

₹47.66L-CR Total expenditure budgeted for FY25, 6.1% higher than FY24

₹30.80L-CR Total receipts other than borrowings in 2024-25

₹11.11L-CR Capital expenditure for FY25 (3.4% of GDP), 11% higher than the current financial year

5.1% Fiscal deficit target for FY25, down from 5.8% in current financial year

₹14.13L-CR Central govt estimates to borrow in next fiscal

₹1.3L-CR Long term loans to be provided by the Union government to states for spending on infrastructure

INTERIM BUDGET 2024-25

MAJOR ALLOCATIONS (₹ in lakh crore)

Defence	6.2
Road Transport and Highways	2.78
Railways	2.55
Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution	2.13
Home Affairs	2.03
Rural Development	1.77
Chemicals and Fertilizers	1.68
Communications	1.37
Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare	1.27

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 302 | www.orissapost.com BHUBANESWAR | FRIDAY FEBRUARY 2 2024 12 PAGES | ₹5.00

INFRA PUSH

Pre-election Budget shuns populism, encourages vaccination of girls in 9-14 age group to prevent cervical cancer and offers rooftop solar installations in one crore households



The next five years will be years of unprecedented development and golden moments to realise the dream of developed India by 2047

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
UNION FINANCE MINISTER

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 1: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Thursday announced a Rs 11.11 lakh crore spending on infrastructure and vowed to continue reforms as she resisted resorting to populist measures in Modi government's last Budget before general elections, instead choosing to stay on the path of cutting deficit while bolstering measures for focus groups.

Presenting a vote on account or an interim Budget for 2024-25, Sitharaman proposed no changes in income tax rates for individuals and corporates, as well as import duty but offered amnesty for disputed income tax de-

mands of the period prior to 2014-15 as a relief to small taxpayers.

In her Budget speech in the Lok Sabha, she listed her government's achievements across sectors in the last 10 years and announced measures to boost tourism, housing and renewable energy.

Giving a sneak preview of what will be the Modi government's priority in the third term, if re-elected, she said economic policies that foster and sustain growth, facilitate inclusive development and contribute to generation of resources to power investments will be adopted towards making India a developed country by 2047. "The next five years will be years of unprecedented development and golden moments to realise the dream of developed India by 2047," she said.

The interim Budget seeks Parliament's authorisation for spending for four months and the full Budget for the fiscal year starting April will be presented in July by the government elected in April-May general elections.

Sitharaman's Budget proposes to cut food, fertiliser and fuel subsidies by 8 per cent in 2024-25 over last year while keeping the allocation for MGNREGA unchanged. The size of Budget 2024-25 has increased 6.1 per cent to Rs

47.66 lakh crore because of rise in expenditure and higher allocation for capital expenditure and social sector schemes, she said.

Spending on infrastructure such as roads, ports and airports has been raised by 11 per cent to Rs 11.1 lakh crore in a bid to sustain the current world-record beating economic growth and create more jobs.

The Union government will also provide Rs 1.3 lakh crore long term loans to states to spend on infrastructure.

The government will build two crore affordable houses in the next five years and will launch a scheme for housing for the middle class.

It will develop tourist centres and market them at global scale as also provide viability gap funding for harnessing wind energy potential for an initial capacity of one gigawatt.

Also, private and public investments will be promoted in post-harvest activities, including modern storage and supply chains, in addition to boosting self reliance on oilseeds.

A comprehensive programme for the development of dairy farmers is being planned as also an increase in spending on fisheries to boost productivity of the sector. All this while sticking to the fiscal consolidation path which will see the fiscal deficit being reduced to 5.1 per cent of GDP in 2024-25 as compared to the revised deficit estimate of 5.8 per cent for the current financial

year ending March 31. The deficit for the current fiscal is lower than the 5.9 per cent that was projected when Sitharaman presented her last Budget in February 2023.

On tax measures, Sitharaman announced that investments by sovereign wealth funds and pension funds will be tax-free for one more year. Total revenue receipts for 2024-25 were estimated at Rs 30 lakh crore as compared to revised estimate of Rs 26.99 lakh crore in the previous year. Tax-GDP ratio is seen at 11.7 per cent as opposed to 11.6 per cent of GDP in 2023-24.

Stating that every challenge of the pre-2014 era was overcome through economic management and governance, she said the government, in its July Budget, will present a detailed roadmap to make India a developed country.

"We continue on the path of fiscal consolidation, as announced in my Budget speech for 2021-22, to reduce the fiscal deficit below 4.5 per cent by 2025-26," Sitharaman said.

Among the headline announcements in the Budget are rooftop solar installations at one crore households to deliver up to 300 free units of electricity per month, a corpus of Rs 1 lakh crore for innovation and technology by providing financing at low or nil interest rates, and a new scheme to strengthen deep tech in the defence sector.

LEADERS SPEAK

Interim Budget offers the guarantee of strengthening the foundation of a developed India and carries the confidence of continuity. It will empower the four pillars of developed India - the young, poor, women and farmers

NARENDRA MODI
PRIME MINISTER

I listened to the Budget carefully. There was nothing for the poor, lower middle class, or middle class. They did not give the details of promises made for 10 years. They should have compared how many promises were made and how many were fulfilled

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE
CONGRESS PRESIDENT

Other announcements include viability gap funding for offshore wind energy projects, announcements related to clean energy, including setting up of coal gasification and liquefaction capacity of 100 tonnes by 2030. Sitharaman termed her government's track record on economy management as GDP - Governance, Development and Performance (GDP).

MORE: P4&11

Odisha gets ₹10,536cr for rail development

AGENCIES

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha received an allocation of ₹10,536 crore for the development of railway infrastructure in 2024-25, Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said after the interim Budget, Thursday.

"Out of the total allocation of ₹2.52 lakh crore to the Indian Railways, Odisha received ₹10,536 crore — ₹524 crore more than last year," Vaishnaw said, adding that East Coast Railway (ECOR), which is the most profitable railway zone in the country, earned ₹23,872.69 crore from freight in 2022-23.

Earlier in the day, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government will implement three major economic railway corridor programmes and convert 40,000 normal railway bogies to Vande Bharat standards.

Presenting the interim Budget for 2024-25, she said that creating the corridors will decongest high-traffic corridors and also improve passenger train opera-

tions.

While railway corridors will improve efficiency of logistic services and reduce cost, conversion of coaches will increase safety, convenience and comfort of passengers, she said.

"Three major economic railway corridor programmes will be implemented. These are: energy, mineral and cement corridors, port connectivity corridors, and high-traffic density corridors," Sitharaman said. "The projects have been identified under PM Gati Shakti for enabling multi-modal connectivity. They will improve logistics efficiency and reduce cost," she said.

The creation of new railway

corridors will result in decongestion of high-traffic corridors and will also help in improving operations of passenger trains, resulting in safety and higher travel speed for passengers,

Sitharaman said.

"Together with dedicated freight corridors, these three economic corridor programmes will accelerate our GDP growth and reduce logistic costs," the finance minister said.

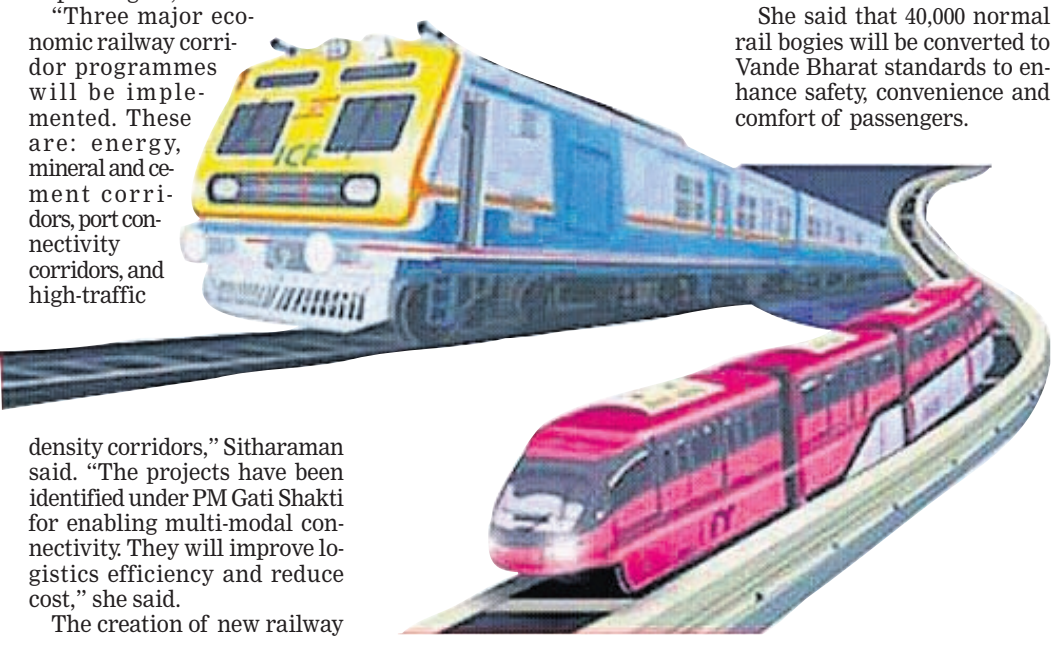
She said that 40,000 normal rail bogies will be converted to Vande Bharat standards to enhance safety, convenience and comfort of passengers.

Corridors will result in decongestion of high-traffic corridors and will also help in improving operations of passenger trains, resulting in safety and higher travel speed for passengers,

Sitharaman said.

"Together with dedicated freight corridors, these three economic corridor programmes will accelerate our GDP growth and reduce logistic costs," the finance minister said.

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Nirmala's shortest Budget speech

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Thursday presented her sixth consecutive Budget with a speech lasting 56 minutes, her shortest-ever. Sitharaman, who holds the distinction of delivering the longest budget speech at 2.40 hours in 2020, was cheered at regular intervals by the treasury benches — her remarks on the presentation of the full Budget by 'our government' in July receiving the loudest applause. Opposition members listened to Sitharaman's Budget speech with rapt attention, barring some voices of disapproval to the minister's reference to her government returning to power.

BSE Sensex 01 FEB 2024

Previous day close: 71,752.11 Change: -106.81

71,600 71,800 72,000

09:15 16:00

71,645.30

TOP GAINERS

- 4.40 Maruti Suzuki
- 2.49 Power Grid
- 1.56 Axis Bank
- 1.32 NTPC
- 1.12 SBI

TOP LOSERS

- 2.42 UltraTech Cement
- 2.38 L&T
- 2.03 JSW Steel
- 1.93 Titan
- 1.75 Bajaj Finance

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



No, YOU can't call it a historic budget. That's my line as that's the only thing I know and can say about the budget

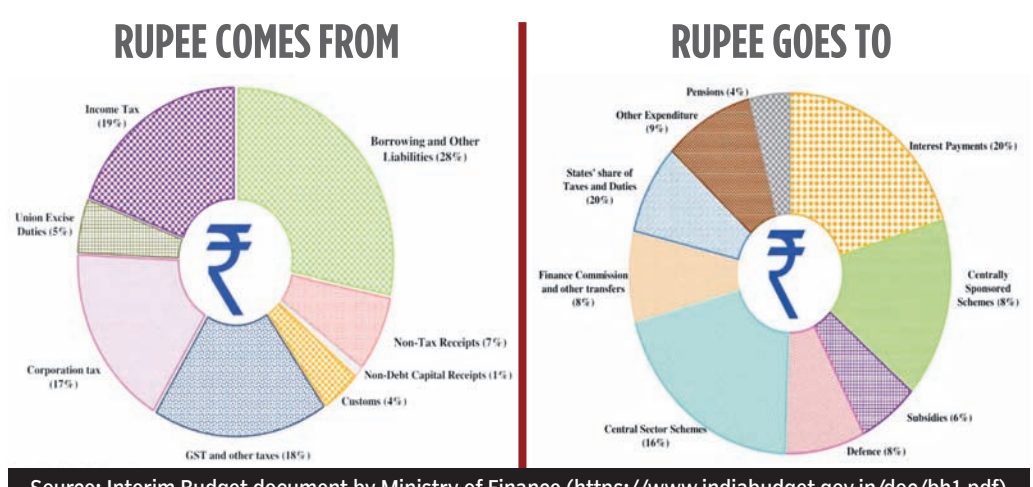
Where is the 1%?

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: A noticeable mismatch in the per rupee income and expenditure breakup released by the Finance Ministry in connection with the interim Budget tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Thursday fuelled speculations about whether the missing one paisa (or one per cent) was a bonafide faux pas.

For every rupee in the government coffers, 63 paise will come from direct and indirect taxes, 28 paise from borrowings and other liabilities, 7 paise from non-tax revenue like disinvestment and 1 paise from non-debt capital receipts, according to the interim Budget 2024-25 documents.

Of the total, 36 paise will come from direct taxes which include corporate and individual Income



Tax. While Income Tax will yield 19 paise, corporate tax will account for 17 paise.

Among indirect taxes, Goods and Services Tax (GST) will contribute the maximum 18 paise in every rupee of revenue. Besides, the government is looking to earn 5 paise out of every rupee from excise duty and 4 paise from customs levy.

The collection from 'borrowings and other liabilities' will be 28 paise per rupee, as per the

interim Budget 2024-25 presented in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Thursday.

The Budget documents provide a fractional break-up for around Re 1 that comes in as well as gets spent.

On the expenditure side, the outlay for interest payments and states' share of taxes and duties stood at 20 paise each for every rupee.

Allocation for defence stands

at 8 paise per rupee.

Expenditure on central sector schemes will be 16 paise out of every rupee, while the allocation for centrally-sponsored schemes is 8 paise.

The expenditure on 'Finance Commission and other transfers' is pegged at 8 paise. Subsidies and pension will account for 6 paise and 4 paise, respectively.

The government will spend 9 paise out of every rupee on 'other expenditures'.

SHORT TAKES

PM to inaugurate IIM Sambalpur February 3

Bhubaneswar: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate a ₹400-crore permanent campus of IIM Sambalpur, power projects worth ₹28,978 crore and National Highway projects built at a cost ₹2,045 crore during his one-day visit to Odisha February 3, official sources said. The PM is also scheduled to inaugurate the redeveloped Sambalpur station and the Talcher-Sambalpur doubling project (168.2 km) at a cost of ₹2,193 crore. He may also inaugurate the newly-constructed Sonepur station and flag-off a train on the Bolangir-Sonepur section (47 km) of the Khurda Road-Bolangir new line (301 km) project. Once inaugurated, Sonepur will get rail connectivity, an official said. In a press release Thursday, the NHA said the prime minister Saturday will dedicate three transformative highway projects built at a cost of ₹2,045 crore.

Govt notifies special Srimandir battalion

Bhubaneswar: State government has issued a notification for the creation of a Special Security Battalion for safety and security of the Jagannath Temple in Puri. According to a notification issued by the Home Department, as many as 1,083 posts in different ranks will be created for the special battalion. The Special Security Battalion would function under the command and control of the Superintendent of Police, Puri. With the creation of the special battalion for Puri temple, the 139 posts of APR (armed police reserve) created earlier under Singhdwar police station for the safety and security of Srimandir in Puri will be abolished, the notification said. An official in the Home department said that the newly created posts will be filled up by relevant recruitment rules and provisions of the ORV (Odisha Reservation of Vacancies) Act.

leisure



KIM, KANYE REUNITE TO SUPPORT DAUGHTER

Reality TV personality Kim Kardashian and singer Kanye West put up a united front to support their eldest daughter North West, despite their rather toxic past. The former couple treated their daughter and her friends to dinner at Nobu in Malibu, reports *Mirror.co.uk*.

MARGOT'S POSITIVE OUTLOOK OVER BARBIE OSCARS SNUB

Actress Margot Robbie is not much upset despite not receiving an Oscar nomination for her role in *Barbie*. Moreover, she believes director Greta Gerwig, who orchestrated a remarkable cinematic achievement, should have been nominated.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
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ARIES
Someone new in your life is going to make you smile; remember, however, that it doesn't always have to be fun and diamonds. A song sung straight from the heart makes a greater impact, says Ganesh. Today's the right time to go out and do things which will make you proud later.

TAURUS
This day you will be inclined to act tough and pick up a fight with everyone whom you are likely to encounter, warns Ganesh. Those who know you well will be at a loss to make anything out of your belligerent attitude and may not be able to keep up with you for too long.

GEMINI
You will feel the need to pursue your passions today. You will give more time to your family and will spend as much time as possible with your children and will bestow your love and affection on them. You will be in an imaginative and romantic mood today.

CANCER
It is likely that you will reach an important milestone in life today. Keep in mind that your success may be a cause of envy for a few people, some of whom may want to harm you. You are left with two choices: either try to help them out of their troubles and miseries, or prepare for a battle.

LEO
It is a good day to renew old acquaintances and make new relationships. Your friends and relatives will probably visit you today. A jovial feeling will pervade your home. You may throw a grand party for your guests, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Logic as well as emotions will hold sway in your relationships today. Emotionally you will feel a little confused and will swing between your feelings and what is actually expected of you. However, finally you will pay more heed to your inner voice rather than depending on the views of others.

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

SCORPIO
Retail therapy with your loved ones is a perfect recipe to have a good time! You will be more than willing to buy things of their choice. Hagging will be a trait you have closeted today as you go about being lavish in your expenses, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Tedious day in store for you as hectic work is likely to keep you one toes; this is not-so-good-news. And well, it's time for some good news now. You will do so much running around for your work, that you will actually shed a few kilos of weight. Celebrate by treating your taste-buds, but with low-cal food!

CAPRICORN
Normally, others, especially colleagues get jealous of one's success, but yours is a different case. They will not only motivate you, but also guide you while you take up new projects and assignments. Not everyone is blessed with such cooperative colleagues, says Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
God helps those who help themselves. You have experienced this plenty of times as your efforts have been paid off. While your colleagues at work may pass negative comments at your work, your boss will not have any complaints with you.

PISCES
You will be able to come up trumps against the competition today. You should be wary of hidden enemies, for they might be involved in slandering you. It is best to reach out to others and make friends before they take it upon themselves to hinder your progress.

Kriti believes in moving forward

Mumbai: Kriti Sanon entered the world of Hindi movies with Tiger Shroff in *Heropanti* in 2014 and there on, she has delivered many successes like *Mimi*, *Lukka Chuppi*, *Bheidiya* and *Housefull 4*. However, her recent releases, *Ganapath*, *Shehzada* and *Adipurush* failed to live up to the box office expectations.

The actress is currently in the midst of promoting her upcoming film, *Tere Baaton Mein Uljha Jiya*, with Shahid Kapoor. During a conversation with a media agency, the actress opened up about handling success and failure. They are just temporary and that one has to keep moving forward, said the actress.

She also stated that before the result of any film, she begins shooting for her next one. She also expressed that an actor doesn't have much control over how a film will perform at the box office. The only thing she can control is how she can play her part in the best possible way, and she doesn't want to regret the thought that she could have done something else or that she didn't give her best.

"I sulk for a weekend when things don't work out, and I party for the weekend if it works out. After that I move on," Kriti, revealing about her fun of handling success and failure, said.

AGENCIES



Hina shares her fitness mantra

Mumbai: A fervent fitness enthusiast, actress Hina Khan's holistic approach to exercise includes a focus on deep breaths, believing it not only enhances calmness but also boosts the ability to lift more.

The *Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai* actress took to the Stories section and shared some videos of her recent workout sessions.

