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BHUBANESWAR | SUNDAY | FEBRUARY 2, 2025

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Kia Syros Evolved by the future The new Kia Syros is light years ahead of its contemporary SUVs. Right from an evolved design language with upright squared shoulders, to the future-forward autonomous safety tech and future-ready connected car tech with Over-the-Air (OTA) updates, everything about the Kia Syros is a giant leap in automotive thinking. Settle into the first-in-segment 2nd row ventilated, reclining & sliding seats, and you'll agree that the future itself has evolved it. Experience the Syros today!

Innovative Technology

Future, reimagined



Dual Pane Panoramic Sunroof



2nd Row Seat Reclining & Sliding with Seat Ventilation



76.20 cm (30") Trinity Panoramic Display Panel



Kia Connect 2.0** with Over-the-Air (OTA) Software Updates and Other 80+ Connected Car Features



Harman Kardon Premium 8 Speakers Sound System



ADAS Level 2° with 16 Smart Autonomous & Robust 20 Standard Safety Features

Kia Service

Introducing My Convenience Secure*: Option to cover your car's wear and tear parts for up to 3 years from date of delivery.

3 Years Unlimited km Warranty Extended Warranty^{*} Up to 5 Years Scratch Care Program^ IoT Based Smart Services 24x7 | 3 Years Nationwide RSA° Kia Connect Diagnosis##

Enables vehicle
diagnosis remotely

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 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 30th June 2025. "10T 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 filtment and may vary. The colors shown are subject to availability and may not be available 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

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INNOCEAN-006/25

eisure



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 wellbeing of their family. Their recent public appearances highlight their strengthened connection and cooperative approach to parenting.

Tamannaah's

self-love ritual

thanking it for its strength and resilience,'

good about myself," she said.

that," she added.

brace her body.

Tamannaah shared that her per-

spective on beauty has only recent-

ly shifted. She credited her journey

with dance and performances like

Aaj Ki Raat for helping her em-

'The moments I actually start-

ed feeling beautiful had nothing

to do with how thin I was. It took

me a long time to understand

AGENCIES

SUDOKU

4

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6

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6 8

she shared.



TUNE FORECAST

👼 Ganesha Speaks.com accuracy • reliability • trust

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 Ganesha.

TAURUS

Ganesha 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 n 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 Ganesha.

CANCER

Control your anger, counsels Ganesha. 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,

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 Ganesha.

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. Ga-nesha says blood is thicker than water, and family and friends will cement their relationship with you.

Ganesha 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 Ganesha. 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 Ganesha.

CAPRICORN

Mounting pressure of work and responsibilities during the day may drain your energy, but not your enthusiasm, feels Ganesha. 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 Ganesha. 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 Ganesha.



Mumbai: Actress Khushi chimed in with, "No Kapoor, who is gearing way, @vedangraina, is that you?" while another up for the release of her commented, "Wait, is that upcoming film Loveyapa, @iakpataudi?" 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

us-

er



Khan. IANS



A third user wrote, "Ayyeeeee it's definitely vedang cause the body personality is of Vedang but may be khusii 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

Meanwhile, Khushi's next offering, Lov*eyapa,* stars her alongside Aamir son, Junaid

> Mumbai: Veteran singer Udit Narayan stirred controversy after an undated video of him kissing a fe-

male 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

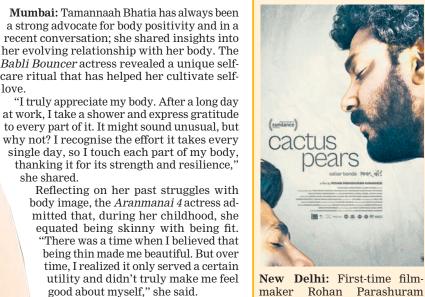
then kissed her on her lips. The singer kissed the female fan on the lips, as per viral videos from the show, which are now doing the rounds

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

Outrage over Udit's lip-kiss to fan

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."

SUNDANCE FILM FEST Sabar Bonda wins World Cinema Grand Jury Prize



Kanawade's Marathi film Sabar Bonda has bagged the World Cinema Grand Jury Prize: Dramatic at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival. The prestigious film gala an-

nounced the winners for its latest edition on its official social media pages Friday evening. Sabar Bonda, a same-sex

love story set in a village near Sangamner in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district, features Bhushaan Manoj, Suraaj Suman and Jayshri Jagtap in the lead roles. Titled Cactus Pears in English, the film is about Anand, a

30-something city dweller, who is compelled to spend a 10-day mourning period for his father in the rugged countryside of western India, tenderly bonds with a local farmer struggling to stay unmarried. "As the mourning ends, forc-

ing his return, Anand must decide the fate of his relationship born under duress," according to the official logline.

The jury for the World Cinema Dramatic Competition included film critic Ava Cahen, Kenyan filmmaker Wanuri Kahiu and Oscar-winning British actor Daniel Kaluuya. In their citation, the jury described Sabar Bonda as a "great modern love story".

The movie is a co-production between India, the UK and Canada. It is produced by Neeraj Churi, Mohamed Khaki, Kaushik Ray, Hareesh Reddypalli, Naren Chandavarkar and Sidharth Meer.

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8

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9

6

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a

manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains

5

7

8

6

the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any

9

5

3

5 1

2 8

SOLUTIONS

PEANUTS







CALVIN AND HOBBES





BREVITY



POST

CROSSWORD

10 19 23

Copyright ©2025 PuzzleJunction.com 22 Earthy colour

23 Humiliation

25 The daily grind

24 Peers

(3,4)

Across

- 1 Candidate 5 Major artery
- 8 Fragrance
- 9 Short trip 10 Kind of nut
- 11 Train
- 12 Monasteries
- 14 Aura

- Desperado 19 Break open
- 17 Banderas of
- 3 Risqué

Down

- 1 Wealthy one 2 Purple shade

- 4 Admiration 5 Winter pear

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

21 Uptight

6 Pie plant

source

13 Man with a

cleaver

e.g.

7 Sophia Loren,

12 Mother-of-pearl

- 15 Blink of an eye 16 World Cup sport
- 18 Exigencies 20 Cocoon contents

PERI CAVEMAN MACAW V G W N STRAPPED AS

8 3 9 5 2 6 2 5 6 4 8 1 7 9 3 8 4 3 6 2 5 1 9 2 6 3 4 1 5 7 2 9 6 8 2 6 9 4 8 1 3 7 5 8 5 7 3 6 9 2 1 4

SUDOKU

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

₹34.96L-cr PROJECTED TOTAL RECEIPTS OTHER THAN BORROWINGS

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

PROJECTED FISCAL DEFICIT

PROJECTED GDP GROWTH



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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday announced significant income tax cuts for the middle class and unveiled a blueprint for next generation reforms for Viksit Bharat as she treaded a fine line between fiscal prudence and providing a thrust to growth.

Individuals earning up to ₹12 lakh in a year will not have to pay any taxes after she raised the exemption threshold from ₹7 lakh. An additional ₹75.000 standard deduction is available for the salaried class.

Presenting her eighth straight budget, she also altered tax slabs for people earning above this threshold to help save up to ₹1.1 lakh in taxes for those with income up to ₹25 lakh in a year.

The raising of the rebate

leads to 1 crore people not managing to stick to the fishaving to pay any tax, she said. The overall tax slab regig 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

cal 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, protecting the growth outlook amidst global uncertainties. While maintaining

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister duty cuts on intermediar-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 Nationa Democratic Alliance (NDA) looks to keep the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)-led Mahagathbandhan at bay and win Bihar late this year. ₹1,348 crore has also beer

the thrust on infrastructure development, it also continued to provide increasing support to the MSME and

allocated to the National Capital

an increase of ₹100 crore in loans

and advances ahead of polls.

Territory (NCT) of Delhi, reflecting

the agricultural sector. Also announced were

ies 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 related to laying of impose widespread tariffs including on India.

PRESS TRUST OF 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 manufactured in the next coaches, 200 Vande Bharat two to three years. 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 new lines, doubling, quadrupling,

constructions, station redevelopment, 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



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

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

NARENDRA MODI

P1

RAHUL GANDHI LEAD OF OPPOSITION

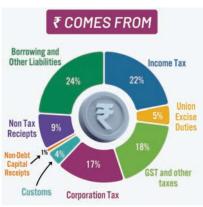


We commend the 2025 Union Budget for its continued support of robust consumption growth through changes in the tax structure, effectively placing more disposable income in the hands of the Indian consumer.

DR. ANISH SHAH



Divya





Income		Tax on Slabs and Rates		(for those earning below ₹12 lakh	Total Benefit	Tax after benefit
	Present	Proposed	Rate Slab	Full rebate upto ₹ 12 lakhs	30,000	0
Up to 8 lak	30,000	20,000	10,000	20,000		
9 lakh	40,000	30,000	10,000	30,000	40,000	
10 lakh	50,000	40,000	10,000	40,000	50,000	0
11 lakh	65,000	50,000	15,000	50,000	65,000	0
12 lakh	80,000	60,000	20,000	60,000	80,000	0
16 lakh	1,70,000	1,20,000	50,000	0	50,000 90,000	1,20,000 2,00,000
20 lakh	2,90,000	2,00,000	90,000	0		
24 lakh	4,10,000	3,00,000	1,10,000	0	1,10,000	3,00,000
50 lakh	11,90,000	10,80,000	1,10,000	0	1,10,000	10,80,000

CHEAPER

- Medicine
- Electronic Goods
- Headphones **EV Vehicles**
- Mobile Phones
- Critical minerals exemption
- Leather products Shipbuilding raw material
- Handicraft exports
- Carrier-grade ethernet
- Marine products

Imported motorcycles DEARER

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

FOOD AND

FERTILISERS

and fertilisers

Government subsidies on food

have been pegged

at ₹3.71 lakh crore

for 2025-26, mar-

ginally higher by 0.70 per cent than

the estimated

outgo in the current fiscal year

I-T rejig a visionary step: CM No cheer for market

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Minister Mohan Charan Maihi 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.

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1:Chief

Taking to X. Maihi 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



for brighter financial opportunities for all.'

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that annual income of up to ₹12 lakh will be exempt from I-T under the new income tax regime

For salaried taxpayers, this income threshold will be ₹12.75 lakh after taking into account standard deduction. "The new structure will substantially reduce the taxes of the middle class and leave more money in their hands, boosting household consumption." She added.

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 Sat-

urday 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

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

Pitta Disease - Best medicines for all diseases of liver, intestine & digestive system and chronic acidity, etc.

To know more about research on this, visit: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9208489/ https://www.cell.com/heliyon/fulltext/S2405-8440(25)00235-X



Livogrit, Livogrit Vital, Livamrit Advance, Acidogrit and Aloe Vera Juice

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Avoid self-medication and always take the medicines under medical supervision



₹6.81 lakh crore to the defence sector, marking a major increase from the ₹6.2 lakh crore assigned **EDUCATION**

The Ministry of Education

has been allocated more

than ₹1.28 lakh crore in the



HEALTH

Γhe 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 esti mates) of 2024-2025



ROAD TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS The government ₹2,873,33.16

has allocated 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



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
- Proposal for removal of 7 tariff rates over an above those in removed in earlier budget. Only 8 tariff rates to remain after the
- 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. Orissa POST

downtown/state

UNURUM fest ends at FMU

Balasore: The third edition of the UNU-RUM International Festival concluded at the Fakir Mohan University campus The three-day festival aimed at promo tribal culture of Odisha and the nation Chandra Jena, Sairendhri Sahu, Bhagabata Das, Uday Narayan Das, Kavita Barik, and Niranjan Khuntia shared their narratives on the final Santosh Kumar Tripathy and Debasis counting their own captivating tales At the valedictory ceremony, Supriti Mishra, dean of IMI Bhubaneswar.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

I, Tasneem Kanchwala, W/o - Husain Kanchwala, R/o - 3rd flr, Metro Plaza, Phase - II, P.O. - Buxi Bazar, P.S. - Cantonment, Dist. Cuttack, Pin - 753001, Odisha, declare by this Affidavit No. - **051-D7** Dated - **01.02.2025** that now onwards I shall be known as **Tasnim Husain Kanchwala** for all future purposes.

