expand youth-centric development initiatives, empowering the next generation of athletes and leaders

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | SPORTS AND YOUTH AFFAIRS MINISTER

India is currently pushing through with an ambitious bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games for which a letter of intent has been submitted to the International Olympic Committee

Fund, which was created in 1998, will continue to be Rs 18 crore for a second successive year, while the government has decided to cut the grant for incentive to sportspersons from Rs 42.65 crore to Rs 37 crore

Cuts were also announced to the funding for National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development and Youth Hostels. However, the contribution for multilateral bodies and

youth exchange programmes has been raised from Rs 11.70 crore to Rs 55 crore.

A Rs 20 crore fund has been approved for the enhancement of sports facilities in Jammu and Kashmir, which is Rs 14

crore more than the previous year. A massive chunk of the increased budget will be going to the National Service Scheme which will receive Rs 450 crore, a hike of Rs 200 crore from the previous year.

The National Service Scheme (NSS) aims to "develop character and personality of youth in schools and colleges."

It's a scheme that works towards shaping youngsters through social work and community service.

# Odisha FC extend winning streak

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 1:** The Kalinga Warriors extended their winning streak with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Sribhumi FC in the Indian Women's League (IWL) 2024-25 Saturday at the Barrackpore Stadium. Goals from Jennifer (40') and Lynda (81') secured the win for the Odisha FC Women's Team.

Both teams came out aggressively, with Sribhumi FC testing Odisha FC early on. In the 13th minute, goalkeeper Shreya Hooda made a crucial flying save to deny a powerful goal-bound shot from distance.

The girls broke the deadlock in the 40th minute. Kajol delivered a precise through ball to Neha on the left flank. Her shot was saved by Sribhumi keeper Aditi, but Jennifer was quick to pounce on the rebound and slot the ball into the net.

The second half saw more action as Odisha continued to press. In the 54th minute, Kajol provided another key through

ball, this time to Jennifer on the right. She put in a cross into the box which deflected off a SBFC defender, but the Kalinga Warriors couldn't capitalize on the chance. A few minutes later, Jennifer floated in a cross for Lynda, whose header was expertly saved by Aditi.

Sribhumi FC found an equalizer in the 77th minute through Queenable, who netted the goal to make it 1-1. However, Odisha FC responded with increased intensity. In the 81st minute, Neha delivered a perfect cross from a tight angle and Lynda was at the far post to slot the ball and restore Odisha's lead.

Odisha had a chance to extend their lead late in the match when Aishwarya fired a shot from the edge of the box, but Aditi was there to make the save.

With this win, Odisha FC moved up to second in the league standings with 10 points. They will now travel to Bengaluru to face Kickstart FC at the Bengaluru Football Stadium in their next outing February 7.



## SHORT TAKES

### Mohan wins National trophy

**Chennai:** Bengaluru teenager Abhay Mohan, who won one of the two premier single-seater National Championships in the prestigious MRF MMSC FMSCI Indian National Car Racing Championships in 2024, won his first National Championship Trophy at a glittering awards ceremony here. The 16-year-old 2022 Junior National Karting champion dominated the track in his very first year after graduating into single-seater racing this year, and notched up 10 race wins from 12 races in the MRF 1600cc National Championship.

### Kohli mania hits crescendo

**New Delhi:** A major security lapse occurred at the Feroz Shah Kotla ground as three over-enthusiastic fans barged into the field of play in a mad rush to get near Virat Kohli on day three of the Ranji Trophy game between Delhi and Railways despite heavy security presence. It is normal for fans to breach security in a desperate attempt to be close to their cricketing heroes but those scenes are usually reserved for international games. However, Kohli's return to Ranji Trophy after 13 years turned the country's attention towards the first-class game which would have been otherwise played in front of empty stands. A heavy security cordon around the field of play was breached when three fans managed to hoodwink a group of more than 20 guards to make their way into the middle.

### Kartik Singh makes history

**Gurugram:** Indian amateur Kartik Singh made history, becoming the youngest player from the subcontinent to make the cut in an Asian Tour event at the International Series India here Saturday. The 15-year-old Singh carded a one-under-par 71, bringing his total to four-over at the halfway stage, comfortably inside the cut line, which fell at eight-over at the DLF Golf and Country Club. This was Singh's second appearance in a professional tournament, having previously played just one Asian Development Tour event.

# Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers clinch men's HIL trophy

Jugraj Singh leads the way with a stunning hat-trick in the final



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rourkela, Feb 1:** Jugraj Singh slammed a hat-trick as Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers clinched the men's Hockey India League title after beating Hyderabad Toofans 4-3 in the summit clash here Saturday.

Jugraj scored in the 25th, 32nd and 35th minutes, while Sam Lane (54th) added another goal for the Bengal Tigers.

Gonzalo Peillat (9th and 39th) and Amandeep Lakra (26th) were the scorers for the Toofans.

The title made the Bengal Tigers richer by Rs 3 crore besides the trophy, while Hyderabad Toofans received Rs 2 crore for finishing as runners-up.

It was a tense contest from the first whistle with both teams taking turns to outwit others' defence.

The Tigers employed aerial passes regularly, resulting in a penalty corner four minutes into the game but the Toofans withstood all three attempts on goal from Jugraj.