Along with the video, the *Hacked* actress penned a long note, "Making a habit of holding your breath can cause your blood pressure to rise, possibly resulting in dizziness, nausea or even a

heart attack. practice deep breaths while exercising. Deep breaths can lower your blood pressure, enhance relaxation, keeps you calm, helps you engage all muscles...it also gives you the ability to lift more."

"Weight training is not just about good form...deep breathing and breathing right is equally important...Paying attention to your breathing during strength training can really work for you," she added.

Meanwhile, on the work front, she will be soon seen in English and Hindi bilingual movie *Country of Blind*.

IAN S



Ananya, Sara to team up for Cocktail 2!

Mumbai: Actresses Ananya Panday and Sara Ali Khan, who appeared in the Season 8 of *Koffee With Karan* are now in talks for *Cocktail 2*, the sequel to the 2012 original film.

A report by a media agency stated that there are discussions about Ananya Panday and Sara Ali Khan being in talks for *Cocktail 2*. The speculation gained traction following sightings of both actresses leaving the office of Maddock Films, the production house behind the *Cocktail* franchise.

The 2012 original film starred Saif Ali Khan as the lead, with Deepika Padukone and Diana Penty as the lead actresses. As of now, an official statement from the makers is awaited regarding the cast of the film.

On the work front, Sara will be seen next in *Metro...In Dino*, while Ananya has *Control* and *Call Me Bae* in the pipe line.

AGENCIES



Vintage memorabilia from Dev Anand films to go under hammer



Mumbai: Rare and vintage memorabilia from the films of legendary actor late Dev Anand are set to be auctioned online.

The memorabilia includes film publicity art from the classics such as *Baazi*, *Kala Bazaar*, *C.I.D.*, *Kala Pani*, *Guide*, *Tere Ghar Ke Samne*, *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*, *Johnny Mera Naam* and *Heera Panna*.

It also includes rare and vintage photographic stills, posters,

showcards, lobby cards, song booklets from his lesser known films such as *Aaram*, *Milap*, *Maya*, *Manzil*, *Kahin Aur Chal*, *Baarish*, *Baat Ek Raat Ki*, *Sarhad* and *Kinare Kinare*.

The highlights include a rare set of sixteen *Kala Bazaar* and *Johnny Mera Naam* lobby cards, 8 first release publicity black and white photographic stills from *Guide*, 15 coloured photographic stills from *Hare Rama*

Hare Krishna, rare and beautifully designed posters of *Munimji*, *Milap*, *Sarhad*, *Maya*, *Manzil*, *Kinare Kinare*, *Guide*, *Gambler*, *Darling Darling*, and the unique Indian collaged handmade showcards from *Kala Pani* and *Amir Gharib*.

Senior Spokesperson for deRivaz & Ives Film Department - SMM Ausaja, said: "The small famous black and white silver gelatin pho-

tograph from *Baazi*, the *Guide* photographic publicity stills created for the international launch, the publicity and song booklets for *Sarhad*, the full set of *Kala Bazaar* Lobby Cards are some of the standout rare items of memorabilia in this auction."

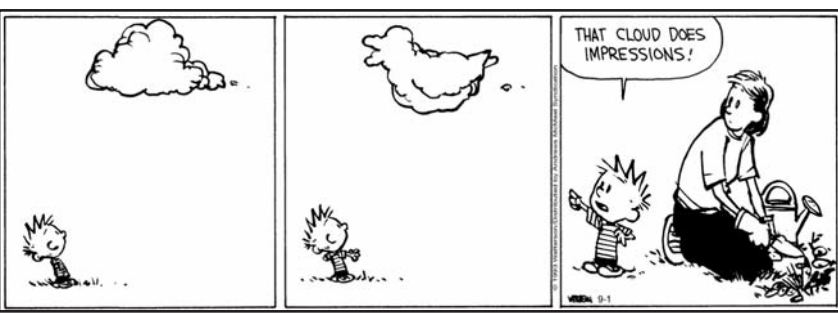
The online auction starts February 8 on www.derivazives.com and closes February 10, 2024.

IAN S

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

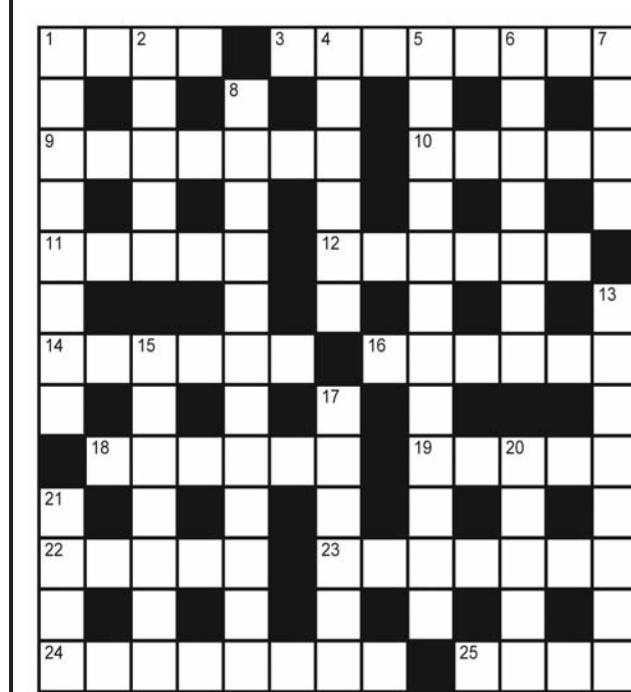


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- 1 Vista
- 3 Losers (4-4)
- 9 German city on the Elbe
- 10 Pace
- 11 Words to remember
- 12 Full-grown
- 14 Advise
- 16 Slight
- 18 Kitty-cat
- 19 Terrier type

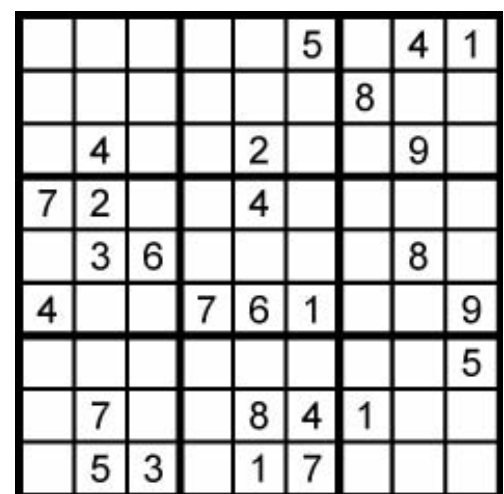
Down

- 1 Intense
- 2 Ant, in dialect
- 4 Chickpea, e.g.
- 5 Like some arms
- 22 Ruth's mother-in-law (Bib.)
- 23 Taxonomic group
- 24 Poisonous ornamental
- 25 Epochs

- 6 Looks up to
- 7 School zone sign
- 8 No longer stylish (3-2-7)
- 13 Olga Korbut and her ilk
- 15 Pair
- 17 Brightly coloured
- 18 tropical fish
- 20 Cupcake topper
- 21 Nullify

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

1ST WORLD ODISIA LANGUAGE CONFERENCE



Odisha's tribal languages: A bird's eye view



The two most crucial features for which Odisha is globally famous are Jagannath Dham and its tribals. While Lord Jagannath is deeply associated with Odisha's emotions, its tribal sector runs along with nature and culture of the state. Barring coastal pockets of the state, the tribals' presence is largely felt in other areas.

The other aspect for which Odisha is talked about is its rich linguistic tradition. Even researchers from abroad are drawn here to study more into tribal language and culture. Since the villages here see a confluence of multi-lingual communities, verbal communication among people within the community takes place in their own language while a third language is used in inter-community communications.

Odisha's tribals have the ability to retain the identity of their language and culture while simultaneously paying respect to other languages and cultures. And, this is the reason why linguists, sociologists, anthropologists and culture experts choose Odisha as their research subject.

Altogether 62 categories of tribal communities reside in Odisha of which 13 are categorised as underdeveloped communities. On the basis of language, the tribal communities are broadly divided into three categories - Austric or Astro-Asiatic, Dravidians and Indian Aryans.

Likewise, Dravidians were stated to have expanded their habitation from southern Odisha to north-western region. Dravidians, believed to be good promoters of assimilation culture, are also known for propagation of palli, haat, dance, music and Shakti and Shaiva culture.

The culture of Dravidians is closely linked with agriculture. The assimilation of Dravidians' and Mundas' culture was possible

when Aryans started residing with them.

Language is the vehicle of culture. When we talk about the modern day language & culture, it's nothing but an improvised adoption of Dravid-Munda-Aryan versions.

Even today we find use of Shabar dialects in literatures on Jagannath culture. Legends have it that amalgamation of Shabar and Brahmin culture resulted in development of Jagannath culture.

Significantly, linguists have recognised Odisha as a field for discussion on languages while prioritising language research. The tradition of contemplation on language is very ancient and it started since the advent of Aryans who reached Odisha from Koshal and Bengal sides. Massive exchange of language took place due to assimilation of Dravidians and Mundas along with their geographical location.

Tribals, who constitute 22.85 per cent of Odisha's population, are divided into 62 broad categories while 13 tribal groups are considered underdeveloped. Moreover, there are 21 languages and 74 sub-languages prevalent among the tribals.

To start with, Munda language is divided into two segments - Dakkhina Munda and Kherwari. While Dakkhina Munda is divided into two sub-sects - Koraput Munda and Kendriya Munda, Kherwari has Santali in one branch and Mundari, Ho, Bhumija and Birhor like inter-related languages in the other. Koraput Munda comprises Saura, Gorum in one branch and Gadda, Gudab and Rem (Bonda) language in the other. However, Gorum language is in the verge of transformation and

is being replaced by Desia language. Similarly, Gadda and Gudab languages are gradually losing their existence.

Kendriya Munda language consists of Khadia and Juang, and is considered as closer to Koraput Munda language.

If we see Dravidian language, it is divided into two parts - Kendriya and Uttaranchaliya. While Uttaranchaliya segment consists of Oraon and Kissan languages, Kendriya segment has three branches - (1) Telugu, Parjee, Olagrir; (2) Kui, Kuvi, Pengu, Kanda; (3) Gondi, Koya, Madia, Muria.

Although there is no clarity as to which main language is connected to Aryanuga sub-language, Desia-Bhatari-Halabijharia of Dakkhinanchala sect appear to be sub-sects that are related to each other. Similarly, Sadari-Laria-Chhatishgadi-Bhunja-Sambalpur-Kandhanbinjal-Banjara of Paschimanchal branch and Sambalpur-Bhuyan-Bathudi-Kurmali-Saunti are connected with each other under Uttaranchaliya sect.

While Dakkhinanchaliya sect of language is largely spoken in undivided Koraput and Kalahandi regions, Paschimanchaliya sect is used in Kalahandi, Bolangir, Sambalpur and Sundargarh. Likewise, Uttaranchaliya segment is spoken in Sundargarh, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj. These three segments hold significance in culture and language-based studies. All these languages are spread over the plateaus of Odisha. Inter-connection between languages is seen due to rule by various administrative centres on different occasions.

Excerpts...
Paramananda Patel

Ways to save Odia language from extinction

Extinction is inevitable if the challenges of times are not effectively dealt with. This is the only reason why so many languages have disappeared from the face of the earth. It's continuation that keeps a language alive. If that tradition of continuation is broken and does not accommodate changes as per the demands of time, it simply stagnates, before facing imminent annihilation.

Then the question arises, why does a language lose its vitality? The main reason for the language's stagnation is its rigidity, failure to acquire new vocabulary and inability to accommodate new thoughts and recognition of the language used in daily life. If the language used in daily life does not find place in the literary tradition, the language loses its relevance and becomes obsolete. Through its application and use, the colloquial language is transformed into a vibrant language and becomes widespread. Such languages prosper and cease to extinct.

In that pretext, we have to assess the current status of Odia language. There is a need to evaluate the extent to which the language is connected with progress. There is also a need to assess the extent to which the Odia language has contributed to Odisha's political landscape and thought, economic progress and planning, skill development, intellectual discussions, knowledge and cultural development.

It is observed that while the English language is dominant in the economic, technical and intellectual spheres, Odia has established its sway in political



field and thought as well as cultural development. This is on account of the fact that politics and culture are directly linked to the people. Political statements and cultural terms have played an important role in the development of native words. It has infused life and vibrancy into the language. Many new words related to food, clothing and lifestyle have entered into the Odia lexicon. However, it is absent in the economic, technical and intellectual traditions. It is still stuck in its infancy and restricted to a few. The language will reach its pinnacle the day it becomes the people's language. For that purpose, five ways can be suggested:

(a) Digital Media: Computers and digital platforms are being used at every level in the society. However, English remains the medium in a majority of platforms. The language of computers and mobiles should be Odia at all levels. For this, a handy language program called Unicode is available on every computer and mobile. All Indian languages can be written easily using Unicode programme.

Therefore, the widespread use of Unicode has created huge possibilities for Odia language on digital platforms.

(b) Intellectual discourses and technical skill: The language of intellectual discourses, research and technology is mainly English. Now a days efforts are being made to use Odia in intellectual discourses and technical skill. Therefore, for the purpose of research and higher education, the texts of various languages are being translated into Odia. However, it is impossible to successfully deal with the transformation through translation. A literal translation of the original text may not always be possible. It is a complex process. Therefore, an encyclopedia should be introduced in Odia language.

(c) Social justice and collective progress: There is a need for the administration's message to be always in simple and presentable Odia. The use of English language has created a linguistic gap between the administration and the public. If the language of the public becomes the language of administration and the judi-

ciary, then the language will create an immediate source of progress and help in making social justice and collective progress more inclusive.

(d) Artificial Intelligence and provincial language issues: Most of the competitive examinations conducted at the national and provincial levels are in English. All these tests should be conducted in regional languages. That will ensure social justice. The complex relationship between different regional Indian languages has to be solved with the help of Artificial Intelligence. Provincial language, literature and culture are given importance in the new National Education Policy. Therefore, all the examinations, tests and competitions conducted at the national level should be done through regional languages on the digital platform to help foster national unity.

(e) Language should be a symbol of identity: Odia language should reinvent itself by accessing digital platforms. Regional traditions, cultural elements, literary and philosophical texts and works of art are being given importance in globalisation. This is enabling in understanding a region's culture.

Language is always flexible and not restricted to grammar. Changes and evolution in language must be acknowledged and welcomed. New terminologies should be welcomed by doing away with orthodoxy. This will give the language its vitality. If the ideology of the age is not expressed through language, then that language will surely face extinction. Just as the era changes, the language should also be updated to keep up with it. Honouring this, creation of new grammars is inevitable. This will perpetuate the language, otherwise it will shrink and slip into oblivion.

Dr. Khirod Chandra Behera
Former Deputy Director
Directorate of Higher Education, Bhubaneswar

PALM LEAF INSCRIPTIONS AND ANCIENT ODISIA HERITAGE

As examples of the conversion of verbal works of art into lines and paintings, the illustrated manuscripts of Odisha occupy a unique place. The history of such transformative representations of art in Odisha is yet to be traced in a coherent manner. These drawings engraved with iron stylus on palm leaves are painted and filled with colours prepared with natural ingredients. If one studies the style of paintings and the representation of 'bhava' in them, the similarities with Odishan architecture and sculpture can be traced well.

From such a perspective, the composition of illustrated manuscripts may be said to have been contemporaneous with the practice of stone engravings in the temples of Lingaraj (Bhubaneswar), Srimandir (Puri), Sun Temple (Konark) and Rajarani Temple (Bhubaneswar). It might have been that the artists drafted their artistic thoughts on leaves and then translated the thoughts in stone. Whereas the leaves were prone to decrepitation because of air, heat, water and insects, the stone carvings could withstand the travails of time and hence preserve the ancient art for all ages. Therefore, the illustrated manuscripts are the representatives of the tradition introduced above.

Of all the rich and rare treasures of the Odisha State Museum, the best and the most unique is the large collection of palm leaf inscriptions which has the largest such collection not only in the country but perhaps in the entire world. The collection includes a variety of items like manuscripts of ancient texts both illustrated and non-illustrated, covering a wide variety of subjects like poetry, music, astrology, philosophy, mathe-

matics and medicine etc., some rare etchings and paintings, calligraphed palm leaf wall pieces, garlands, fans and items in miscellaneous other shapes. In itself, the collection constitutes a most comprehensive record of the history and culture of the state spreading over several centuries and therefore is an excellent source material for research and scholarly studies. It is difficult to determine the exact place and time of the origin of the art of palm leaf inscriptions but it is well known that in the Vedic times there was no system of writing and the Vedas were disseminated through the word of mouth and therefore were called sruti. The earliest forms of writing known to us are rock edicts and among these, the most famous Asokan rock-edicts date from the third century BC.

However, from these rock edicts no evidence is available regarding the prevalence of palm leaf writing or about the use of iron stylus. However, from one of the copper plate inscriptions of Sailodbhava dynasty, it is learnt that the script was first written on a palm leaf and then transcribed on to the copper plate as a copy. Noted historian Satyanarayan Rajguru refers to this in his book on the origin of Odia script and therefore we can safely assume that by the sixth century AD, the art of palm leaf writing was well established. There are also many sculptural evidences regarding the use of palm leaf manuscripts.

The earliest of these can be found in the Parsurameswara temple at Bhubaneswar which is believed to have been built in the seventh century. We also find similar representations in the nearby Mukteswara temple of 10th century AD and also the famous Sun temple of Konark of the 13th century. Another important scul-



tural evidence is an 11th century image of Buddha found at Hariapur near Khurda Road railway station. In this sculpture, one finds in the pedestal a scholar studying some holy scripture in the shape of a stringed palm-leaf manuscript placed on Vyasasana.

In a sculpture from the Jagannath temple at Dharakot one can find a beautiful presentation of a scribe writing with the stylus on a palm leaf. It is also interesting to note that the art of palmleaf inscription is used even today for recording the horoscope of newborn babies. Similarly, the invitation sent to the deities, known as 'diyannimantrana', as well as the ceremonial invitation to the bride-groom from the bride's family is generally written on palm leaf in Odisha.

However, by its very nature palm leaf cannot be preserved over a long period and for this very reason there is a tradition of copying manuscripts before they reach an irreparable condition and after copying, the older manuscripts are destroyed. The earliest dated

PART-1

palm leaf manuscript available in Odisha State Museum is only five centuries old.

This manuscript is a copy of the poetic work Abhinava Gita Govinda by Kavi Chandra Ray Dibakar Mishra and was inscribed by one Sri Sridhar Sharma and the date of the manuscript has been established as 6th April, 1494. The poet has dedicated the composition to Gajapati King Sri Purushottam Deva. This is an imitation of the more famous 12th century Sanskrit lyric Sri Gita Govinda by the first major Odia poet Jayadeva. Although we have quite a large number of collection of palm leaf copies of Jayadeva's work, none of them is older than the Abhinava Gita Govinda.

It may be mentioned here that by 15th century the art of palm leaf writing had attained great excellence and was also quite widespread. The next major literary work which spread through copies of palm leaf writing was the Sarala Mahabharata or the Odia rendering of the Sanskrit epic by Vyasa.

