

## UNION BUDGET 2024-25

FISCAL DEFICIT PEGGED AT 4.9% OF GDP IN 2024-25, TO BE CUT FURTHER BELOW 4.5% IN 2025-26

₹11.11 LAKH CRORE ALLOCATED TOWARDS CAPITAL EXPENDITURE FOR 2024-25

CORPORATE TAX ON FOREIGN COMPANIES REDUCED FROM 40% TO 35%

20% TAX ON SHORT-TERM GAINS ON CERTAIN FINANCIAL ASSETS

**Budget brings better growth and bright future. It will be a catalyst in making India world's third largest economy**  
NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

**Budget gives no relief to common Indian. It's copy paste of Congress manifesto and previous budgets**  
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

**Bengal completely deprived. Union budget doesn't look into interests of poor people**  
MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

**On behalf of the people of Odisha, I would like to thank the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister for giving special importance to the development of Odisha's tourism sector in the Budget and making arrangements to provide the necessary financial support**  
MOHAN CHARAN MAJHI | ODISHA CM

# Peanuts for middle class



**PNN & AGENCIES**

New Delhi, July 23: The first full Budget presented by the NDA government on its third term in office Tuesday came as a disappointment for the middle class suffering from high inflation for the last three-four years.

Though Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the Budget is all about employment, skilling, farmers and the middle class, a cursory glance at the Budget documents reveals that the plans for the middle class are mostly for long term, while there is no immediate relief from rising inflation and joblessness.

There is



**BIG NUMBERS**

|                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Defence           | ₹6,21,940 crore |
| Rural Development | ₹2,65,808 crore |
| Home Affairs      | ₹2,19,643 crore |
| Agriculture       | ₹1,51,851 crore |
| Education         | ₹1,25,638 crore |
| IT and Telecom    | ₹1,16,342 crore |
| Health            | ₹89,287 crore   |
| Energy            | ₹68,769 crore   |
| Social Welfare    | ₹56,501 crore   |
| Commerce & Ind    | ₹47,559 crore   |

SOURCE: PIB & INDIA BUDGET

**₹2.62L-cr for Railways**

New Delhi: Railways has been allocated ₹2.62 lakh crore in the Budget which Union Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw termed as 'historic' and highest ever allocation. Vaishnaw said that even as the Kavach roll out has been low (merely 2.14 per cent of the entire railway network), after the approvals for Kavach 4.0 work on deployment of Kavach will be rapid. He also focused on creation of up to 40,000 new railway jobs.

five years and a spending splurge for states run by her party's new coalition partners with an outlay of ₹48.21 lakh crore.

With rural distress and unemployment being blamed for BJP losing its majority, Sitharaman provided ₹2.66 lakh crore for rural development and maintained spending on long-term infrastructure projects at ₹11.11 lakh crore to boost economic growth.

She abolished 'angel tax' for all classes of investors in startups, cut customs duty on mobile phones and gold and simplified capital gains tax. She, however, raised the securities transaction tax (STT) on futures and options of securities, which led to tanking of stock markets.

For Bihar, where Assembly elections are due next year, she announced spending of ₹60,000 crore on infrastructure projects.

Similarly, for Andhra Pradesh, whose ruling TDP recently joined BJP-led NDA, she allocated ₹15,000 crore in financial aid through multilateral agencies. A similar request for support to Bihar will be expedited, she said.

For the middle class, she raised standard deduction by 50 per cent to ₹75,000 and tweaked tax slabs for taxpayers opting for the new Income Tax regime. This will lead to taxpayers under the new tax regime -- which offers lower rates of taxes but permits limited deductions and exemptions -- saving up to ₹17,500 in tax annually, she said.

Sitharaman said the government's fiscal deficit will be trimmed to 4.9 per cent of the GDP in 2024-25.

Experts meanwhile, said that the new tax regime and sops in the Budget offer little relief to the middle class which has been hit hard with rising inflation and unemployment for a long time.

Opposition Congress termed it as a 'copycat' and a 'kursi bachao' Budget, and said the 'copy-paste government' bor-

rowed ideas generously from the party's manifesto but botched up the policy. Congress also said unemployment is the 'biggest challenge facing the country' and the government's response is 'too little' and will have little impact on the 'grave situation'.

In a post on X, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi said, "Kursi Bachao Budget. Appease Allies: Hollow promises to them at the cost of other states. Appease Cronies: Benefits to AA with no relief for the common Indian. Copy and Paste: Congress manifesto and previous budgets."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge termed the Budget a 'copycat' and alleged that it is not for the progress of the country but to save the Modi government.

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said unemployment is the 'biggest challenge facing country' and the response of the government is 'too little and will have only little impact

on the grave situation'.

Chidambaram also said nothing in the Budget speech 'gives us the confidence that the government will seriously tackle the issue of inflation'.

Though the Finance Minister promised financial assistance for development of tourism, monuments, wildlife sanctuaries and craftsmanship in Odisha, former CM Naveen Patnaik expressed his disappointment at the continued neglect of Odisha in the Budget despite the state's significant contributions to the country.

"There has been nothing substantial for Odisha over the years, and this Budget has also been a disappointment for us," Patnaik said.

He further said many big promises in different sectors were made to the people of Odisha during the election campaign by the BJP, especially in agriculture, MSMEs, and industry. "However, there is no mention of any promise being fulfilled in this Budget. This is a complete neglect of Odisha and her people," Patnaik remarked.

**MORE: P3, 9, 11 & 12**

- CHEAPER**
- Gold & Silver bar and dore
  - Platinum, Palladium, Osmium, Ruthenium and Iridium
  - Cancer drugs - Trastuzumab Deruxtecan, Osimertinib, Durvalumab
  - Medical equipment
  - Polyethylene for use in manufacture of orthopaedic implants
  - X-ray tubes for use in manufacture of medical X-ray machines
  - Imported mobile phones, charger/adaptor
  - Critical Minerals
  - Lithium carbonates
  - Steel Sector - Ferro Nickel and Blister Copper
- COSTLIER**
- PVC flex films
  - Garden umbrellas
  - Laboratory chemicals
  - Solar glass for manufacture of solar cells or solar modules
  - Tinned copper interconnect for manufacture of solar cells or solar modules

**NEW TAX REGIME**

| INCOME       | TAX |
|--------------|-----|
| ₹0-₹3 lakh   | Nil |
| ₹3-₹7 lakh   | 5%  |
| ₹7-₹10 lakh  | 10% |
| ₹10-₹12 lakh | 15% |
| ₹12-₹15 lakh | 20% |
| > ₹15 lakh   | 30% |

**New regime to help save upto ₹17,500**

- Standard deduction for salaried employees up from ₹50,000 to ₹75,000
- Deduction on family pension for pensioners up from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000



## SC no to cancellation, re-test of NEET-UG

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

New Delhi, July 23: The Supreme Court Tuesday dismissed the pleas seeking cancellation and re-test of the controversy-ridden NEET-UG 2024, holding that there was no data on record to indicate a systemic leak of question paper and other malpractices.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra heard submissions from a battery of lawyers, including Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA), and senior advocates Narendra Hooda, Sanjay Hegde and Mathews Nedumapra for around four days.



The bench dictated the operative part of the judgement keeping in mind the future of over two million students and said a detailed judgement will follow.

"There is absence of material to conclude that result of NEET-UG 2024 exam is vitiated or there is systemic breach," the CJ said.

The bench, however, said the fact that the question paper leak took place in Hazaribagh and Patna was not in dispute.

The NTA and the Union education ministry have been at the centre of a massive political row and protests by students over alleged large-scale malpractices ranging from question paper

leaks to impersonation in the test held May 5.

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) is conducted by the NTA for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions across the country.

The NEET-UG 2024 was taken by 23.33 lakh students at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including in 14 overseas, May 5.

## 'Cocaine sharks' found in Brazil

**S**harks off the coast of Brazil have cocaine in them and scientists believe the drug may be altering their behaviour.



In a study conducted on 13 Brazilian sharpnose sharks from waters near Rio de Janeiro, marine biologists found high levels of cocaine in their muscles and livers.

While it is not known how the sharks have been feeding on the drug, some theories exist. Scientists believe that the cocaine likely came from the drainage of illegal labs that produce drugs or from the excrement of drug users through untreated sewage.

It could also be that the sharks fed on bundles of cocaine that were lost or dumped in the sea by drug smugglers. "We don't usually see many bales of coke dumped or lost at sea here, unlike in Mexico and Florida," a scientist told The Telegraph, asserting that it was highly unlikely the sharks had been eating cocaine from dumped packages.

According to scientists, the test results showed "chronic exposure" to cocaine in the sharks.

While they estimate that the cocaine was harmful to them, it is not known to what degree the drug could have affected their behavior or if it made them more aggressive and unpredictable.

"This may be the case, as cocaine targets the brain, and hyperactive and erratic behaviour has been noted in other animals. It's a possibility and further studies are required," said Dr Enrico Mendes Saggioro, an ecotoxicologist.

The researchers, who picked

the small sharks from the water on fishing near Rio de Janeiro, dissected them and tested their organs. In a worrying finding, they found concentrations of cocaine up to 100 times higher than previously found in other marine animals.

The results of those tests revealed that every single sample from the sharks tested positive for cocaine, with 92 percent of muscle samples and 23 percent of liver samples also testing positive for one of the drug's main metabolites, benzoylecgonine. This marks the first evidence of cocaine being identified in free-ranging sharks.

While the extent of the damage to the animals from the cocaine is not known, scientists suspect that one way the drug can affect the sharks is by damaging their eyesight, affecting their capacity to hunt.

They may not be going nuts from the cocaine but it could reduce their life expectancy, a scientist said.

AGENCIES

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**

The budget is historic just like the last 38 I have seen. It will fuel growth, improve the economy, cut deficit,...



**EMINEM GRABS TOP SPOT ON BILLBOARD 200**

Singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, who had been on the Number 1 spot on the Billboard 200, has now been replaced by Rap icon Eminem for the top spot. Eminem has grabbed the top spot courtesy of his album *The Death of Slim Shady (Coup de Grace)*, reports *Variety*.

**JESSICA ALBA ENDORSES MORE SLEEP FOR WOMEN**

*Never Been Kissed* actress Jessica Alba is advocating more sleep for women, citing new research. The actress recently shared a study on her Instagram stories, highlighting the need for women to get more sleep for their bodies to function at their full potential.



**FORTUNE FORECAST**

GaneshSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**

You probably have a big circle of friends, and though most of them may be casual friends, they may sometimes prove to be favourable. They may help you overcome some dejections. It will also help you figure out the importance of the role friends can play.

**TAURUS**

This day, you need to watch out against your selfish and possessive tendencies. Ganesh advises you not to be too determined or demanding. Try to not to be self centred. Do not impose your need and wishes on anyone. You should act generously towards one and all; particularly towards your spouse.

**GEMINI**

You will be busy organising some religious function today or in visiting a place of religious significance. You will encounter expenses in religious and charitable work. However, you should guard against ignoring your daily work in pursuit of all these matters, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**

You will labour more to finish pending tasks. You will give priority to career compared to personal chores. So you will be caught up in your career and business riddles. By evening, however, you will have cheerful moments as Ganesh sees you having cherishing time with your beloved.

**LEO**

You will be able to meet all challenges and obstacles successfully. Your ultimate goal is to come out victorious from any situations. There is a possibility that you will have to face severe competition in business or trade. Personal life will proceed without any hiccups though, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**

Your renewed enthusiasm for life will bring about a radical change in you. Ganesh says today is a good time to let others see how important and how brilliant you can be. Your intelligence will become very evident as you demonstrate how things should be done.

**LIBRA**

Ganesh says you will try to gain knowledge in new topics today. You will feel enthusiasm and a feeling of positivity today. You will show more interest when talking with friends and this will make you come closer to them. There will be benefits to you from your life partner. You will be happy to be in the company of a close relative today. Ganesh says he will be with you always.

**SCORPIO**

The ground beneath you seems a bit shaky; watch your steps. A time would come when your confidence would be shattered, however, don't let set-backs and failures affect you. Adapt the attitude of 'this too shall pass' and the rest would fall in place, says Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**

A cheerful you, your energy level is on an all time high. Ganesh foresees that you will enrol you name for a correspondence or a part-time course. This will boost your confidence and brush up your memory as well. People who are in legal profession will have a rocking day ahead.