I, Kasturi Kumari Sahu, Daughter of Abhimanyu Sahu, resident of Ward No. 3, P.O. - Panigrahi Pantho, P.S. - Bada Bazar, At - Gurumurty Pentho Sahi, Aska Road, Berhampur, Dist. : Ganjam, PIN - 760006, Odisha declare by this Affidavit No. 983 Dtd. - 25.01.2025, that now onwards I shall be known as Kasturi Chandra Sahu for all future purposes.

I, Basant Kumar Mishra, S/o-Late Chintamani Mishra, resident of Qtr.No.--B/94. Tensa. P.O.- Tensa. P.S.- Lahunipara, Dist.-Sundargarh. PIN-770042, Odisha declare by this affidavit dtd: 27.01.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as Basant Kumar Mishra for all future

I Jibanjyoti Nayak(22), S/o- Chandrahasya Nayak, Vill/P.O.- Olaga, P.S.- Dhusuri, Dist.-Bhadrak, Odisha, PIN-756138 that my mother's correct name of spelling is Kiran Mayee Sahu as per her Aadhaar Card. But it is wrongly mentioned in my **Educational Certificate** Kiranmai Nayak. By this affidavit No.- 6864, dated 10.09.2024. I declare that both name are same and one person.

I Kiran Mayee Sahu (52), W/o- Chandrahasya Nayak and D/o-Nityananda Sahu, Vill-Bijegangadharpur, P.O.-Mouda, P.S.- Bhadrak (R), Dist.- Bhadrak, PIN-756181, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.-6865, dated 10.09.2024 that now onwards I shall be known as Kiran Mayee Sahu for all purposes.

Interstate robbery gang busted Toshali LitFest kicks

Eight arrested with seizure of ₹3.51cr cash, arms and ammunition



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Odisha Police Saturday busted an inter-state robbery gang, arresting eight persons and recovering ₹3.51 crore of looted money from their possession, a senior officer said.

Addressing a press conference here, DGP YB Khurania said that the eight accused persons hail from neighbouring Jharkhand, and besides the cash amount, arms and ammunition and vehicles used in the crimes were also

The arrested accused were identified as Tahir Ansari, Hussain Khan, Jasim Khan, Samim Ansari, Basudev Gope. Pintu alias Alim, Anuj Kumar and Samim Ansari from Ranchi district of Jharkhand.

The arrests were made after a robbery incident took place on the night of January 30 in a country liquor factory at Dharmagarh in

Kalahandi district

The arrests were made after a robbery incident took place on the night of January 30 in a country liquor factory at Dharmagarh in Kalahandi district. Eight armed miscreants entered the factory and allegedly threatened people working there. They looted a huge amount of cash from the liquor factory. A case was registered at Dharmagarh police station in this regard.

The DGP said a special team was formed under the leadership of Kalahandi SP Abilash G to arrest the robbers and raids were conducted at various places.

After committing the robbery, the accused had fled in a van to Jharkhand.

During initial investigation, Odisha Police arrested two accused persons from the state January 30 and the vehicle used in the crime was identified and seized in Jharkhand.

The police had received information that the other accused had fled towards Jharkhand. January 31, the remaining accused were arrested in Jharkhand, the DGP said. The DGP said that the police of 11 districts of Odisha and Jharkhand were involved in nabbing the gang.

Apart from Kalahandi, the police forces of Bolangir, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Rourkela of Odisha and Gumla, Ranchi Rural, Lohardaga, West Singhbhum and Simdega districts of Jharkhand were involved in the operation, he said.

The DGP said that the ac cused persons could be arrested due to proper coordination between the police forces of

off in Bhubaneswar



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: The third edition of the Toshali Literature Festival commenced Saturday at Ranch Resort, located on the out skirts of Bhubaneswar, bringing together eminent poets, writers, and literary enthusiasts from across the country and abroad.

The two-day festival was inaugurated by Saraswati award-winning author Sharankumar Limbale, in the presence of distinguished literary figures, including Ayaz Rasool Nazki, Raja Rajeswari Sitharaman, Chandrahas Choudhury, and Prafulla Kumar Mohanty. The festival aims to explore the intrinsic connection between life and literature through insightful discussions, poetry readings, and book launches.

A key highlight of the inaugural day was the presentation of the second Jayanta Mahapatra National Award for Literature to Indore-based poet Vinita Agarwal. The prestigious award, which includes a citation and a cash prize of ₹50.000, honours literary excellence and contribution to Indian literature. Speaking at the event, the guests emphasised the profound role of literature in shaping society and individual consciousness. They discussed how creative expression is deeply intertwined with human experiences and serves as a reflection

of life itself. The festival features a series of panel discussions, book launches, and poetry readings, offering a platform for over 100 participants to engage in meaningful literary discourse. The inaugural session was presided over by Paresh Kumar Patnaik, while Jay Jagdev extended a warm welcome to the esteemed

3 killed as ambulance rams into dumper

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhadrak, Feb 1: A 26-year-old man, his brother-in-law and the driver of the ambulance on which they were taking back the body of his deceased fa ther from hospital were killed Saturday in Bhadrak district after the vehicle rammed into a dumper from behind, police

The accident happened on National Highway-16 near Maitapur, about 16km from Bhadrak town, they said.

The deceased were identi fied as Sanjay Jena (26), Sud

hansu Jena (42),and Man, the ambubrother-in-law lance drivdie while taking er, Dillip Singh (43). back father's Sanjay's body home from mother Sabitri Jehospital na suffered grievous

injuries and was admitted to the Bhogarai hospital.

Sanjay's father Dibakar Jena died at the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cut tack Friday night while un dergoing treatment for some ailment. The accident hap pened when they were taking his body back to their native place in Palasia village in the Bhogarai police station area.

A case was lodged, and an investigation is underway,

Lalchnd Jewellers' gemstone festival for Basant Panchami

To commemorate the occasion, Jewellery **Store chain is offering** a special discount to all customers who visit the stores during the festival

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Lalchnd Jewellers has launched Odisha's first-ever gemstone festival to mark the auspicious occasion of Bas-

ant Panchami (Saraswati Puja). The festival that began Friday is being held exclusively at Lalchnd's stores located at Raghunathpur and Master Canteen Square.

For the first time, customers in Odisha can explore a vast collection of exquisite gemstones from around the world, including premium rubies and emeralds. The event aims to honour the spirit of Basant Panchami, a festival symbolising knowledge and the arts, by showcasing the brilliance of these natural

treasures.

Visitors at the stores will have the opportunity to learn about various gemstones, their significance, and find the perfect piece for themselves or as a cherished gift.

To commemorate the occasion, Lalchnd Jewellers is offering a special discount to all customers who visit the stores during the festival. 'We are thrilled to intro-

duce this unique gemstone festival in Odisha, coinciding with Saraswati Puja. Basant Panchami celebrates beauty and wisdom, and we

believe gemstones perfectly embody these values. We ~vite everyone to join us in celebrating this special occasion and explore our

exclusive col-Trusted Brand Since 1948 lection," said Sunjoy Hans. founder and chairman

Lalchnd Jewellers

The festival promises an unparalleled experience for jewellery enthusiasts, offering a rare glimpse into the artistry of gemstone craftsmanship. Customers can visit the designated stores to witness the dazzling showcase during the festival period.

Olive Ridley mating concludes in Rushikulya

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 1: The threemonth-long mating process of Olive Ridley sea turtles in the ocean has come to an end, a report said.

According to Rabindra Nath Sahu, secretary of the Rushikulya Turtle Protection Committee, the female turtles have

now begun surfacing on the seawater. This is indicative that the turtles have concluded their mating. Sahu stated that Rushikulya estuary is a prime nesting site for Olive Ridley turtles. Each year during this period, they arrive in large numbers for mass nesting along the vast coastline. In preparation, the forest department and various

voluntary outfits have implemented all necessary protective measures. Fencing has been set up along the beach to prevent the entry of predators like dog and jackals, and efforts are being made to keep the area clean.

To safeguard the turtles, fishing activities have been restricted up to 10 kilometres into the sea along the stretch from

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

Prayagi to Aryapalli. During the mating season, the turtles re mained within this 10-kilometre

BUILDING INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE BUSINESSES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: The Aashdit Foundation and Diverseus Society Trust hosted the Sustainable Solutions and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Conclave 2025 Saturday, under the theme "Voices of Change: Building Sustainable and Inclusive Businesses.

The event, held in Bhubaneswar, brought together industry leaders, sustainability experts, professionals, and students to promote discussions on fostering inclusive and sustainable business practices.

Joint Director and Head of MSME DI, Cuttack PK Gupta, was the guest of honour, while, Executive Director (HRD and Administration) at NALCO Asutosh Rath also attended the event. The conclave featured four technical sessions covering topics such as "Net Zero for Industries."

"Sustainable Practices," "The Role of Technology in Driving Inclusion," and "Diversity and Inclusion in FinTech Services."

The first session, moderated by CEO of Sustainable Advancements Nayan Mitra, focused on innovative strategies for reducing carbon footprints.

Panelists included *Dharitri*

commitment to sustainability, stating, "As a representative of *Dharitri* and **Orissa POST**, I am dedicated to raising climate change awareness and collaborating with grassroots environmentalists for meaningful action." She also advocated for the mantra, "Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Repurpose, and Recycle.

zone. Now that the process has concluded, the male turtles have separated from the females. With Makar Sankranti mark

ing the transition of the sun into the northern hemisphere, south erly winds will start to blow causing a rise in temperature.

BBSR

33.6°

CTC

30.5°

20.4°

95%

Nil

WEATHER

Max Temp

Min Temp

Humidity

Rainfall

Dense fog

FORECAST

VARIATION INDEX SENSEX 77.505.96

and Orissa POST Chief Executive Mishra said "The collabora-Adyasha Satpathy, RKFL Chief People Officer Arjya Mishra, and tion between businesses, govhead of CSR at CESC Neepa Saha ernments, and communities is **EURO** 90.20 essential in driving policies that Satpathy emphasised her support sustainable practices. GOLD ₹81,925 SILVER ₹93,148

VISHISHT RAIL SEVA PURASKAR-2024

ECoR recognises employees for exceptional service

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: The East Coast Railway (ECoR) Saturday held a grand ceremony to celebrate the Vishisht Rail Seva Puraskar-2024 at the Railway Auditorium in Bhubaneswar, an event dedicated to recognising the exceptional service and unwavering commitment of its employees. The occasion saw the felicitation of 49 employees for their exemplary contributions to the organisation's success.

The awards were presented by ECoR's general manager Parmeshwar Funkwal who took the opportunity to com-



dedication and hard work. He praised the recipients for their outstanding performance, which has played a pivotal role in achieving the organisation's objectives and upholding its operational stan-

The Sambalpur division was awarded the coveted overall

efficiency shield, a testament to its exceptional operational performance and the high standards of service it consistently maintains. In addition, the award for cleanliness was presented to the Puri station, which was honoured with the big station cleanliness shield for its remarkable efforts in

maintaining cleanliness across the station. Haridaspur station under the Khurda Road division, earned the small station cleanliness shield, further highlighting the commitment of ECoR stations to high standards of hygiene and sanita In his address, Funkwal also

emphasised the significance of teamwork and the continuous efforts required to achieve operational excellence. He acknowledged the 24/7 dedication shown by the employees, particularly in ensuring that passenger satisfaction is always a top priority.