This epic work which was written during the reign of Kapilendra Deva of the 15th century marks the full flowering of the Odia language. Next comes the Bhagabata of Atibadi Jagannatha Das which is not only the first Odia rendering of the Sanskrit original but also the first in entire Eastern region. It may be of interest to note that the reading of chapters of this holy scripture was a daily ritual in the homes of Odias and also in the village gatherings. In fact, the scripture was considered to be an incarnation of God and was installed ceremonially in our villages in a separate village-hall called the Bhagabata Tungli where the villagers gathered together to hear readings from the scriptures.

The seat of the scripture known as Bhagabata Gadi, literally meaning the throne of Bhagabata, is found even today among the more orthodox Odia families and traditional villages. There was a time when it was said that there was no Odia house without a copy of Bhagabata and there was no village without a copy or two of Sri Gita Govinda. Thus it can be safely said that palm-leaf writing was intimately and inextricably intertwined with the cultural heritage of the state.

As late as the beginning of 20th century, several lakhs of these manuscripts were still available as mentioned by Prof. Macdonalds and Hara Prasad Sastri regarding their visit to Puri in 1916. (Ref. to Rev. J. Long's article in the Journal of Asiatic Society and also Sri M. M. Chakravarty). Not many of these numerous manuscripts have survived but quite a sizeable number have been procured and preserved in the State Museum and the collection today exceeds 50,000 in number covering about 15,000 titles.

The first systematic efforts for doc-

umentation of the available palm leaf manuscripts was started in the years 1935-1938 under the auspices of the then Director of Public Instructions. After detailed survey of the manuscripts available in the state, a catalogue was prepared, of which nine volumes have been preserved in the State Museum, although the total number of volumes was much larger.

The actual collection of the palm leaf manuscripts however started much later in the year 1950 when the Museum started a separate section for the palm leaf manuscripts. Over the period of three decades however the Museum has acquired an enviable collection of 50,000 manuscripts.

Mention must be made here of the great contribution of the Late historian Kedarnath Mahapatra who was the first curator of the Manuscript Section of the museum and who spared no efforts to organise the collection and bring out its importance. This vast collection of the manuscripts has been organised into 26 sections, namely: 1. Veda, 2. Tantra, 3. Sanskrit Puranas, 4. Religious texts, 5. Philosophy, 6. Astrology, 7. Ayurveda (Medicinal texts), 8. Lexicon, 9. Grammar, 10. Sanskrit poetry, 11. Poetics, 12. Music, 13. Crafts, 14. Mathematics, 15. Paper manuscripts (Odia), Paper manuscripts (Sanskrit), Manuscripts in Bengali Language, 18. Manuscripts in Sanskrit, 19. Manuscripts in Sanskrit Bengali script, 20. Manuscripts in Telugu, 21. Manuscripts in Persian, 22. Odia poetry, 23. Odia Puranas, 24. Odia Prose compositions, 25. Odia historical poems, 26. Illustrated manuscripts.

Excerpts from an article by Dr Bhagyalipi Malla, former Superintendent, Odisha State Archives, Bhubaneswar, in the Odisha Review

Pandian visits Gajapati, Dhenkanal districts



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: While visiting the Gajapati and Dhenkanal districts to review progress of various development projects, 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian interacted with students during Nua-O programme and encouraged them to work hard to achieve their dreams. Pandian attended Maha Guru Abhisheka ceremony at Padmasambhava Monastery in Jiranga and offered his prayers. There he interacted with priests and devotees while also reviewing progress of development

works being undertaken at the monastery at a cost of ₹2.68 crore, which was sanctioned after his earlier visit May last year.

He reviewed progress various projects along with the district Collector and other senior officials and directed the officials to ensure project completion within the determined timeframe.

Later, Pandian participated in the Nua-O programme where he interacted with college students from across Dhenkanal. He encouraged the students to take benefit of the platform provided by Nua-O to showcase their talent and strive to achieve

overall personality development in addition to academic achievements.

The 5T Chairman urged the students to work hard with self-confidence to achieve success in life. He motivated them to aim high in life while narrating achievements of some prominent personalities of the district.

In his address, he mentioned Pradeep Kumar Jena, presently serving as the Chief Secretary, Anoop Kumar Sahoo, IPS - IG of Police, late Justice Gati Krushna Mishra, Ex- Chief Justice in Orissa High Court, notable writer and researcher Antaryami Mishra and famous mountaineer late Kalpana Das.

5T Chairman said that so many such role models have emerged from Dhenkanal who have all been students of government colleges and schools. "They have achieved success because of hard work and determination," he said while motivating students to believe in their goals and work hard.

Pandian also reviewed some of the major irrigation and infrastructure projects being implemented in the district. Many of these projects were taken up after the 5T Chairman's previous visit to the district last year.



OFFICIAL MEET: Governor Raghuraj Das felicitated NCC Cadets from Odisha who participated in the Republic Day parade in Delhi at Raj Bhavan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

State records 2nd highest ever GST collection

Bhubaneswar: Odisha has recorded the second highest ever collection of Gross GST with a collection of ₹4,963.16 crore during January, 2024 against corresponding collection of ₹4,255.59 crore recorded during January, 2023 registering a growth rate of 16.63%. The progressive Gross GST collection during FY 2023-24 (till January 2024) is ₹44,502.83 crore with growth of 10.78 per cent over corresponding period of FY 2022-23. Odisha has also recorded the third highest ever collection of State GST with a collection of ₹2,271.77cr.

INTERIM UNION BUDGET 2024

Experts hail innovation push, women empowerment

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Interim Budget for 2024-25 in Parliament Thursday. Last budget of Modi government before the General Elections, it contained several offerings for citizens and industries, like the two crore additional homes that will be brought under the PM-AWAS Yojana, rooftop solar power facility for millions of household and the boost to MSMEs to help them compete at the global level.

On the occasion, OrissaPOST spoke to experts from different sectors and politicians to get insights into their understanding and response to the budget.

Educationist and chairperson of the SAI International Education Group Silpi Sahoo said that the Interim Budget intends to be accessible and inclusive for all. "It prioritizes the education sector among several others and is a step forward from last year's focus on job creation. It promotes skill development, boosts employment, and encourages entrepreneurship. We welcome investments in progressive technologies like AI, integrating it with education, and the emphasis on digital literacy as well as STEM education, specially for women," she said.

Entrepreneur Sakyasingha



Mahapatra said, "Overall, the Interim Budget looks positive with focus on future. The budget clearly shows that the government has its focus set on Innovation and research. With a ₹1 lakh crore corpus set for long-term financing of tech-savvy youths, with 50-year interest-free loans, it gives a major push to innovation and entrepreneurship."

Speaking on the budget, Congress leader Niranjan Patnaik said, "PM Modi calls this year's budget a 'historic budget'. Indeed, it is historic because never in the history of Indian budgeting has such an anti-common man budget been tabled in the Parliament. The fact is, despite optimistic Budget Estimates, the Revised Estimates paint a different picture."

"Agricultural allocation fell

short by 3.3 per cent, Education faced a 6.5 per cent cut, Health witnessed a 10.9 per cent decrease, and Social Welfare experienced a 15 per cent reduction. Questions arise as to why the government spent less than planned," he said.

Giving his perspective on the budget's impact on social sector, activist Sudarshan Chhotaray said, "The Union budget, presented with an eye on General Elections, has tried to woo women and youth promising additional two crore PMAY houses of which 75 per cent will be in the name of women."

Similarly CPI leader Jayanta Das said, "In this budget, while corporate tax and property tax have been reduced, the minimum income tax will be revised next July without any reduction. Although the government repeatedly expressed reservation of seats for women in parliament and legislative assembly, this will not be implemented in the 2024 general elections."

"The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme has not included the necessary expenditure. No expenditure has been earmarked for poverty alleviation of the most exploited sections of the country. No special remunerative rate hike has been announced for farmers in terms of minimum support price," he said.

FIRST WORLD ODISIA LANGUAGE CONFERENCE

Odias world over to sing 'Bande Utkal Janani'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Odisha government has urged all Odias living across the world to sing the state song 'Bande Utkal Janani' at 11.30am February 3, when the state will hold the first World Odia Language Conference in the Capital city.

The appeal was made by Odia Language, Literature and Culture (OLLC) minister Ashwini Patra at a press conference here Wednesday in presence of Information and Public Relations department secretary Sanjay Singh and OLLC secretary Sujata K Rout.

To celebrate the occasion, the government has also planned to hold gatherings at Panchayat and block levels. Rout said that the initiative is of critical significance because the first World Odia Language Conference plans to connect the new young generation of Odias to their mother



tongue.

"To make the conference more impactful, all Odias living in the state, across the country and abroad are requested to sing 'Bande Utkal Janani' at 11.30am February 3," she said, adding, "The language conference is a celebration of antiquity and continuity of Odia, which is one of the six classical languages of the world."

An official of the department informed that various programmes will be organised at

all district headquarters and other places to celebrate the conference.

During the conference, there will be 16 academic sessions on various topics related to Odia language, literature and cultural heritage. There will also be a special session on Jagannath consciousness. Another special session is on cards to discuss opportunities for promotion of Odia language based on the theme 'Odisha @2036: A Space for Tomorrow.'

WORLD WETLANDS DAY

India leads South Asia with 80 Ramsar sites

Wetlands are crucial ecosystems, disappearing rapidly due to human activities such as drainage, pollution, and overexploitation. This loss has profound implications for biodiversity, climate, and economies worldwide. To address this, there's a need to change perceptions and prioritize wetland conservation. Raising awareness, particularly on World Wetlands Day, is essential to catalyze action and safeguard these vital ecosystems.

World Wetlands Day, observed annually February 2, raises awareness about wetlands and commemorates the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands in 1971. This international treaty provides a framework for wetland conservation and wise use. The significance of World Wetlands Day was emphasized in 2022 with the adoption of Resolution 75/317 by the UN General Assembly, establishing it as a global observance.

World Wetlands Day 2024 focuses on the theme 'Wetlands and Human Wellbeing,' highlighting the critical role wetlands play in enhancing our lives

by providing flood protection, clean water, biodiversity, and recreational opportunities essential for human health and prosperity.

This year, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), in collaboration with the Government of Madhya Pradesh, is organizing the national World Wetlands Day event at Sirpur Lake, Indore, a Ramsar site designated in 2022. Musonda Mumba, secretary-general of the Ramsar Convention, is visiting India to participate in the event February 2, 2024.

Wetlands in India

Wetlands hold significant cultural and traditional importance in India, with revered sites like Loktak Lake and Kecheoparli Lake. The country's diverse wetlands attract tourists and find mention in ancient texts like Chanakya's Arthashastra. India has made strides in wetland conservation, boasting the largest network of Ramsar Sites in South Asia, covering 1.33 million hectares. These sites contribute significantly to biodiversity, hosting 6,200 species across various faunal groups. India's wetlands



serve as crucial stopovers for millions of migratory birds, playing a vital role in maintaining waterbird populations globally. Despite global threats, India is reversing the trend of shrinking wetlands through legal protections and conservation efforts.

The country's commitment to wetland conservation continues to strengthen with recent milestones marking significant progress. In January 2024, India proudly expanded its Ramsar Site count to 80 by designating five new sites in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, showcasing its dedication to preserving invaluable ecosystems.

This achievement builds upon the momentum set in August 2022 when India added 11 wetlands to its roster; a poignant gesture commemorating the nation's 75th year of Independence. Additionally, the Wetlands of India Portal serves as a knowledge hub for wetland managers and stakeholders, providing comprehensive information and resources.

Recent developments

As of January 31, 2024, India boasts a total of 80 Ramsar Wetlands, solidifying its position as the country with the highest number of wetlands in South Asia. This achievement was bolstered by the addition

of five new sites, including the Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary and Longwood Shola Reserve Forest in Tamil Nadu, along with the Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve, Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve, and Aghanashini Estuary in Karnataka.

Earlier, August 14, 2021, India celebrated the recognition of four additional wetlands as Ramsar sites by the Ramsar Secretariat. Notably, Haryana gained two new Ramsar sites, while Gujarat expanded its count by three, following the initial designation of Nalsarovar in 2012.

Government initiatives for wetland conservation

Launched during the presentation of the Union Budget 2023-24, the Amrit Dharohar Scheme represents a pivotal step towards promoting optimal utilization of wetlands over the next three years. This initiative aims to enhance biodiversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities, and local community income generation, aligning with the government's vision for sustainable development.

In 2013, the National Wetlands

Conservation Programme merged with the National Lake Conservation Plan, giving rise to the comprehensive National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems. This amalgamation reflects the government's holistic approach towards safeguarding these vital ecosystems.

Initiated in 2020, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) embarked on a transformative journey towards wetlands rejuvenation. This program employs a multifaceted approach encompassing baseline information development, rapid assessment through wetland health cards, establishment of stakeholder platforms, and comprehensive management planning. With over 500 wetlands covered, this initiative stands as a testament to the government's commitment to conserving these critical habitats.

The government's commitment to wetlands conservation and mainstreaming their values into developmental planning demonstrates a crucial step towards ensuring the sustainable management of these invaluable ecosystems for future generations.

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Government of Odisha



CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE LORD'S ABODE

HIGH POINTS



80 high-end premium buses from across the state

Connecting district headquarters and major subdivisions to Shreekshetra Dham via Capital city of Bhubaneswar

High-end safety features along with ultra comfort

Live Vehicle Tracking System, panic and SoS buttons for emergency

Fire alarm and protection system (Introduced first time in any bus in Odisha)

50% bus fare concession for women



Long wheelbase for enhanced comfort in longer journeys

PASSENGERS SPEAK

I can't thank enough to our beloved CM Shri Naveen Patnaik for this amazing new year gift for all the women. This is way more than we expect

Never thought visiting puri would be so easier & relaxing. No more buriers for me to visit Jaga & seek his blessings

Nestled along the beautiful Bay of Bengal, Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannath, holds the spiritual heart of Odisha.

Known for its ancient temples, especially the revered 12th century marvel, Srimandir; the city is a symbol of Odisha's rich heritage and tradition of devotion.

The Pilgrim City's golden beaches, lively marketplaces, and traditional art forms make it a captivating destination that perfectly blends spirituality, culture, history with natural beauty.

In a landmark development that amplifies the experience of people, especially devotees, travelling from the nook and corner of the state to Puri, the Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) launched the Shree Jagannath Express special bus service January 18, 2024.

Under the groundbreaking initiative, a part of the Odisha government's Location Accessible Multi-modal Initiative (LAccMI), a fleet of 15-metre multi-axle luxury super premium buses have been introduced connecting every district headquarters to the revered destination of Puri.

Aimed at ensuring a seamless pilgrimage experience for Jagannath darshan, the Shree Jagannath Express is a testa-



ment to OSRTC's commitment to providing luxury travel options for the people of Odisha.

In the beginning 12 buses have been deployed, while plans are

afoot to extend the fleet to a total of 80 ensuring accessibility and connectivity for all.

This not only facilitates a smooth darshan of the sibling

deities but also marks a significant step forward in promoting women's safety. Further, to promote women empowerment and an inclusive transport sys-

tem, Hon'ble Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has announced 50 per cent concession to all the women passengers travelling in Shree Jagannath Express.

People using the Shree Jagannath Express can avail a host of benefits that will make their journey comfortable and pleasant.

PROMOTES SAFETY

The Shree Jagannath Express prioritises passenger safety, particularly women, by eliminating the need for multiple transfers. This not only reduces travel complexities but also enhances the overall safety and security of passengers throughout their journey.

Technological innovation

The Shree Jagannath Express is not just a mode of transportation as it signifies technological advancement in public travel. Equipped with modern amenities, the initiative embraces innovation to enhance the overall travel experience.

From advanced safety features to on-board facilities, the Shree Jagannath Express introduces a new era of technological sophistication in public transportation, setting a precedent for future advancements in the sector.



AFFORDABILITY

To promote women empowerment and an inclusive transport system, Hon'ble Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has announced 50 per cent concession for all the women passengers travelling in Shree Jagannath Express.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The launch of the Shree Jagannath Express has a profound economic impact, especially in the tourism sector. By providing a convenient and comfortable mode of transportation, the initiative boosts tourism, attracting more visitors to explore the rich cultural heritage of Puri and its surroundings. The increased tourist footfall will contribute to the local economy, creating economic opportunities for businesses, hospitality services, and local artisans. Additionally, the expansion of the Shree Jagannath Express fleet opens doors for employment, fostering economic growth in the region.



LUXURIOUS TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

The Shree Jagannath Express redefines travel with its 15-metre multi-axle super premium buses, providing passengers with a heightened sense of luxury and comfort during their journey. Passengers can enjoy the spacious seating arrangements, ergonomic designs, and modern interiors, ensuring a premium and relaxed travel experience.

SEAMLESS PILGRIMAGE

As a dedicated initiative to enhance the pilgrimage experience, the Shree Jagannath Express connects every district headquarters to Puri, streamlining the sacred Jagannath darshan for devotees. By offering a direct and efficient route, pilgrims can now embark on their spiritual journey without the inconvenience of changing multiple modes of transportation, ensuring a seamless and hassle-free pilgrimage.





Knowledge gropes but meets not Wisdom's face.

SRI AUROBINDO



Fiscal Prudence

Since national elections are due soon, this Budget was supposed to be passed by a vote on account. Which meant that no special initiatives could be expected or inserted. Even then the incumbent ruling party could be tempted to pump in some fiscal fuel to charge up the economy on the eve of elections. This is not unheard of in India's own electoral history. A famous quip by an American president has been "it's the economy, stupid." Implying that the voter always votes with economic interest in mind. That may not be wholly true of the Indian voter, yet the temptation of an incumbent government to provide fiscal expansion has always been there.

The most remarkable thing about Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget proposal presented on February 1 is the fiscal restraint. The proposed expenditure is barely 6% more than this year. Of which the non-capex, i.e. revenue expenditure is barely going up by 3.2%. This is the so called "non-productive" or routine expenditure and its growth has been sharply curtailed. Two years ago, it grew at 8%. Even the capital expenditure is budgeted to grow at 17% next year, much less than the rate of 31% growth per year seen for the past three years. The FM reminded the Parliament that the fiscal deficit target of 6% for this year had been met, indeed bettered to 5.8% of the GDP. That is good news for fiscal rectitude, although part of the success of a lower fiscal deficit ratio is because the denominator i.e. nominal GDP at only 8.6%, lower than planned. Next year's target for the deficit is only 5.1%, even though the denominator, i.e. nominal GDP is projected to grow at 10.5%. And the FM indicated that the following year in 2026 the deficit target will be lower than 4.5%. This is quite remarkable, and shows that fiscal restraint is indeed the main flavour of this Budget.

The fact that the FM did not indulge in any fiscal adventure could mean two things, and both may be valid. Firstly, the ruling party does not need fiscal sops, especially from the Budget to enhance its electoral prospects. Remember during UPA-I there was a substantial loan waiver announced about a year and half before the national elections. Secondly, the government now believes that growth cannot depend forever on fiscally supported capex by the public exchequer. This can have negative ramifications on the national debt. The International Monetary Fund had recently warned that India's debt to GDP ratio could shoot up to 100%. Of course, the government rebutted this dire prediction, saying that the debt ratio has actually come down from 88 to 82% post COVID. And that much of the debt is denominated in domestic currency not in dollars. But the point is that even at 82% the ratio is too high and is crowding out private investment and keeping interest rates high. Interest payment alone eats up nearly 40% of tax revenues. So fiscal consolidation is an imperative. Fiscal restraint is needed, because higher deficits increase the interest burden, and are inflationary.