**CAPRICORN**

You are a die-hard romantic and with every plan to please your sweetheart, you are taking him/her closer to the cloud nine. But, don't live in fantasy world, warns Ganesh, as problems are going to follow you everywhere. If you are a businessman, your rivals may give you a hard time. Take proper care of your health, advises Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**

You will remember this day for the rest of life as today you will make some important decisions and give a new direction to your life. You are in for a windfall and cherry on the cake will be all the recognition and rewards you get for your sincerity and hard work, predicts Ganesh.

**PISCES**

You will finally realize the worth of your resources today. You will take a decision to increase your savings and clamp down on unnecessary expenses. Your expenses are likely to increase temporarily. It is a good idea to invest in debt schemes today, says Ganesh.

**'Situationship is a retarded concept'**

**Mumbai:** Janhvi Kapoor is busy promoting her upcoming release *Ulajh*. In an interview with a portal, the actor was asked about situationships, but the actor shared that she never understood it at all, calling it a 'retarded concept'.

When Janhvi was asked about a situationships and whether she has been in one, she immediately said no and added: "It feels like a very retarded concept to me. It's either you like someone and you commit to them because you want to be with them and you don't want to share them or you are not interested in which case you don't have time to lead them on into all of that rubbish. I do not understand this middle segment. All the guys who leave you hanging, kick them and throw them out."

Janhvi is currently dating Shikhar Pahariya, with whom she was most recently seen at Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's wedding celebration.



**'There's more to me than being someone's ex'**

**Mumbai:** Harleen Sethi frequently faces questions about her past relationship with Vicky Kaushal. The actor recently addressed being referred to as Vicky's ex-girlfriend.

In an interview with an entertainment portal, Harleen stated that there is more to her identity than being labeled as someone's ex. Harleen, on being quizzed on how she deals with media attention on her personal life after so many years, she opined, "Even in my Instagram bio, I have written 'I am,' there is nothing more. I call myself a general and I don't even recognize myself only as an actor. I am all of it: I am an actor, I am a sister, I am a friend, I am a confident woman, I am a fearless woman or I am a scared woman. It's 'I am'... that's what I need."

She further said, "I think you are a product of all the experiences you've had in your life. So it is very important to be grateful to everything and everybody who has come into your life and given you some experience and some lessons. I am grateful for it all. But, there is no point holding on to something. Everybody has their own journey and that ship has sailed. So let it sail, let it sail beautifully, and you surf. You have your own journey."

**FSB's Children's Film Festival begins today**

**BHUBANESWAR:** The second edition of Children's Film Festival, organised by Film Society of Bhubaneswar (FSB), will be held here at Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre from Wednesday.

Students from Class VI, VII and VIII, of several educational institutions including Loyola School (both English and Odia medium) KIIT International School will take part in the three-day event. The festival plans to engage children with hands-on workshops around pop-up artwork, sketching and sand art animation. On the concluding day, the children will see their efforts from the workshops, culminate into an animated short film. The festival will screen films of renowned film makers from across the world, from Japan - Hayao Miyazaki, from India - Vishal Bharadwaj, from



Denmark - Tom Moore, from USA - Carroll Ballard, Buster Keaton, from France - Albert Lamorisse and Jacques Tati.

"The participating students will get a flavour of some of the best children's films that will expose them to history, storytelling cultures and hopefully open up conversations about the world. We believe exposure to good cinema enables cognitive development and curiosity leading to lifelong learning and engagement with one's society," said FSB president Subrat Beura. For the unversed, FSB is a voluntary organisation set up by a group of filmmakers and film enthusiasts from Odisha established in 2004. It promotes the cause of meaningful cinema and makes the medium accessible to a wider audience and especially the younger generation and students. PNN

**Sonam vows to fight prejudices**

**Mumbai:** Actress and fashion icon Sonam Kapoor has shared a glimpse of her new photoshoot for a magazine, promoting acceptance and fighting against prejudices.



views are still prevalent, taking a stand can be controversial, but I believe it's essential to use whatever platform I have to promote acceptance and fight against prejudices - Sonam A Kapoor."

Sonam, the daughter of actor Anil Kapoor, started her career as an assistant director with filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Black*.

The actress made her acting debut with the 2007 romantic drama *Saawariya*, alongside Ranbir Kapoor. Produced and directed by Bhansali, the film was based on Fyodor Dostoevsky's 1848 short story *White Nights*.

Sonam has featured in movies like *Delhi-6*, *I Hate Luv Storys*, *Mausam*, *Raanjhanaa*, and *Prem Ratan Dhan Payo*.

In 2016, she essayed the role of Neerja Bhanot in the biographical thriller film *Neerja*, directed by Ram Madhvani and written by Saiwyn Quadras and Sanyuktha Chawla Shaikh.

Neerja revolved around the real-life event of the attempted hijacking of Pan Am Flight 73 in Karachi, Pakistan, by the Libyan-backed Abu Nidal Organisation on September 5, 1986.

On the personal front, Sonam is married to businessman Anand Ahuja. The couple has a son named Vayu. IANS

**PEANUTS**



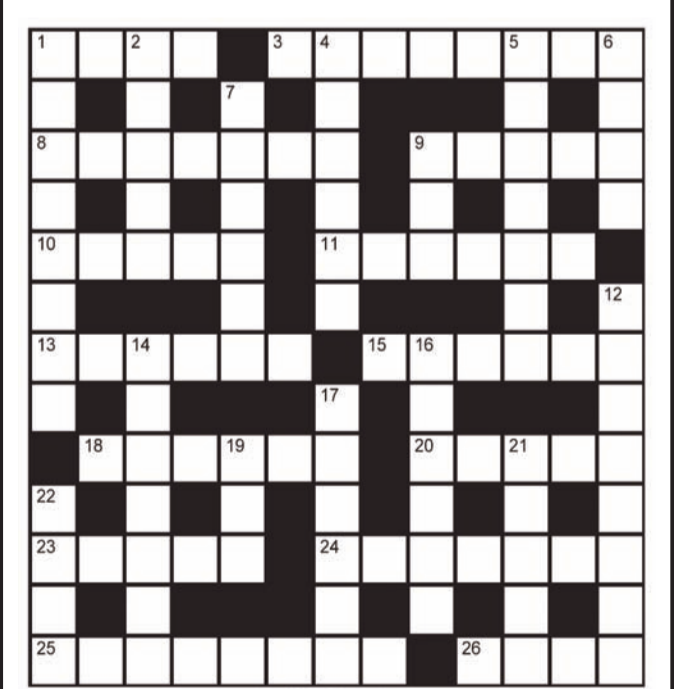
**CALVIN AND HOBBS**



**BREVITY**



**FUN post CROSSWORD**



- Across**  
1 Golf hazard  
3 Suffering  
8 Hard liquor  
9 Kind of salad  
10 Pachyderm's proboscis  
11 Potent  
13 Noria  
15 Type of net or pin  
18 Building material
- Down**  
1 Lab equipment (4,4)  
2 Gallic goodbye  
4 Take a firm stand  
20 Sick and tired (3,2)  
23 Type of layer  
24 Like some volcanoes  
25 Recall  
26 Flock
- 5** Cologne, maybe  
**6** Hitch  
**7** "Burger, hold the \_\_\_"  
**9** Standard  
**12** Compassion  
**14** Caterpillar  
**16** Ratify  
**17** It could be a toy  
**19** Stage signal  
**21** Male duck  
**22** Room access

**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.

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

**SOLUTIONS**

**CROSSWORD**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | C | A | N | D | A | L | R | O | T | O | R |
| A | D | O | O | A | O | I | I |   |   |   |   |
| B | A | L | L | O | O | N | D | I | M | P | S |
| R | I | R | D | E | P | S |   |   |   |   |   |
| E | L | B | O | W | A | V | O | C | A | D | O |
|   |   |   |   |   | A | U | N | L |   |   |   |
| P | A | P | A | Y | A | C | H | A | I | S | E |
| U | O |   |   |   | C | O |   |   |   |   |   |
| L | U | M | B | A | G | O | L | O | A | L |   |
| S | P | O | S | I | T | A | I |   |   |   |   |
| A | M | O | U | R | M | E | D | I | C | A | L |
| R | U | T | I | A | H | A |   |   |   |   |   |
| S | A | S | H | A | C | R | I | P | T | I | C |

**SUDOKU**

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Girls in Bhubaneswar walk with umbrellas to protect themselves from rain triggered by a low pressure area formed in Bay of Bengal Tuesday



downtown

BJD dubs Budget 'disappointing'; BJP calls it 'growth-oriented'

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 23: Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Congress Tuesday described the Union Budget for FY 2024-25 as 'disappointing' and 'anti-Odisha' respectively while the ruling BJP termed it as "growth-oriented" and that it would help generate employment.

Taking to X, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said, "On behalf of the people of Odisha, I would like to thank the Prime Minister Mr @narendramodi and the Finance Minister Mrs @nsitharaman for giving special importance to the development of Odisha's tourism sector in the current budget and making arrangements to provide the necessary financial support."

However, BJD president and Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik said he, along with other



people of the state, was disappointed at the "continued neglect" of Odisha.

Expressing concern over the Budget allocating more funds for the controversial Polavaram Dam, Patnaik pointed out that Odisha has been fighting for justice in the Indira Sagar project issue for long.

Stating that the NDA government has been at the centre for more than 10 years now and every Budget talks about focusing on Eastern India, Patnaik said: "There has been nothing

substantial for Odisha over the years, and this budget has also been a disappointment for us."

Noting that though Odisha faces a number of natural disasters every year, including floods and cyclones, Patnaik said the state's request for a special package for disaster management was ignored while similar pleas of other states have been considered. "So, on both counts, whether it is special package or revision of coal royalty, Odisha continues to be neglected by the NDA," Patnaik said, adding that

BJP promised to grant special category status in its election manifesto.

Special packages allocating crores of funds have been announced for Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, he said.

"Lots of promises in different sectors were made to the people of Odisha during the election campaign. There is no mention of any promise being fulfilled in this budget," Patnaik said.

The former CM, however, said he was happy to see there is a focus on Tourism for Odisha.

Noting that though Odisha faces a number of natural disasters every year, including floods and cyclones, LOP Naveen Patnaik said the state's request for a special package for disaster management was ignored by the Centre

Deputy Chief Ministers - KV Singh Deo and Pravatī Parida - on the other hand welcomed the provisions of the Budget.

Parida said the announcements made by Sitharaman will play a significant role not only in boosting Odisha's tourism but also in the state's economic growth.

Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the budget is growth-oriented and it will provide employment, education, skilling, MSME and middle-class have been focused upon in this budget.

Senior Congress leader Srikanth Jena alleged that Odisha has been betrayed by the BJP-led NDA government in the budget.

"The double-engine government has failed to give justice to the state in the Budget," he said.

Utkal Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ltd (UCCIL) said some areas of Odisha have been identified for cluster development, while announcements made for the promotion of tourism are welcome.

"On a scale of 1-10, UCCI will rate this Budget as 6," the industry body said.

Talsara MLA files nomination for Deputy Speaker

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 23: Ruling BJP legislator Bhabani Shankar Bhoi filed the nomination for the post of Deputy Speaker in the Assembly, Tuesday.

Accompanied by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Deputy Chief Ministers KV Singh Deo and Pravatī Parida and others, the Talsara MLA filed his nomination for the post.

Bhoi was elected to the Odisha Legislative Assembly twice—in 2019 and 2024.

The election for the post of the Deputy Speaker will be held Wednesday, if there is more than one candidate in the fray, an official said.

Earlier, senior BJP leader Surama Padya was elected as the Speaker of the Assembly, he added.

The BJP has 78 MLAs in the 147-member Assembly, while the BJD has 51 MLAs, Congress 14, Independents three and the CPI(M) one MLA.

State records highest forest land diversion



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: Odisha has recorded the highest approval of forest land for non-forestry purpose (mining projects) in the last five years, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Bhupender Yadav told the Lok Sabha.

Responding to a query of Rajkumar Roat in the Lower House Monday, Yadav said Odisha has seen approval of 48 proposals (7680.78 ha) for use of forest land for non-forestry purpose under Van (Sanrakhan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam Act, 1980 between April 1, 2019 and March 31, 2024.