The event was graced by notable dignitaries, including president of the ECoR Women's Welfare Organisation president Kavita Funkwal, additional general manager Mohes Kumar Behera and other senior officials from ECoR, including principal department heads. Senior deputy general manager BK Mishra welcomed the guests and highlighted the importance of the awards in motivating employees to excel in their roles. Deputy general manager KK Kadanga coordinated the event and concluded the ceremony by delivering the vote of thanks.

The Vishisht Rail Seva Puraskar-2024 ceremony served as a powerful reminder of the hard work and dedication that drives ECoR's success

Masterstroke on income tax! Just need a job to celebrate it

mend the awardees for their BOOKING FOR SSIFIED AD **ERTISEMENTS** CON OUR

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech-Tankapani Road-9861341488

Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816 Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookieman-9439491273, Nigamananda Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347 Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

BUDGET 2025-26: WHO SAID WHAT EXPANSION AT 5 NEW IIT

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,

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 adthe issues of un-

employment and price rise but also overlooked Odisha's demand for special

"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, vet 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 Illaka flaved the Union Budget stating that the much awaited Budget has once again failed to address the critical concerns of



political compulview of the upcoming Assembly elections in

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 rath-



er 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 (ASSO-CHAM) 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.



to provide long-term loan developing tourism infrastructure in rural

areas is a commendable step as 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

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. sincerely thank

the honourable Finance Minister for presenting 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



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 Bharativa 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 government

has continued to put adequate focus on the need for skill de velopment.

"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 duexemption



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 res-

toration 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 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,

ture expansion at the five new IITs to accommodate 6,500 more students, 10,000 new medical seats and an allocation of ₹500 crore to set up a Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence

for education. These are among

the big announcements for the

New Delhi. Feb 1: Infrastruc-

AI PUSH, INFRA

AT 5 NEW IITs

education sector in the 2025-26 Budget. The Ministry of Education has been allocated more than ₹1.28 lakh crore in the Union Budget 2025-26, higher than the revised estimate of ₹1.14 lakh crore in

2024-25.

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

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who presented her eighth straight Union Bud get, also said the government will launch 'Bharatiya Bhasha Pushtak' scheme to provide digital form of Indian language books for schools and higher education.



She announced the govern ment 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,

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 'leap frogging' 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 devel opment of India's human capital

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

Pvt players in nuclear power sector soon

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

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

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 I

UNION FINANCE MINISTER

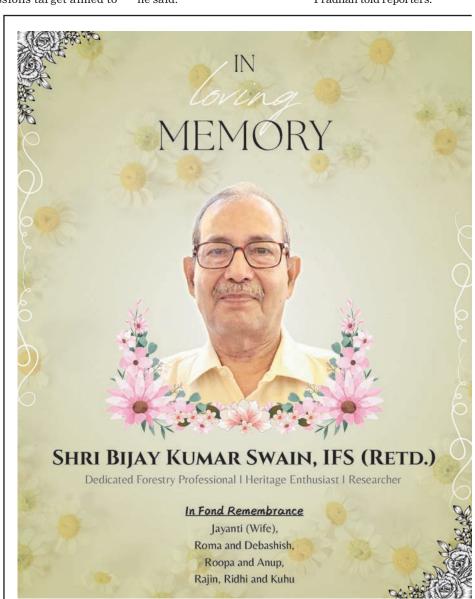
had huge potential to provide the country long-term energy security in a sustainable manner.

"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 landbased nuclear fission reactors, which can be built and fabricated in specialised factories and be assembled on site.

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.





Detachment is the beginning of mastery.

SRI AUROBINDO



For two years

months before

COVID hit in

March 2020,

meaning for

nine straight

quarters, the

rate of GDP

growth had

been slowing

and three

Sound of Silence

here are two big ideas that India's Prime Minister is committed to, and this commitment of his has shown itself over his years as leader.

The first is to birth a developed nation by 2047. India is to become like the United States and China, a great power that is wealthy and influential. This is a big idea that has no theory of change or pathway. Narendra Modi wants to get it done but he doesn't know how. He hasn't known how from the start.

His courtiers recognise this and show it by going silent when the economy is in its usual or default mode, meaning delivering indifferent growth. But they crawl out to scream "fastest growing economy" and so on in the periods when there is a bump. Usually this is accompanied by a denigration of Nehru and his horrible policies, but Nehru did not gratuitously sabotage India's economy or put the poorest and most vulnerable Indians through weeks of hardship with masterstrokes on currency.

For two years and three months before COVID hit in March 2020. meaning for nine straight quarters, the rate of GDP growth had been slowing. Why? The government did not say because that will mean accepting that there was no real pathway and no plan. When after COVID passed growth came to fill in the chasm

left by the lockdown, the trumpets were taken off the wall again and hosannas sung to the

Now, when again we are back to talk of slowdown, the sound of silence can be heard.

Modi's most important champion on this front is Arvind Panagariya, economist and professor at Columbia University. He was drawn to Modi on the assumption that Modi, like Panagariya, was a free-market man. He resigned as deputy chair of the NITI Aayog (the chair is Modi) in September 2017 to return to the US. Since then, he has been a critic of the Indian government's protectionism. He believed that India's tariffs on things like tyres and television sets, which came in 2020 would reverse the thinking of demonetisation, which was to formalise the economy, and encourage the creation of micro and small enterprises.

He said he was worried that the "wrong turn" taken in 2017 by Modi, towards protectionism, had not yet been reversed. After the Atmanirbhar Bharat plan was made public in August 2020, Panagariya said that "policy mistakes" by Modi on international trade were undoing the good work done in 1991.

"What has this policy achieved in six years?" he asked of Atmanirbhar Bharat. "Imports of electronics goods have gone up from \$32.4 bil-

lion in 2013-14 to \$55.6 billion in 2018-19, while exports inched up from \$7.6 billion to \$8.9 billion over the same period. Predictably, protected and subsidised, several mobile phone assembly firms have come up during these years but they have not added up to a vibrant electronics industry. Nearly all locally owned firms are small by global standards with none that is about to turn into an export powerhouse."

It may surprise the reader that a person with these views is a champion of Modi, but this is true. A headline from 3 February 2021 says: 'Arvind Panagariya calls Budget 2021 'mind-blowing', says hopes from PM Modi now coming true." No, the hopes are not coming true.

The problem here is the assumption that Modi had some strategic direction in the first instance. It is hardly Modi's fault that Panagariva saw himself and his free-market ideology in the person of Modi. Panagariya flitted between adoration and deification of Modi one day and the next day producing a paper the key thesis of which was that India's best growth years were actually from 2003-14.

So why do Panagariya and others like him continue to remain in awe? It is because of the second big idea that India's Prime Minister is committed to. This is of course that of demolishing constitutional pluralism and installing a majoritarian state, where religious minorities are second class citizens existing on sufferance. Here, unlike on the economy, there is an extremely successful programme. The results are before us and whether supports or opposes the Prime Minister, it cannot be denied that he has been effective in achieving what he had sought to, both in Guiarat and now across the country.

The legal route of discrimination, exclusion, harassment and persecution has been adopted by BJP states across the country. Laws on what Muslims eat, where they live and work, what they wear, who they can marry, how they divorce, how much representation they are allowed to have (actually not have) have become so widespread so as no longer be news.

This has become such an ingrained part of India's politics that a reversal is hard to imagine in the medium term, say of 15 years. This has been down to Modi and it is his great achievement.

So long as he stays on this path, and he will because he does it out of belief and ideology, he will continue to have in his court those who keep looking for signs of his greatness elsewhere, such as on the economy

WISDOM CORNER

It is not our purpose to become each other; it is to recognize each other, to learn to see the other and honor him for what he is.

Keep your eyes open to your mercies. The man who forgets to be thankful has fallen asleep in life.

, Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1905:** American writer Ayn Rand, whose commercially successful novels promoting individualism and laissez-faire capitalism became influential among conservatives and libertarians, was born in St. Petersburg.
- **1922:** "Ulysses" by James Joyce is published. The novel is considered one of the most important works of modernist literature.
- **1943:** The Battle of Stalingrad comes to an end as the Axis Powers surrender. Germany's defeat marked a turning point in World War II.
- **1971:** Idi Amin declared himself president of Uganda and for the next eight years headed a regime that was noted for its brutalitv.

FOCUS UNION BUDGET

QUESTIONS ON FISCAL FRONT

he Union Budget 2025 26 is the second budget of the NDA 3.0 government. It comes against the backdrop of a dramatic uptick in geopolitical risks and tensions, slowdown in economic growth in India measured in terms of real GDP (6.4% in 2024-25 as against 8.2% in 2023-24) and inflation rate measured in terms of combined consumer price index (CPI-C) at 4.8% for 2024-25 (RBI's Governor statement on 6 Dec, 2024) as against an average 4% in the flexible inflation targeting mandated for RBI. So, this is a bad climate.

If we needed a mood-changer, then look no more beyond the headlines that the Budget has grabbed. An important feature is personal income tax reform with a special focus on the middle class. As announced, there will be no income tax payable for income up to Rs 12 lakh per annum under the new regime. The threshold works to Rs 12.75 lakh for salaried taxpayers, due to the standard deduction of Rs75,000. Furthermore, other slabs and rates have been revised to benefit all taxpavers, resulting in a higher disposable income in the hands of households, which will boost consumption, savings and

The focus of the fiscal policy stance as enumerated in the Budget includes (a) fostering equitable and sustained growth, (b) tax reform, particularly personal income tax, (c) to increase spending power, (d) increased public capital spending, (e) adapting a "saturation approach" to social welfare and development and more (f) importantly, framing a fiscal consolidation path with an end target, without intermediate targets.

To reach the goals of a Viksit Bharat, firstly, the Budget has focused on spurring agriculture growth and building rural prosperity through (a) the Prime Minister Dhan-Dhanva Krishi Yojana. (b) enhanced credit to farmers, (c) high yielding seeds, (d) focus on pulses, by increasing productivity. Secondly, the Budget has supported MSMEs with credit cards



There are important questions on the prescribed path of fiscal consolidation by moving from the fiscal rule to fiscal standard

for micro enterprises, launching of a scheme for the first time entrepreneur, focusing on ease and cost of doing business, facilitating employment for labour intensive sectors and revising the classification criteria for MSMEs in terms of investment and turnover. Thirdly, the budget has focused on promoting export with an export promotion mission. Bharat Trade Net (BTN) as a digital public infrastructure for international trade will integrate with the global supply chain. The above key features of the Budget are welcome steps. However, the fiscal consolidation path outlined in the Budget raises question

The Budget 2025-26 has outlined for the first time a fiscal consolidation path - "with an end target but without intermediate target." It is claimed by the authorities that "the aim was to equip the government with requisite operational flexibility so as to respond to exigencies arising at a time of high uncertainty." Thus, from 2026-27, the endeavour of the government will be to focus on debt to GDP ratio as the fiscal anchor in place of fiscal deficit as a target. This implies that fiscal deficit to GDP ratio of 3% will not be in sight and will likely be breached. Instead, the effort would be to keep the fiscal deficit such that the debt to GDP ratio will be 50 (+/-1 percent) by 31st March 2031.

In the above context, it is pertinent to note that the Budget is an annual exercise which operationalises the fiscal policy

of the government with the objective (a) to move the economy to a higher growth trajectory, (b) to lower unemployment and (c) to ensure stability of the economy. The authorities have been following since 2003 a rule based fiscal policy in the mandatory framework of Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act.

In rule based fiscal policy, as the global practice and academic literature tells us, there are three rules viz: deficit rule, debt rule and borrowing rule. While adhering to deficit and debt rule, the authorities fix the level of deficit and debt as percentage of GDP. In borrowing rule, the authorities prohibit themselves from borrowing from the central bank by printing money. This is critical self-imposed discipline followed by India since 2003. We have been following these three rules under the FRBM Act (with amendments).