The borrowing requirement for next year is marginally lower than last year. Some of this is because the redemption of some bonds is being postponed. But it brought some good cheer to bond markets. There is no change in tax slabs, which is welcome, since India already has an income tax slab structure that is an outlier in the world. We begin taxing only above Rs 7.5 lakh annual income, which is nearly three times the per capita income of the country. The exemption limit is too high, and also the highest marginal tax rate kicks in too soon.

The speech of the FM presented major highlights and achievements of the government over the past ten years. The growth in infrastructure, in formalisation, in gross enrollment in higher education, in the founding of new institutions are all impressive. The short economic report published on the eve of the Budget speech had a special section devoted to explaining why the economy has become more resilient. Indeed, if the growth of 7% continues in the next year wracked by geopolitical uncertainty and recessionary winds, it would be quite a remarkable achievement.

The longer-term sustainable growth requires consumption, private investment and exports to all do well. Each of these components in turn requires that the employment situation be robust, investment sentiment be positive and India's competitiveness improve so that we make a bigger dent in the export market. High growth is to be mainly driven by private enterprise, which then in turn can generate healthy tax revenues to be used for welfare, health, education, pensions and the elderly. The economic policy stance needed to promote all this is well supported by the Budget, in terms of its fiscal stance, and continuity of policies. Let us wait for the big bang reforms in the July Budget.

The writer is a noted Pune-based economist.

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WISDOM CORNER

Life isn't about finding yourself; it's about creating yourself. So live the life you imagined.
HENRY DAVID THOREAU

If you want to find the secrets of the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency and vibration.
NIKOLA TESLA

Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.
CG JUNG

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 in World War II ended with the surrender of German troops to the Soviets. Germany's defeat marked a turning point in World War II.

1990: Ban on African National Congress lifted. On this day, South African President FW de Klerk lifted the 30-year ban on the African National Congress, resulting in the release from prison of Nelson Mandela and marking the beginning of the end of apartheid.

FOCUS INTERIM BUDGET

POSITIVE IMPULSES



Recognising that infrastructure development is a key to economic growth the government has focussed on capital expenditure outlay, as this expenditure has massive multiplier impacts on economic growth and employment creation

The interim Budget was presented today against a backdrop of steady economic growth and moderation in inflation in the Indian economy and complex geopolitical developments with global challenges of regional conflicts. The focus of the Budget is on inclusive development and growth, social justice, farmer welfare and empowering the poor, youth and women, with an emphasis on governance, development and performance. In the areas of economic management people-centric inclusive development and proactive inflation management are important policy priorities. Recognising that infrastructure development is a key to economic growth the government has focussed on capital expenditure outlay, as this expenditure has massive multiplier impacts on economic growth and employment creation.

The fiscal strategy priorities for FY 2024-25 are a) focus on a more inclusive, sustainable and more resilient domestic economy, b) channelising and allocating resources towards capital spending, c) strengthening fiscal federalism by enhancing public infrastructure and d) a focus on integrated and coordinated planning and implementation of infrastructure projects. However, with the fiscal policy priority and strategy seen in conjunction with fiscal consolidation efforts one wonders whether issues relating to fiscal sustainability are adequately addressed. Fiscal sustainability is good housekeeping by the government and involves determining whether the government can continue to pursue its set of budgetary policy strategies (in the present and probable future policy settings) matching its resource ability.

The key deficit indicators viz. fiscal deficit, revenue deficit and primary deficit relative to GDP are budgeted at 5.1%, 2% and 1.5%, respectively. The fiscal deficit represents the borrowings of the government and consequently the debt of the government. The revenue deficit represents the negative savings

of the government administration as the government is borrowing for current consumption. The primary deficit represents the current operation of the government and the higher primary deficit questions the sustainability of fiscal policy. In the interest of fiscal sustainability a revenue deficit and primary deficit should be zero and as per the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003 amended subsequently in 2018, the fiscal deficit should be 3% of GDP and debt to GDP ratio should be 40% of GDP. However, in marked contrast to this, fiscal deficit and debt to GDP ratio are budgeted at 5.1% and 57.2%, respectively. A budgeted revenue deficit of 2% of GDP is a pointer towards unsustainable economic growth as it pulls down savings of the economy and consequently investment.

Let us now turn to the fiscal arithmetic presented in the interim Budget. The gross tax revenue as a proportion of GDP is budgeted at 11.69% after adjusting the state share as per the recommendations of the finance commission the net tax revenue is budgeted at 7.99% of GDP. The interest payment in 2024-25 budgeted at 3.63% of GDP pre-empts 32.6% of revenue expenditure. This development needs to be addressed in the context of higher borrowings and higher debt level. A strong fiscal consolidation path is the need and a priority.

One welcome move in the Budget is higher provisioning for capital expenditure at 3.39% of GDP during 2024-25. However, a critical glance at the Budget arithmetic reveals that in 2023-24 the Budget estimates provided Rs 10,00,961 crore but in the revised estimates it declined by Rs 50,715 crore to Rs 9,50,246 crore. This trend of making a higher provision in the Budget and reducing it in the revised estimates is against fiscal prudence.

A weak fiscal consolidation questions fiscal sustainability particularly in the context of a higher revenue deficit at 2% of GDP. It is pertinent to note that higher revenue deficits compel the government to borrow more and thereby the debt or liability of the government increases. The higher liability of the government results in higher net liability as the assets become lower than liabilities. For example, the net liability of the government (liabilities minus assets) stood at nearly 33% of GDP on an average during 2018-2022. This development questions fiscal sustainability and sooner or later the government should attempt to make the revenue deficit zero.

The major challenge to fiscal sustainability remains visible in a relatively higher revenue deficit, the absence of a primary surplus and the threat of a vicious cycle of deficit and debt. In addition, there is the structural imbalance in the form of a high revenue deficit.

This results in the pre-emption of borrowing for consumption expenditure thereby rendering capital asset creation for social and economic services difficult.

Against the above backdrop the government should focus on the following sustainability indicators - i) Rate of growth in total debt should be lower than the rate of growth in nominal GDP; ii) Real interest rate should be lower than real GDP growth; iii) Fiscal deficit to GDP ratio and debt to GDP ratio should decline gradually and remain stable; iv) Revenue deficits should gradually turn to revenue surplus; v) The primary deficit should gradually turn to a primary surplus; vi) Repayment of past loans are a stress factor as this increases market borrowings in gross terms and could have adverse implications on interest rate; vii) Creating fiscal space by enhancing fiscal empowerment (maximise revenue to the budget).

In conclusion, the interim budget has presented a two-fold fiscal policy stand to provide a) positive impulses to the growth environment and b) to make the domestic economy more resilient to global headwinds. This fiscal policy stance faces challenges in terms of inflation management at 4% under the flexible inflation targeting adopted by India. It is important to note that the nominal GDP growth for 2024-25 in the Budget has been projected at 10.5% assuming the growth rate of 6.5% in real terms as presented in the January 2024, World Economic Outlook by IMF. In this context it is pertinent for India to note what the IMF says (World Economic Outlook update in January 2024) "... a renewed focus on fiscal consolidation to rebuild budgetary capacity to deal with future shocks, raise revenue for new spending priorities and curb the rise of public debt is needed."

The writer is a former central banker and Professor at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune. Views are personal. ©THE BILLION PRESS

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Growth bereft of distributive justice

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her interim Budget has ignored ground reality but iterated about India's much vaunted growth story. She said that people are living better and earning better, with even greater aspirations for future. Average real income of the people has increased by fifty per cent and inflation is moderate, she said.

What is worrying is that India is behind 138 countries in terms of per-capita income. Per capita income growth has gone down by 5.1% this fiscal, lowest in 21 years. Inflation rate may moderate due to base effect but prices of goods and services rarely decline. People are worst hit by price rise and their purchasing power has been eroded.

The government is coining terms like GDP (Governance, Development and Performance) and FDI (Fast Developed India) to hoodwink the masses. But only the rich and the corporate sector have benefited by GDP growth. Growth is never inclusive but bereft of distributive justice. Inequality is so rampant which is evident from the fact that

40% of the wealth created in the country from 2012 to 2021 had gone to just 1% of the population while only 3% had trickled down to the bottom 50%. But the Budget does not try to reduce inequality by giving proposal of taxing the rich and the corporate.

Whoever forms a government, the size of the Budget increases each year in nominal terms. Hence, each finance minister has to spend and float various schemes and increase outlay of old schemes. But our Budget size as a percentage of GDP is very low compared to developed countries. Should the government try to take credit for each rupee spent?

Further, that money is collected from people, especially more from poor and middle-class people through higher GST and excessive excise duty on petroleum products. Revenue through GST has increased not because of better compliance but higher GST rate and bringing more goods and services under tax regime by perpetuating a regressive tax system. The Budget should have made change in this regressive tax regime.

Quoting the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister says, "We need to focus on four major castes. They are, 'Garib' (Poor), 'Mahilayen' (Women), 'Yuva' (Youth) and 'Annadata' (Farmer). But the Budget has not addressed their plights. For the youth, creating employment opportunities is important. But India's seemingly so-called pompous growth has, so far, not translated into a commensurate increase in more productive employment opportunities for millions entering the labour force every year.

The poor, the farmers and women are more affected due to decline of expenditure in social sectors including education and health. According to a study by a national daily, the government has allocated only a small portion of its expenditure to education and health. Spending on categories such as interest payments and major subsidies accounted for one-third of the total expenditure pie, while an additional 12% was allocated to secure borders and maintain law and order. Similarly, between 2009 and 2021,

the share of social sector expenditure going to education, sports, art, and culture declined from 20% to 9%.

If the nation is progressing and there is development, then why is the government providing free food grains to 80 crore people. The much-trumpeted fact of 25 crore people getting freedom from multidimensional poverty in the last 10 years is a gimmick.

The talk of developed India by 2047 sounds preposterous as nobody can say what will happen tomorrow. The Budget neither creates any hope nor has any sense of purpose. It is not a blueprint of intent but a publicity stunt to derive electoral mileage. The Finance Minister has unabashedly resorted to self patting and supercilious exaltation of the government. Overall, there is no effort to increase the standard of living, prevent erosion of purchasing power, solve the cost-of-living crisis, and enhance employment.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist. Views are personal.



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

OUR BUDGET SIZE AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP IS VERY LOW COMPARED TO DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Air pollution

Sir, Nowadays, no one thinks about the future. We think only about the immediate benefits obtained by our activities. Air pollution in Delhi has culminated into all-time high making it the most polluted city on Earth. Places like Talcher, Angul, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack are also becoming uninhabitable due to air pollution. Polluted air is related to various health hazards thereby reducing life span. Massive deforestation, negligible afforestation, large number of vehicles, vast population well as different industries all contribute to this nuisance. All must think for remedy.

Pradeepta Kumar Dash, CUTTACK

Iconic music duo

Sir, This year the one half of the iconic music duo Laxmikant-Pyarelal -- the 83-year-old composer Pyarelal was bestowed with India's third-highest civilian award, the Padma Bhushan. Born in 1940, Pyarelal got basic knowledge of music from his father, trumpeter Pandit Ramprasad Sharma. A Goan musician named Anthony Gonsalves taught him how to ace the violin. Later in his career, Pyarelal dedicated a song to him in the movie Amar Akbar Anthony as a tribute. After meeting Laxmikant, they forayed into their journey of music for Indian cinema. Laxmikant-Pyarelal collaborated on about 750 Hindi movies from 1963 to 1998. Together, they worked with some of the biggest filmmakers in the industry, including Raj Kapoor, Dev Anand, Shakti Samanta, Manmohan Desai and Yash Chopra. Laxmikant-Pyarelal's first film as music directors was not released. The first released movie which featured them as music directors was Babubhai Mistry's Parasmani (1963), a costume drama. All the songs of the film became immensely popular. Laxmikant-Pyarelal hit big time with Rajshri Productions' 1964 film Dosti. The film had two newcomer heroes who never became popular, but the film was a huge success due to its music. After Laxmikant's death, Pyarelal has done some work independently. Yet, Pyarelal always used the name 'Laxmikant-Pyarelal' for all compositions. When the playback singer Kumar Sanu turned music director, he approached Pyarelal to arrange music for him. Pyarelal was approached to assist in the music of Farah Khan's Om Shanti Om song 'Dhoom Tana'.

Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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BERHAMPUR ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2024

Parties banking on organisational skills

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 1: Organisational skills of candidates will be the key to get nominated for the Berhampur constituency in the upcoming Assembly polls. BJD's Bikram Panda had won from the seat in 2019, after quitting the Congress. He is looking to do an encore, but the BJD is yet to announce the name of its candidate from the constituency. The BJP and the Congress are also trying their best to wrest the seat from the BJD. Keeping in mind the results in 2019, this time it is again going to be a two-way contest between the BJD and the BJP.

Interested candidates from various parties wanting nominations have started lobbying. However, the fact is that the three major parties are laying special stress on the organisational skills of the aspirants.

BJD has already started strengthening its organisational network and trying to end infighting within the party, if any. It is also trying to woo young and first-time voters, by highlighting the development under the Naveen Patnaik-led government.



Panda has been given the responsibility of the Gopalpur Assembly constituency also. Not only is he visiting his own constituency, but also working hard in Gopalpur. He is regularly holding meetings and organising road shows to highlight the development work done by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. Party sources said that Panda has the backing of the workers who expect him to be nominated again, but then there is an effort by a certain group of leaders in Ganjam district who want a new

face. When he joined the BJD in 2019 after quitting Congress it was this same group which had opposed Panda's move.

The other names as BJD candidates doing the rounds are those of State Planning Board member Ramesh Chandra Chyau Patnaik and Chairman of Odisha Cashew Development Corporation (OCDC) Subhash Moharana. Political analysts however, are of the opinion that the BJD will again field Panda.

BJD spokesperson in Ganjam district, Tumbhanath Panda said

that the organisation is very strong and it will ensure victory for the party candidate. He exuded confidence that the BJD will retain the seat.

Meanwhile the BJP is trying its best to wrest the seat from the BJD. It is trying to attract the voters on the basis of developmental work done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra'.

However, newly-appointed BJD president in the district Subhash Sahu is yet to unravel the poll strategy, planning to keep the cards close to his chest. In the last elections, the BJP had fielded Kanhu Charan Pati. However, he lost by a margin of approximately 20,000 votes to Panda. Majority of the party workers are backing Pati for re-nomination, but it is not known what the BJP leadership in the state is thinking.

All eyes will also be on Shiba Shankar Das, who quit the BJP and contested as an independent candidate in 2019. Even though he lost, he got more votes than Congress candidate Lingaraj Choudhury (5,381). Das has a good enough following to affect the fortunes of the other candidates.



LIVELIHOOD MATTERS: A fisherman readying his boat to embark on his daily fishing journey at Balapur village on the left dyke of Hirakud reservoir in Sambalpur district, Thursday

Man dies in road mishap

Deogaon: A youth, identified as Jayaram Bariha, 37, a resident of Dumerpita village died Thursday in a road mishap at Ramchandrapur village under Bandhapada police outpost limits in Bolangir district. According to reports, Jayaram was returning home from Singamunda village on his bike when he lost control and fell down. His head hit the road surface hard leading to his death on the spot. Locals said the deceased was not wearing a helmet. On being informed, officials from the Bandhapada police station reached the spot and sent the body for post-mortem. Later in the day, police handed over the deceased's body to his family members following which Jayaram was cremated. Police have seized the bike and have started an investigation.

Parrot-catching gang busted

Forest department officials rescue 40 birds, nab 1

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 1: Forest department officials arrested Thursday a person here and recovered 40 parrots and chicks from his possession. The accused, identified as Tahir Ansari, is a member of an inter-state gang which deals in selling of birds. A week back, Forest officials had recovered 82 parrots from another person in this city.

The Forest department team led by ACF Shulapani Das along with ranger Prasanna Pradhan raided the house of Ansari near Nuagaon village under Lathikata forest range. The team had prior information that Ansari was in possession of the parrots and chicks.

During the raid Ansari initially tried to downplay the entire incident. However, during interrogation he confessed that he worked for an inter-state gang

dealing in selling of parrots in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and cities of West Bengal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

DFO, Rourkela Forest Division Jasobanth Sethi said that the gang is operational for quite some time now in the area. "We had information that Ansari had captured the parrots. So we conducted a raid and rescued the birds," Sethi said.

Sethi also informed that the gang had employed youths to capture parrots and chicks from the forest and then hand the birds over to Ansari. "He would then send the parrots to various destinations. He had received ₹10,000 to carry out the job," Sethi informed.

Ansari has been booked under Forest Animal Protection Act U/S-9, 39, 49(b) and 49(c). He was later forwarded to court during the day. However, two other gang-members who were at Ansari's house, managed to escape.

Number of migratory birds increases in SNP

Baripada: In good news for ornithophiles, there has been an increase in the number of migratory birds in forest divisions under Similipal Wildlife Sanctuary. This is according to the latest bird census report published by the Similipal National Park (SNP). As per the report, a total of 26,242 winged guests were counted during the census. The census was conducted in 32 ranges under five forest divisions of the wildlife sanctuary. Counting of birds was done in the north and south divisions of Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR), various water reservoirs coming under Baripada, Karanjia and Rairangpur divisions and more than 100 other places including wetlands. During the census 13,342 migratory birds were found in seven ranges under Baripada Forest division. Similarly, 247 migratory birds were recorded at eight ranges under North Forest division, 407 in nine ranges of South Forest division, 7,273 were found in four ranges of Rairangpur Forest division and 4,973 were found in four ranges of Karanjia, the report said. "This year, the number of migratory birds to the wildlife sanctuary has increased in comparison to last year, said field director STR and Regional Chief Conservator of Forest (RCCF), Baripada circle, Prakash Chand Gogineni.

Youth arrested for posting teacher's obscene pictures

Malkangiri: Police arrested Thursday a youth on charges of uploading obscene photographs of a lady teacher on a social media platform after creating a fake account in her name. The youth, identified as Rahul Biswas, 19, is a resident of Reclamation Colony in this town and a former student of the victim's school. Biswas was produced in court and remanded to judicial custody after the court rejected his bail plea. The victim is a teacher of a school under Model Police limits here. Police said Biswas while studying in the school had an affair with a girl student. After being apprised of the matter, the lady teacher called the two and asked them to concentrate on their studies instead of getting involved in silly matters. Biswas however, developed a grudge against the teacher. After leaving the school, Biswas decided to harm her.

Recently, he opened a fake account of the teacher on Instagram and uploaded morphed obscene photographs of her edited with the help of artificial intelligence (AI). He also opened fake accounts of some girl students and uploaded their morphed nude photographs. When the lady teacher was informed about this development, she was shocked. She lodged a complaint at the Model police station. Police registered a case and launched an investigation and arrested Biswas.

SC RELIEF FOR JAYNARAYAN

IT HAS BEEN ALLEGED THAT THE BJP MLA FROM SAMBALPUR HAD ALLEGEDLY ASSAULTED A WOMAN POLICE OFFICER DURING AGITATION



PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 1: The Supreme Court has granted interim protection from arrest to the Leader of Opposition in the Odisha Legislative Assembly and BJP leader Jaynarayan Mishra in a case of allegedly assaulting a woman police officer after accusing her of taking bribe.

A bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and Prashant Kumar Mishra issued notice to the Odisha government and sought its response within four weeks. "Issue notice, returnable in four weeks. In the meantime, the petitioner is protected from arrest in connection with the above case," the bench said.