Odisha was followed by Tripura (31 proposals), Madhya Pradesh (21 proposals) and Jharkhand with 16 proposals. Altogether 18,922.98 hectare forest land has been diverted to non-forestry purposes in the last five years, the minister said.

POLAVARAM PROMISE IN BUDGET IRKS OPPOSITION

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, July 23: Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Congress Tuesday came down heavily on ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over the Budget speech of the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in which she asserted that the government is committed to the financing and early completion of Polavaram irrigation project in Andhra Pradesh.

"Our government is fully committed to financing and early completion of the Polavaram Irrigation Project, which is the lifeline for Andhra Pradesh and its farmers," the Finance minister said.

Opposition BJD and Congress leaders termed the statement as a "betrayal" of the people of Odisha and the interests of Odisha.

Terming the decision on Polavaram partisan, senior BJD leader Prasanna Acharya



Odisha has been apprehensive about Polavaram Irrigation Project which it claims would result in submergence of a large number of villages in Malkangiri district

said that the Union government took the decision out of its political compulsions.

"As the Union government survives with the support of other parties, it is acting against the interests of a state like Odisha to please them," he said.

He said former Chief

Minister Naveen Patnaik and the Odisha government in the past had expressed their views against the project. The members of BJD had also repeatedly raised the issue in both Houses of the parliament.

The state government had repeatedly requested the

Centre to at least consider the interest of Odisha in Polavaram project issue. He accused the Union government of ignoring the requests of the Odisha government.

"The special provision made in the Budget for the completion of Polavaram project is a big blow to the interests of Odisha," added Acharya.

He alleged that the BJP has been hampering the integrity of and sowing animosity between the states.

Congress leader Sofia Firdous alleged that several villages in Odisha are submerged and thousands will get displaced due to the Polavaram project. She alleged that the people of Odisha were betrayed by the BJP government.

Notably, Odisha has been apprehensive about the project which it claims would result in the submergence of a large number of villages including protected tribal areas in Malkangiri district bordering Andhra Pradesh.

Advertisement for Lijjat Papad featuring a woman holding a packet of papad and a rabbit. Text includes 'Shaadi, Utsav ya Tyohar... Lijjat Papad Ho Harbar...' and contact information.

Fake sauce unit busted; 3 held

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, July 23: A special squad of Commissionerate Police Tuesday claimed to have busted a fake sauce manufacturing unit near Bhitangi area here and arrested three persons in this connection.

ACP Himanshu Bhusan Swain said, "At least 1,000 sauce bottles have been seized from the factory while three people have been rounded up in this connection." The accused have been identified as Rabindra Biswal, 52, Ashok Kumar Behera, 42, and Dilip Swain, 44, he said, adding that the owner of the manufacturing unit, Iswar Sahoo, is at large. Swain said the officials swung into

action following a tip-off by a local. Besides, a few other sauce manufacturing units are under the scanner of the police as they were reportedly supplying fake sauces to several food joints in City.

A senior official, who was part of the special squad, said huge quantities of corn starch, artificial flavour and hazardous synthetic products were seized during the raid. Several items were used for industrial purposes were also seized. During the raid,

it was found that the sauce was being prepared in an unhygienic environment, she added.

Officials added that the unit's owner sourced a fake manufacturing licence from a third-party via online instead of obtaining it from the civic body.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



SHARP EXCHANGES BETWEEN CJJ, LAWYER

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 23: The keenly watched proceedings in the Supreme Court on NEET-UG 2024 Tuesday saw a heated exchange of words between Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and an advocate intent on speaking out of turn, with the CJJ warning the lawyer he will have him removed from the courtroom.

An exasperated Justice Chandrachud asserted he will not

allow any lawyer to "dictate" the procedure of the court.

The CJJ rapped advocate Mathews J Nedumpara, appearing for some of the petitioners, after the lawyer repeatedly demanded that he be allowed to argue when senior advocate Narender Hooda, the lead counsel for the petitioners, was about to advance his arguments.

The CJJ told Nedumpara that the bench would allow him to argue after Hooda has made his sub-

missions.

"You please sit down. I will have to have you removed from the court," the CJJ said, adding angrily, "I am warning you".

"If your lordships don't respect me, I on my own will leave," the lawyer said. However, Nedumpara kept complaining that he was not allowed to speak in the court. "Please call the security. We will ask him to be removed from the court," an annoyed CJJ said.

228 migrant workers died outside state since 2019



PNN AND AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 23: At least 228 migrant labourers from Odisha have lost their lives while working outside the state since 2019, the Assembly was informed Tuesday.

Responding to a query by BJD MLA Sanatan Mahakud, Labour and Employees' State Insurance Minister Ganesh Ram Singkhuntia said 197 migrant workers died within India and 31 lost their lives outside of the country till June 2024. The state, however, managed to bring only eight mortal remains of the deceased migrant workers.

According to Singkhuntia, Ganjam district reported the highest number of deaths, with 42 migrant workers succumbing outside the state. Twenty-five deaths were recorded in Chhatrapur and 17 in Berhampur, he added.

Furthermore, Bolangir, another district known for signif-

icant migration, recorded 21 deaths of migrant workers, the minister said. Among other districts, 19 deaths were reported from Kandhamal, Rayagada (18), Kendrapara (15), Boudh (11) and Kalahandi (10), he said.

Meanwhile, death records in other districts include Puri (5), Khurda (2), Jharsuguda (1), Jagatsinghpur (1), Cuttack (2), Balasore (1) and Baragarh (2). However, no death was reported in districts like Deogarh, Dhenkanal and Sambalpur.

In another written reply, the minister said 2,821 contractors were issued licences for migration of 1,89,705 workers from Bolangir district during 2019 to 2024. These licences were issued under the provisions of the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979.

Singkhuntia acknowledged that migration for better earnings is a common practice among

House adjourned twice over ASO assault case

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 23: Pandemonium continued to prevail on the second day of the Budget Session in the Assembly Tuesday, when members of Opposition Biju Janata Dal staged a ruckus over the alleged assault on an assistant section officer (ASO) by the son of Governor Raghubar Das, prompting Speaker Surama Padya to first adjourn the House till 11:30am and later till 4pm.

"An ASO was assaulted by the Governor's son July 7 but he hasn't been provided justice so far. Both the Governor and Chief Minister held discussions with the victim but what transpired between them didn't come out. The ASO didn't get justice and was even transferred. They came to power raising the 'Odia Asmita' issue but are failing to provide security to Odia people," al-

leged senior BJD leader Pramila Mallik. She also criticised Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan's statement in which he advised the Opposition to wait till the submission of an inquiry report by Puri Collector who is investigating the matter.

Congress leader Tara Prasad Bahinipati targeted BJD and BJP saying that both parties jointly adjourned the House so that important issues like unemployment couldn't be raised.

The first day of the budget session began on Monday on a stormy note as the opposition staged a walkout as soon as Governor Raghubar Das started delivering his address in the house. The Opposition Congress and BJD had staged a walkout over the government's failure to take action against Lalit Kumar, son of Governor Das, over alleged attack on ASO.

leged senior BJD leader Pramila Mallik.

She also criticised Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan's statement in which he advised the Opposition to wait till the submission of an inquiry report by Puri Collector who is investigating the matter.

Congress leader Tara Prasad Bahinipati targeted BJD and BJP saying that both parties jointly adjourned the House so that important issues like unemployment couldn't be raised.

The first day of the budget session began on Monday on a stormy note as the opposition staged a walkout as soon as Governor Raghubar Das started delivering his address in the house. The Opposition Congress and BJD had staged a walkout over the government's failure to take action against Lalit Kumar, son of Governor Das, over alleged attack on ASO.

collaborations. He also highlighted the implementation of a State Action Plan aimed at ensuring the safety and welfare of migrant workers in Odisha.

ECoR's breakthrough in tunnel construction

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 23: The construction wing of the East Coast Railway (ECoR) has achieved a major breakthrough in constructing a 700-meter-long escape tunnel from national highway with the 4,185-meter-long tunnel in Adenigarh-Charichhak section under deep reserve forest of Madhapur forest range in Boudh.



Out of the total 301km of the Khurda Road-Bolangir project, 152.805km has been commissioned. Apart from this, Subarnapur to Jharmunda, a distance of 28.765km has also been completed

With this the Khurda Road-Bolangir rail link project achieved a major milestone, ECoR sources said.

Out of the total 301km of the Khurda Road-Bolangir project, 152.805km has been commissioned. To speed up the work and ensure early completion of the project before the scheduled timeline, Railways has been constructing this line from both sides, from Khurda Road and Bolangir.

Till now, 105.8km from Khurda Road to Daspalla and 47km from Bolangir to Subarnapur has been commissioned.

Apart from this, Subarnapur to Jharmunda, a distance of 28.765km has also been completed. The segment from Subarnapur to Purunakatak, covering about 73km, is expected to be completed within the next few months. This public-centric project, which spans remote areas, is closely monitored by the Ministry of Railways.

Take stringent action against erring vehicles: Transport Min to STA

Transport commissioner Amitabh Thakur says the enforcement will be even more stringent for educational institutions as no negligence regarding student safety will be tolerated

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, July 23: In order to put a check on road accidents, Commerce and Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena Tuesday directed the State Transport Authority (STA) officials to take stringent action against vehicles operating without valid fitness and registration certificates.

Following the directives, Transport commissioner Amitabh Thakur, in a circular, asked all deputy transport commissioners and regional transport officers (RTOs) to adopt strict approach against erring vehicles.

"Decisions have been taken to not only impose fines but also to seize these vehicles and file legal cases as per the law. All concerned officials have been instructed to intensify the inspection process of fitness and registration certificates throughout the state," he said.

"According to the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, it is mandatory for transport vehicles to have valid registration and fitness certificates, and for non-transport vehicles to have valid registration certificates. Despite repeated awareness campaigns, some vehicle owners have been

found violating these norms," Thakur said.

"Moreover, insurance companies do not compensate for accidents involving vehicles without valid fitness and registration certificates. Therefore, it has been decided to strictly control such vehicles and take firm action against lawbreakers. The STA has issued a crucial circular consisting of nine points in this regard," he said.

"As per the guidelines, motor vehicle inspectors shall abstract fitness and registration certificate expired report from VAHAN on daily basis. The report contains the owner's address and mobile number. These vehicles will be closely monitored. If caught without valid fitness and registration certificates, they will be seized under Section 207 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, by issuing challans," Thakur said in the circular.

"The list containing details of vehicles whose fitness and registration certificates have expired will be circulated among respective bus/truck/taxi owner associations on monthly basis with a request not to allow these vehicles to ply under their associations," he said.

"The RTOs will also circulate list containing fitness and registration certificates expired to respective toll plazas functioning under their region every month with a request not to allow those vehicles to pass through those plazas.

Thakur said the enforcement will be even more stringent for educational institutions as no negligence regarding student safety will be tolerated.

He instructed the RTO officials to file a prosecution report against the heads of educational institutions if they are found using vehicles for transportation purpose without valid fitness certificates and other required documents.



UP IN ARMS: Members of East Coast Railway Porters' Union stage a demonstration in front of Cuttack railway station, Tuesday, seeking fulfillment of their various demands

KIMS docs save infant with heart defect

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: The doctors at Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) here Tuesday saved the life of a 10-day-old baby with a congenital heart disease.

The paediatric cardiology team, led by Asish Ranjan Mohakud, along with the neonatology unit and cardiac anesthesiologist Ashok Kumar Badamali performed the surgery.

"The baby weighed 2.2 kg and was referred to KIMS with a suspected congenital heart disease.



The baby's oxygen saturation was below 70 per cent and it required continuous oxygen support," Mohakud said.

"Investigations using chest X-rays and echocardiography revealed a condition known as pulmonary atresia, where blood

flow to both lungs was severely restricted, Mohakud said, adding "Babies with this condition can survive if they have an additional blood supply to the lungs, such as a patent ductus arteriosus (PDA), but this naturally occurring connection often closes

soon after birth." "Surgical options, such as a Blalock-Taussig (BT) shunt, were available but carried significant risks, especially for infants weighing less than 2.5 kg. So, we decided on a less invasive yet highly effective approach: dilating and stenting the ductus arteriosus," Badamali said.