The argument to shift to end-target (Debt-GDP ratio) in place of intermediate target (fiscal deficit to GDP ratio) builds on "a conscious policy choice" which is "aimed at moving away from a regime characterised by rigid fiscal rules towards flexible fiscal standards." This follows the argument that "fiscal rules are prescriptive and focus on achievement of numerical targets, fiscal standards are in the nature of general objectives that have to be followed.'

Here's a cautionary note: A rule should not be confused with standard. As alluded to earlier

we need a deficit rule and debt rule. In the Indian context, keeping in view the budgetary practice with a revenue and capital account, the budget should not have a revenue deficit and the government should not borrow to meet the revenue expenditure as it is happening currently. Furthermore, a revenue deficit of 1.5% of GDP as budgeted for 2025-26 reflects the dis-savings of the government and has the potential to adversely impact economic growth. Therefore, the priority is to eliminate revenue deficit. In this context it is important to note that the income tax buoyancy of 1.30 for 2025-26 is lower than the average buoyancy of 1.74 recorded in the past five years ending 2023-24.

Thus, increasing tax buoyancy is critical and crucial for elimination of revenue deficit to ultimately promote growth given the inflexibility of reducing revenue expenditure. It is important to explicitly state the fiscal deficit to GDP ratio in the FRBM Act.

The standard budgetary practice has a tendency to place capital expenditure at a higher level in the budget estimates and subsequently reduce the same to a lower level to show a lower fiscal deficit to GDP ratio. This deviation is against prudent fiscal management and shows poor fiscal marksmanship. Illustratively, this has happened during 2024-25 revised estimate where effective capital expenditure was reduced from Rs 1,501,889 to Rs 1,318,320 - a reduction of 13.9%. To arrest this tendency, we may need an expenditure rule, particularly for capital expenditure to GDP ratio.

To conclude, the Budget has outlined a useful journey with policy measures to reach the destination of Viksit Bharat but there are important questions on the prescribed path of fiscal consolidation by moving from the fiscal rule to fiscal standard.

The writer is a former central banker and Professor at the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune.

SPECTRUM

INCREASING

CRUCIAL FOR

ELIMINATION

OF REVENUE

ULTIMATELY

DEFICIT TO

PROMOTE

GROWTH

REVENUE

GIVEN THE

INFLEXIBILITY

OF REDUCING

EXPENDITURE

TAX BUOYANCY

IS CRITICAL AND

UNION BUDGET

Silent on real issues



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

THE SIZE OF THE BUDGET AS **PERCENTAGE OF GDP IS AROUND 15%, LOWER THAN 17.7% OF** 2020-21. THIS IS **ABYSMAL WHEN COMPARED WITH OTHER COUNTRIES**

nion Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has unveiled her eighth consecutive Union Budget focussing on four engines: agriculture, MSME, investment, and exports, to drive the goal of Viksit Bharat. The budget has evoked mixed reactions. Prime Minister Modi has described it as a people's Budget and a force multiplier, while Opposition has alleged that the engines of Budget have derailed.

The Budget 2025-26 has set a nominal GDP growth target of 10.1% for 2025-26, slightly above the 9.7% achieved in the previous fiscal. Similarly real GDP is estimated to be 6.3 to 6.8% in 2024-26. However, the Budget is contractionary as the rise of budgetary outlay is less than the estimated rise of nominal GDP.

The budgetary outlay for 2025-26 is estimated to grow only by 5.5% to Rs 50,65,345 crore from Rs 48,20,51 in 2024-25 (BE). Even the hudgeted estimated expenditure of Rs 48,20,512 crore in 2024-25 has shrunk in revised estimate to Rs 47,16,487 crore. Revenue Receipts have shrunk in revised estimates too and are rising at its slowest pace since 2022-23.

The size of the Budget as per-

centage of GDP is around 15%, lower than 17.7% of 2020-21. This is abysmal when compared with other countries. This is 57% in France, 53.8% in Italy, 59.5% in the Euro Area, 48.4% in Germany, 45.4% in Spain, 44.05% in Japan, 44.5% in Great Britain, 34.38% in the US and 32% in Switzerland.

Sitharaman's Budget breaks with the past to provide substantial tax relief to the salaried middle classes to prop up consumption. The zero-income tax slab up to an income of Rs 12 lakh per annum covers the widest section of the salaried middle class in the country. But the salaries class constitutes only a meagre proportion of total population.

Individuals are now paying more taxes than all the companies in India combined. Before 2019-20, the corporates were paying more. In 2019-20 revenue generated through corporate taxes was much higher than that of individuals. But due to corporate tax cuts, the situation has reversed. In 2024-25 corporate taxes accounted for 17% while income taxes accounted for 19% of total receipts.

In an agrarian economy like India, where farmers are forced

sale, there is need for providing more fertiliser subsidy to reduce the cost of production. Similarly, there is an imperative for enhancing food subsidy as 55.6% of Indians are unable to afford a healthy diet and 13% are undernourished, according to FAO. But budgetary outlay in both food fertiliser subsidies has been cut. Allocation for fertiliser sub-

to commit suicide due to distress

sidy which was reduced from Rs 2,51,339 crore in 2022-23 to Rs 1.71.299 crore in 2024-25 (RE) is estimated to decline Rs 1.67.887 in 2025-26. Similarly, allocation for food subsidy which was reduced from Rs 2,72,802 crore in 2022-23 to Rs 1,97,420 crore in 2024-25 (RE) is budgeted to be Rs 2.03.420 crore in 2025-26, lower than Rs 2,05,250 crore in revised estimate of 2024-25. The government has allocated Rs 03.83 lakh crore for food, fertilizer and petroleum subsidies in 2025-26. nearly the same as the revised estimate of the current fiscal year. Some years back, it was around Rs 5 lakh crore. In order to improve the living

standards, it is imperative to provide education and health facilities free of cost. Expenditure

on education has shrunk from Rs 1,25,638 crore in 2024-25 (BE) to Rs 1,14,054 in revised estimate and estimated to rise to Rs 1.28.650 crore in 2025-26. Likewise, expenditure on health has shrunk from Rs 89,287 crore in 2024-25 (BE) to Rs 88,032 crore in 2024-25 (RE). But will increase marginally to Rs 98.3.111 crore in 2025-26.

The Prime Minister says the Budget will increase savings, consumption and investment and enhance GDP. But this is not possible unless the real income of people increases. Soaring household indebtedness, dismal savings are affecting economic activities.

The Budget is not just an instrument of income and expenditure of the government but it is also the most effective policy instrument for the government to address various problems plaguing the economy. But issues such as slowing the economy, galloping inflation, soaring unemployment, decline in real wages, erosion of purchasing power and high inequality are not addressed

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 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:

OrissaPOST B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Disparaging remarks

Sir, The disparaging remarks on President of India Droupadi Murmu made by some sections in the highest echelon of our political spectrum is highly condemnable and is in bad taste. It is an insult to the exalted office of President and to the Constitution. It is not for the first time that someone coming from a humble background has occupied the highest position of the land which is a tribute to our inclusive democracy. She is a highly educated lady who has conducted herself with grace, dignity and modesty both in India and abroad. She has an unblemished record in public life. Although she had held important constitutional positions, there has been no iota of doubt of her impeccable honesty and integrity; no charges of nepotism and favouritism can be levelled against her. As the President of India, she has articulated her insightful care and concerns for the poor, downtrodden and the vulnerable strata of the society. Power has not got into her head and she has carried herself with a great degree of equanimity and poise. The highly objectionable remarks on her smack of colonial and slavish mind-set

Rup Narayan Das, NEW DELHI

Burden of bags

Sir, Heavy school bag is pain in the neck for a child. Viewed against this backdrop, the decision of the Andhra Pradesh government to re-introduce the "no bag day" for school students every Saturday is most welcome. This rule was first implemented in 2018; first and third Saturdays were "no bag days' then. Students need not carry books, too, every Saturday. This move can benefit the students in a few ways. First, children can have a sigh of relief at least on one of the school days by not being burdened by heavy bags. Second, they can relax to some extent amidst the excessive pressure of academics. Third, Saturdays will be focused on holistic development of a student. Children will be encouraged to take part in sports, games and cultural activities like debates and essay writing. However, it is important for the state government to not go back on its aim.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA



TWO STATES





DELHI ASSEMBLY POLLS

7,552 OPT FOR HOME VOTING



New Delhi, Feb 1: A total of 7,552 electors have opted for the home voting facility, available to elderly voters and differently-abled persons, for the upcoming Delhi Assembly election.

The home voting facility is available to voters above 85 years of age and differently-abled, offering them the option to cast their votes from their homes, it said.

According to a statement, the Election Commission of India (ECI) deployed 206 teams of polling officers across 11 districts and 70 Assembly constituencies in the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCT), ensuring smooth and timely execution as

per ECI guidelines. As of January 31, 2025, 92 per cent of registered home voters have successfully cast their votes. This includes 5,982 senior citizens and 998 persons with disabilities.

District West recorded the highest home-voting turnout at 94 per cent, the statement said.

It mentioned that polling officials and security personnel visit voters' residences to collect their votes and voters are notified in advance through SMS alerts to ensure they are prepared for the visit.

To maintain transparency, the entire process is being video-graphed.

"Home voting will continue until Tuesday for voters who have filled out forms," the statement added.

For voters who choose to visit polling booths instead, 8,715 volunteers and 4.218 wheelchairs have been stationed at polling locations to assist, the statement said.

The ECI has also introduced a postal ballot facility for all her life to fight against communalism: Vijayan PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Zakia Jafri dedicated

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 1: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Saturday said that Zakia Jafri, the wife of former Congress MP Ehsan Jafri, who was killed in the 2002 Gujarat riots, will be remembered for dedicating her life to fighting against communalism.

Zakia died Saturday in Ahmedabad at the age of 86.

Mourning her death, Vijayan, in a Facebook post, said that Zakia's two-decade-long legal battle against the leaders of the 2002 riots "was a shining chapter in the history of secular

The rioters who carried out the massacre in Ahmedabad's Gulbarg Society claimed 69 lives, including that of Ehsan Jafri, the CM said.

personnel on election duty,

including security and police

personnel, who are unable to

vote at their assigned polling

This extension also applies

to private sector employees,

such as drivers, conductors,

videographers and other

non-government staff de-

ployed on election duty, the

A total of around 26,000

postal ballot forms have been

received and facilitation cen-

tres have been set up at train-

ing venues for smooth process-

ing, the statement highlighted.

around 16,000 personnel have

cast their votes, with the re-

maining personnel expected

Additionally, 16,984 postal

ballot forms have been re-

ceived from Delhi Police and

to vote by February 4, 2025.

Delhi Home Guards

It also mentioned that

statement noted.

He added that Zakia's legal battle to bring the perpetrators to justice turned into a fight to ensure justice for the victims of the riots.

"It is a sad fact that justice has not been ensured even today," he added.

Vijayan said that her memories inspire everyone to "stand together and fight against the aggressive ideology of the Sangh Parivar"

Zakia waged a legal battle with the Supreme Court in a bid to hold top political leaders accountable for the large conspiracy behind the horrific riots across Gujarat following the Godhra train burning episode, which resulted in the deaths of 59 'karsevaks' returning

condemnable: Kerala FM BUSINESS COMMUNITY HAILS BUDGET

business community in Kerala. Yusuff Ali M A, Chairman of Lulu Group said

the buget marks a pivotal moment in India's economic trajectory, delivering

a much-needed boost to the middle class while advancing the country's

goal of becoming a 5 trillion USD economy. Key measures, such as income

exemptions and incentives for startups and MSMEs, will directly benefit

individual incomes and entrepreneurial ventures, he said in a statement

self-reliant economy," he added. The direction of the budget is towards

the goal of Vikasit Bharat, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Kerala

here. "This budget clearly empowers the middle class and fosters a vibrant

Chairman Vinod Manjila said. "A very positive budget that takes care of the

diverse sectors of the economy including agriculture, middle class, exports

the Union Budget 2025, according to a release issued by the organisation.

tax reductions-including a no-tax threshold up to ₹12 lakh-and expanded

Kochi: The Union Budget proposals presented by Finance Minister Thiruvananthapuram, Feb Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday received a positive response from the

Union Budget disappointing,

1: Kerala Finance Minister KN Balagopal Saturday expressed strong displeasure and disappointment with the Union Budget for 2025-26, presented by Nirmala Sitharaman, and accused the Centre of showing political discrimination towards states in the allocations

He said Kerala had justified expectations in some areas, but they were completely neglected in the budget.