The counsel appearing for Mishra submitted that in the course of the last one year, the petitioner, who is an MLA and also the Leader of the Opposition in the Odisha Legislative Assembly, is performing his usual duties and the police never had on any

occasion summoned him in connection with the incident which allegedly took place February 15, last year.

The counsel stated that the Orissa High Court should have favourably considered the petitioner for pre-arrest bail since custodial interrogation may not be necessary, considering the nature of the allegations made against the petitioner and the videography evidence stated to be available.

The top court was hearing an appeal filed by Mishra against

the November 23, 2023 order of the Orissa High Court which had dismissed his plea seeking anticipatory bail in the matter.

The MLA from Sambalpur had dismissed the charge and claimed that the Dhanupali police station Inspector in-charge, Anita Pradhan, had pushed him.

Both lodged police complaints in connection with the incident, which occurred during the BJP's agitation outside the district collector's office in Sambalpur, as part of the state-wide stir on the 'worsening law and order situation' in Odisha.

According to Pradhan, as BJP workers were trying to barge into the premises, she came face-to-face with Mishra, who asked who she was.

"When I identified myself, he (Mishra) accused me of taking bribe and called me a dacoit. When I asked why he was levelling such allegations, he pushed me," the woman officer had alleged in her complaint.

Mishra, however, had dismissed the charge, saying he went to the forefront upon hearing that police were 'torturing' women workers.

NCST seeks report in 7 days

ANGUL: The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) directed Thursday the Odisha DGP, the Angul district collector and the SP to initiate a probe into the allegations of BJD leader Nalini Pradhan and his supporters misbehaving with a tribal woman and submitting the report within seven days. The consecration ceremony of Jangha Deo's temple took place January 15 at Ambasaramunda village under Athamallik in this district. During the programme, Pradhan and his supporters allegedly hurled abuses at the tribal women. In this regard, the Akhila Bharatiya Gondwana Gond Parishad had filed a complaint with the NCST.

No plans to restore hockey player's statue

THE STATUE WHICH WAS UNVEILED JUST BEFORE THE HOCKEY WORLD CUP IN 2023 CAME CRASHING DOWN WITHIN 6 MONTHS OF ITS INSTALLATION

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 1: With just 10 days to go before the Birsas Munda International Hockey Stadium here hosts matches of the FIH Pro League, the venue is getting a facelift. New coats of paints are being put, chairs are being cleaned and overall there is the ambience of an upcoming festival. However, no one is talking about the statue of the hockey player wearing the No.2 jersey which once stood near the airport here. Many believe that the statue was of hockey legend Dhyana Chand.

The statue had become a huge attraction for residents of this city as well as visitors. It had become a selfie point for the enthusiasts.

However, much to the dismay of all, the statue crashed from the pedestal it stood on, June 11, last year. Many alleged that the statue had been constructed with poor quality material leading to its destruction. However, officials of the Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) dismissed the allegations. The statue had



been set up just ahead of the 2023 FIH Men's Hockey World Cup.

Like always, a panel comprising an NIT Rourkela professor, ADM and Commissioner of RMC and other officials was formed to investigate the reasons behind the collapse of the statue. Till date however, the report has not been made public.

There have been many occasions when former RMC Commissioner, Dr Subhankar Mohapatra was asked on this issue. He always used to assert that the report of the committee would be made public soon. He also ruled out the use of poor quality materials in construction. The RMC version always remained

that, 'some miscreants, probably who stole iron, cut the base on which the statue was standing leading to its collapse'. However, with a police beat office in front of the statue, no one was ready to accept the explanation.

After it toppled over, the statue remained lying on the road for more than a month, before it was removed. Even though the RMC was criticised for its lackadaisical attitude over the statue, it never came out with its plans.

Olympian and former captain of the Indian hockey team, Ashok Kumar, who visited this city July last year also criticised the RMC for not restoring the statue. "It doesn't matter whether the statue

is of my father Dhyana Chand. What matters is that it is of a hockey player and the game should be respected. The way the situation has been handled is an insult to the game," Ashok had said.

Sources meanwhile said that the plan to rebuild the statue has been abandoned. In its place a replica of the World Cup will be kept, they added.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. n-287
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT PROJECT COORDINATOR
SARVASIKHYA AVIYAN, SAMBALPUR
E-Procurement Notice
BID IDENTIFICATION No. SSA/SBP/CIVIL/04/2023-24
E-mail: dpcssambalpur.opeps@nic.in, Phone/Fax: 0663-2410834
No. 23/CW Dated: 29.01.2024

- The District Project Coordinator, SSA, Sambalpur on behalf of Government of Odisha, invites Percentage Rate bids in Double Cover System in ONLINE MODE for construction of Buildings, as detailed in the DTCN from the eligible Class of Contractors.
- No. of Works : 02 (Two)
- Tender Cost : Rs. 10,000/-
- Class of Contractor : "A" Class & "B" Class
- Date and time available in website & receipt of Bids : 12.00 Hrs. of 02.02.2024 to 17.00 Hrs. of 14.02.2024
- Date of Opening of Tender : 17.02.2024 at 11.30 Hrs.
- The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in only.
- Any Corrigendum/Addendum will be displayed in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in only.

Sd./- District Project Coordinator, SSA, Sambalpur
OIPR-27119/11/0006/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. B-1714
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
BOLANGIR (R&B) DIVISION, BOLANGIR
Mail ID: eepwd.bgr@rediffmail.com, eepwd.bgr@gmail.com, Ph. No.: 06652-232374
Bid Identification No: BGR R&B/40/2023-24
No. 385 Dtd. 25.01.24

- The Superintending Engineer, Bolangir (R&B) Division, Bolangir on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in Single Cover System in ONLINE MODE for construction of building work detailed in the table below from eligible contractors.
- Nature of work : Electrical Work
- No. of tender : 01 No. Electrical Work
- Tender Cost : Rs. 6,000/- (Tender paper cost)
- Class of Contractor : "MV" Class, (Registered with ELBO)
- Date & time of sale & receipt of Bids : From Dt. 02.02.24, 11.00 A.M. to Dt. 08.02.24 upto 05.00 P.M.
- Date of Opening Bid : Dt. 03.02.24 at 11.30 A.M.
- The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: <http://tendersodisha.gov.in>.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Bolangir (R&B) Division
OIPR-34028/11/0037/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, KUCHINDA
No. O-2384 E-mail: eerw_kuchinda@yahoo.com
"e" Procurement Notice for Road Works
Identification No. Online Tender/15/RWD, Kuchinda/2023-24

- Name of the Work : Road Works
- Total Number of Works : 03 Nos.
- Class of Contractor : B, C & D Class of Contractor
- Period of Completion : 01 Calendar Month
- Availability of Tender : Dt. 03.02.2024 to 13.02.2024 Online for Bidding
- Last date & time of seeking tender clarification : Dt. 12.02.2024 at 5.00 A.M.
- Date & time of opening of tender : 15.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Rural Works Division, Kuchinda
OIPR-25151/11/0026/2324

FOOD CORPORATION OF INDIA
REGIONAL OFFICE, BHUBANESWAR
ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना / Notice Inviting e-Tenders
सहायक महाप्रबंधक (सीई) भा खा नि, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, भुवनेश्वर निम्नलिखित कार्यों के लिए <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app> पर द्वि बोली प्रणाली के तहत भारतीय खाद्य निगम को और से ऑनलाइन प्रतिस्पर्धा पर निविदाएं आमंत्रित करता है।
The Assistant General Manager (CE) FCI, Regional Office, Bhubaneswar invites on behalf of Food Corporation of India online percentage rate tenders under two bid systems at <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app> for following works.

NIT NO. CE- 32/2023-24. Name of Work- Providing Cement Concrete road along with drains at FSD Balijhori. Estimated Cost Rs. 3,71,51,958/- (Rupees Eleven Crore Forty lakhs Five thousand Three hundred and Eighty one Only). Earnest Money-Rs. 22,80,108/- (Rupees Twenty two lakhs Eighty thousand One hundred and Eight Only). Period of Completion 365 Days. Last time and date of submission of bid: 21/02/2024 upto 3:00 pm.

NIT NO. CE- 33/ 2023-24. Name of Work- Providing of Cement Concrete Road along with drains at FSD Phulbani. Estimated Cost Rs. 11,40,05,381/- (Rupees Three Crore Seventy one lakhs Fifty one thousand Nine hundred and Fifty eight Only). Earnest Money- Rs. 7,43,039/- (Rupees Seven lakhs Forty three thousand and Thirty nine Only). Period of Completion 270 Days. Last time and date of submission of bid: 21/02/2024 upto 3:00 pm.

NIT NO. CE- 34/ 2023-24. Name of Work- Providing Cement Concrete Road along with drains at FSD Jaleswar. Estimated Cost Rs. 3,55,32,608/- (Rupees Three Crore Fifty five lakhs Thirty two thousand Six hundred and Eight Only). Earnest Money- Rs. 7,10,652/- (Rupees Seven lakhs Ten thousand Six hundred and Fifty two Only). Period of Completion 270 Days. Last time and date of submission of bid: 21/02/2024 upto 3:00 pm.

बोली प्रश्न एवं अन्य विवरण www.eprocure.nic.in के वेबसाइट से प्राप्त की जा सकती है। The bid forms and other details can be obtained from the website www.eprocure.nic.in.
नोट: किसी भी विवादित स्थिति में मूल अंग्रेजी पाठ ही मान्य होगा।

GOVERNMENT OF ORISSA No. O-2382
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, KARANJIA (MAYURBHANJ)
E-mail ID: eerwkaranjia@yahoo.com
Letter No. 690 Dated: 29.01.24

"e" Procurement Notice for Special Repair to Roads & Bridges and Approach Road & Periodical Maintenance Works for year 2023-24
Bid Identification No. RWDKNJ-18/2023-24

- Name of the Work : Road and Building Works (As per Annexure)
- Estimated Cost : Rs. 32.77 to Rs. 5.08 lakhs approximately (As per Annexure)
- Class of Contractor : 'D', 'C' & Class (As per Annexure)
- Period of Completion : As per Annexure
- Tender Paper Cost : Paper cost of bid as mentioned in Annexure of Road Works

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O.C. S.E.R.W. Division, Karanjia Technical & Financial Bid
		From	To		
1	2	3	4	5	6
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Karanjia	Road Online RWDKNJ-18/23-24	Dt. 05.02.2024 at 10.00 A.M.	Dt. 09.02.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.	Dt. 08.02.2024 upto 1.00 P.M.	Dt. 10.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M.

OIPR-25086/11/0030/2324 Sd./- Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division, Karanjia

HOURS AFTER COURT ORDERS

Prayers performed in Gyanvapi cellar

THE RITUAL WAS STOPPED DURING THE TENURE OF FORMER CHIEF MINISTER MULAYAM SINGH YADAV AFTER THE BABRI MOSQUE IN AYODHYA WAS DEMOLISHED DECEMBER 6, 1992

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Varanasi, Feb 1: Prayers were performed in a cellar of the Gyanvapi mosque here Wednesday night following court orders allowing the resumption of a practice said to have been discontinued three decades back, Kashi Vishwanath temple trust president said.

Earlier Wednesday, the district court ruled that a priest can perform prayers before the idols in a cellar of the Gyanvapi Masjid, a significant development in the legal battle over the mosque adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath temple.

"Vyas ji's cellar was opened after 31 years for prayers," temple trust president Nagendra Pandey told PTI.

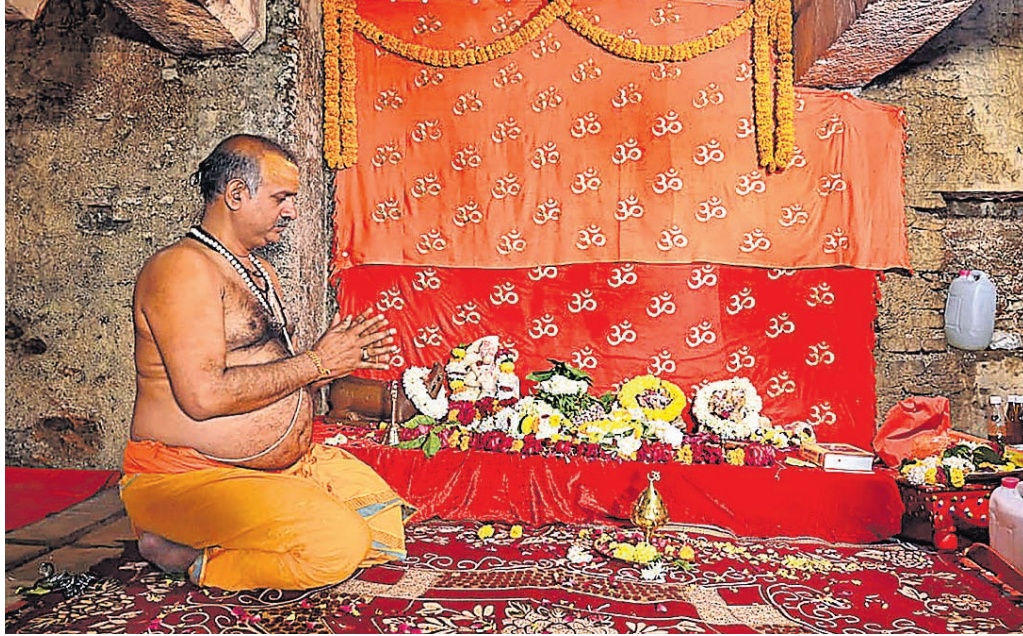
He said the southern cellar was opened at around 10.30 pm Wednesday.

Asked if prayers were performed in the basement, he said, "Yes." "It was necessary to follow the court's orders, so the district administration made all the arrangements with great promptness," Pandey added.

District Magistrate S Rajlingam said, "I have complied with the court's order."

Some locals claimed that after cleaning the cellar, an 'aarti' of Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesh was performed.

Official sources in the district administration said at around 9.30 pm Wednesday, the mem-



A priest performs prayers in the basement of Gyanvapi mosque following court orders allowing the resumption of the practice that was discontinued three decades back, in Varanasi, late Wednesday night. PTI PHOTO

bers of the Kashi-Vishwanath temple trust were called and the barricades before the Nandi statue facing the mosque's 'wazukhana' were removed.

The court had directed the local administration to make arrangements within seven days for prayers in the cellar. This will involve 'proper arrangements' with metal barricades at the complex, it said.

Taking a swipe at the Yogi Adityanath government in the

state, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said the haste displayed by the BJP in following the court orders is an attempt to prevent any legal recourse.

"Due process has to be maintained while following any court order. The Varanasi Court fixed a 7 day period for it (making arrangements). What we are seeing now is a concerted effort to go beyond the due process and prevent any legal recourse that can be taken," Yadav said on X.

The order by Judge AK Vishvesha came a day after an Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) report on the mosque complex was made public.

The ASI survey, ordered by the same court, in connection with a related case, suggested that the mosque was constructed during Aurangzeb's rule over the remains of a Hindu temple.

Wednesday's order was delivered on the plea of

Gyanvapi mgmt panel moves HC

Prayagra/Varanasi: The Gyanvapi mosque management committee moved the Allahabad High Court Thursday challenging a Varanasi court order that allowed Hindu prayers before idols in a cellar of the mosque. Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee counsel SFA Naqvi said they have requested an urgent hearing in the matter. They moved the HC within hours of the Supreme Court refusing to hear their plea against the Varanasi district court's order and asking them to approach the HC.

Shailendra Kumar Pathak who claimed that his maternal grandfather, priest Somnath Vyas, offered prayers till December 1993, according to Hindu side counsel Madan Mohan Yadav.

Pathak said the puja was stopped during the tenure of former Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav after the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya was demolished December 6, 1992.

Devotees at the Kashi Vishwanath temple welcomed the Varanasi court order. Yogesh Garg said he heard about the order the previous evening and decide he must visit the temple Thursday.

"The judge has delivered directions that there should be prayers. The basement has been opened. It's a matter of great joy," another devotee said.

UCC draft to be submitted to Uttarakhand govt today

A special four-day session of Uttarakhand Assembly has been convened from February 5-8 to pass a legislation on UCC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, Feb 1: The Uttarakhand government-appointed panel to prepare a draft of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) will submit the document to Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami here Friday.

A special four-day session of the Uttarakhand Assembly has already been convened from February 5-8 to pass a legislation on the UCC.

The draft will be discussed in a meeting of the state Cabinet before it is tabled in the form of a Bill in the Assembly.

Passing a legislation on the UCC will fulfil a major promise made by the BJP to the people of the state in the run-up to the 2022 Assembly polls, which saw the saffron party storm to power with a landslide victory for the second consecutive term - a feat achieved for the first time by any political party in the state which came into being in 2000.

The second consecutive electoral win was interpreted by the BJP as the people's mandate for a UCC and the Dhami government decided at the very first meeting of the state Cabinet in March, 2022 to constitute a committee to prepare a draft for the same.

A five-member committee headed by retired Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai was later formed in May, 2022 to prepare a draft of the UCC.

If implemented, Uttarakhand will become the first state in the country after Independence to adopt the UCC. It has been operational in Goa since the days of the Portuguese rule.

The UCC will provide a legal framework for a uniform marriage, divorce, land, property and inheritance laws for all citizens irrespective of their religion.

The UCC drafting committee, which also consists of retired justice Pramod Kohli, social activist Manu Gaur, former Uttarakhand Chief Secretary Shatrughan Singh and Vice Chancellor of Doon University Surekha Dangwal, has been given a total of four extensions, the latest one of 15 days in January this year.

The extensions were given to the panel to look into different aspects before finalising its report.

It received 2.33 lakh written suggestions and held 60 meetings in which the members interacted with around 60,000 people.

Snowfall, rain bring cheer to apple growers

Recent change in weather has ended a prolonged dry spell which was posing a threat to the apple crop in the upper Himalayan region

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, Feb 1: Overnight snowfall and rain continued to lash several parts of Uttarakhand Thursday adding to the chill, according to the meteorological department.

The temperature is likely to plummet by 4-5 degrees Celsius due to the continuing snowfall and rain, the MeT said.

The recent change in weather has ended a prolonged dry spell which was posing a threat to the apple crop in the upper Himalayan region.

Snowfall in the upper reaches of the state and intermittent showers in the lower areas continued in Chamoli, Uttarkashi, Rudraprayag, Tehri and Dehradun districts Thursday, it added.



Badrinath, Hemkund Sahib, Valley of Flowers, Nanda Devi national park, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri shrines and Chakrata in Dehradun district are all carpeted with snow.

The MeT had issued a yellow alert for heavy rain, snowfall and thunderstorms at isolated places in the hills of Uttarakhand for a 24-hour period starting Wednesday evening.

The current meteorological analysis and weather prediction models indicate that an active western disturbance is likely to affect Uttarakhand, the weather office said.

Mass marriage fraud unearthed in UP's Ballia

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ballia (UP), Feb 1: In a shocking revelation, an alleged scam has come to light in Ballia regarding the Uttar Pradesh government's community wedding scheme, the police said.

A man who came to witness the community wedding, alleged that he was made to pose as a groom in exchange of Rs 2,000 to Rs 3,000.

Bablu, a resident of Ballia, said that he went as a spectator at the community programme January 25. However, he alleged he was later told to pose as a groom in exchange of money.

He also said that the programme coordinators made other men to pose as grooms. The scandal erupted when a video surfaced, exposing brides garlanding themselves.