The Toofans showed more initiative as the quarter progressed and earned a penalty corner of their own. And Gonzalo Peillat stepped up to flick the ball past Tigers' goalie

Jamie Carr to hand his side a crucial lead halfway into the first quarter.

The Toofans continued to be on the front foot as the second quarter began while the Tigers remained relevant with occasional counterattacks.

With six minutes left in the quarter, Abhishek earned a penalty corner for the Tigers and Jugraj powered the ball into the left corner with a thunderous drag flick to restore parity.

The Toofans responded by earning a penalty corner in the next minute and Amandeep found the back of the net with a powerful flick to give his team the lead again.

The Tigers slowed down the tempo to create a clear goal scoring chance in the third quarter, resulting in a penalty corner.

And, Jugraj picked out the left bottom corner with another powerful drag-flick to beat Toofans' keeper Bikramjit and level the scores again.

Soon after, from another penalty corner, Jugraj found the back of the net again with another drag-flick to complete his hat-trick and give the Tigers the lead.

# Buttler felt it was unfair but referee took call: Morkel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Pune, Feb 1:** England captain Jos Buttler was unhappy with Harshit Rana being used as a "concussion sub" replacing Shivam Dube but India's bowling coach Morkel defended the move, saying the final call was taken by match referee Javagal Srinath after they put forth the young pacer's name.

Dube, who scored a half-century, got hit by Jamie Overton off the penultimate delivery of Indian innings and head coach Gautam Gambhir effectively used the rules to field tear-away quick Rana in place of the Mumbai all-rounder, who bowls at early 120 clicks.

"As far as I'm aware, Shivam (Dube) obviously took the knock on the head and when he came off the field during the innings break with mild headache symptoms, we took a name forward to the match referee in terms of a suitable substitution.

"From there it's up to the

## CONCUSSION SUB ROW



match referee to make that decision," Morkel replied when asked about the controversy surrounding Rana.

The pacer took 3/33 on debut and played a role in India winning by 15 runs here Friday night to clinch the T20I series with a match in hand.

"Harshit (Rana) was having dinner, had to get himself ready as quick as possible to get onto

the field and bowl and I thought he did an excellent job," Morkel said. Morkel sidestepped when asked about Buttler calling out the replacement as not the one which was like-for-like.

"You know, it goes to the powers sort of above me (match referee).

"Match referee, he made the decision, you know, we can only take the name forward and from there it's out of our hands. We got the green light to go with that and, you know, we gave it an opportunity," he said.

The former South African pacer, who joined the Indian team management before the home season, is very impressed with the bowling unit and their consistency in execution.

"In our planning we do before games, everybody's contributing in those conversations. But the main thing at the end of the day is to go out and execute," Morkel said.

## DAVIS CUP

### Mukund, Ramkumar lead India challenge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 1:** Sasikumar Mukund returned to Davis Cup action with a fluent straight-set victory while Ramkumar Ramanathan hardly broke a sweat in his match as an untroubled India took a 2-0 lead in the World Group I play-off tie against Togo, here Saturday.

Togo had promised a tough fight in the build-up, even warning the Indian skipper to not take them for granted but their performance belied the exceptional results they had enjoyed coming into this match.

There was not even a semblance of resistance from the players of the African nation making it a pretty dull contest, watched by about 1500 fans.

The opening match of the tie went on expected lines with Liova Ayite Ajavon, languishing outside the top-1000, lacking ammunition to test the 365th ranked Mukund in his home conditions.

# SAHA BIDS FAREWELL TO CRICKET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Feb 1:** India wicketkeeper-batter Wriddhiman Saha retired from all forms of cricket Saturday, bringing down the curtains on an illustrious career after playing his final Ranji Trophy group-stage match for Bengal against Punjab at the iconic Eden Gardens here.

The 40-year-old Saha, who made his international debut in February 2010, has played 49 matches for India across formats -- 40 Tests and nine ODIs. He also represented Bengal and Tripura in domestic cricket, featuring in 142 First-Class and 116 List A matches.

Reflecting on the impact of cricket on his life, Saha said, "Everything I am today, every achievement, every lesson learned— I owe it all to this wonderful game. Cricket has given me moments of immense joy, unforgettable victories, and



invaluable experiences. It has also tested me, shaped me, and taught me resilience.

"Through the highs and the lows, the triumphs and the setbacks, this journey has made me who I am. But as all things must eventually come to an end, I have decided to retire from all forms of cricket."

Saha's last international appearance came against New Zealand in 2021. After

It has been 28 years since I first stepped onto a cricket field in 1997, and what a journey it has been! Representing my country, state, district, clubs, university, college, and school has been the greatest honour of my life

WRIDDHIMAN SAHA | WICKETKEEPER-BATTER, INDIA

MS Dhoni's retirement in 2014, Saha had become a regular member of the Indian team, before losing his place to Rishabh Pant.

In his final Ranji Trophy appearance, Saha was dismissed for a duck, but his team, Bengal, defeated Punjab by an innings and 13 runs. After the match, he was lifted by his team-mates on their shoulders.

"Now it is time to begin a

new chapter, dedicating myself to my family and friends, cherishing the moments I may have missed, and embracing life beyond the field," said Saha, who scored three hundreds and six fifties for India.

He expressed gratitude to his family and the BCCI for their unwavering support, saying, "I am eternally grateful to my parents, my beloved elder brother Anirban, and my extended family. Their sacrifices and unwavering belief in my dreams made this journey possible.