It was "utterly sad and condemnable" that the Union Budget made no mention of the Wayanad landslide tragedy, which had shocked the country months ago, or the Vizhinjam port, Balagopal told reporters here.

The Union Finance Minister made many announcements with an eye on the upcoming elections in Bihar and New Delhi, he said.

But at the same time, there was no package or even a reference to the landslide tragedy in Wayanad, no mention of Vizhinjam Port, and no general financial allocations to the state, he said

Balagopal pointed out that Sitharaman, in her budget, spoke at length about exports but ignored the Vizhiniam port in Kerala, which has been the most significant export promotion scheme in the country in the last two decades.

A big port is a gateway for exports, but no allocation has been made for it, he said, addstartups and ease of doing business", he added. It will benefit Kerala industry with regard to tourism, health care, and export, Manjila said. The Cochin Chamber of Commerce and Industry has given a 'thumbs up' to the various budget proposals, aligning with the key insights from the Economic Survey presented in Parliament January 30, 2025, which support and satisfy

ing that no significant institutions have been allotted to the state in the budget.

"It is utterly sad and condemnable...We hope they will correct this," the state FM said.

Further criticising the Union Budget, Balagopal said it has "failed" to ensure equal treatment for all states in the country, without any discrimination.

It generally seems that they (the centre) would do more for the states where they have political interests and neglect the other states, he alleged.

The minister said that although there is a general increase in the allocations towards states in the budget, Kerala is unlikely to get the deserved amount in accordance with its population density.

As per the budget, there is an increase of ₹5 lakh crore in the allocations to states.

In accordance with its population density, Kerala should receive ₹14,288 crore, but as per the budget figures, it is doubtful whether the state will even receive ₹3,000 crore, the minis ter pointed out.

He also criticised the inadequate allocations in the ag ricultural sector and for Ma hatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

There was also no mention of special schemes to attract investments to the country he said, adding that the zero income tax up to ₹12 lakh announcement would not be as beneficial to the people as its hype suggests.

Kerala Guv takes part in 'A Day at Sea'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, Feb 1: Kerala Governor Rajendra Viswanath Arlekar took part in 'A Day at Sea', an event organised by the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) here Saturday, as part of its 49th Raising Day.

A ceremonial guard was paraded upon the arrival of the Governor onboard the Coast Guard ship (ICGS) Samarth.

DIG N Ravi, Commander of the Coast Guard Kerala and Mahe, received Arlekar onboard the ship, according to a release issued by a Coast Guard

During the 'Day at Sea', Coast Guard assets demonstrated operations in search and rescue. pollution response, anti-piracy and boarding, vertical replenishment, steam past by ships, and fly past by aircraft, the release said.

The Coast Guard ships Samarth, Saksham, Arnvesh, and Abhinav, interceptor boats C-410, C-162, AB Urja Pravaha, Dornier, and Chetak aircraft participated in the event, it added.

SwaRail app to integrate multiple rail services

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: The Railway Ministry has released an application called SuperApp, a one-stop solution offering multiple public-facing services, on Google Play Store for testing recently, an offi-

"Only 1,000 users can download it. We will assess the response and feedback. After that, it will be made available for 10,000 downloads for further suggestions and comments," a Board official said.

He added that the app provides easy access to services like reserved and unreserved ticket bookings, platform and parcel bookings, train inquiries, PNR inquiries, help through Rail-Madad and more

"The core emphasis of the app is to enhance user experience through a seamless and clean user interface. It not only combines all services in one place but also integrates several services to provide users with a complete package of Indian Railway services," Dilip Kumar, Executive Director of Information and Publicity at the Railway Board, said.

Foster love for reading among children: Prez

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: President Draupadi Murmu Saturday urged people to focus on the creation and promotion of books for children, emphasising that every adult should take it as a responsibility to nurture the habit of reading in children.

Speaking at the inauguration of the 53rd New Delhi World Book Fair (NDWBF) at the Bharat Mandapam, Murmu described reading books as a "transformative experience." stressing it is much more than merely a hobby. "I appeal everyone to give special importance to the creation and promotion of books for children. One of the best habits we can develop in our children is the love for reading books. Every elder should take it up as an important duty," the President during her speech.

Encouraging children to read different kinds of books -- apart from those prescribed as part of the syllabus -- Murmu said it will help them uncover their potential and capabilities and guide them to become good human beings.

"Developing the habit of reading among our children should be done in a concerted and consistent manner by elders, teachers, writers, publishers, voluntary organisations, social workers, media groups and everyone who can contribute to this cause. When you make a child enjoy reading, you contribute to nation-building," she added.

Happy that the book fair,



Visitors at the 'World Book Fair' at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi, Saturday

which this year has 'Republic@75' as its theme, highlights the journey of India as a Republic during the last 75 years. Murmu said, adding it provides an "excellent expression to India's cultural diversity, its abiding unity and impressive progress". She also expressed her happiness on Russia being the 'focus country' this year and said its special participation in the fair will help strengthen cultural bonds between the two countries.

Authors and speakers from 50 countries, including France, Qatar, Spain, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Columbia, are set

to participate in NDWBF 2025. "I am glad to know that many other countries also participate in this Fair. I am happy that the Russian Federation, the focus country of this fair, will organise various literary events. activities for children and cul-

tural performances," she added. Actor Pankaj Tripathi, food critic Pushpesh Pant, senior

politician Shashi Tharoor, Minister of Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, poet Kumar Vish was, and filmmaker Prakash Jha are among the prominent speakers from diverse fields such as literature, governance, technology, art, and cinema, participating in the fair.

Also, several literature festivals, including 'Brahmaputra Literature Festival', 'Prabhat Prakashan', 'Bharat Literature Festival', 'Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival', 'Penguin Dialogues' and the 'Great Indian Book Tour', will be held parallelly as part of the fair. Among the new additions at

this year's NDWBF are a dedicated authors' lounge for authors to engage and the 'Children's Corner', which will offer a wide range of storytelling. literary, art, craft, and dance sessions for young visitors.

The event, which will come to a close February 9, will have free entry for students in school uniform and senior citizens.

Former ISRO chairman S Somanath feted

Kottavam (Kerala): Former ISRO Chairman S Somanath is chosen for the Mallivoor Shankar Smriti Award instituted in memory of noted Sanskrit scholar and Bhagavatham exponent late Mallivoor Sankaran Namboothiri. The honour comprises a purse of ₹1 lakh, citation and plague, a statement issued Saturday said. Former President of India and rocket scientist A P J Abdul Kalam was the first recipient of the award. instituted in 2012. Distinguished persons who make remarkable contributions in the fields of arts. literature, science and spirituality are chosen for the honour, it said, Besides Somanath, 'harikatha' exponent Visakha Hari is selected for the 'Mallivoor Ganesha Award' that comprises ₹25,000 cash, a citation and a plaque.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

e-Tender No. 28-SBP-TRD-OT-2024-25, Date : 27.01.2025 NAME OF WORK: TRD RELATED WORKS IN CONNECTION WITH THE WORK OF SETTING UP OF AUTOMATIC COACH WASHING PLANT Approx. Cost : ₹ 38,45,191.24, EMD ₹ 76,900/-, Completion Period : 0

Months. Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1530

Hrs. on 18.02.2025 No manual offers sent by Post / Courier Fax or in person accepted against suc e-tenders even if these are submitted o

firm's letter head and received in time. A such manual offers shall be considere invalid and shall be rejected summaril without any consideration. Complete information including e-tende documents of the above e-tender is available in website: www.ireps.gov.in

days before the date of closing of tender t note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Porta Only registered tenderer/bidder car participate on e-tendering. Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD),

PR-939/P/24-25

Amrit Udyan to open for public from today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: The famed Amrit Udyan will be open for public viewing from Sunday, and will receive visitors till March 30, the Rashtrapati Bhavan Saturday said.

People can visit the park six days a week between 10am and 6pm, except Mondays, which are maintenance days, it said in a

President Droupadi Murmu graced the opening of the Amrit Udyan winter annuals edition 2025

"The Amrit Udyan will open for public viewing from February 2 to March 30, 2025," the statement said

Booking and entry to the garden is free of cost and can be made at visit.rashtrapatibhavan.gov.in.

People are also allowed to

Booking and entry to the garden is free of cost and can be made at visit. rashtrapatibhavan. gov.in

walk into the park without booking, it said.

Entry and exit for all visitors will be from gate no 35 of the President's Estate, close to where North Avenue meets Rashtrapati Bhavan.

A shuttle bus service from Central Secretariat Metro Station to gate no 35 will be available every

30 minutes between 9.30am and 6pm, the statement said. Visitors can carry mobile phones, electronic keys, purses and handbags, water

bottles and milk bottles for

infants, it said.

Provision for drinking water, toilets, and first aid, medical facilities will be made at various places along the public route.

Along with tulips this year, visitors will witness 140 different types of roses and more than 80 other flowers at Amrit

"Route for the visitors will be Bal Vatika - Plumeria theme Garden - Bonsai Garden - Central Lawn - Long Garden - Circular Garden," the statement said, adding that visitors can get detailed information about any display by scanning QR codes.

The udyan will remain closed February 5 (due to polling for the Delhi Legislative Assembly), February 20 and 21 (due to the Visitors' Conference at Rashtrapati Bhavan), and March 14 (on account of Holi), the Rashtrapati Bhavan said. It will be open for special categories March 26 for differently-abled, March 27 for personnel of defence, paramilitary and police forces. March 28 for women and tribal women's self help groups and March 29 for senior citizens.

Rashtrapati Bhavan will also host Vividhta Ka Amrit Mahotsay as part of Amrit Udvan from March 6 to 9, 2025.

'This year's mahotsay will showcase the rich cultural heritage and unique traditions of Southern India," it said.

Apart from the Amrit Udyan, people can also visit Rashtrapati Bhavan and Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum six days a week (from Tuesday to Sunday).

They can also witness the change of guard ceremony every Saturday except on Gazetted holidays.

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI Baliapal, Balasore Email: ori-baliapal@nic.in

INVITATION FOR BIDS THROUGH e-PROCUREMENT Bid Identification No. PSBPL-03 of 2024-25

Invitation for Bids

1	The BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, BALIAPAL,						
	BALASORE, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites						
	percentage rate bids in single cover system in Online						
	Mode only, for works as detailed below.						
2	Nature of work	:	Civil Works				
3	No. of work	:	04 Nos.				
	Bid Cost	:	₹ 6,000/-				
5	Class of Contractor	:	'C' & 'D' License				
6	Availability of Bid	:	From 10.00 A.M. of				
	Documents in the		03.02.2025 to 5.00 P.M. of				

11.00 A.M 8 The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only Further details can be seen from the website: https:// tendersodisha.gov.in. Any addendum / corrigendum cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.