Ballia District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar said that the allocated funds for beneficiaries have not been disbursed as intended. An immediate investigation has been launched and an FIR has been registered against nine individuals, including the Assistant Development Officer of Social Welfare Department.



Kedarnath temple premises covered in snow after fresh snowfall, in Rudraprayag, Thursday. PTI PHOTO

Work resumes at Silkyara tunnel UP launches caravan tourism

41 labourers were trapped in the 4.5 km long under-construction tunnel due to a cave-in that followed a landslide

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Uttarkashi, Feb 1: Construction work at the Silkyara tunnel suspended since its partial collapse in November which left 41 labourers trapped in it for more than a fortnight has resumed after more than two months.

On the instructions of the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, construction work of protective nature has begun from both Barkot and Silkyara ends of the tunnel, an official here said.

Shuttering has started for the construction of a 'centre wall' of the tunnel while the work on a bridge at the mouth of



the tunnel from Silkyara side has also started.

After getting permission from the ministry, work has started gradually and will pick up pace in 15 days, said Colonel Deepak Patil, Project Manager of

National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).

Colonel Patil had inspected the work Saturday. He said protection work will be done first in the sensitive area of about 100 me-

tres between the landslide hit spot and the tunnel's mouth in Silkyara.

Workers will be sent inside through the escape passage prepared for the safe exit of the trapped workers so that 'dewatering' can be done.

After the Silkyara tunnel accident, business in hotels, 'dhabas' and grocery shops outside it had slowed. Villagers are happy with the resumption of work at the tunnel.

Even the labourers who were among the trapped and had gone home post rescue are gradually returning to the site to restart work. While some of them have already arrived, others will soon be arriving.

On the morning of November 12 last year, 41 labourers were trapped in the 4.5 km long under-construction tunnel due to a cave-in that followed a landslide. However, they were all rescued safely after an enormous effort involving various agencies, national and international experts that lasted 17 days.

Construction work at the tunnel had been suspended since the accident.

The initiative aims to address accommodation challenges in regions where proper facilities are lacking

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 1: The Uttar Pradesh's Tourism Department, in partnership with Motorhome, has launched Caravan Tourism in the state, signalling a significant move to enhance travel experiences focused on families.

The initiative aims to address accommodation challenges in regions where proper facilities are lacking.

Caravan tourism is poised to bring a fresh perspective to tourism in Uttar Pradesh, catering specifically to family-oriented travel. The Motorhome Caravan accommodates six to eight people, offering sleeping arrangements for up to six individuals.

The vehicle is well-equipped with two washrooms and cook-



ing facilities, ensuring a comfortable and convenient travel experience. Booking for the caravan can be made through UP Tourism State Development Corporation Limited.

To mark the launch, a promotional offer allows full-day booking at approximately Rs 35,000. This covers travel up to 350 km, with an additional charge of Rs 150 per kilometre for distances beyond the initial limit.

Tourism Minister Jaiveer Singh expressed hope that the

new facility would significantly boost tourism in the state. Acknowledging Uttar Pradesh's prominent position in domestic tourism, he emphasised the goal of achieving a similar status for foreign tourists.

The introduction of caravan tourism underscores the state's commitment to providing diverse and enriching travel experiences, especially for families, marking a stride towards enhancing tourism in Uttar Pradesh, he added.

national

of the day quote

We had promised to provide employment to one lakh youth every year and the youth of the state are eagerly waiting for fulfillment of that promise
SUKHVINDER SINGH SUKRU | HIMACHAL CM

People will not trust Jagan Reddy as he hurries to hold the DSC examination with 6,000 positions in the last 60 days after ruling for 60 months
NARA LOKESH | TELUGU DESAM PARTY LEADER

Mamata Banerjee now wants to get down from the train and we welcome it
MOHAMMED SALIM | CPI(M) WB SECRETARY

SHORT TAKES

CPI union calls for national strike

Chennai: The Bharatiya Kisan Mazdoor Union (BKMU), affiliated with the Communist Party of India (CPI), has called for a nationwide strike February 16 in protest against the "anti-farmer activities" of the National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre. The BKMU, one of the most prominent affiliates of the CPI, took this decision during its general body meeting that was held in Chennai between January 28 to 30. The meeting was presided over by BKMU President and former MLA N Periyasamy. The meeting unanimously adopted several resolutions that include spreading awareness among the rural population to get 200 days jobs per year under MGNREGA and ensure the minimum wage of Rs 700 per day.

Woman kills son

Idukki: A 35-year-old woman allegedly ended her life after killing her five-month-old child, police said Thursday. Dinu, a resident of Thopramkudy, was found hanging inside her room on Wednesday night, while the infant boy was found in the crib, police said. "A relative found them in the room and informed the local people and the police, after which they were taken to a nearby hospital," police said.

Man stabbed

New Delhi: A 22-year-old man was stabbed by a group of people in northwest Delhi's Netaji Subhash Place area allegedly for not withdrawing criminal cases against two of their associates, police said Thursday. The attackers were closed associates of Anas alias Rahul and Harsee, both of whom are facing two criminal cases, including an attempt to murder, in Budh Vihar area, police said.

Champai Soren meets J'khand Guv

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, Feb 1: JMM leader Champai Soren Thursday met Jharkhand Governor C P Radhakrishnan and urged him to accept his claim to form the government at the earliest as there was "confusion" in the state, which was without a chief minister since the resignation of Hemant Soren, deepening the political crisis.

Amid concerns over the delay in the appointment of JMM legislative party leader Champai Soren as the next chief minister by the governor, the majority alliance also took steps to shift its MLAs from Jharkhand in two chartered planes, in a bid to ring-fence them against a possible poaching attempt by the BJP.

According to some coalition legislators, they were being taken to Hyderabad in two chartered planes - one 12-seater and another of 37 seats. Meanwhile, Hemant Soren, who was pro-



The arrest of Hon'ble Jharkhand Chief Minister Thiru @HemantSorenJMM is a blatant display of political vendetta by Union BJP Govt
M K STALIN | TAMIL NADU CM



duced before the special PMLA court in Ranchi, was sent to judicial custody for a day. He was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) Wednesday after over seven hours of questioning on money laundering charges in an alleged land fraud case. Before the arrest, he tendered his resignation as Jharkhand chief minister.

The 48-year-old leader has also moved the Supreme Court challenging his arrest and the matter has been posted for hearing Friday. As there was no official communication from the Raj Bhavan over the government

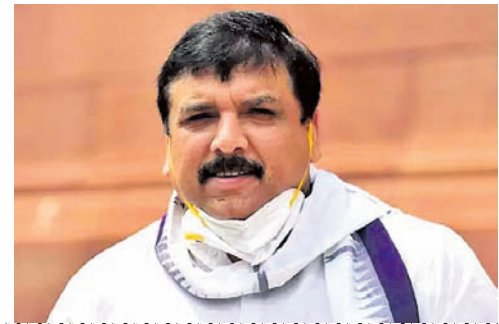
formation, Champai Soren wrote to the governor, saying: "Hemant Soren had tendered his resignation as the chief minister Wednesday night, which was accepted by the Raj Bhavan at 8.45 pm."

Earlier in the day, state Congress chief Rajesh Thakur told PTI that Champai Soren, who is also heading the alliance, has sought time from the governor at 3 pm to prove the majority. However, the governor called them for a meeting at 5.30 pm. "We told the governor that I have already submitted the letter of support required for the formation of the new government and he should soon start the process for the same," Champai Soren told reporters after the meeting with the governor.

Champai Soren, who had gone with four other alliance legislators to meet Radhakrishnan, also said that the governor has assured them that he will take a decision soon on their request for

SANJAY SINGH SEEKS INTERIM BAIL

Senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh Thursday moved a Delhi court seeking interim bail in a money laundering case related to alleged excise scam to take oath as a member of Rajya Sabha and attend the ongoing Parliament session



Oppn dubs budget as 'poll gimmick'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: Several Opposition leaders slammed the BJP-led Centre Thursday for allegedly offering nothing to people in the interim budget and said it was more of an "election gimmick" to woo people, even though it has failed to honour the promises made to them on employment, price rise and farmers' income.

The Congress said the interim budget lacks accountability and vision. The party alleged that the ruling NDA's approach to the economy and governance is biased in favour of the rich and the interim budget neither talks about the promised two crore jobs every year nor about taming inflation or doubling farmers' income.

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati said the budget presented before the Lok Sabha polls is more of an election gimmick. Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray claimed that Sitharaman has presented the Modi government's "last" budget. Addressing party workers in Maharashtra's Raigad, he said according to Sitharaman, the budget would focus on four "castes" -- the poor, women, youngsters and farmers. Thackeray said the Centre has finally realised that the country has these four sets of people. CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said the budget is a clear signal of the "Modi developmental model", which is enriching the rich and impoverishing the poor.

ED searches India Cements offices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 1: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has conducted searches at the offices of leading Chennai-based cement manufacturer India Cements Ltd. As part of a foreign exchange violation investigation, official sources said Thursday.

The searches were launched Wednesday at two office premises of the company in Chennai and one in Delhi, under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), the sources said.

Noted industrialist N Srinivasan is the owner of India Cements, which owns Chennai Super Kings (CSK) T-20 cricket IPL team. Srinivasan is a former BCCI president.

The company said in a regulatory filing that it was cooperating with the federal probe agency.

"Certain officials of Enforcement Directorate visited our corporate office in Chennai during 31.01.2024 and 01.02.2024 and conducted a search to find out if any irregularities concerning FEMA."

"We have provided/undertaken to provide all the clarification/documents sought by them. We do not anticipate any material impact on the company with regard to the aforesaid investigation," India Cements said. According to the sources, the probe pertains to the affairs of India Cements' associate company India Cements Capital Ltd (ICCL) and transfer of funds abroad worth about Rs 550 crore, they said.

The role of some alleged dubious agents and directors are under the probe scanner of the ED, they said. ICCL deals in foreign exchange, money transfer, travel insurance and remittances.

SNIPPETS

HC snubs plea to abort 28-wk 'completely viable' foetus

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court said Thursday "foeticide cannot be permitted", as it reserved its judgement on a 20-year-old unmarried woman's plea seeking its approval to terminate her pregnancy of 28 weeks, holding that the foetus was "completely viable". The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act permits aborting a foetus at a maximum of 24 weeks. In case of substantial foetal abnormalities, subject to the permission of a medical board, termination can be done even after 24 weeks. "This court is not going to permit termination of pregnancy at 28 weeks. I am not going to allow it for a completely viable foetus of 28 weeks. In the report, I can't see any abnormality in the foetus. Foeticide cannot be permitted," the judge said orally, before reserving the verdict.

Badal bats for re-opening of borders with Pakistan

Attari (Punjab): Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) President Sukhbir Singh Badal Thursday launched the party's 'Punjab Bachao Yatra' from near the zero line here, as he gave a clarion call for re-opening of the international border with Pakistan to facilitate trade between the two countries, besides demanding enhancement in compensation to farmers tilling land beyond the barbed wire fence in the Indian territory. Earlier, the SAD chief and the senior party leadership offered prayers at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib to seek divine blessings for the success of the party's 'Punjab Bachao Yatra' that formally started from Attari Thursday. Senior party leaders Gulzar Singh Ranike, Bikram Singh Majithia and Anil Joshi accompanied the SAD President at the head of the cavalcade along with hundreds of youth on foot. All along the way from Attari to Raja Sansi, hundreds of tractors joined the Yatra along with a crowd of youth.

15 get life imprisonment in 23-year-old case

Mathura (UP): A court here has sentenced 15 men to life imprisonment in a 23-year-old case of violence against members of the Dalit community in which an infant was burnt alive. In the verdict delivered Wednesday, Additional District and Sessions Judge (SC/ST Act) Manoj Kumar Mishra also slapped a fine of Rs 73,000 on each of the convicts. On January 23, 2001, some upper caste people started construction work on panchayat land in Datia village under the Highway police station area here.

Some Dalit community members opposed the construction, leading to a conflict between the two groups, Special Public Prosecutor Suresh Prasad Sharma said Thursday. According to a complaint lodged in the matter, the upper caste group thrashed Dalits, fired bullets and indulged in arson. In the violence, a six-month-old Dalit girl was burnt alive in a hut and a man was shot in the thigh.

Kejriwal likely to skip ED summons again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal is unlikely to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) Friday for questioning in a money laundering case linked to the Delhi excise policy, sources in the party said.

The ED Wednesday issued a fresh and the fifth summons to Kejriwal after he skipped four earlier summonses issued by the federal agency over the last four months.

Though the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) remained tight-lipped about whether the Delhi CM will appear before the probe agency, sources in the party said that he is likely to skip the summons this time too.

The AAP has maintained that its legal team is studying the summons issued to Kejriwal in connection with the excise policy linked money laundering case.

Kejriwal is scheduled to participate in a protest along with his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann outside the BJP headquarters Friday against the alleged cheating in Chandigarh mayoral polls.

On Tuesday, in a setback to the Congress and the AAP - both INDIA bloc members - the BJP swept the Chandigarh mayoral polls.

The AAP-Congress combine alleged that the presiding officer had tampered with the ballot papers.

Kejriwal skipped ED summonses for November 2 and December 21 in 2023 and January 3 and January 18 this year. He had called these notices "illegal".

NEW CANCER CASES TO SOAR 77%: WHO

Global cancer cases are predicted to rise by more than 75% by 2050, according to the World Health Organisation.

Latest figures from the WHO's cancer arm, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, makes plain the growing burden of cancer, rising from 14.1 million new cases and 8.2 million deaths worldwide in 2012 to 20 million new cases and 9.7 million deaths a decade later.

The IARC predicts there will be more than 35 million new cancer cases by 2050, an increase of 77% from 2022 levels, and that deaths will have nearly doubled since 2012 to more than 18 million. The IARC said tobacco use, alcohol consumption and obesity were key factors behind the increasing incidence of cancer, as well as population ageing and growth.

It predicts that the highest-income countries will record an additional 4.8 million new cases in 2050, but lower-income countries will experience the biggest pro-



portional increases in cases. Cancer mortality in the latter countries is projected to almost double. "The impact of this increase will not be felt evenly across countries," said Dr Freddie Bray, the head of the IARC's cancer surveillance branch. "Those who have the fewest resources to manage their cancer burdens will bear the brunt of the global cancer burden."

IARC's global cancer observatory, which covers 185 countries and

36 types of cancer, shows that 10 types of cancer accounted for about two-thirds of new cases and deaths globally in 2022.

Lung cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer worldwide, accounting for 12.4% of new cases and 18.7% of deaths. Female breast cancer is the second most common form, but while it accounts for 11.6% of cases, it causes fewer than 7% of deaths. Other major causes of death include bowel liver and stomach cancer.

Inequalities are particularly pointed in breast cancer.

Women in lower-income countries are 50% less likely to be diagnosed than women in higher-income countries, putting them at a "much higher risk of dying of the disease due to late diagnosis and inadequate access to quality treatment", said Dr Isabelle Soerjomataram, the deputy head of the IARC's cancer surveillance branch.

One in 12 women in higher-income countries are diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime and

one in 71 will die of it, the figures show. In poorer countries, only one in 27 women are diagnosed in their lifetime, but one in 48 will die of the disease.

GOVT. OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, RAIRANGPUR
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement No.657/Road Work Date: 30.01.24
No.O-2366- Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Rairangpur on behalf of Government of Odisha invites PERCENTAGE RATE% tender through e-Procurement for "Special repair to roads for the year 2023-24" (available in website). The bid should be submitted on-line in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in by eligible class of contractors having both legal competency and expertise in Civil, Works registered with the State Government and contractors of equivalent Grades/Class registered with Central Government/MES/Railways for execution of Works i.e. Civil Works. The bidders should have the necessary Portal Enrolment (with his own Digital Signature Certificate). The registered bidders of outside Odisha can also participate in this process after necessary Portal Enrolment but shall have to subsequently undergo registration with the appropriate authority of the State Government within a month of acceptance of bid.
1. Estimated Cost: From Rs.7.92 to 28.14 lakhs (approximately). 2. Class of Contractor (Eligible): "D", "C" & "B" Class or relevant Class of works license. 3. Time for completion: 01 (One) calendar month. 4. Exemption of E.M.D.: The bidder shall transfer online the Earnest Money Deposit/Bid security at the rate of 1% of the estimated cost put to tender as mentioned under DTCN. Bidders desirous to hire machineries or equipments from outside the State or owned but deployed outside the state are required to transfer online 2% of the amount put to tender as Bid Security. Exemption from EMD is permissible as per codal provisions of Govt. of Odisha. 5. Cost of Tender Paper: The Bidder shall transfer online the Cost of bid documents as per annexure towards cost of bid through a process as mentioned in the DTCN. 6. Mode of submission of tender: Tender should be submitted online in www.tendersodisha.gov.in. 7. Period of availability of tenders On-line/Date of time of bidding On-line/last date of seeking clarification/Date of opening of Tender Papers. The details are as follows.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/O S.E.R.W. Division, Rairangpur. Technical Bid & Financial Bid
		From	To		
1	2	3	4	5	6
S.E.R.W. Division, Rairangpur	RWDRRP-28/2023-24	02.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M.	08.02.2024 up to 5.00 P.M.	07.02.2024 up to 5.00 P.M.	09.02.2024 at 11.30 A.M.

OIPR-25107/11/0032/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.O-2366:
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION, KUCHINDA
E-mail: eerw_kuchinda@yahoo.com
"e" Procurement Notice for Building Works
Identification No. Online Tender/16/RWD, Kuchinda/2023-24

- Name of the Work : Building Works
- Total Number of Works : 05 Nos.
- Class of Contractor : B & C Class Contractor
- Period of Completion : 06 Calendar Months
- Availability of Tender Online: Dt.05.02.2024 to Dt.15.02.2024
- Last date & time of seeking : Dt.13.02.2024 at 5.00 P.M. tender clarification
- Date & Time of Opening of : Dt.16.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M. Tender

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer Rural Works Division, Kuchinda
OIPR-25151/11/0027/2324

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, KHARIAR ROAD, DIST-NUAPADA, PIN-766104
"e" Procurement NOTICE
Bid Identification No. 2023-24
No.C-2967: The Executive Officer on behalf of Khariar Road NAC invites tenders in Single Cover System. Bid documents consisting of specification the Schedule of Quantities and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen the Govt. website i.e. <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.

- Number of Civil Works: 5 (Five numbers)
- Estimated Costs: 2.94 lakhs to 14.23 lakhs
- Period of Completion: As per NIT.
- Date and time of availability of the Bid documents in the portal: From 10.00 A.M. of 31.01.2024 to 5.30 PM of dt.09.02.2024.
- Last Date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal: 05.30 PM of 09.02.2024
- Bids will be opened on: 11.00 A.M. on dt.13.2.2024
- Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid: Executive Officer, Khariar Road NAC.