"Following the procedure, the infant's oxygen levels improved, rising above 90 per cent. The immediate life-threatening condition was resolved, and the baby was able to maintain stable oxygen levels," he said.

HRAO gives thanks to FM Sitharaman

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 23: The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) chairman JK Mohanty Tuesday expressed gratitude to Union Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman for giving priority to the tourism sector in the Budget.

Mohanty said besides places like Vishnupad Temple at Gaya, Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya, Rajgir and Nalanda in Bihar, it is heartening to learn that the Union government will now prioritise on developing the tourism sector in the state.

"Tourism has tremendous potential to generate higher employment opportunities in rural and urban areas of the state. There are beaches, mountains, waterfalls, rich temple architecture and places of historical importance that attract tourists," he said. "At present, GDP contribution from tourism is eight per cent which could go higher with a double-engine government," he said.

Villagers to safeguard Debrigarh Sanctuary

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: In order to help in the conservation and protection of wild animals, around 120 households in Amjhar village under Attabira tehsil in Bargarh, Tuesday joined hands with the authorities from Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary.

Around 400 villagers, in presence of Hiraakud Wildlife Division DFO and DWS forest officials, pledged in front of village deity to make Amjhar free from pollution, open defecation and use household toilets and dustbins in the locality.

DWS authorities, on a priority basis, constructed toilets in nine households which did not have the facility earlier, repaired around 76 toilets by installing doors, septic tanks, water tanks and water-motor as well as repaired seepage roofs. The au-



thorities also constructed 10 dustbins at different locations in the village.

Villagers pledged to actively participate in various developmental works including ecotourism initiatives and road-repairing in and around the sanctuary.

Notably, a few villagers of the area are already engaged in ecotourism activities and around 10 per cent revenue generated from these activities are utilised for development works

Earlier, in an initiative supported by Hiraakud Wildlife Division, the villagers of Dhodrakusum had declared the village as 'Green Village-Dhodrukusum'. They took a pledge to make the area neat and clean by using individual toilets and public dustbins. They ensured to keep forests safe by avoiding man-made fire and promised to paint pictures of animals on their house walls for creating awareness on wildlife within the community.

MARKET WATCH table with columns for INDEX and VARIATION, listing SENSEX, NIFTY, DOLLAR, EURO, GOLD, and SILVER.

WEATHER table with columns for BBSR and CTC, listing Max Temp, Min Temp, Humidity, and Rainfall.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Priyanka Haldar, W/o-Sanjay Biswas, resident of Ward No.- 11, Mission Compound, P.O./P.S.-Kotpad, Dist.- Koraput, PIN-764058, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.-813, dtd. 18.07.2024 that now onwards I shall be known as PRIYANKA HALDER for all future purposes.

Chimpanzees communicate with human-like gestures

NEW RESEARCH HAS FOUND THAT CHIMPS SEND 'RAPID FIRE' GESTURES BACK AND FORTH TO ONE ANOTHER, IN THE SAME CADENCE AS PEOPLE DO, ACCORDING TO A NEW STUDY PUBLISHED IN THE JOURNAL CURRENT BIOLOGY

Humans might be the masters of quick-fire banter, but it seems chimpanzees have their own rapid back-and-forth, albeit in the form of hand signals.

New research has found that chimps send 'rapid fire' gestures back and forth to one another, in the same cadence as people do, according to a new study published in the journal Current Biology.

To learn more about the rules surrounding their use, the researchers studied more than 8,500 gestures recorded from 252 wild chimps in five wild communities in East Africa.

They found that 14 per cent of their communications involved gesturing between two individ-

ual chimpanzees. Most exchanges were in two parts, but some extended up to seven different types of gesturing.

"Human conversation follows very strict rules of turn-taking that are consistent across cultures and languages," said Gal Badihi, an animal behaviour expert at the University of St Andrews. "We started to wonder whether chimpanzee communication was governed by its own rules, or if the rules are similar to human conversation."

Most of the interactions were brief. In one, recorded at Budongo Conservation Field Station in Uganda, a chimp called Monica extended her hand towards another, called Ursus, after a phys-

ical altercation, prompting Ursus to respond with a reassuring tap.

But in other cases, chimps traded up to seven gestures in a row. In these exchanges, the apes typically took 120 milliseconds to respond to each other, similar to the average human conversational response time of 200 milliseconds.

"Chimpanzees use gestures in almost every aspect of their life," said Badihi. Besides reconciling after a fight, she observed chimpanzees using gestures to avoid confrontation, to greet each other with a hug or kiss, to ask to share food and to indicate they wanted to travel together or go their separate ways. Grooming sessions were when most gestures took place.

"Some groups use a big, loud, scratch gesture and then start grooming together. In the middle of the grooming interactions they might gesture to each other to change position or to start grooming in a new place," she said.

The researchers describe how



the timing between exchanges hardly varied between chimps of different ages, but there were

some variations between different communities, akin to the subtle cultural differences seen

in humans. For example, gestures were exchanged more slowly in the Sonso chimp community in Uganda. The shared traits could be traced back to shared ancestral mechanisms, according to Catherine Hobaiter, a senior author on study.

Still, there are plenty more questions to get to the bottom of, such as "when these conversational structures evolved, or why," said Hobaiter.

Since humans and chimps are both great apes, quick-fire communication may be a product of their shared evolutionary heritage. Alternatively, rapid turn-taking could be a broader feature of social communication, and exist in other species such as whales, dolphins, bats and hyenas, the researchers said.

"To get at that question we need to explore communication in more distantly related species — so that we can work out if these are an ape-characteristic, or ones that we share with other highly social species, such as elephants or ravens," they added.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS. List of various agencies and their contact information.



FOCUS UNION BUDGET

# IT ALL COMES DOWN TO JOBS



A failure of mass level job creation has become the biggest elephant in the room for muted consumption and hence for the ability to grow at a sustained 7%+ for the next 25 years

creation. Other than being hobbled by onerous bureaucratic compliance and regulations, one of the key reasons for these small enterprises not being able to scale up (and integrating into supply chains of medium and large corporates) has been a lack of access to formal credit. Interest rates on loans from money lenders were exorbitant. The action plan in the Budget "formulates a package covering financing, regulatory changes and technology support, to help them grow and compete globally." A key component is a credit guarantee scheme for manufacturing MSMEs as well as a self-financing guarantee fund. There are other incentives to increase bank loans to this segment (including higher MUDRA loan limits, better working capital management, etc.)

Finally, a failure of mass level job creation has become the biggest elephant in the room for muted consumption and hence for the ability to grow at a sustained 7%+ for the next 25 years. The focus, front and centre of the government's vision as communicated in the Budget speech is to incentivise well-paying employment opportunities, much of this through skilling. The Budget has an outlay of ₹1.48 lakh crore in FY25 for education, employment and skilling, and targets 4.1 crore job opportunities for youths over the next 5 years. An Employment Linked Incentive scheme for companies is a key pillar, focusing on first time employees, with the obvious intent of encouraging hiring in the formal sector.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of these strategies will ultimately depend on their implementation. Circling back to the nine priorities mentioned earlier, these will present formidable challenges. The government does well to recognise that collaboration between the Centre and states will be key in effective implementation.

*The writer is a Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research. Views are personal.*

©THE BILLION PRESS

To an extent, the 2024-25 Budget measures were influenced by the general election results. The higher allocations to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh were the most obvious manifestations. However, the other Budget priorities, while likely given a bit more urgency post the elections, are based on other unfolding economic trends, many of which have evolved as major concerns over the last few years.

The Finance Minister began her speech listing four key themes of the Budget planning: employment, skilling, MSMEs and the middle class. These are then detailed into nine actionable priorities, which the forward-looking vision plan intends to be drivers of sustained growth.

On growth and overall economy, the Economic Survey had forecast inflation-adjusted FY25 GDP growth at 6.5-7.0% (lower than RBI's 7.2%). Economic activity remains robust, with industrial activity, manufacturing and service exports, airline traffic, hotel stays and many more remaining robust. Yes, growth in these indicators is slowing, but still remains healthy. The stock markets have crossed historical highs almost every month; despite the stretched valuations, domestic household savings still keep pouring in every month.

has been the lack of incremental quality, well paying jobs. Increasingly, as official data shows, larger numbers of additional employment come from "casual labour" or "self-employed" rather than "salaried". Even amongst the salaried classes, an increasing number are contract workers. None of the categories have pensions or benefits, and remain vulnerable to losing their jobs in economic downturns.

On the other hand, a rising concern over the past 3-4 years has been a flood of money from retail investors in stock markets. In the earlier years of this shift, this flow had largely been through mutual funds, but recently has shifted not just to direct stock investing, but into

speculative Futures and Options (F&O) derivatives. In fact, regulators are now saying that this huge rush of retail investors is leading to a diversion of household savings from productive investments into speculation. This has led to a five-fold increase in the Security Transactions Tax on F&O trades from 0.02% to 0.1%, a hike in the Short Term Capital Gains (STCG) tax from 15% to 20% and on Long Term Capital Gains (LTCG) tax from 10% to 12.5%. These changes will result in a net revenue loss of ₹37,000 crore due to the personal income tax changes and a gain of ₹30,000 crore via the capital gains tax increases. The govt also estimates to lose another ₹8,000 crore with the reductions in indirect taxes on goods. At a very broad level, households stand to net gain only about ₹15,000 crore in disposable incomes, a very small amount relative to the total private consumption (0.08%).

The MSME sector (particularly the Micro and Small segments) was another focus area, since it overlaps both the concerns of lagging consumption and a lack of well-paying jobs. Recently released government data showed 6.5 crore unincorporated enterprises employing 11 crore workers in 2022-23; these comprise the informal sector and will be key to future job



Saugata Bhattacharya

**THE PROXIMATE REASON FOR MUTED CONSUMPTION DEMAND HAS BEEN THE LACK OF INCREMENTAL QUALITY, WELL PAYING JOBS**

## Coalition Budget

Nothing, not even the darkest falsehood can stop the ultimate triumph of Truth.

THE MOTHER



Appeasement is a dirty word, especially in the context of Indian politics. It becomes dirtier when it is applied to the country's economic management. There is no other way to term the first Budget of the NDA government placed by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman who for the first 25 minutes spoke only about Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. This Budget has been used to unabashedly placate the two allies of the NDA - Telugu Desam Party (TDP) ruling Andhra Pradesh and Janta Dal United (JD-U) running the Bihar government. N Chandrababu Naidu and Nitish Kumar had lobbied and clamoured for greater budgetary allocations for the development of their respective states. The FM ended up providing large chunks of funds for the two states unable as she was to concede their bigger demands for special category status. This could be seen as done under political compulsion as the government's survival depends of the support of these two allies. After a decade, this could be seen as BJP's first coalition Budget. The Union Budget has been used as an instrument to placate the two primary allies of the NDA instead of drawing up an economic blueprint for the development of the entire country.

One cannot blame Opposition politicians such as Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aadiya Thackeray, Karnataka Deputy CM DK Shivakumar and West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee for slamming the Budget for letting their respective states down. The complaint becomes justified when the Centre uses its Budget to pick and choose individual states for giving its largesse.

In the process, the budgetary exercise has been exposed as deprived of decisive policy action to tackle price hike, disinvestment, agriculture & infrastructure development and job creation. In this Budget, the government has promised to provide skill training and employment to millions of unemployed youth in partnership with the private sector. Vast number of under-skilled youth is supposedly to be employed or protected by the Top 500 companies of the country. It is unclear how these private enterprises will handle these trainees on their work floors and who will train them. Most genuine working factories will not have the space or manpower to handle such trainees. Also, the Finance Minister has claimed that the government will incentivize 3 million youth entering the job market by providing one month's Provident Fund (PF) contribution. However in many companies in India, PF does not kick in from Day One. It is unclear how this would incentivize employment.

On the other hand, Orissa has not figured in the Budget priority and has very little to show in terms of budgetary allocations while being a major support pillar of this third term of Prime Minister Modi. Apart from a lollipop promised on the tourism sector, no new infrastructure, irrigation or special projects have been announced for the state.

Many other important things are missing in this Budget. The FM seems to have conveniently forgotten MNREGA which does not find mention in her Budget. There were complaints in the past about the government reducing MNREGA funds. The Budget makes no serious effort to improve the income of the bottom 40 per cent of the population whose income has gone down during the past decade of the BJP rule.