OIPR-19141/11/0005/2425

Date of Opening of Bid

Sd./- BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, BALIAPAL, BALASORE

Dt. 17.02.2025 at

national



The Union Budget has nothing for Bengal. As in the past during the BJP's reign, there has not been enough allocation for the state in this budget. Our (TMC) MPs have been vocal and have sought a rise in the allocation of funds for central projects

ABHISHEK BANERJEE | TMC LEADER

BIRD FLU OUTBREAK IN RAIGARI

At least 17,000 chickens and quails were culled in Chhattisgarh's Raigarh after avian influenza or bird flu was detected at a state-run poultry farm in the district, officials said Saturday. The authorities have stepped up vigil within a 10 km radius of the affected area, they said





the fact that the cal deficit from

the budget estimate of 4.9 per cent to the revised estimate of 4.8 per cent. It was achieved at a huge cost to the economy P CHIDAMBARAM | SENIOR CONG LEADER

We remain steadfast in our objective to fence the border, identify new immigrants, regulate the entry of foreigners with issuing of passes and completely eradicate drugs from the state

I wholeheartedly welcome the Viksit Bharat Budget 2025 presented by Union Minister for

N BIREN SINGH | MANIPUR CM

Finance & Corporate Affairs Nirmala Seetharaman under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi

PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CM

SHORT TAKES

Man consumes poison at PS

Nagpur: A 30-year-old man consumed poison at a police station (PS) in Maharashtra's Nagpur city Saturday in a bid to end his life after his partner ended her livein relationship with him, an official said. After the incident, which took place at the Nandanvan police station, the man - Sagar Mishra - was admitted to a hospital, where he is currently undergoing treatment, he said.

IED weighing 9 kg recovered

Medininagar: An improvised explosive device (IED) weighing about 9 kg planted by Maoists to harm security forces was recovered and destroyed successfully in Jharkhand's Palamu district a police officer said Saturday The IED was found in a forest area of Dudhiyah during a search operation. A locally made firearm was found also hidden in nearby bushes, the

1st suspected GBS death in Assam

Guwahati: A 17-vear-old girl died at a private hospital here due to suspected Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS), the first such case in Assam in the current season, doctors of the health facility said Saturday. However, there was no official confirmation from the hospital and the state health department.

Gujarat Police bust illegal liquor trade

Vadodara: In a crackdown

on illegal liquor trade, the Vadodara Rural Local Crime Branch (LCB) in Gujarat has seized 597 boxes of foreign liquor valued at ₹38.98 lakh from a container on the Vadodara-Savli road. The police have arrested the container driver and another person, and a complaint has been registered at Manjusar police station. Acting on a tip-off, the LCB team set up surveillance on the Vadodara-Savli road. During their patrol within the Manjusar police station limits, officials intercepted a suspicious container.

3 held with 9.30L alprazolam tablets

Indore: Three persons were arrested allegedly with more than 9 lakh alprazolam tablets and 5,240 cough syrup bottles by Indore police from Madhya Pradesh capital Bhopal, an official said Saturday.

BJP trying to woo voters nuclear energy sector in Bihar, Delhi: Opposition

While Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said the Centre was "bankrupt of ideas" and needed a paradigm shift to solve the economic crisis, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the government was busy garnering praises for the budget when the entire country was struggling with inflation and unemployment



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: The Opposition Saturday described the Union Budget as one offering "band-aid for bullet wounds" and said the BJP-led Centre was only trying to woo voters in Bihar and Delhi through the announcements.

While Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said the Centre was "bankrupt of ideas" and needed a paradigm shift to solve the economic crisis, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the government was busy garnering praises for the budget when the entire country was struggling with inflation and unemployment.

Kharge -- the Opposition leader in the Rajya Sabha -- claimed the budget was an attempt to "dupe" the people and described it as "nau sau choohe khake billi hajj ko chali" -- a Hindi proverb that means seeking to be pious after committing a number of sins.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced significant Income Tax cuts for the middle class and unveiled

a blueprint for next generation reforms as she looked to shore up a slowing economy amid global uncertainties.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the "people's budget" that put more money in the hands of the common public. The Opposition, however, said the sops to the middle class had come long after they suffered the brunt of high taxes and price rise.

"A band-aid for bullet wounds! Amid global uncertainty, solving our economic crisis demanded a paradigm shift," Gandhi said in a post on X. The Congress criticised the budget as bereft of cure to the "illnesses" of stagnant real wages, lack of buoyancy in mass consumption, sluggish rates of private investment, and a complicated GST system that the economy was suffering from.

It accused the Modi government of appearing to offer a "bonanza" to Bihar, governed by National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partner Nitish Kumar, and "cruelly" ignoring Andhra Pradesh, another pil-

lar of the same alliance. In a post in Hindi on X,

ernment collected ₹54.18 lakh crore in Income Tax from the middle class in the past 10 years and exemption was now being given to those earning up to ₹12 lakh. There was no roadmap to

Kharge said the Modi gov-

double farmers' income and no concession in GST rates on agricultural inputs, he added. Former finance minister P Chidambaram said Sitharaman was "walking on the worn-out path and not willing to break free, as we did in 1991

TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee said there was nothing for West Bengal in the budget.

"There is nothing for the common people. They have presented the budget with the upcoming Bihar elections in mind. Last time as well, all announcements were for Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. Elections in Andhra Pradesh are over, the Bihar polls are coming so the state is in focus," the Diamond Harbour MP told re-

DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran called the budget a "big letdown", especially for the middle class. "The finance minister claims she is giving tax exemption up to ₹12 lakh but the very next line was that there is a 10 per cent tax slab for ₹8 to ₹10 lakh income.

Samajwadi Party supremo Akhilesh Yadav said the budget figures meant nothing when the government was unable to provide an accurate number of the people who had died or were missing in the Maha Kumbh stampede

The CPI(M) Politburo said in a statement that the budget was a "cruel betraval" of the requirements of the people.

The hypocrisy of the government is symbolised by its measly allocations for a right, which is a lifeline for the rural poor, the MNREGA, it added.

The CPI's National Secretariat said the budget neglected the challenges faced by the Indian

India to revolutionise



New Delhi, Feb 1: India Saturday announced plans to amend its nuclear liability law and set up a nuclear energy mission, a move that came ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's likely visit to the US.

New Delhi made public its decision to amend the nuclear liability law little over two weeks after Washington lifted restrictions on three Indian nuclear entities to open up new avenues for India-US collaboration in the civil-nuclear field.

Certain clauses in India's Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 have emerged as hurdles in moving forward in implementation of the historic civil nuclear deal that was firmed up between the two strategic partners around 16 years ago. Modi is expected to visit Washington this month to hold wide-ranging talks with US President Donald Trump with a focus on further shore up bilateral cooperation in a range of areas including trade, energy and defence.

India's decision to set up a 'Nuclear Energy Mission' with an outlay of ₹20,000 crore and plans to amend the nuclear liability laws were announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the Union budget for 2025-26 in Parliament. "Development of at least 100 GW (Gigawatt) of nuclear energy by 2047 is essential for our energy transition efforts," she said. "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

plans to amend the nuclear liability laws were announced by Finance Minister Nirmala

will be taken up," she added. The Atomic Energy Act of

1962 prohibits investments by the private sector in nuclear power plants. The proposed amendment is expected to remove this provision. The finance minister said 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," she said. Modi described the decision

to promote the private sector in the nuclear energy sector as "historic". "This will ensure a major contribution of civil nuclear energy in the development of the country in the coming times," he said in his reaction to the Union budget. Modi said that civil nuclear

energy will ensure a significant contribution to the country's development in the future.

The US last month removed restrictions on Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Indira Gandhi Atomic Research Centre (IGCAR) and the Indian Rare Earths (IRE).

8 Naxalites killed in encounter in Bijapur district

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bijapur, Feb 1: Eight Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district Saturday, a senior police official said. An Insas rifle and a barrel

grenade launcher (BGL) were among the weapons recovered from the encounter site, he in The gunfight broke out

around 8.30 am in the forest in Gangaloor police station area when District Reserve Guard and Special Task Force of the state police along with Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and CoBRA (Commando Bat talion for Resolute Action) were out on an anti-Naxalite operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sund-

The operation was launched on Friday after receiving information about the presence of cadres of the "West Bastar division" of the outlawed Com munist Party of India (Mao-



ites have been recovered from the spot. Many more ultras have either been killed or in jured. The search operation at the site is still underway. We have recovered an Insas rifle a barrel grenade launcher and other weapons from the spot, Sundarraj said.

With this encounter, 50 Nax alites have been killed in separate encounters in the state so far this year.

16 Naxalites were killed in an encounter January 20-21 with security personnel in the state's Gariaband district

Last year, 219 Naxalites were neutralised by security forces in separate encounters in the state, as per police.

Over 60 LPG cylinders loaded in truck explode; no one hurt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ghaziabad, Feb 1: More than 60 cooking gas cylinders loaded in a truck en route to Ghaziabad blew up in an explosion early Saturday, the fire department said.

The explosion was caused by a fire around 4 am, likely due to friction in the cylinders, officials said. At least four furniture shops in the vicinity turned into ashes and some vehicles parked nearby also got burned, they said. Chief Fire Officer Rahul Pal

told PTI that it took more than eight fire tenders around 90 minutes to douse the flames. No casualties were reported.

The sound of the explosion and the consequent mayhem sent people nearby scampering to safety, with many vacating their houses. According to officials, when the driver noticed the fire, he parked the truck near a petrol pump. Soon after, the blasts happened, and the staff deserted the pump, which was also later shut. Eyewitnesses said a few cylinders fell into the petrol pump premises but did not explode. Dinesh Kasana, an office bearer of the district unit of the BJP, claimed that around 100 cylinders exploded.



Tourists take a 'shikara' ride at Dal Lake on a cold winter day in Srinagar

'Kids, teens under-represented in drug-resistant TB cases'

New Delhi, Feb 1: Studies have found that children and teenagers treated for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, including those in India, are under-represented in case numbers, with researchers calling for a "focus for case-finding efforts" in this age group.

A tuberculosis (TB) patient is said to be multidrug-resistant when the bacteria strain causing the infection has become immune to at least two of the effective drugs.

Multidrug-resistance is a significant challenge in eliminating the bacterial disease, as the complication increases treatment durations, which further risks the spread of the infection.

Researchers reviewed previously published studies to understand trends in multidrug-resistant treatment of TB in children and teenagers aged 18 or below. One of the reviews. by researchers, including those from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, analysed 42 studies involving over 23,369 children and teenagers aged 19 or below, mostly from India and South Africa.

The findings, published in The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health journal, revealed that nearly three in every four children or teens were successfully treated, with treatment durations typically lasting 16 months overall.

'Younger and clinically diagnosed children are under-represented among those treated

for MDR (multidrug-resistant) and RR (rifampicin-resistant) tuberculosis and should be a focus for case-finding efforts, the authors wrote.

Rifampicin is a key drug recommended by the World Health Organisation as first-

line treatment for TB. Further. older teens between 15 and 19 years represented nearly 70 per cent of all the participants. They tend to have disease patterns similar to those seen in adults with TB and in whom it is easier to confirm the diagnoA tuberculosis (TB) patient is said to be multidrug-resistant when the bacteria strain causing the infection has become immune to at least two of the effective drugs

sis microbiologically (through lab tests), the authors said.

They added that children aged under 5 were particularly under-represented, an important limitation as most deaths in children due to TB worldwide are in this age group

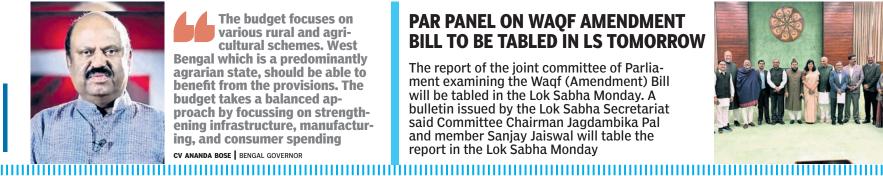
and who were never started on treatment. Another review by research-

ers from the University of Toronto, Canada, looked at 48 studies, including those from

They found high rates of successful treatment (almost 90 per cent) in children and teenagers with extensively drug-resistant TB -- when the infection-causing bacteria is resistant to nearly all available effective drugs.