Sd./- Executive Officer
Khariar Road NAC
OIPR-13136/11/0015/2324

international



There should not be any doubt about elections. No matter what happens, the government will ensure that the elections are held February 8
GOHAR EJAZ | ACTING INTERIOR MINISTER, PAKISTAN

US APPROVES SALE OF 31 ARMED DRONES TO INDIA

The US Thursday approved the sale of 31 MQ-9B armed drones to India at an estimated cost of USD 3.99 billion. The proposed mega drone deal was announced during the historic State Visit of PM Modi here in June 2023.



of the day quote

No other entity has the capacity to deliver the scale and breadth of assistance that 2.2 million people in Gaza urgently need. Decisions by various countries to pause funds for UNRWA, the largest supplier of humanitarian aid in this crisis, will have catastrophic consequences for the people of Gaza
TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS | DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WHO

China is a dominant player in the global car industry, and governments need to ensure that companies building cars or sourcing parts in China are not tainted by the government's repression in Xinjiang. Doing business in China should not mean having to use or benefit from forced labor.
JIM WORMINGTON | SENIOR RESEARCHER, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

The genocide convention was enacted following World War II and its intention was to ensure that never again would we see the atrocities that were part of the Holocaust against Jewish people in Europe. Those who were to be the beneficiaries of the Convention are today the ones we believe are committing genocide
NALEDI PANDOR | FOREIGN MINISTER, SOUTH AFRICA

SHORT TAKES

Iran building 4 N-power plants

Tehran: Iran began construction on four more nuclear power plants in the country's south, with expected total capacity of 5,000 megawatts, the official IRNA news agency reported Thursday. Iran seeks to produce 20,000 megawatts of nuclear energy by 2041. The country has one active nuclear power plant, a 1,000 megawatt plant that went online with help from Russia in 2011. It's also building a 300-megawatt plant in oil-rich Khuzestan province, near the western border with Iraq. The UN's nuclear watchdog said last year that Iran has increased the rate at which it is producing near-weapons grade uranium.

Judge dismisses Trump's lawsuit

London: A judge in London Thursday threw out a lawsuit by former US President Donald Trump that accused a former British spy of making "shocking and scandalous claims" that were false and harmed his reputation. Judge Karen Steyn said the case Trump filed against Orbis Business Intelligence should be dismissed. "There are no compelling reasons to allow the claim to proceed to trial," she said. The ruling comes as Trump, the front-runner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, faces legal problems on both sides of the Atlantic.

Pak forces kill 21 terrorists

Karachi: Pakistani security forces have killed at least 21 terrorists linked to a banned separatist group in the troubled Balochistan province since Monday night in an operation launched after militants launched three coordinated attacks, including one on a high-security prison, in the area, a security official said Thursday. Following a brazen attack by heavily armed terrorists on the Mach town and Kolpur areas in Balochistan Monday night, the security forces launched an operation to repulse the attacks and hunt down the perpetrators. "As a result of the operation in Mach and Kolpur so far 21 terrorists have been eliminated," the official said.

Tide is turning against junta 3 yrs after takeover

Bangkok, Feb 1: When the army overthrew Myanmar's elected government February 1, 2021, it looked like a walkover that could entrench the military in power indefinitely. Three years later, a poorly armed grassroots resistance movement has shaken the military's grip in a modern-day David vs. Goliath conflict. Overshadowed by the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, Myanmar's civil war is no longer on the front pages, even as violence perpetrated under the military government has risen. Air strikes

on villages have increased and civilian casualties have grown, according to the Armed Conflict Location; Event Data Project, a US-based nonprofit organisation, and Myanmar Witness, a project headquartered in Britain. The war has engendered a humanitarian crisis, the UN special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar said in an interview. "Thousands and thousands have been killed, 2.3 million people have been displaced. 18.6 million in Myanmar are in need right now of humanitarian aid," Tom Andrews said. Half the

MYANMAR COUP ANNIV



country has fallen into poverty. The education system doesn't

exist for millions of children. The health care system is in shambles." Inside Myanmar, opponents of military rule called for a "silent strike" on Thursday's anniversary, with people showing their solidarity by staying inside their homes or workplaces. The same tactic was employed on the two previous anniversaries. Eight nations, including the United States, and the European Union issued a statement calling for the military government, led by Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, to halt violence against civilians, release all political pris-

oners including ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, and allow access for humanitarian groups and dialogue among all stakeholders. The 2021 military takeover was met by widespread nonviolent protests and civil disobedience. But the confrontations escalated into violence after security forces used deadly force against the protesters. The battlefield advancements have buoyed the fortunes of the resistance forces and represent a turning point, though victory for the opposition is still not in sight, experts say.

Greta goes on trial in London

London, Feb 1: Climate activist Greta Thunberg went on trial Thursday for refusing to leave a protest that blocked the entrance to a major oil and gas industry conference in London last year. Thunberg, 21, was among more than two dozen protesters arrested Oct 17 after preventing access to a hotel during the Energy Intelligence Forum, attended by some of the industry's top executives.



SL's controversial online safety bill becomes law

Colombo, Feb 1: Sri Lanka's Parliament Thursday endorsed a controversial bill to regulate online content despite criticism from the Opposition that claimed it will stifle freedom of speech. Parliament's communications office in a release said that Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena certified the bill with his signature. The Speaker's endorsement came despite demands internationally and locally to refrain from signing it. The Parliament had approved the bill with amendments last week.

Farmers' anger spreads in Europe

Brussels, Feb 1: Farmers threw eggs and stones at the European Parliament in Brussels Thursday, started fires near the building and set off fireworks as they demanded EU leaders do more to help them with taxes and rising costs. With anger against green regulations and cheap imports shared among farmers across Europe, protesters from Italy, Spain and other European countries took part in the Brussels demonstration, which coincided with an EU summit nearby, as well as holding protests at home. While local grievances also vary, the growing unrest, also seen in Portugal, Greece or Germany, exposes tensions over the EU's drive to tackle climate change.



continue to produce more but better? How can we continue to tackle climate change? How can we avoid unfair competition from foreign countries?" French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said, as he announced new measures in Paris. Attal promised to make life easier for farmers and better protect them at French and EU level, including by banning cheap imports of products that use a pesticide forbidden in Europe and making sure food labels clearly state if produce is imported. More aid for farmers is also on the way, he said. **MORE HELP** Farmers have already secured several measures, including the bloc's executive Commission

Farmers descend on Brussels as EU summit takes place
Greek farmers carrying coffin protest death of agriculture
Roads between Spain and Portugal blocked
Protests spread in Europe

timate. Security personnel in riot gear stood guard behind barriers where the leaders were meeting at European Council headquarters. The pockets of unrest diminished during the day, but farmers continued to heckle towards them. **'NO FOOD, NO FUTURE'** In Portugal, farmers made their way to the Spanish border at dawn to block some of the roads linking the two countries. In France, farmers headed towards the lower house of parliament in Paris while drone footage showed a huge convoy of tractors on a motorway near Jossigny as others blocked highways around the French capital. Hundreds of Greek farmers with black flags - to symbolise what they say is the death of agriculture - drove their tractors across the centre of Greece's second-biggest city Thessaloniki. No farmers, no food, no future - one banner read. One tractor was carrying a black coffin.

HUNGARY FALLS IN LINE

EU agrees \$54bn in new aid for Ukraine

Brussels, Feb 1: European Union leaders unanimously agreed Thursday to extend 50 billion euros (\$54 billion) in new aid to Ukraine, the chairman of the summit said, overcoming weeks of resistance from Hungary and winning praise from Kyiv. Before the summit started, EU leaders piled pressure on Hungary to lift its block, telling Prime Minister Viktor Orban to pick sides in what several saw as an existential challenge posed by Russia's war in Ukraine, the biggest conflict in Europe since World War II.

The agreement comes after weeks of wrangling with Orban, who vetoed the aid package last December

Volodymyr Zelenskiy welcomed the agreement, saying the aid would strengthen long-term economic and financial stability of his country as the war approaches its third year. Ukraine's dollar bonds gained on the news. Kyiv, which relies heavily on Western aid as it fights Moscow, said it expected to receive the first tranche of 4.5 billion euros from the EU in March. The agreement comes after weeks of wrangling with Orban, who vetoed the aid package last December. There was no comment from Hungary on the deal.

US hikes H-1B visa fees

Washington, Feb 1: The US has announced a steep increase in fees for various categories of non-immigrant visas like the H-1B, L-1 and EB-5, the most popular among Indians. The fee hike, first after 2016, will come into force from April 1. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. The EB-5 programme, launched by the US government

in 1990, enables high-net-worth foreign investors to obtain a US visa for themselves and their families by investing a minimum of USD 5,000,000 in a US business that helps create 10 jobs for American workers. To come into force from April 1, the new H-1B application visa fee, which is form I-129, has been increased from USD 460 to USD 780. The H-1B registration will increase from USD 10 to USD 215, but from next year. The fee for L-1 visas has been increased from USD 460 to USD 1,385, and that of EB-5 visas, popularly known as investors visas, has jumped from USD 3,675 to USD 11,160, according to a federal notification issued Wednesday.

FACEBOOK, THE SOCIAL NETWORK OLD-TIMER, TURNS 20

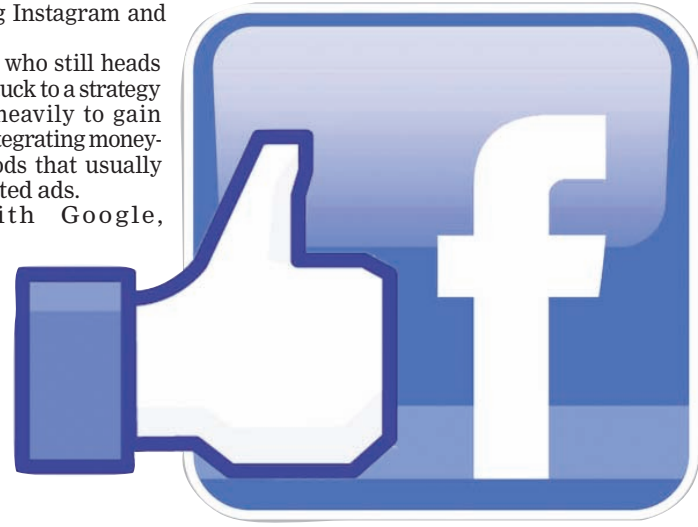
Washington (US), Feb 1: Founded 20 years ago as a simple hangout spot for young people, Facebook has since become a battle-hardened behemoth that - despite perceptions of being for boomers and parents - continues growing and growing. "I will never forget the day that I ran up to my high school's Mac lab and signed up for Facebook," Insider Intelligence analyst Jasmine Enberg told AFP. "You simultaneously felt that you were part of this small, exclusive community where your parents, grandparents and teachers weren't - but also part of something much larger." Launched as thefacebook.com by Mark Zuckerberg and three friends February 4, 2004, the site was originally restricted to Harvard College students. It became available to students at other US universities before opening to anyone in 2006.

Facebook became a venue for connecting with just about anyone, anywhere and by 2023 reported being used by more than 3 billion people monthly - a three percent growth over the previous year. "Facebook, when it launched, was revolutionary," Enberg said. "It's hard to overstate the impact that Facebook has had on shaping everything from pop culture to politics to how we behave online." She noted Facebook's famous 'feed' that served up photos, comments, or other 'posts' its algorithm figured would grab the attention of users. The more users engaged with the social network the more it could serve up money-making ads targeted using the vast amount of information people shared at Facebook. It is credited with having helped open the door for content to "go viral" and fueled the trend of online-only news outlets.

Ad behemoth Facebook gained a reputation for buying or copying potential rivals, now boasting a "family" of apps including Instagram and WhatsApp. Zuckerberg, who still heads the company, stuck to a strategy of investing heavily to gain users before integrating money-making methods that usually involved targeted ads. Along with Google, Facebook became an online advertising giant. In 2022 - a bad year for the Silicon Valley-based company - its profits reached \$23 billion. The platform "is part of the digital landscape", particularly for 'millennials' born in the 1980s or 1990s, according to Enberg.

"It remains irresistible to advertisers, thanks to its reach and performance," the analyst said of Facebook. Fresh off accusations that Russia used the platform to try to influence the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, it became embroiled in the Cambridge Analytica data-harvesting scandal. In 2021, it came under fire over whistleblower accusations that executives put profit over the safety and well-being of users. Despite it all, Facebook has continued to grow. And the tech titan's expansion has allowed it to invest in innovations including artificial intelligence and virtual reality.

Facebook changed its parent company name to 'Meta' in late 2021, saying it was due to Zuckerberg's vision of immersive, virtual worlds referred to as the 'metaverse' being the next major computing platform. Analyst Enberg called buying Instagram in 2012 as part of a pivot to smartphone lifestyles one of the best business decisions made by Facebook. The move eliminated a rival, provided a new forum for ads, and appealed to younger internet users losing interest in Facebook. "Above all, it gives the company an app to rival Snapchat and TikTok, which are ultra-popular with teenagers," according to Enberg. Today, more than half of Facebook users are between the ages of 18 and 34 years old, according to online insights company DataReportal. But how engaged users are with the social network remains difficult to gauge.



Path of fiscal consolidation

GOVT LOWERS FISCAL DEFICIT TO 5.1% OF GDP FOR FY25



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her sixth Budget in a row Thursday, equalling the record of former PM Morarji Desai. The interim Budget 2024-25 resisted the temptation of spending trillions of rupees on schemes for the poor in the Centre's last budget before elections and instead stuck to the path of fiscal consolidation to attract investors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: Continuing on the fiscally prudent path, the Modi government in the interim Budget refrained from announcing populist measures, which will help it trim the fiscal deficit to 5.1 per cent of the GDP next fiscal and 4.5 per cent in FY26.

The nominal GDP growth for the next financial year has been pegged at 10.5 per cent against the 11 per cent estimated earlier. The nominal GDP for BE 2024-25 has been projected at ₹3,27,71,808 crore, assuming 10.5 per cent growth over the estimated nominal GDP of ₹2,96,57,745 crore, as per the First Advance Estimates of FY2023-24.

Helped by an improvement in tax buoyancy, the government managed to achieve a fiscal deficit of 5.8 per cent against the budget estimate of 5.9 per cent for the current financial year.

Presenting the interim Budget 2024-25, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman refrained from providing any tax relief or announcing other populist measures before general elections due in the next couple of months.

There is macro-economic stability, including in the external sector. Investments are robust. The economy is doing well.
FINANCE MINISTER

"The Revised Estimate of the fiscal deficit is 5.8 per cent of GDP, improving on the Budget Estimate, notwithstanding moderation in the nominal growth estimates," she said while unveiling the interim Budget 2024-25.

As per the Fiscal Responsibility & Budget Management (FRBM) Act, the government plans to achieve a fiscal deficit of 4.5 per cent in 2025-26. "We continue on the path of fiscal

consolidation, as announced in my Budget Speech for 2021-22, to reduce fiscal deficit below 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. The fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1 per cent of GDP, adhering to that path," she said. In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit would be ₹16,85,494 crore against ₹17,34,773 crore for the current fiscal.

At the same, the effective revenue deficit would be 1.8 per cent in the current financial year and 0.8 per cent in the next financial year.

MARKET BORROWING
To meet the fiscal deficit, the gap between revenue receipt and expenditure, the government raises funds by issuing bonds in the market.

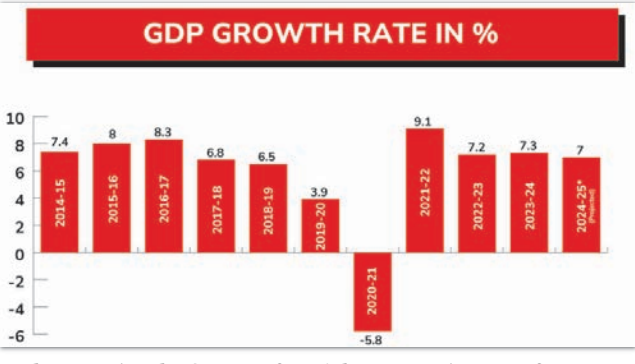
"The gross and net market borrowings through dated securities during 2024-25 are estimated at ₹14.13 lakh and ₹11.75 lakh crore respectively. Both will be less than that in 2023-24. Now, that the private investments are happening at scale, the lower borrowings by the Central Government will facilitate larger availability of credit for the private sector," she said.

₹47.66L-cr Budget, 6% higher than FY24

New Delhi: The size of Budget 2024-25 has increased 6.1 per cent to ₹47.66 lakh crore because of rise in expenditure and higher allocation for capital expenditure and social sector schemes. "The Revised Estimate of the total receipts other than borrowings is ₹27.56 lakh crore, of which tax receipts are ₹23.24 lakh crore. The Revised Estimate of the total expenditure is ₹44.90 lakh crore," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said while presenting the interim Budget in the Lok Sabha Thursday. The revenue receipts at ₹30.03 lakh crore are expected to be higher than the Budget Estimate, reflecting strong growth momentum and formalisation in the economy, she said.

Economy growth pegged at 10.5%

New Delhi: The Union government has assumed a nominal GDP growth of 10.5 per cent for 2024-25, the interim Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman noted. "Nominal GDP for BE 2024-25 has been projected at ₹3,27,71,808 crore assuming 10.5 per cent growth over the esti-



imated Nominal GDP of ₹2,96,57,745 crore as per the First Advance Estimates of FY 2023-24," the Budget documents said.

AGRI PUSH TOWARDS SELF-RELIANCE

New Delhi: The government will formulate a strategy to make India self-reliant in edible oils by boosting domestic output of oilseeds and launch a comprehensive programme to support dairy farmers, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced.

India imports a large quantity of edible oils to meet the domestic demand. During the 2022-23 marketing year (November-October), the country imported nearly 165 lakh tonne of cooking oils, valuing a whopping ₹1.38 lakh crore. The finance minister said the government will further promote private and public investment in post-harvest ac-

Govt to formulate plan to make India self-reliant in edible oils; launch scheme for dairy sector

activities to boost food processing levels and farmers' income. Application of nano-liquid DAP (di-ammonium phosphate), a key fertiliser, will be expanded to all agro-climatic zones.

Presenting a vote on account for 2024-25, also known as the interim Budget for the period till the new government comes into office after general elections, she said the government will step up efforts for value addition

in the agricultural sector and boosting farmers' income.

"Farmers are our 'Annadata'. Every year, under the PM-KISAN SAMMAN Yojana, direct financial assistance is provided to 11.8 crore farmers, including marginal and small farmers. Crop insurance is given to 4 crore farmers under PM Fasal Bima Yojana. These, besides several other programmes, are assisting 'Annadata' in producing food for the country and the world," she highlighted.

The agriculture sector is poised for inclusive, balanced, higher growth and pro-

ductivity, she said, adding that these are facilitated by farmer-centric policies, income support, coverage of risks through price and insurance support and promotion of technologies and innovations through startups.