A few sops here and there such as a modicum of relief in the new tax regime, reduction in the import duty on gold and silver which immediately led to a crash in their prices, making mobile phones a little cheaper by way of less taxation are but just cosmetic in nature. High sounding self-congratulatory rhetoric for the Budget by top ministers of the ruling alliance would do little to take the country forward. Political messaging seems to have taken over economic goals for the country in the present Budget.

### WISDOM CORNER

Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.  
ALBERT SCHWEITZER

When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.  
HENRY FORD

Look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious.  
STEPHEN HAWKING

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1911:** Led by a local resident, American Hiram Bingham reached Machu Picchu, the 15th century, largely forgotten Inca site, in a remote part of the Peruvian Andes.
- **1915:** In one of the worst maritime disasters in American history, the passenger liner SS Eastland capsized in the Chicago River, killing more than 840 people, in Chicago.
- **1917:** Beginning of Mata Hari's trial. Dutch-born dancer and courtesan Mata Hari, whose name became a synonym for the seductive female spy, went on trial this day in 1917, accused of spying for Germany, and was subsequently found guilty and shot by a firing squad.
- **1923:** The Treaty of Lausanne is signed between Turkey and the countries that formed the Allied Powers in the First World War. Under the treaty, Turkey had to give up all the territorial claims made by the Ottoman Empire and agree to new borders.
- **1959:** A series of debates, now popularly called the kitchen debates, occurred between U.S. Vice President Nixon and Soviet Premier Khrushchev in Moscow. Nixon was visiting a house built as part of an exhibit in the American National Exhibition.
- **1977:** The 4-day long Libyan-Egyptian War comes to an end. The border war began with thousands of Libyans marching towards Egypt's borders.

### LOL

#### FLYING IN THE PLANE

Two hunters got a pilot to fly them into the far north for elk hunting. They were quite successful in their venture and bagged six big bucks. The pilot came back, as arranged, to pick them up. They started loading their gear into the plane, including the six elk. But the pilot objected and he said, "The plane can only take four of your elk; you will have to leave two behind." They argued with him; the year before they had shot six and the pilot had allowed them to put all aboard. The plane was the same model and capacity. Reluctantly, the pilot finally



permitted them to put all six aboard. But when the attempted to take off and leave the valley, the little plane could not make it and they crashed into the wilderness. Climbing out of the wreckage, one hunter said to the other, "Do you know where we are?" "I think so," replied the other hunter. I think this is about the same place where we landed last year!"

### IN JEST THIS



Melvin Durai

**LETTING YOUR CHILD SPEND MORE THAN THREE HOURS A DAY ON SOCIAL MEDIA IS LIKE LETTING YOURSELF SPEND MORE THAN THREE HOURS A DAY AT THE LOCAL BAR**

US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy wants to require Facebook, X and other social media platforms to carry a warning label, similar to the labels that appear on tobacco and alcohol products.

The label would look like this: SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: This social media platform may cause considerable harm to your mental health. It may cause anxiety and depression. It may make you envious of your online friends, wishing you could have their houses, their cars, their bodies. It may make you wish you could go on vacations like they do, win major awards like they do, raise perfect children like they do. It may make you think of strangers online as close friends, while turning your real-life friends into strangers. It may introduce you to a potential mate, someone who will fall deeply in love with your bank balance. It may take your money to a country you've always wanted to visit. It may

make your attention span so short, you'll have trouble reading a long word like "attention." It may expose you to fake videos and fake news, get you excited about fake likes from fake followers with fake eyelashes."

Wait ... that warning label is too long. Perhaps that's why Murthy is focusing on just one aspect of social media's ill effects: its impact on the mental health of adolescents. As he wrote in a New York Times essay, "adolescents who spend more than three hours a day on social media face double the risk of anxiety and depression symptoms, and the average daily use in this age group, as of the summer of 2023, was 4.8 hours."

You may conclude, from those facts, that the average adolescent is getting very average parenting. That's where a warning label would help, says Murthy. It would remind parents that social media "has not been proved safe." Letting your child spend more than three hours a day on so-

cial media is like letting yourself spend more than three hours a day at the local bar. It's not good for your health, even if everybody knows your name.

For a warning label to take effect, Congress would need to approve it. That means that Democrats and Republicans would have to agree. First, there would be a debate on the floor of the US House of Representatives: Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez: "I don't know why anybody would be against a warning label on social media platforms. It makes too much sense. We need to protect our children."

Republican Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene: "I'd rather wait until President Trump appoints a new surgeon general. Why should we listen to Vivek Murphy?"

Ocasio-Cortez: "His name is Murthy, not Murphy. Put a 'T' where there's a 'P'."

Greene: "Okay, but too much 'T' and I have to 'P'."

Following the debate, a vote would be taken and Speaker Mike Johnson would announce the results: "By a vote of 299 to 136, the US House of Representatives has passed a bill to put a warning label on Marjorie Taylor Greene."

A warning label on social media platforms would not be enough, Murthy says. He wants to see other measures, including restrictions on features such as push notifications, autoplay and infinite scroll, which are used by social media platforms to keep adolescents and others hooked. He also wants parents and teachers to establish phone-free zones and periods. Parents need to teach their children that they can survive a few hours without looking at their phones.

Mom: "Put your phone away. We didn't come on this vacation for you to be on Instagram the whole time."

Teen: "But Mom, I'm just looking to see if any of my friends are having better vacations."

### Formidable challenge

Sir, Vice President Kamala Harris is under intense pressure to revitalise her political standing and secure the Democratic Party's nomination after President Joe Biden's withdrawal from the presidential race. With the election just 100 days away, the urgency to win over Democratic delegates and donors is paramount. Securing the official nomination from the party is the first critical hurdle she must overcome, setting the stage for her to face a formidable Republican ticket. Harris' path to the nomination involves not only garnering support from within her party but also reaching out to detractors and undecided voters. This is a challenging task, given the solid opposition posed by Donald Trump and JD Vance. The duo has a strong appeal to a significant portion of the American electorate, making them tough adversaries to beat. Political analysts, including Lew Lukens from Signum Global Advisors, acknowledge the difficulties Harris faces but also see potential in her candidacy. Lukens believes that despite the uphill battle, Harris deserves the chance to be the Democratic candidate. This endorsement from seasoned experts suggests a belief in her abilities to mount a credible challenge against Trump and Vance. The Democratic Party sees Harris' candidacy as an opportunity to regroup and refocus its efforts. Her potential to unify different factions within the party and appeal to a broad voter base could be crucial in re-energising the Democratic campaign. If Harris can navigate the nomination process successfully and appeal to a wide range of voters, she might strengthen her position significantly.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

### Sense of responsibility

Sir, The sense of responsibility of the Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi is worth appreciating when the General made no delay in visiting Jammu to get first-hand information from the formation commanders following terror attacks which killed four Army soldiers including a captain. Sadly enough, terror attacks in the Jammu region continue unabated in spite of strict vigil by the Indian Army. I think, there may be some loopholes somewhere which are yet to be identified. Can the Indian Army take the advice of their predecessors to plug the loopholes?

Arun Gupta, KOLKATA

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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

# Budget reflects govt's political bankruptcy: TMC

**IN A SOCIAL MEDIA POST, THE PARTY DISMISSED THE TERM 'UNION BUDGET 2024', RENAMING IT AS THE 'ANDHRA-BIHAR BUDGET'**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, July 23: The Trinamool Congress Tuesday launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre and said the Union Budget reflected the fiscal and political bankruptcy of the regime.

In a social media post, the party dismissed the term 'Union Budget 2024', renaming it as the 'Andhra-Bihar Budget'.

TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee told reporters in New Delhi that "The net result is zero because Bengal has been constantly tortured and deprived."

"You have seen how Bengal has been consistently deprived by this BJP government. Has there been a positive outcome of 12 BJP MPs elected from Bengal?," Banerjee said outside the Parliament complex.

Recalling Bengal BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari's words "Jo Hamare Sath, Hum Unke Saath," (We will be on the side of those who support us), the Diamond Harbour MP said, "What he said has been proved today."

"Just to save their government, they have allocated special packages to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. We don't have any problem with any state getting any allocation, but why should Bengal be deprived?," he said.

"Bengal has always led from the front in the country's freedom struggle. But the same Bengal has been deprived and people will surely give a befitting reply again," he commented.

"This BUDGET is a complete failure with ZERO WARRANTY, presented by a FAILED FINANCE MINISTER OF A FAILED GOVERNMENT. Instead of tackling urgent issues like



**This BUDGET is a complete failure with ZERO WARRANTY, presented by a FAILED FINANCE MINISTER OF A FAILED GOVERNMENT. Instead of tackling urgent issues like unemployment, rising prices and growing inflation, the BJP has crafted a budget to bribe its coalition partners and buy time before the government implodes!**

ABHISHEK BANERJEE | NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY, TMC

unemployment, rising prices and growing inflation, the BJP has crafted a budget to bribe its coalition partners and buy time before the government implodes!," Banerjee later posted on X. Senior TMC leader Kunal Ghosh in a post on X said, "This budget should not be labeled as union budget. It is a budget to keep Andhra Pradesh and Bihar happy. To save one's chair and keeping some others in good humour."

Accusing the Modi government of neglecting West Bengal and replicating successful social welfare schemes pioneered by the Mamata Banerjee administration, Ghosh emphasised that the Budget failed to address the nation's core issues and merely manipulated statistics and rhetoric.

Summing up his criticism, the former Rajya Sabha MP described the Budget proposals as emblematic of the Centre's financial and political bankruptcy.

BJP state spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Samik Bhattacharya told PTI, the Union Budget will galvanise the development trajectory of entire

eastern region of which Bengal is a part.

Praising the budget, BJP leader and state president of party's youth wing Indranil Khan referred to the waiving of basic customs duty on cancer medicines.

The Union Budget allocated substantial funds for Bihar, including over ₹26,000 crore for highway development and ₹11,500 crore for flood mitigation efforts.

Additional initiatives for Bihar encompassed new bridges over the Ganga, a new airport, a medical college, and advancements for Nalanda University and tourist attractions like the Nalanda-Rajgir corridor.

Gaya was designated as the headquarters for the Kolkata-Bihar corridor, alongside plans for three new expressways and enhanced sports infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh received significant financial aid, including ₹15,000 crore for the state capital's development, with ongoing commitments for future support.

The Budget also earmarked over ₹3 lakh crore for women-centric schemes, pledged to com-

## TMC slams FM for neglecting 'Ghatal Master Plan'

Kolkata: The Trinamool Congress Tuesday criticised Union Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman for not including the Ghatal Master Plan, aimed at managing floods in low-lying areas of Paschim and Purba Medinipur districts, in her Budget speech.

The speech also overlooked long-standing Ganga erosion issues in districts such as Malda and Murshidabad, which have consistently gained national attention. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had recently announced that the state government would proceed with implementing the master plan using its own resources, citing the Centre's lack of response to the demand.

Ghatal MP and Bengal film star Deepak Adhikari aka Dev described the non-allocation of funds for the Ghatal Master Plan in the Union Budget as "nothing but a vindictive political attitude" of the Narendra Modi government.

Talking to PTI over the phone, Dev said, "It is sad (that funds weren't allocated for Ghatal Master Plan). I think the reason behind this could be that the BJP won fewer seats in the state this time and also because Bengal is ruled by the Trinamool Congress."

In her Budget speech, Sitharaman unveiled a comprehensive plan to address recurring flood crises in several states, with significant allocations for Bihar, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Sikkim.

Bihar, frequently impacted by floods, will receive substantial financial support through programmes such as the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme.

Assam, grappling with an-



nual floods from the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, will receive assistance for flood management and related initiatives, Sitharaman said in her Budget speech.

Uttarakhand, affected by cloud bursts and landslides, will also benefit from government assistance aimed at recovery efforts. Sikkim, which was hit by devastating flash floods and landslides in October last year, will also get financial assistance from the Centre to rebuild the state.

Despite these allocations, there was minimal mention of Bengal in the Finance Minister's budget, except in the context of the Purvodaya programme, which aims to foster the comprehensive development of the eastern region, encompassing Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh.