However, "few childhood XDR- (extensively drug-resistant) and pre-XDR-TB cases are reported", the authors wrote in the study published in the journal PLoS Global Public Health. Treatment durations were found to range from 6 to 27 months.

national



The budget focuses on various rural and agricultural schemes. West Bengal which is a predominantly agrarian state, should be able to benefit from the provisions. The budget takes a balanced approach by focussing on strengthening infrastructure, manufacturing, and consumer spending

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





Modi ji has provided (in the budget) schemes worth crores of rupees for Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Ut-

tarakhand. 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



Markets did not rise despite 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

Roughly 2% actually pays some

- Now with this change: roughly 1% would pay taxes effectively This does not build any kind of investor confidence

SHORT **TAKES**

5 Nepalese returning

from Kumbh killed

Muzaffarpur: Five persons from

Nepal, including three women,

returning from the Mahakumbh

at Prayagraj in UP met with an

accident in Bihar, police said.

The accident took place in the

Muzaffarpur district where

speeding on a highway, said

Deputy Superintendent of Police

Vineeta Sinha. "According to the

eyewitnesses, the driver took a

sharp turn, trying to avoid hitting

a motorcycle. All the occupants

belonged to the Mahottari

district of Nepal," she said.

Over 100 bureaucrats

the SUV overturned while

were killed Saturday when

the SUV in which they were

@Akshat_World

Eight MLAs who quit AAP join BJP

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 (Uttam 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 convenor Arvind Keiriwal and to the Speaker of the Delhi Legislative Assembly.

Naresh Yadav, who was previously the Mehrauli candidate for AAP, was convicted by a Puniah 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 Baiiavant Jav 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, ir 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 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." 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.

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 sched-

Top Bhutanese Army

commander begins

6-day visit to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

uled to hold talks with Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi. National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chau han, 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

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 be

longed 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 be longed 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

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.

festering boundary row.

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 guestion 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 Tetarivakhar 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 (UA(P) 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 Mehmara 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

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.

More medical seats to boost doctor-patient ratio: Experts

reshuffled in Rajasthan

Jaipur: The Rajasthan government has transferred 53 officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), 24 of the Indian Police Service (IPS) and 34 of the Indian Forest Service (IFoS) cadre. Along with them, 113 officers of Rajasthan Administrative Service (RAS) have also been transferred. The orders were issued by the Department of Personnel late Friday night.

Higher reaches of J&K receive fresh snowfall

Srinagar: The higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) received fresh snowfall Saturday as the plains were lashed with rain and snow. The higher reaches of Kashmir like Sonamarg, Zojila pass, and Doodhpatri received moderate to heavy snowfall.

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

"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 Advi-

sory Services, EY India. The government may consider expanding existing medical colleges wherever possible to



optimize expenditure. The plan

to add about 200 day care can-

cer centres in all district hospi-

tals this year, "will strengthen

cancer care infrastructure,

reducing mortality rates and

improving patient outcomes.

The impact would be even

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

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

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

Sundaram said.

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

that the budget would pave

"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 lifesaving drugs, providing relief to patients, particularly those suffering from cancer, rare dis eases, 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.

international



I ask undocumented **Colombians in** the U.S. to immediately leave their jobs in that country and return to Colombia as soon as possible

GUSTAVO PETRO

INDIA-ISRAEL MAITRI PROJECT KICKS OFF

Non-governmental organisation Sharaka brought this week the first delegation of intellectuals, influencers, professionals, and academics from India to Israel under its flagship programme 'India-Israel Maitri Project' (IIMP) to promote awareness and understanding through Holocaust education and exposure to the Israeli society



Pakistan Tehreek-e-In saf (PTI)-led government has lost its authority in the province as armed groups have taken control in Khyber Pakh-

MAULANA FAZLUR REHMAN JUI-F CHIEF, PAKISTAN

I'm encour aged by the focus on economic growth on invigorating [because] we do

need more private investment for growth to be sustainable, on skilling and stimulating more RICHARD MCCALLUM | CEO OF THE UK INDIA

BUSINESS COUNCIL





Pakistan to intervene

IMRAN KHAN | JAILED FORMER PM, PAKISTAN

SHORT **TAKES**

US military conducts airstrikes in Somalia

Washington: The US military has conducted coordinated airstrikes against Islamic State operatives in Somalia, the first attacks in the African nation during President Donald Trump's second term. **Defence Secretary Pete** Hegseth said Saturday that the strikes by US Africa Command were directed by Trump and coordinated with Somalia's government. An initial assessment by the Pentagon indicated that "multiple" operatives were killed.

18 security personnel. 23 terrorists killed

Islamahad: At least 18 security personnel and 23 terrorists were killed during clashes between the two sides Balochistan province. The military said the terrorists were killed in different areas of troubled Balochistan in the last 24 hours. In one such operation in Harnai district Saturday, national troops effectively engaged the terrorists, killing 11 militants and destroying multiple terrorist hideouts.

Students to lead mass rally in Serbia

Novi Sad (Serbia): Serbia's students will lead mass demonstrations and blockades of three bridges over the Danube river in the northern city of Novi Sad Saturday to mark three months since a concrete canopy crashed down at a train station there, killing 15 people. The collapse November 1 of the huge concrete construction has sparked a wide anticorruption movement and months of street student-led protests against the populist authorities in the

Italy takes back 43 migrants

Balkan country.

Shengjin (Albania): An Italian navy ship Saturday took migrants to Italy from asylum processing centres in Albania following a court decision in Rome. It was the third failed attempt by Giorgia Meloni's far-right government to process migrants in the non-EU country. A coast guard ship took 43 migrants from the port of Shengjin, 66 kilometers (40 miles) northwest of the capital, Tirana. They were among the 49 men who were transferred to Albania on an Italian naval ship Tuesday.

TRUMP'S TARIFFS THREAT

Washington, Feb 1: US President Donald Trump is expected to sign an order Saturday imposing hefty new tariffs of 25% on goods from Mexico and Canada and 10% on imports from China, potentially disrupting more than \$2.1 trillion worth of annual trade.

Trump, who is working from his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida this weekend, said Friday that there was little that the top three US trading partners could do to forestall the tariffs. He set the Feb 1 deadline to

push them to take strong action to halt the flow of fentanyl and precursor chemicals into the US from China via Mexico and Canada, as well as to stop illegal immigrants from crossing southern and northern US borders.

But during a lengthy White House exchange with reporters, Trump brushed aside the notion that his tariff threats were merely bargaining tools.

"No, it's not ... we have big (trade) deficits with, as you know, with all three of them." He also said that revenue was a factor and the tariffs may be

 Canada and Mexico face 25% duties; China looking at 10% above current tariffs

 Canadian oil will be taxed at 10%. more oil and gas tariffs expected in mid-February

Retaliation expected from top three US trading partners

increased, adding: "But it's a lot of money coming to the United States." Trump did, however, reference a potential carve out for oil from Canada, saving that tariff rate would be 10% versus the 25% planned for other Canadian imports. But he indicated wider tariffs on oil and

natural gas would be coming in mid-February, remarks that sent oil prices higher.

Crude oil is the top US import from Canada, reaching nearly \$100 billion in 2023, according to US Census Bureau data.

HIGHER COSTS

Trump acknowledged that the steep duties could result in higher costs being passed on to consumers and that his actions may cause disruptions in the short term, but said he was not concerned about their impact on financial markets.

Jake Colvin, president of the National Foreign Trade Councompanies on trade matters. said imposing tariffs on key US trading partners "could impact the cost and availability of everything from avocados to air conditioners to cars and risks shifting the focus of our relationships away from constructive dialogue.

Although Trump speaks of 'charging" other nations for tariffs, they are paid by importing companies and sometimes passed on to consumers.

Automakers would be particularly hit hard by higher costs, through tariffs on vehicles assembled in Canada and Mexico. Their vast regional supply chain, where components can cross borders several times before final Assembly, would further exacerbate these costs.

And Trump said that more tariffs are coming, saying import taxes were being considered on European goods, as well as on steel, aluminum and copper, and on drugs and semiconductors. White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said the tariffs would be implemented immediately, and details would be published Saturday.

Rubio off to Central America with Panama Canal plan

Washington: Secretary of State Marco Rubio embarks this weekend on his first foreign trip in office, heading to Central America to press President Donald Trump's top priority - curbing illegal immigration - and bring the message that the US wants to reclaim control over the Panama Canal despite intense resistance from regional leaders. It's an



unusual destination for the maiden voyage of America's top diplomat, whose predecessors have generally favoured Europe or Asia for their initial outings. It reflects not only the personal interest that Rubio - the first Hispanic to hold the nation's most senior Cabinet post - has in the region but also the Trump administration's intent to focus much of its foreign policy energy close to home. "It's no accident that my first trip abroad as secretary of state will keep me in the hemisphere," Rubio wrote in The Wall Street Journal Friday.

Russian air attack kills 11 in Ukraine

Kyiv: Russia launched a barrage of day, killing 11 people and damaging dozens of residential buildings as well as energy infrastructure across the Interior Ministry said that a Russian in the central city of Poltava, killing seven people and injuring 14, including three children. The ministry posted



pictures on the Telegram messaging app showing the building with several top floors smashed and thick columns of smoke rising into the sky. Firefighters and dozens of rescuers were searching through the rubble. One person was killed and four were wounded in the city of Kharkiy in the northeast in a drone attack. the mayor said. Three police officers were killed during the attacks as they patrolled streets in a village in the northeastern region of Sumy, regional officials said. "Last night Russia attacked our cities using various types of weapons: missiles, attack drones, and aerial bombs," President Volodymyr Zelenskiy

7 dead, 19 injured in air ambulance crash

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Philadelphia, Feb 1: At least seven people were killed and 19 were injured when an air ambulance crashed into a busy Philadelphia intersection, officials said Saturday. The dead from Friday's accident include a child who was receiving treatment at a Philadelphia hospital and her mother. Mexican President Claudia

Sheinbaum confirmed that all six of those on board the jet including a child who had received medical treatment at a Philadelphia hospital — were killed. All the victims were from Mexico.

In addition, one person on the ground who was in a car was killed and 19 others were injured in the crash, Philadelphia Mayor Cherelle Parker said.

The crash scene was a very large area with a lot of damage and authorities were working to assess the damage, said Adam Thiel, the city's managing director. Teams were going house to house inspecting the dwellings in the area to search for damage.

It is "entirely possible" that there will be changes to the casualty figures being reported thus far, Thiel said.

There are "a lot of unknowns" as to who was where on the streets of the neighbourhood when the plane crash, Thiel said.

It could be days or more until authorities are able to definitely answer the question of how



many people died or were injured, Thiel said.

In a statement Saturday on the social media platform X, Sheinbaum confirmed the deaths. "I mourn the passing of six

Mexicans in the aviation accident in Philadelphia, United States. Consular authorities are in constant contact with the families; I've asked the Foreign Affairs Secretary to support whatever is needed. My solidarity with their loved ones and friends," she said in a statement translated from Spanish.

The jet was transporting a child who had just completed treatment at Shriners Children's hospital, her mother and four crew members

"The patient had received care from Shriners Children's Philadelphia and was being transported back to her home country in Mexico on a contracted air ambulance when the crash happened, Shriners spokesperson Mel Bower said in a statement.

"Because of patient privacy concerns, we cannot say any more about the patient and her family at this time.