Under Pradhanmantri Suryodaya Yojana, the govt will enable one crore families to get up to 300 units of free electricity every month and help them save up to ₹18,000 annually

The government will mandate the phased blending of compressed biogas (CBG) in compressed natural gas (CNG) for transport and natural gas (PNG) for domestic purposes

To meet India's commitment to net zero, viability gap funding will be provided to harness wind energy potential for the initial capacity of 1GW

Coal gasification and liquefaction capacity of 100MT will be set up by 2030. This will help in reducing imports of natural gas, methanol and ammonia

To promote climate resilience for Blue Economy 2.0, the govt has proposed to launch a scheme for restoration and adaptation measures, and coastal aquaculture and mariculture with an integrated, multi-sectoral approach

Net zero goals



AT A GLANCE

- CAPEX TARGET**
 - Capex target raised by 11.1% to ₹11.11 lakh crore
 - On-year jump in capex target down from 37% spike in last Budget, as government restricted public spending
- TAX TARGETS**
 - Total revenue receipts for FY25 estimated at ₹30 lakh crore, up from revised estimate of ₹26.99 lakh crore in FY24
- INCOME TAX SLABS**
 - No income tax slab benefits for you
 - Direct and indirect tax including import tax rates left unchanged
 - All outstanding disputed direct tax demand up to Rs 25,000 withdrawn
- HOUSING SCHEME**
 - Middle class to get a new housing scheme
 - Govt to build 2 crore houses under PM Aavas Yojana

- HEALTHCARE**
 - Healthcare facilities under Ayushman Bharat will be extended to all Aasha workers, Aanganwadi workers
 - Government plans to set up hospitals in all districts
 - Vaccination of 9-14 year old girls for cervical cancer
- ALLOCATION FOR SCHEMES**
 - Allocations up for at least five major schemes for FY25
 - MNREGA - Allocation hiked by 43.3% to ₹86,000 crore
 - Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY - Allocation up 4.2% to ₹7,500 crore
- DIVESTMENT PLAN**
 - Government cut divestment target for this fiscal year to ₹30,000
 - Target for FY25 has been set at ₹50,000 crore
 - No new announcement of privatisation of state companies

FOCUS AREAS

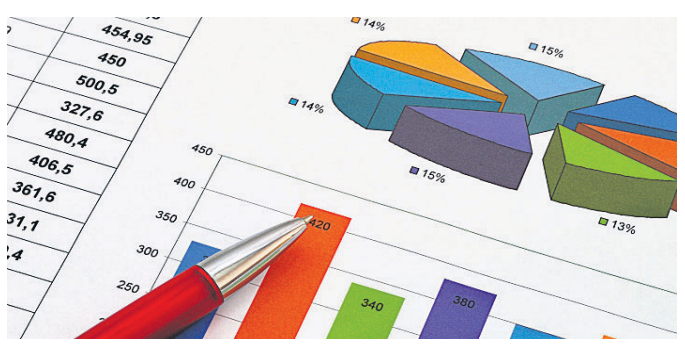
- U-WIN ROLL OUT**
Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the newly designed U-WIN platform for managing immunisation will be rolled out expeditiously across the country
- EV ECOSYSTEM**
The government will expand the electric vehicle ecosystem to support charging infra, and e-buses for public transport networks will be encouraged, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said
- FOREIGN INFLOW**
India is negotiating bilateral investment treaties with different countries with a view to promote foreign inflows, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said
- APPAREL EXPORT**
The government approved the continuation of an export incentive scheme - RoSCTL - for apparel, garments and made-ups up to March 31, 2026
- RELIEF FOR STARTUPS**
The government on Thursday proposed to extend the tax incentive for startups and investments made by sovereign wealth or pension funds for one more year till March 2025

Budget to deliver inclusive development: India Inc

INDUSTRY TERMED THE BUDGET AS A FORWARD-LOOKING ONE WITH NO POPULIST MEASURES DESPITE BEING PRESENTED AHEAD OF THE GENERAL ELECTIONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi: Industry leaders Thursday welcomed the interim Budget 2024-25 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, saying the measures announced augur well for India to deliver on aspirational yet people-centric, inclusive development with prudence scoring a decisive victory. In a post on X, Mahindra Group Chairman Anand Mahindra said Sitharaman's presentation was one of the shortest speeches and brevity



It is an India-first budget. A confident budget of a confident government that focuses on the objective of ensuring that India becomes a 5 trillion-dollar economy by 2025 and a developed nation by 2047

is welcome and it communicates quiet confidence. "No populist measures were announced as has traditionally been expected in pre-election budgets. A welcome, and I hope, permanent approach! The fiscal deficit target was better than envisaged. Prudence scored a decisive victory!" he said. With no major tax and duty changes announced, Mahindra said, "Businesses place a high value on stability and predictability and that was evident in this Budget. The really good news was the higher Tax to GDP ratio which has long been hoped for and which cements a strong foundation for fiscal flexibility and aggressive expenditure when it is needed." Similarly, Biocon Ltd Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-

Shaw also said the finance minister has outlined a comprehensive roadmap for sustained economic growth that will enable India to achieve developed economy status by 2047. "Her emphasis on #research & #innovation, biomanufacturing, robust infrastructure development, and technology-driven digital transformation augur well for India to deliver on aspirational yet people-centric, inclusive development," she said in her post on X.

Chief Financial Officer (India), ZEISS Group, Dhaval Radia, said the Budget is a forward-looking one and "it is a Budget of continuity and trust". "The extension of Ayushman Bharat facilities to anganwadi and ASHA workers is a crucial step in revolutionising the accessibility and affordability of healthcare services in rural India... It is a significant step in the right direction for healthcare, and it will have a far-reaching impact on the overall well-being of the population," he added.

TIDBITS

WHITE PAPER ON MISMANAGEMENT OF ECONOMY PRIOR TO 2014

The government is likely to present a White Paper on the mismanagement of the economy prior to 2014 with an aim to draw lessons. Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led NDA government came to power in May 2014 after a 10-year rule by the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre. "It is now appropriate to look at where we were then till 2014 and where we are now, only for the purpose of drawing lessons from the mismanagement of those years. The government will lay a White Paper on table of the House," announced Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the interim Budget for the next financial year Thursday. According to a senior government official, the white paper may be presented next week. The Budget session of Parliament which began Wednesday is scheduled to be the last session of the 17th Lok Sabha before the General Elections in the next couple of months. The current Budget session would end February 9 with the passage of the Interim Budget 2024-25.

₹75K-CR INTEREST-FREE LOAN TO STATES

The Union government will provide ₹75,000 crore as interest-free loan for 50 years to support reforms by states for realising the vision of 'Viksit Bharat'. The government has set a vision to make India a developed nation by 2047. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made the proposal in this regard in her Budget speech. Many growth and development enabling reforms are needed in states for realising the vision of 'Viksit Bharat', she said. "A provision of seventy-five thousand crore rupees as fifty-year interest-free loan is presented this year to support those milestone-linked reforms by the state governments," the minister said.

Hurt India eye sweeping changes in approach in second Test; England bring in Anderson, Bashir

India look for equaliser

Sarfaraz Khan hopes to join league of legends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Visakhapatnam, Feb 1: The mountain of runs that he scored in domestic circuit might have opened the doors of Indian cricket to him, but for Sarfaraz Khan the learning never stops as he aspires to join the league of legends like Virat Kohli, Viv Richards and Javed Miandad. Sarfaraz has been recently drafted into the India squad for the second Test against England starting here from Friday after KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja were ruled out due to injuries. The prolific Mumbai batter turned into a fan-boy while discussing his learning process.

"I like to watch Virat Kohli, AB de Villiers, Vivian Richards, and even Javed Miandad because my dad has told me that I play like him. I watch Joe Root's batting also. Anyone who is succeeding, I am watching them to see how they are doing it so I can learn and apply it. I want to continue doing this, whether it's in the Ranji Trophy or playing for India in the future," Sarfaraz told JioCinema.

But then there is a real-life hero for Sarfaraz - his father Naushad Ahmed - who dedicated countless hours to

make his son a cricketer. "My father introduced me to cricket, and I always wondered why am I even playing. I am an attacking batsman and I used to get out sooner than others and scoring big runs was getting difficult."

"It was disheartening to see others succeed while I wouldn't be among the runs. But my dad always believed in hard work, and everything I have is a result of that work," said Sarfaraz.

In the 2015-2016 domestic season, Sarfaraz opted to play for Uttar Pradesh after he ran into trouble with Mumbai selectors during an U-19 game. Sarfaraz said his dad would travel to UP or wherever the team played to watch him bat.

When I moved from Mumbai to UP, he (his father) would take flights to come and see me. He would start bowling to me on the terrace or the road itself before selection trials. Now I realise the impact and importance of those efforts

SARFARAZ KHAN



PASSING THE KNOWLEDGE: Rahul Dravid gives some tips regarding batting technique as Shubman Gill listens to his head coach with focus during India's practice session, Thursday

India won't have the luxury of fielding Jadeja in this game but Ashwin, four shy of the 500-wicket milestone in Tests, and Axar will need to redraw their plans to come back hard at their uber-aggressive opponents who are sure to employ the sweeping tactics irrespective of the conditions.

Left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav is expected to play in Jadeja's absence and it remains to be seen if India go in with only one pacer in Jasprit Bumrah and play another spinner, possibly off-spinning all-rounder Washington Sundar. Uncapped left-arm spinner Sourabh Kumar has also been added to the squad.

Not just India's lethal spinners were tested against Bazball, their batters' struggles on turning tracks also came to the fore as left-arm spinner Tom Hartley transformed a seemingly forgettable debut into a match-winning one.

Rohit, perhaps, was the only frontline batter who looked assured in the second innings while the young brigade, especially Shubman Gill, were guilty of playing the turning ball with hard hands. The defensive approach of Gill contributed to his downfall.

With Virat Kohli set to return in the third Test, there will be immense pressure on the likes of Gill and even Shreyas Iyer to deliver here in Vizag.

The home team batters are not as comfortable as their English counterparts in play-

ing the sweep but they need to find a way to match the visitors' high-risk play. Rajat Patidar, who was also a part of the squad in Hyderabad, is likely to replace Rahul. However, the management will have a closer look at conditions before taking a final decision on the playing 11.

Anderson, Bashir in England, on the other hand, might sense a golden opportunity to take a 2-0 lead in the five-match series that can severely mount pressure on the Indians. The way Stokes used and backed his resources in the opener was a captaincy masterclass.

The call to give an extended spell to debutant spinner Hartley in the first innings despite Yashasvi Jaiswal's brutal assault and learning from how Ashwin and Co. bowled spoke a lot about the leadership style of Stokes, who calls himself a great observer of the game.

The tourists also have a point of concern after experienced left-arm spinner Jack Leach has been ruled out of the match be-

cause of a knee injury and young off-spinner Shoaib Bashir will make his debut here.

Pacer Mark Wood had failed to make an impact in Hyderabad despite bowling 25 overs across two innings and for this match the visitors have replaced him with veteran pacer James Anderson, whose unerring accuracy can bring higher value if the track remains slow and low.

In that context, England will not put into practice their coach Brendon McCullum's thought of fielding an all-spin attack for this game. The ACA-VDCA stadium has staged two Tests till date and the pitch usually favours the batters in the first innings.

MATCHDAY

India vs England
2nd Test (Day 1)

Time: 9:30 am

Telecast: Sports18 Network

Stream: Jio Cinema

Visakhapatnam, Feb 1: An under-pressure and under-resourced India will need to think out of the box to counter England's fearless bunch of 'Bazballers' in the second Test beginning here Friday.

India are seldom stretched at home but following a dramatic loss in Hyderabad, they have plenty to ponder and the absence of injured Ravindra Jadeja and KL Rahul has made their task tougher.

Three years ago, the mighty hosts found themselves in a similar situation having lost the opening Test to England at Chennai but bounced back to win the series.

However, the Joe Root-led side was a different breed then and this time India plan to fightback against a team that has redefined the way Test cricket is played and defied all probability to win the series opener after conceding a 190-run lead on a turning track.

England batters, led by Ollie Pope, swept and reverse swept their way to success in the first Test, taking Rohit and his bunch by surprise, while making the most potent spin trio in the world look ordinary.

England captain Ben Stokes and coach Brandon McCullum inspect the pitch ahead of their second Test in Vizag



SHORT TAKES

Barca pip Osasuna

Barcelona: With coach Xavi Hernandez still in charge, Barcelona got back on track with a 1-0 win over Osasuna in the Spanish league Wednesday. Young Brazil forward Vitor Roque scored his first goal in the 63rd minute, heading in a cross by Joao Cancelo about a minute after coming off the bench. Barcelona struggled at home against an opponent who played with 10 men from the 67th minute after defender Unai Garcia was sent off with a second yellow card. The victory moved Barcelona back within eight points of Spanish league leaders Girona. Barcelona sit seven points behind Madrid. Memphis Depay's 90th minute winner helped Atletico Madrid beat Rayo Vallecano 2-1.

Cheatle to miss WPL

Melbourne: Australia pacer Lauren Cheatle has been ruled out of the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2024 after undergoing a medical procedure to remove skin cancer from her neck. Cheatle, who made her Test debut against India in last December, underwent the procedure Wednesday. This year's WPL begins February 23 in Bengaluru and Cheatle, a left-arm quick, was signed up by Gujarat Giants during the auction in December last year.

No CR7-Messi faceoff

Riyadh: Cristiano Ronaldo will miss the chance of a much anticipated reunion with Lionel Messi because of an injury, Al-Nassr coach Luis Castro said. Ronaldo is recovering from a reported calf injury and will not be fit in time to play in the exhibition match between Al-Nassr and Inter Miami in Riyadh Thursday. Messi and Ronaldo were longtime rivals when they played in Spain - for Barcelona and Real Madrid, respectively - and have combined to win 13 of the last 15 Ballon d'Or awards given to the world's best player. The latest installment of that rivalry was seen as the highlight of Miami's pre-season tour, which included two games in Saudi Arabia. But that was put in doubt when Ronaldo suffered an injury that prompted Al-Nassr to postpone two exhibition matches in China this month.

Manjunath stuns Srikanth to seal quarterfinal berth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, Feb 1: Sixth seeds Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand entered the women's doubles quarterfinals, but former World No.1 Kidambi Srikanth was upstaged by lower-ranked compatriot Mithun Manjunath on a mixed day for Indians at the Thailand Masters badminton tournament here Thursday.

With the tough three-game win over Srikanth, Manjunath, along with Ashmita Chaliha in the women's draw, progressed to the last-eight stage of the singles' competition.

Treesa and Gayatri beat fellow Indians Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa 21-15, 24-22 in their round of 16 match. They will next be up against fourth seeds Febriana Dwipuji Kusuma and Amallia Cahaya Pratiwi of

Indonesia.

Manjunath, the current national champion who is ranked 63rd in the world, had to sweat it out for 54 minutes to get the better of Srikanth 21-9, 13-21, 21-17 in a round of 16 match. Manjunath will play Netherlands Mark Caljouw in the last-eight round. However, it was curtains for the other Indian in men's singles draw, S Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian. Subramanian, a qualifier, lost 9-21, 11-21 to Chinese Taipei's Chun-Yi Lin to exit the tournament.

Ashmita also made the next round, beating Chinese Taipei's Yu Po Pai 21-12, 15-21, 21-17 in women's singles. But Malvika Bansod made an early exit in women's singles, losing 22-24, 7-21 to local shuttler Busanan Ongbamrunphan in the pre-quarters.



Liverpool, Man City fire up title race

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Liverpool, Feb 1: Liverpool and Manchester City looked primed and ready for another heavyweight clash for the Premier League title. Liverpool routed Chelsea 4-1 Wednesday to restore a five-point lead for Jurgen Klopp's team atop the table before going to third-placed Arsenal this weekend. City eased to a 3-1 win over Burnley and moved up again to second, ahead of Arsenal on goal difference, and having played a game fewer than their two rivals.

With their fourth straight wins, the Premier League powers showcased deep squads, fast-improving young stars and, for City, the tentative return of feared forward Erling Haaland after nearly two months out injured.

Haaland came off the bench with City comfortably in a three-goal lead as Julian Alvarez again stepped up to lead the attack with two goals. The second was created by Kevin De Bruyne making his first start in the Premier League since August.

For Liverpool, Diogo Jota again covered for the absence of Mohamed Salah and opened the scoring early against a poor Chelsea taking a pass from the impressive Conor Bradley.

Bradley, an unheralded 20-



Diogo Jota celebrates his goal against Chelsea; (inset) Julian Alvarez reacts after one of his two strikes against Burnley, Wednesday

year-old right-back filling in for Trent Alexander-Arnold, then scored his first goal for the club before assisting again for Dominik Szoboszlai to effectively seal the win in the 65th.

Liverpool had the luxury of forward Darwin Nunez missing a first-half penalty, one of a

in eight second-half minutes to beat Brentford 3-2 and rise to fourth, trailing Liverpool by eight points.

CUP FINAL REHEARSAL

Liverpool and Chelsea meet again in the League Cup final February 25. Maybe this time there will be a winner at Wembley Stadium within 90 minutes after the teams Wednesday ended their streak of seven straight draws in games between them for the past 2½ years.

A BIRTHDAY BASH

On the day he turned 24, Alvarez scored twice in the first 22 minutes to set City on their way to an easy win over Burnley. Rodri extended the lead 30 seconds after the second-half restart.

Alvarez now has six goals in his last five games to help the English, European and World Champions manage the absence through injury of Haaland.

City have won six straight games since coming home from Jeddah and also now has Haaland back in action. The Norwegian, who has 19 goals in all competitions this season, came on in the 71st minute after missing six Premier League games and the Club World Cup.

Haaland had shooting chances but the only further goal was Ameen Al-Dakhil's consolation for Burnley in stoppage time.

₹45 crore budget boost for Sports Ministry



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 1: The Sports Ministry was Thursday allocated ₹3,442.32 crore, a hike of ₹45.36 crore as compared to last year, in the interim Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The Paris Olympics, to be held from July 26 to August 11, will be the country's main focus during the 2024-25 financial year.

The country is proud of our youth scaling new heights in sports. The highest-ever medal tally in Asian Games and Asian Para Games reflects a high confidence level. Chess prodigy and our No.1-ranked player R Praggnanandhaa put up a stiff fight against the reigning World Champion Magnus Carlsson. Today, India has over 80 chess Grandmasters compared to little over 20 in 2010

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN, FINANCE MINISTER

In the previous budget, the Sports Ministry had got a revised allocation of ₹3,396.96 crore.

Khelo India, the ministry's flagship programme, gets ₹900 crore, an increase of ₹20 crore from the previous budget

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) sees ₹26.83 crore increase in its budgetary allocation from the previous year's revised expenditure of ₹795.77 crore

The National Sports Federations (NSFs) receives ₹15 crore more this

time, as compared to the 2023-24 revised budget of ₹325 crore

The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) gets a raise with the government allocating ₹22.30 crore in the interim budget as compared to ₹21.73 crore in 2023-24

The National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL), which conducts the testing of dope samples, receives ₹22 crore, ₹2.5 crore more than the previous budget

The budget for National Centre of Sports Science and Research sees a

reduction to ₹8 crore from ₹10 crore previously

The National Sports University gets an increased allocation of ₹91.90 crore from ₹83.21 crore of 2023-24 budget

The budget for incentives to sportspersons sees a significant reduction from ₹84 crore to ₹39 crore

National Sports Development Fund's allocation sees a significant reduction to ₹18 from ₹46 crore

The Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare for Sportspersons

Financial backing is crucial for athletes to focus on their training without concerns about resources. I believe that with collaborative efforts between the government, sports organisations, and the public, we can achieve greater heights in the world of sports

PT USHA, IOA PRESIDENT

scheme gets ₹2 crore

The allocation for 'Enhancement of Sports Facility in Jammu and Kashmir' sees a downfall to ₹8 crore from previous budget allocation of ₹20 crore

The allocation for Commonwealth Games also sees significant reduction from previous year's ₹15 crore to ₹0.01 crore this time

Ladakh all set for 2024 Khelo India Winter Games

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Leh, Feb 1: The Union Territory of Ladakh, hosting the Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) for the first time, is all set for a traditional opening ceremony at the Nawang Dorjay Stobdan Stadium here Friday.

The first part of KIWG 2024 will be held here till February 6. The second part of the Games will be held in Gulmarg, Jammu and Kashmir from February 21-25.

Ladakh will be conducting two disciplines - ice hockey and speed skating. Three hundred and forty-four athletes from 15 states and union territories and two public institutions will compete over five days across three venues.