"This reflects the BJP's consistent anti-Bengal stance and vindictive politics. They withhold support even for natural disaster relief in non-BJP ruled states like Bengal because they cannot gain politically," TMC spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Santanu Sen told PTI.

Slamming the Union Budget as "directionless" and "anti-poor", Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee questioned the logic behind opening up government coffers for Sikkim but making no mention of funds for the Darjeeling hills.

plete the Polavaram irrigation project, and announced a grant

for backward regions in three districts of the state.

## Apex committee formed to curb stray dog menace

Promotion of pet dog registration, mandatory crèche at construction sites on GHMC's agenda to check dog bite incidents

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Hyderabad, July 23: Telangana Municipal Administration Principal Secretary Dana Kishore Monday announced that an apex committee has been set up, comprising senior officials of various government departments and others, to formulate an action plan to prevent stray dog menace and dog-bite incidents.

Kishore, who held a meeting with officials of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), the Veterinary department and members of the Blue Cross as well as other animal welfare organisations, directed the officials concerned to set up animal care centres in all urban local bodies (ULBs) of the state at the earliest, an official release said.

He underlined the need to take up an Information, Education, Communication (IEC) campaign to spread awareness within resident welfare associations and lower-income housing federations as well as among school children about the behaviour of dogs.

A training programme for all sanitary workers, field sanitary assistants and women self help groups should be conducted in every ward of the GHMC within the next week to create awareness about the street dog menace, the official said.

Similar training programmes should also be conducted in all the ULBs in the state, he added. The GHMC officials were also told to set up a couple of shelter homes for stray dogs in the city on a pilot basis.

GHMC Commissioner Amrapali Kata said that the GHMC will take up a survey of

stray dogs in the city along with a sterilisation drive and anti-rabies vaccination of all street dogs.

She also stated that GHMC would initiate steps for promoting pet dog registration, elimination of garbage at vulnerable points to avoid street dogs from gathering, and ensuring proper food waste disposal by hotels, restaurants, function halls, etc.

The release said that the availability of crèche facilities should be made mandatory at construction sites, as the children of construction labourers are most vulnerable to fatal dog attacks as they are left unsupervised when the parents work.

Members at the meeting discussed the challenges being faced in handling the stray dog menace.

They said that coordination of all departments is essential in tackling the stray dog and also pointed out that there is a need to educate pet dog owners as well as dog feeders, the release added.

Several incidents of street dog attacks have been reported in the state, resulting in deaths in some cases, in the recent past.

Last week, an 18-month-old boy died, while another boy suffered injuries when street dogs attacked them in separate incidents in Telangana. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had expressed anguish over the death in Hyderabad last week and had directed officials to take steps to prevent the recurrence of such incidents in the future.

# Dengue cases on rise in Bengal

**HEALTH DEPT SAYS SITUATION 'NOT ALARMING'**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, July 23: At least five districts in southern West Bengal have witnessed a surge in dengue cases with each having reported more than 100 vector-borne infections till July 20, an official said Tuesday.

He, however, claimed that the situation was not alarming.

North 24 Parganas with 268 dengue cases topped the list of districts.

Other districts in south Bengal where the number of dengue cases is high are Murshidabad

district (224) Hooghly (181) and Kolkata (152).

Malda district in north Bengal has also reported around 230 cases, he said.

"The dengue situation in West Bengal is not alarming. This disease has a seasonal pattern that shows an increasing trend with the onset of monsoon and peaks after the season. This year the number of dengue cases is comparatively low," a senior official of the state Health department told PTI.

The graph of dengue infection in Bengal was much lower than last year, he claimed.

"But in the last few weeks, primarily due to the rainwater accumulation in several areas,



there has been a surge in dengue cases. We have been active since the beginning of this year to prevent the infection," he said.

Since early this year, the civic bodies have been "proactive in removing garbage and stagnant water", he said, adding that at the block level specific routines have been followed to control the disease.

"As a result, the graph of dengue infections was much lower in the January-June period. The heavy rain in the last few weeks has caused waterlogging in various places. Mosquito larvae have also been found in drains, abandoned houses or garbage, especially in urban areas," the official said.

He referred to a survey conducted in Howrah district, which found the number of dengue cases in the municipal area was seven last week.

"Two people were found to have been infected with this mosquito-borne disease in the Bally Municipality area and the remaining five people were from different rural areas of the district," he added.



Border Security Force (BSF) personnel keep vigil along the India-Bangladesh Border, in Dakshin Dinajpur district of West Bengal, Tuesday

## FLOOD THREAT Godavari touches danger mark at Bhadrachalam

The water level rose up to 75.60 ft when floods occurred in 1986

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, July 23: The second flood warning was issued Monday at the temple town of Bhadrachalam in Telangana as water level in Godavari river crossed 48 feet, even as the Chief Secretary urged the district Collectors to continue to be alert in view of the forecast of rains in the state.

The water level was 49.90 ft at 9 pm Monday and the third flood warning would be issued if the water level reaches 53 ft, official sources said.

The water level rose up to 75.60 ft when floods occurred in 1986, they added.

The Collector of Bhadrachalam district Jitesh V Patil asked officials to shift peo-



ple living in areas facing the threat of inundation to relief centres. He urged the people to follow the instructions of the district administration.

Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari, who held a teleconference with district Collectors and other officials, said "Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy is continuously monitoring the situation."

The Chief Minister stressed on preventing loss of life and property, she said.

## 'Swasthya Nagaram' model to combat urban TB

It will focus on surveillance, prevention, and quality TB care in urban areas, using digital apps and molecular tests for early diagnosis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, July 23: A model for tuberculosis-free (TB-free) municipalities, Project 'Swasthya Nagaram', was launched in neighbouring Medchal Malkajgiri district of Telangana Tuesday.

This model for TB-free municipalities is an innovative approach to demonstrate ending TB in urban settings, where social determinants have huge impact on increasing the TB burden, with an approach of surveillance, prevention and quality TB care with the engagement of multi stakeholders, an official release said.

Active TB screening using a digital app and diagnosis using X-ray along with upfront molecular tests will be the primary focus of the model to ensure early diagnosis and prevention,



it said. The model will be implemented in urban settings of Peerzadiguda, Boduppal and Pocharam Municipal Corporation of Medchal Malkajgiri district over a period of three years.

It envisages a one-third decline in TB incidence, bring

Internal migration and mobility and growing slum dwellings contribute to the spread of tuberculosis. Interventions through this model in urban settings will certainly help in restricting TB disease's spread beyond city limits

DR RAJENDRA P JOSHI | DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL TB

initiatives and create an open channel of communication on the quality and availability of TB services in urban settings", Karnan said.

"Internal migration and mobility and growing slum dwellings contribute to the spread of tuberculosis. Interventions through this model in urban settings will certainly help in restricting TB disease's spread beyond city limits," said Dr Rajendra P Joshi, Deputy Director General TB, Central TB Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government

of India in his inaugural address.

He further said the Central TB Division will extend its full support for making this project a successful model and further replicate in other urban settings, beyond Hyderabad.

The project will also address the vulnerability to TB due to migration and urban behavioural changes towards health-seeking behaviour and demand-driven services.

The activities also include vulnerability mapping, engaging all care providers, childhood TB detection, complete treatment of all forms of TB, differentiated TB care, airborne infection control, training and capacity building of all key staff and stakeholders, multi-sectoral coordination, engaging industries/corporates with workplace interventions, social support linkages to TB-affected families and epidemiological and operation research, the release added.



The Central government is very weak and it might collapse in August this year. It will allow the INDIA bloc to form a new government

FLOOD SITUATION IMPROVES IN ASSAM

Assam's flood situation is gradually improving, with the affected population decreasing to 73,703 across 10 districts, according to an official bulletin Tuesday.



of the day quote

The Union Budget presented in Parliament today follows the same old pattern, where except for a handful of rich and wealthy people, it offers little hope of good days for the country's poor...

MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

The Centre always seeks to know the priorities of the states during pre-Budget meetings. But the Centre has disappointed Punjab

HARPAL SINGH CHEEMA | PUNJAB FINANCE MINISTER

The government has decided to give financial assistance to all women aged 21-49. For this, camps will be organised for enrollment in the next four to five days at the village level

HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CM



FLOOD WOES: A flooded area of Gujarat's Saurashtra region following heavy monsoon rains

PTI PHOTO

SNIPPETS

Pradhan hails SC decision on NEET issue

New Delhi: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Tuesday hailed the Supreme Court's decision on the NEET-UG issue, saying truth has prevailed, and announced that the final results of the medical entrance exam will be declared within two days.

New leprosy colony brings hope

Ranchi: Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren Tuesday inaugurated the newly constructed 'Nirmal Awas', a colony for leprosy-affected people in Ranchi's Mudma locality.

UPSC aspirant electrocuted on waterlogged road

New Delhi: A 26-year-old civil services aspirant was electrocuted after he touched an iron gate that had electricity running through it following heavy rains in central Delhi's Patel Nagar area, police said Tuesday.

INDIA bloc to protest in Parl

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 23: INDIA bloc parties Tuesday decided that they will protest in Parliament and outside over "discrimination" against the Opposition-ruled states in the Union Budget.

The decision was taken at a meeting of floor leaders of INDIA bloc parties at the 10 Rajaji Marg residence of Congress president and Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge this evening.

Kharge, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi,

most of the states. So general sentiment of the INDIA bloc meeting was we have to protest against this," Venugopal told reporters after the meeting.

Later, in a post on X, Venugopal said, "The Union Budget presented today was extremely discriminatory and dangerous, which completely goes against the principles of federalism and fairness that the Union Government must follow."

In protest, Congress chief ministers will be boycotting the NITI Aayog meeting scheduled for July 27. "This government's attitude is completely antithetical to Constitutional principles. We will not participate in an event that is solely designed to hide the true, discriminatory colours of this regime," he said.

Congress MP Pramod Tiwari alleged that the budget had "blacked out" states where there are non-BJP governments. "We will hold a protest tomorrow in the Parliament regarding this. We will raise our voice inside Parliament and outside also...This is not the budget of the BJP, it is the budget of the whole country, but they have presented it as if it is BJP's budget...This budget is against the federal structure of the country," he alleged.

THE DECISION WAS TAKEN AT A MEETING OF FLOOR LEADERS OF INDIA BLOC PARTIES AT THE 10 RAJAJI MARG RESIDENCE OF CONGRESS PRESIDENT AND LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN THE RAJYA SABHA MALLIKARJUN KHARGE

ED arrests man in cheating case

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate has arrested a Delhi-based man under the anti-money laundering law in connection with a cyber fraud with a US citizen, who was allegedly duped of more than ₹3.3 crore, official sources said Tuesday.



Cong slams Union Budget

The Opposition party also said unemployment is the "biggest challenge facing the country" and the government's response is "too little" and will have little impact on the "grave situation"

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 23: The Congress Tuesday termed the Union Budget a "copycat" and a "kursi bachao" Budget, and said the "copy-paste government" borrowed ideas generously from the party's manifesto but botched up the policy.

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi dubbed the Union Budget a "kursi bachao budget" (save chair budget) and claimed it makes "hollow promises" to the BJP allies at the cost of other states.

In a post on X, Gandhi said, "Kursi Bachao' Budget. Appease Allies: Hollow promises to them at the cost of other states. Appease Cronies: Benefits to AA with no relief for the common Indian. Copy and Paste: Congress manifesto and previous Budgets."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge termed the Budget a "copycat" and alleged that it is not for the progress of the country but to save the Modi government.



People watch live telecast of the Union Budget presentation by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

In a post in Hindi on X, Kharge said, "The Modi government's 'copycat budget' could not even copy the Congress' Nyay Patra properly! The Modi government's budget is distributing half-hearted 'rewardis (freebies) to dupe its coalition partners so that the NDA survives..."

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh accused the government of indulging in "cut, copy, paste" from Congress' Nyay Patra.

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has "virtually adopted" the ideas

underlying his party's proposals on Employment-linked Incentive (ELI) scheme, apprenticeship scheme with an allowance to the apprentice, and on the abolition of Angel Tax.

Unemployment is the "biggest challenge facing country" and the response of the government is "too little and will have only little impact on the grave situation", he said.

Chidambaram also said nothing in the Budget speech "gives us the confidence that the government will seriously tackle the issue of inflation".