Paramilitary group attacks open market in Sudan, killing 54

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cairo, Feb 1: An attack on an open market in the Sudanese city of Omdurman by a paramilitary group fighting against the country's military killed some 54 people and wounded many more, health authorities

The attack by the Rapid Support Forces on the Sabrein Market also wounded at least 158 others, the Health Ministry said in a statement. It was the latest in a series of deadly attacks in the escalated civil war that has wrecked the northeastern African country.

There was no immediate comment from the RSF.

Khalid al-Aleisir, minister of culture and government spokesperson, condemned the attack, saving that the casualties included many women and children. He also said the attack caused "widespread destruction to private and public properties.

This criminal act adds to the bloody record of this militia," he said in a statement. "It constitutes a blatant violation of international humanitarian law."

Sudan's Doctors Syndicate condemned the RSF's attack. It said one shell hit metres away from al-Naw hospital, which received most of the market casualties.

It said most of the bodies taken to the hospital were of women and children, adding that the hospital has a significant shortage of medical teams, especially surgeons and nurses.

Gaza/Cairo, Feb 1: Pales

prisoners' media office.

"I feel joy despite the journev of pain and hardship that we lived," said Ali Al-Barghouti, who was serving two life

"The life sentence was broken and the occupation will one day be broken," added Barghouti, as the crowd around him in Ramallah chanted "Allah Akbar (God is the most great)."

At the newly reopened Rafah crossing on the southern

GAZA EXCHANGE

Israel releases 183 Palestinians

tinian militant group Hamas handed over three Israeli hostages Saturday, and dozens of Palestinian prisoners and detainees were released in exchange, in the latest stage of a truce aimed at ending the 15-month war in Gaza Ofer Kalderon, a French-Is-

raeli dual national, and Yarden Bibas were handed over to Red Cross officials in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis before being transferred to Israel, Israe li-American Keith Siegel was separately handed over at the Gaza City seaport.

Hours later, 183 Palestinian prisoners and detainees were released in the exchange. Among them, 150 arrived in Gaza while 32 got off a bus in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, where they were greeted by large crowds. One freed prisoner will be exiled to Egypt, according to the Hamas

sentences in an Israeli jail.



Latest stage : Three Israelis in multi-phase •

exchanged for ceasefire • 183 Palestinian deal to end • prisoners and Gaza war detainees

NO REPEAT OF CHAOTIC **SCENES DURING PREVIOUS**

border, children suffering from cancer and heart conditions were among the first Palestinian patients to be allowed to leave Gaza for medical treatment in Egypt.

Mohammad Zaqout, a senior official in Gaza's health ministry, however, criticised the limited number of patients allowed to travel for treatment, saying that around 18,000 people needed better healthcare.

In Israel, crowds gathered at the location in Tel Aviv known

as Hostage Square to watch the release in the morning of the Israeli hostages on giant outdoor screens, mixing cheers and applause with tears as the three men appeared.

Kalderon, whose two children Erez and Sahar were released in the first hostage exchange in November 2023, and Bibas both briefly mounted a stage in Khan Younis, in front of a poster of Hamas figures including Mohammad Deif, the former military commander whose death was confirmed by Hamas this week, before being handed over to the Red Cross officials.

"Ofer Kalderon is free! We share the immense relief and joy of his loved ones after 483 days of unimaginable hell,' French President Emmanuel Macron said in a statement.

Congo rebels seek to make further advances

THE M23 REBEL GROUP THAT IS BACKED BY RWANDA HAS EMERGED AS A MORE POTENT FORCE AFTER BEING CRUSHED NG THEIR FIRST REBELLION IN 2012

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kampala (Uganda), Feb 1: After Rwanda-backed M23 rebels took control of the biggest city in eastern Congo this week, the man who emerged from the shadows to assert his leadership was not the group's long-time military leader.

Sultani Makenga, an ethnic Tutsi rebel leader sanctioned by both the US and the UN, was nowhere to be seen in Goma's Serena Hotel as the bearded Corneille Nangaa, in military fatigues, was ushered into the hall. Nangaa, who is not a Tutsi and who analysts say brings a more diverse, Congolese face to the group, told reporters of his plan to fight all the way to Kinshasa, the national capital a thousand miles away.

The spectacle was significant because it captures the evolution of M23 from an ethnic Tutsi-dominated outfit more than

a decade ago to one that's now actively seeking to be seen as a Congolese nationalist group That's the case despite the military support it gets from neighbouring Rwanda, according to observers and analysts in Africa's Great Lakes region.

FROM ELECTION CHIEF TO **REBEL LEADER**

Nangaa is the former head of Congo's electoral body who oversaw the 2018 presidential election won by President Félix Tshisekedi. He has been a controversial figure in Congolese politics for years. As the election commission chair, he oversaw the heavily criticized vote that elected Tshisekedi and led the US to sanction him in 2019 for undermining Congo's

A falling-out with Congolese authorities, including a dispute over a mining concession, sent Nangaa into exile in Kenya. In



2023, he joined the Congo River Alliance, a political-military coalition including 17 parties and rebel groups opposed to the government of Tshisekedi and became a top political figure.

Besides the mining, his grievance is also believed to be due to

the president's alleged refusal to advocate for the US dropping Nangaa from its sanctions list, according to Christian Moleka, a political scientist at the Congolese think tank Dypol. "His perception that he had been mistreated by the authorities

is what pushed him towards radicalization," Moleka said.

AN UNHOLY MATRIMONY

Last year, Makenga's M23 joined Nangaa's Congo River Alliance and with Nangaa at the helm of the revamped outfit, the M23 looked even more menacing to Congolese authorities,

analysts say. M23 is more of a threat now because the group is trying to "decouple the question of self-determination in eastern Congo" from evidence of Rwandan support, said Angelo Izama, an analyst with the Uganda-based Fanaka Kwawote think tank.

The rebels want to provoke a national discussion on widespread feelings of neglect in eastern Congo while gaining "as much territory as possible such that they can force the Congolese state to deal with questions of genuine autonomy and to force some kind of negotiation," he said.

Forcing political negotiations is "a smart move" for the rebels, "the only path out of this

crisis," he added.

M23 FORCING LOCAL ALLIANCES

IN CONGO Unlike in 2012, when the M23 took Goma in a campaign led by Kinyarwanda-speaking fighters pushing mainly for their full integration into the Congolese army, "this time it has a national agenda," the Crisis Group think tank said of M23 in a recent as sessment.

With Nangaa's Congo River Alliance as the "political umbrella" for the M23, the think tank said the rebels have accumulated resources and allies that made them "attractive partners not only to armed groups in eastern (Congo) but to others aiming to undermine Tshisekedi.'

Budget 2025-26





A ₹50.65L-CR PRESS TRUST OF INDIA lakh crore have been ear-

New Delhi, Feb 1: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday presented Union Budget 2025-26, envisaging an expenditure of ₹50,65,345 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 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,

marked 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

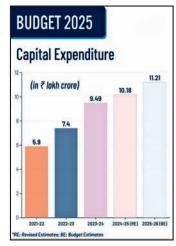
BUDGET 2025

Fiscal Deficit

Revenue Deficit

Govt betters its fiscal deficit aim

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



New Delhi: Having missed the target for the current financial year, Finance proposed to spend ₹11.21 lakh crore 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 Esti mates 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.

lowered its fiscal deficit target to 4.8 per cent of GDP for the current financial year

the next financial, the fiscal deficit has

The Revised Estimate of the total receipts her than borrowings is ₹31.47 lakh crore of which the net tax receipts are ₹25.57

Revised Estimate of the total expenditure s ₹47.16 lakh crore, of which the capital expenditure is about ₹10.18 lakh crore.

is 4.8 per cent of GDP in FY25, she said.

to be at 4.4 per cent of GDP. In absolute

terms, the fiscal deficit has accordingly come down to ₹15.69 lakh crore against

current financial year.

For 2025-26, the fiscal deficit is estimated

Duty relief on 36 life-saving drugs



consecutive Budget. She also medicines to the list attracting

Census. NPR unlikely

of 5 per cent. "Full exemption

respectively apply on the bulk

the above," Sitharaman stated



the exercise in the Budget. A meeting of the Union Cabinet on December 24, 2019 had 2021 at a cost of ₹8,754.23 cror and updating the National ₹3,941.35 crore. The house the exercise to update the NPR but were postponed due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The Budge Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday, allocated ₹574.80 Statistics Registrar General reduction from the Budget allocated, and an indication be carried out even after this significant delay.

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.

BOOSTING CAPITAL FLOW

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

India Post transformation

■ ndia Post will be transformed into a large public logistics

organisation, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said

bank and a vast network of 2.4 lakh dak sevaks, will be

Gia workers in focus

presenting Budget 2025 Saturday. "India Post, with 1.5 lakh

rural post offices, and complemented by India Post payment

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

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

Recognising their contribution, our government will arrange

great dynamism to the 'New Age' services economy

for their identity cards and registration on the e-Shram



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

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.

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

India I

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

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.

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, WLDL and Devvani, Within consumer staples, urbanfocused companies like Nestle, Britannia, Varun Beverages, and Tata Consumer are expected to see positive impacts.

Boost from Income Tax Cuts: As per reports the income tax cuts will drive demand for twowheelers (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

ncreased 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

ncrease 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

Losėrs

Rural Consumption

imited Support: The Lbudget has limited announcements to boost rural consump-tion, which is negative 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

India Energy

to GCCs.

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

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.

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 bar-

"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

India Inc hails 'bold' Budget with 'heavy dose of reforms' 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 finance will re-energise the economy by lifting the sentiments of the middle class and nudg-SANJAY NAYAR | PRESIDENT, ASSOCHAM ing the private sector to advance its investment plans

as demand improves

across sectors," he added.

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

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, ASSO-**CHAM said Finance Minister** Nirmala Sitharaman has lived up to wider expectations by giving significant relief to indi vidual taxpayers, maintaining the fiscal deficit of 4.4 per cent

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.

BUDGET 2025-26

Khelo India gets lion's share winning streak ball, this time to Jenn right. She put in a cro

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

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



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 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 vear.

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 com-

Odisha FC extend

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: The Kalinga Warriors extended their winning streak with a hardfought 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 right. She put in a cross into the box which deflected off a SBFC defender, but the Kalinga War riors 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 equal izer 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 Aishwarva fired a shot from the edge of the box, but Aditi was there to make the

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 vear. and notched up 10 race wins from 12 races in the MRF 1600cc National Championship.

Kohli mania hits crescendo

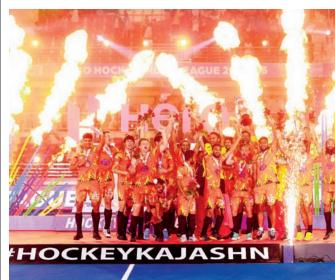
New Delhi: A major security lapse occurred at the Feroz Shah Kotla ground as three over-enthusiastic fans barged into the field of play in a mad rush to get near Virat Kohli on day three of the Ranii Trophy game between Delhi and Railways despite heavy security presence. It is normal for fans to breach 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 The Toofans responded

by earning a penalty corner in the which next minute and Amandeep began December found the back 28, 2024, was of the net with a powerful flick revived after a gap to give his team of seven years the lead again.

> slowed down the tempo to create a clear goal scoring chance in the third quarter, resulting in a penalty

And, Jugraj picked out the left bottom corner with another powerful drag-flick to beat Toofans' keeper Bikramiit 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

expand youth-centric development initiatives,

empowering the next generation of athletes and

youth exchange programmes

has been raised from Rs 11.70

A Rs 20 crore fund has been

approved for the enhancement

of sports facilities in Jammu

and Kashmir, which is Rs 14

crore to Rs 55 crore.

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 Morne 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 tearaway 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

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

CONCUSSION SUB ROW

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

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.

gave it an opportunity," he said.

"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 warn ing the Indian skipper to not take them for granted but their performance belied the excep tional 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

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

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

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

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.

WICKETKEEPER-BATTER, 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.

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