Earlier in the day, Ramesh said, "After ten years of denial -- where neither the non-biological PM nor his party's Lok Sabha Elections Manifesto would even mention jobs -- the Union

Nitish hails Budget

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Tuesday said the "special assistance" announced in the Union Budget addressed the state's concerns, which had previously led to demands for special category status. Speaking to reporters at the Vidhan Sabha premises shortly after the Budget presentation by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament, Kumar, a key ally of the ruling NDA, said, "We had proposed that if special status wasn't feasible for technical reasons, Bihar should receive special assistance (vishesh madad) from the Centre in another form, which has been announced today."

Government seems to have finally come around to tacitly admitting that mass unemployment is a national crisis that requires urgent attention."

Congress MP Manish Tewari said the political message of the Budget was the tail wagging the dog. "It has political compulsions written all over it," he said.

Congress leader Pawan Kherra said the "copy paste government" had to take the support of Congress' 2024 Nyay Patra.

The Modi government should thank the Congress for the internship idea, he said.

India may waive testing demands for cough syrups

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 23: The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) is considering a proposal to waive the need for testing cough syrups for export to certain countries after having received a representation from stakeholders seeking such exemption, official sources said Tuesday.

In May last year, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, Department of Commerce,

Ministry of Commerce and Industry had made it compulsory for cough syrup manufacturers to get samples of their products tested at specified government laboratories from June 1 before getting permission for outbound shipments.

The direction had come after quality concerns were raised globally over cough syrups exported by Indian firms. Now, the CDSCO, the apex drugs regulatory authority, is examining a proposal

to waive the requirement for testing cough syrups being exported to the US, the UK, Canada, the European Union, Japan, Australia, Singapore, Korea and Switzerland at the prescribed laboratory, the sources said. Further, if a cough syrup is manufactured in a plant or section approved by the regulatory agencies of these countries for any product, it may also be allowed to be exported to any country without testing at the prescribed laboratory, they said.

Blaze on merchant navy ship off K'taka coast extinguished



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji, July 23: A major fire that broke out July 19 on a merchant navy ship off the Karwar coast has been doused and efforts are underway to ensure the affected vessel remains in deep sea considering the grave threat posed to the coastline, the Coast Guard said Tuesday.

"The vessel is presently 13 nautical miles west of New Mangalore and heading towards open sea," the ICG stated in a release. MV Maersk Frankfurt, carrying 1,154 containers, including some with dangerous cargo like benzene and sodium cyanate, had caught fire some 102 nautical miles off the coast of Goa while on its way from Mundra in Gujarat to Colombo in Sri Lanka. One crew member died in the blaze, a Coast Guard official had said Sunday. The ICG said it has facilitated the embarkation of an initial team, comprising four members - one Indian and three Filipino.

Sunken museum at Humayun's Tomb to be inaugurated July 29

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 23: The "country's first" sunken museum at the magnificent Humayun's Tomb site in Delhi that marries modern 21st-century architecture with Mughal-era craftsmanship in its design is all set for its inauguration next week.

The museum, whose layout is inspired by the medieval 'baolis' or traditional water tanks, is slated to be inaugurated by Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat July 29, coinciding with the ongoing meeting of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) in the national capital, an official source told PTI.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) is building the museum on behalf of the

Archeological Survey of India (ASI) as part of the urban renewal initiative.

According to AKTC, the museum has been constructed at the entrance zone of the world heritage complex and would serve as a bridge between the three sites of Nizamuddin, Sunder Nursery and the 16th-century tomb.

The museum will showcase the heritage of the Nizamuddin area over the last seven centuries. "The principal structure where the galleries will be located is 6 metres below the ground level while the gallery block rises 4 feet above the ground level and the roof is treated like a Mughal garden," a top official of the AKTC had said in April 2015.



The museum will include galleries, a library, seminar halls, a crafts centre and a cafeteria, among others. The final of the Mughal monument (Humayun's Tomb), which was knocked off in a 2014 storm, will be its "centre-piece", he had said.

Inspired by the medieval baolis (water tanks) of northern India, the underground site museum, with a built-up area of 10,000 square metres, marries modern 21st-century architecture with Mughal-era craftsmanship in its design.

Large Sheesham-made doors in galleries evoke the aura of the grand 'Darwaza' (entrance gateways) seen in Mughal-era



# national



I can understand the BJP wanting to save its government and giving Bihar and Andhra Pradesh a huge sum of the Budget. But what is Maharashtra's fault? That we are the largest taxpayer? What did we get against what we contributed?

AADIYA THACKERAY | SHIV SENA (UBT) LEADER

## COURT GRANTS BAIL TO ATISHI

A court Tuesday granted bail to Delhi minister Atishi in a defamation case filed by a BJP leader over her claim that several AAP MLAs were approached by the saffron party with offers of cash to bring down the Arvind Kejriwal government. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Tanya Bamniyal granted bail to Atishi in the case filed by BJP leader Praveen Shankar Kapoor after she appeared before the court pursuant to summons



## of the day quote

My government is working to encourage the rearing of indigenous breeds of cows. The government is making efforts to keep cows in gaushalas (cow shelters) and also working towards enhancing their capacities to accommodate more domestic animals in it

MOHAN YADAV | MADHYA PRADESH CM

The Budget includes substantial allocations for Maharashtra. It is advisable for the opposition to thoroughly examine the Budget before reacting

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | MAHA DEPUTY CM

As Nirmala Sitharaman is the Rajya Sabha member from Karnataka, we had expected her to do justice for the state and hoped that she would protect the interest of the state, but she has disappointed and done injustice to the people of Karnataka

SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

## X POST OF THE DAY

The #Budget2024 presented by Finance Minister @nsitharaman exhibits a discriminatory attitude towards the states,

particularly Kerala. Our genuine demands for AIIMS, disaster relief packages, and interventions for the tourism sector have been met with deafening silence. This indifference undermines the aspirations of Keralites and is deeply disheartening. While the budget includes several claims about empowering the nation through effective interventions, it glaringly omits the crucial issue of fiscal empowerment for states. Instead, there are further moves to constrain the finances of states, which poses a significant challenge to our autonomy and development. This unsympathetic and discriminatory stance must be called out and actively resisted. We stand firm in advocating for the rights and needs of Kerala and demand fair and just consideration.

@pinarayivijayan

## SHORT TAKES

### Pandemonium in Ch'garh Assembly

Raipur: The Chhattisgarh assembly witnessed noisy scenes Tuesday as the Congress claimed farmers were suffering difficulties in the ongoing kharif season due to frequent power cuts and shortages of seeds and fertilizers. The main Opposition party demanded a discussion on the issue by moving an adjournment motion notice. As the Speaker rejected the demand, Congress MLAs trooped into the well of the House and were suspended.

### Heavy rains lash parts of Himachal

Shimla: Twenty-five roads in Himachal Pradesh were closed in view of heavy rains in the state as the weather office issued an orange alert in Chamba, Kangra, Mandi and Sirmour districts Tuesday. Low to moderate flash flood risk is likely in isolated parts of Kangra, Sirmour and Shimla districts in the next 24 hours, the met department said. A 'yellow' warning of heavy rains at isolated places has also been issued. The weather department said there could be damage to plantation and standing crops, vulnerable structures and 'kutcha' houses due to strong winds and waterlogging in low-lying areas.

# Courts should stay bail orders in rare cases: SC

The apex court said an order granting bail can be stayed by a court only in exceptional cases, when a very strong prima facie case of the existence of the grounds for cancellation of bail is made out



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 23: High courts and sessions courts should be slow in staying bail orders and such a decision should be taken in very rare cases, as the liberty granted to an accused cannot be casually interfered, the Supreme Court said Tuesday.

The apex court said an order granting bail can be stayed by a court only in exceptional cases, when a very strong prima facie case of the existence of the grounds for cancellation of bail is made out.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih said when a person is arrested, the rights guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution get substantially curtailed. "When the high court or sessions court stays such an order, it amounts

to taking away the liberty granted under the order of bail. When an application for cancellation of bail is filed, the high court or sessions court should be very slow in granting the drastic interim relief of stay of the order granting bail," the bench said.

The top court said while issuing a notice on an application for cancellation of bail, the high court can, by an interim order, impose additional bail conditions on the accused, which will ensure that the accused does not flee. "However, an order granting a stay to the operation of the order granting bail during the pendency of the application for cancellation of bail should be passed in very rare cases."

"The reason is that when an undertrial is ordered to be released on bail, his liberty is restored, which cannot be easily

taken away for the asking. The undertrial is not a convict," the bench said. The apex court said an ex-parte stay of an order granting bail, as a standard rule, should not be given.

"The power to grant an ex-parte interim stay of an order granting bail has to be exercised in very rare and exceptional cases, where the situation demands the passing of such an order." "While considering the prayer for granting an ex-parte stay, the concerned court must apply its mind and decide whether the case is very exceptional, warranting the exercise of the drastic power to grant an ex-parte stay of the order granting bail."

"The liberty granted to an accused under the order granting bail cannot be lightly and casually interfered with by mechanically granting an ex-parte order of stay of the bail order," the bench said.

The top court's judgment came on a plea moved by Parvinder Singh Khurana, an accused in a money-laundering case, who challenged a Delhi High Court order that temporarily stayed a bail order passed by the trial court. Khurana was granted bail by the trial court in a case lodged under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) June 17 last year, but the high court had stayed the order.

The apex court June 7 stayed the high court order and restored Khurana's bail.

## Over 4K students crossed over to India from B'desh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, July 23: Border Security Force (BSF) Tuesday said that over 4,300 students, including a Canadian and two Maldivian nationals, have crossed over to India from Bangladesh in the last four days.

"Since Friday, 4,315 students have crossed over the Indo-Bangladesh Border (IBB) and have been provided assistance by the BSF. Of those students who have crossed over, 3,087 are Indians, 41 Bangladeshis, 1,118 Nepalese, 66 Bhutanese, two Maldivians and a Canadian," an official of the BSF's Eastern Command said.

He said that these students have undergone medical check-ups and have been provided food. "Special counters have also been set up for documentation, as and when the need arises. Transportation is also being provided to the students by the BSF to their nearest destinations," the official said.

Eastern Command ADG BSF Ravi Gandhi has issued an 'Operation Alert' - all along the IBB - after nationwide violence erupted in neighbouring Bangladesh.

BSF's Eastern Command is entrusted with the responsibility of guarding the IBB passing along 32 districts of five Indian states that adjoin 30 Bangladeshi districts. The IBB stretches for 4096.7 km, 23 per cent of which is riverine and unfenced. This is the fifth-longest land border in the world.

He said that the BSF has made all operational and administrative arrangements at the Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) and Land Customs Stations (LCSs) for refreshments, food packets, transportation and health check-ups.

## BIHAR CASTE SURVEY Top court lists pleas for final hearing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 23: The Supreme Court Tuesday posted for September the final hearing on a batch of pleas challenging the Patna High Court order upholding the Bihar government's decision to conduct a caste survey.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Sanjay Kumar asked the parties to file written submissions on issues like whether the state has the right to conduct a caste survey, and on what conditions and which circumstances such an exercise is barred under law. The bench told senior advocate Aprajita Singh, appearing for petitioners who have challenged the Bihar government's caste survey, that their arguments should deal with whether the entire data collected by the state should be available in the public domain.

Singh said her main point of challenge is that the survey conducted by the state has breached the privacy of individuals as people cannot be forced to disclose their caste. "Individual caste survey has been barred by Supreme Court's Indra Sawhney verdict of 1992," she said, adding that Bihar's survey mandatorily imposed disclosing caste identity on everyone.

Justice Khanna told Singh that she has to bear in mind the doctrine of proportionality, which is being adopted by the Supreme Court in recent times, and deal with the question of whether the executive can conduct this kind of exercise for collection of data on its population and to what extent it is wrong.

Doctrines of proportionality says actions taken by a public authority should be proportional to the goal it is trying to achieve. The top court January 2 had asked the Bihar government to put in the public domain the break-up of the caste survey data to enable those aggrieved to challenge the findings.

It had refused to grant any interim relief to the petitioners who have challenged the caste survey. The top court October 6, 2023 had questioned the Bihar government as to why it published its caste survey data. It had, however, refused to restrain the state government from making public further data, and said it may examine if the state has the power to conduct such an exercise.

The top court had also issued formal notices on a batch of pleas challenging the August 1, 2023 order of the Patna High Court that gave the go-ahead for the caste survey in Bihar.

It rejected the petitioners' contention that the state government has already published some data preempting a stay. They had sought a complete stay on further publication of data.

## HC: Remove defamatory posts against Anjali Birla



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 23: The Delhi High Court Tuesday directed X Corp and Google Inc to remove alleged objectionable social media posts against Indian Railway Personnel Service (IRPS) officer and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's daughter Anjali Birla.

Justice Navin Chawla, in an interim order, also restrained unknown parties from directly or indirectly posting, circulating, communicating, tweeting or retweeting the alleged defamatory content mentioned by Anjali Birla in her defamation suit.

The high court, which said Birla has been able to make out a prima facie case in her favour, added the social media posts shall be removed by the intermediaries within 24 hours, and in case the plaintiff comes to know of any other similar posts, she shall inform X and Google about it.

"Having considered the contents of the suit and having heard the counsel for plaintiff, I am of the opinion that the plaintiff has been able to make out a prima facie case in her favour. Balance of convenience is also in favour of the plaintiff and against the defendants," Justice Chawla said.

The court was of the opinion that the social media posts Birla had complained about did not appear to have been made after due verification.

"The plaintiff was appointed to IRPS in 2021. The purpose of posting the impugned social media posts in 2024 and in the language they have been posted do not appear to be bonafide," it noted.



PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE: Tamil Nadu health workers check the temperature of passengers as a bus from Kerala enters the state amid the spread of Nipah virus in Coimbatore

## UNION BUDGET

# PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES NEGLECTED: RIGHTS GROUPS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 23: Disability rights organisations have expressed strong disapproval of the Union Budget, citing continued neglect of people with disabilities (PwD) despite government claims of inclusive growth.

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) has been allocated ₹1,225.27 crore in the fiscal year 2024-2025, a marginal increase from the previous year's revised estimate of ₹1,225.01 crore.

The National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled (NPRD) criticised the Budget's allocation to the DEPwD, which remains at a mere 0.025 per cent of the total budget.

NPRD general secretary Muralidharan pointed out that this allocation is significantly lower than the 5 per cent demanded by disability rights organisations.

Muralidharan noted the reduction in support to autonomous bodies such as the National Institutes and the Rehabilitation Council of India, which play crucial roles in rehabilitation and education. He also highlighted the cut in scholarships for students with disabilities, which could force many to drop out. Satendra Singh, a disability rights activist, sarcastically praised the budget on social media, stating, "Bravo, #Budget2024! Inclusive growth by completely forgetting people with disabilities, not even mentioning them once and giving a



generous 0.025% of the budget to @socialpws for our empowerment. Truly redefining #SocialJustice!"

The Politics and Disability Forum underscored the absence of any mention of PwD in the budget speech, despite one of

the nine budget priorities being "Inclusive Human Resource Development and Social Justice".

The forum argued that excluding PwD from social justice efforts undermines the promise of inclusive growth towards Viksit Bharat 2047. It highlighted

According to the disability rights activists, the Budget's inadequate support has led to the failure of flagship programmes like the Accessible India campaign to meet their targets and deadlines

The Scheme for the Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA), under which this campaign falls, has seen a decrease in allocation compared to the last fiscal

the marginalisation of PwD in education and health, with less than 5 per cent able to pursue higher education.

Arman Ali, Executive Director of the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, described the budget allocation for DEPwD as "shockingly inadequate".

He emphasised that despite a proclaimed focus on skill development, the budget overlooks the specific needs of PwD.

Ali also pointed out the exclusion of PwD from major schemes like MGNREGS, PM Awas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, and higher education loans.

The NPRD called upon its affiliates to hold protests against the government's priorities, which they claim condemn the disabled and weaker sections to the margins.

The organisation has asked for increased investment in health insurance schemes for PwD, specific budget allocations for disability across ministries, high-quality assistive aids, uniform state disability pensions, and long-term skill development programmes.

# international



I am doing everything in my power to combine the necessary humanitarian objective and the imperative to return the hostages, and at the same time, preserve the existence of the State of Israel  
BENJAMIN NETANYAHU | PM, ISRAEL

## HOTTEST DAY

The hottest day ever recorded globally Sunday, July 21 was witnessed, according to preliminary data from the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service



## of the day quote

Peace and stability (in the Taiwan Strait) is hugely important not just for our own security but for the entire international community



YOSHIMASA HAYASHI | CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY, JAPAN

Russian-Chinese cooperation is never directed against third countries or groups of third countries, but is aimed only at protecting the interests of these countries



DMITRY PESKOV | KREMLIN SPOKESMAN, RUSSIA

The position of the new South African government remains one of unwavering solidarity with our fellow members of the global South



DION GEORGE | MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, SOUTH AFRICA

## SHORT TAKES

### Ugandan SF detains young protesters

Kampala: Ugandan Security Forces (SF) detained a number of young people Tuesday in downtown Kampala who were taking part in a banned rally against what the protesters say are rampant corruption and human rights abuses by the country's rulers. The protesters were holding placards and shouting slogans denouncing corruption. Soldiers and police have been deployed around the Parliament building and in the centre of the Ugandan capital with the aim of deterring any protesters.

### Colombian President scraps bullfighting

Bogota: Colombian President Gustavo Petro Monday signed a bill that bans bullfights in the South American country, further reducing the short list of nations around the world where the centuries-old tradition is still legal. Petro signed it in front of hundreds of animal rights activists during a ceremony held in Bogota's bullring, after a supporter in a bull costume handed him a copy of the legislation. "We cannot tell the world that killing living and sentient beings for entertainment is culture," Petro said in a speech after signing the bill.

### SL Navy arrests 9 Indian fishermen

Colombo: The Sri Lankan Navy Tuesday arrested nine Indian fishermen and seized their trawlers for allegedly poaching in its territorial waters, officials here said, taking the number of Indian nationals apprehended this year by the island nation in such incidents to 261. The nine fishermen were arrested, and their two trawlers were seized off the coast of Delft islet in the northern Jaffna peninsula, the Navy said. On July 11, the Navy said that 252 Indian fishermen were arrested and 35 trawlers seized this year for poaching.

### Radical preacher faces life term

London: Anjem Choudary, a radical Islamist preacher with dual British and Pakistani nationality, was Tuesday found guilty of directing a banned terrorist organisation and faces life imprisonment in the UK following a joint international investigation. Choudary, 57, was found to have taken on a "caretaker role" in the Al-Muhajiroun (ALM) and a trial at Woolwich Crown Court in London heard that he directed the terror group for a significant period after 2014 and encouraged support for it by addressing online meetings.

# Hamas, Fatah sign unity deal

THE MEETING WAS HELD AMID ATTEMPTS BY INTERNATIONAL MEDIATORS TO REACH A CEASEFIRE DEAL FOR GAZA, WITH ONE OF THE STICKING POINTS BEING THE 'DAY-AFTER' PLAN

REUTERS

Beijing, July 23: Palestinian factions including rivals Hamas and Fatah agreed to end their divisions and form an interim national unity government during negotiations in China that ended Tuesday, China's foreign ministry said.

The Beijing Declaration was signed at the closing ceremony of a reconciliation dialogue among 14 Palestinian factions held in China's capital from July 21-23, according to the readout.

Previous efforts by Egypt and other Arab countries to reconcile Hamas and Fatah have failed to end 17 years of power-sharing conflict that have weakened Palestinian political aspirations, and it remains to be seen whether this deal will survive the realities on the ground.

The meeting was held amid attempts by international mediators to reach a ceasefire deal for Gaza, with one of the sticking points being the "day-after" plan, how the Hamas-run enclave will be governed once the war that began October 7 ends.

Senior Hamas official Hussam Badran said the most important point of the Beijing Declaration was to form a Palestinian national unity government to manage the affairs of Palestinians. "This creates a formidable barrier against all regional and international interventions that

## GAZA GOVERNANCE



seek to impose realities against our people's interests in managing Palestinian affairs post-war," Badran said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his goal is to destroy the Iran-backed Hamas group and opposes it having any role in a post war Gaza administration.

"Instead of rejecting terrorism, (Fatah leader) Mahmoud Abbas embraces the murderers and rapists of Hamas, revealing his true face. In reality, this won't happen because

Hamas' rule will be crushed, and Abbas will be watching Gaza from afar. Israel's security will remain solely in Israel's hands," Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said on X.

Badran said the national unity government would manage the affairs of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, oversee reconstruction, and prepare conditions for elections.

Currently Hamas runs Gaza and Fatah forms the backbone of the Palestinian Authority,

The national unity government would manage the affairs of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, oversee reconstruction, and prepare conditions for elections

## US PREZ RACE Harris moves closer to nomination



I am proud to have secured the broad support needed to become our party's nominee  
KAMALA HARRIS | VICE PRESIDENT, US

REUTERS

Washington, July 23: Vice President Kamala Harris will campaign in the critical battleground state of Wisconsin for the first time as a presidential candidate Tuesday after securing enough Democratic delegate support to clear a path to the nomination.

Harris has emerged as the Democratic candidate after President Joe Biden, 81, abandoned his re-election campaign Sunday, after weeks of calls from within his own party to end his bid, questioning his ability to beat former President Donald Trump or to serve for another four-year term.

Less than 36 hours after Biden endorsed Harris, she secured the nomination Monday night by winning the pledged support of a majority of the party's delegates who will determine the nomination, the campaign said.

"I am proud to have secured the broad support needed to become our party's nominee," Harris said in a statement. "I look forward to formally ac-

cepting the nomination soon."

An unofficial survey of delegates by the Associated Press showed Harris with more than 2,500 delegates, well over the 1,976 needed to win a vote in the coming weeks. Delegates could still, technically, change their minds but nobody else received any votes in the AP survey; 54 delegates said they were undecided.

Harris's rise dramatically reshapes an election in which many voters were unhappy with their options. Weighed by concerns including his age and continued high prices crimping Americans' household finances, Biden had been losing ground against Trump in opinion polls, particularly in the competitive states that are likely to decide the election, including Wisconsin and the sun-belt states of Arizona and Nevada.

The Wisconsin trip offers another opportunity for Harris, the first Black woman and Asian-American to serve as Vice President, to reset the Democrats' campaign.

## Hindu temple vandalised in Canada

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ottawa, July 23: A BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in the Canadian city of Edmonton has been vandalised with alleged hateful and anti-India graffiti, amidst rising Hinduphobia in the country.

The Consulate General of India in Vancouver said in a post on X "We condemn the defacing of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in #Edmonton with anti-India graffiti. We have requested the Canadian authorities to investigate the incident and take prompt action against the perpetrators."

There has been no reaction as yet from the BAPS, the Bochasanwasi Aksharpurushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, the organisation that runs the temple. Also, there are no reports yet of any official action against



the vandalism that took place Monday morning.

"Earlier today, the Edmonton BAPS Mandir was vandalised with paint, displaying hateful rhetoric on the walls of what should be a place of refuge. Hate has no part in Canada, much less in places of worship & prayer. This incident is wrong & goes against the values of our city," said Randy Boissonault, Member of Parliament Depute, Edmonton Centre.

A statement from the Canadian Hindu Chamber of Commerce

(CHCC), dedicated to promoting the interests of the Hindu business community in Canada, said, "The act of vandalism is not only an attack on a physical structure but also an affront to the sentiments of the Hindu community and the principles of respect and tolerance that our society holds dear."

It condemned the "senseless tide of hate" and the "rising tide of Hinduphobia" across Canada and said, "These incidents are deeply troubling and have no place in our multicultural and inclusive society."

The CHCC urged the Canadian government and local authorities to take immediate and effective measures to combat Hinduphobia and protect religious institutions and communities from such acts of violence and intolerance, the statement said and called for united efforts.

## ETHIOPIA MUDSLIDES

### Death toll rises to 157

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Addis Ababa, July 23: At least 157 people were killed in mudslides in a remote part of Ethiopia that has been hit with heavy rainfall, many of them as they tried to rescue survivors of an earlier mudslide, local authorities said Tuesday.

Young children and pregnant women were among the victims of the mudslides in the Kencho Shacha Gozdi district of southern Ethiopia, said Dagmawi Ayele, a local administrator.

The death toll rose from 55 late Monday to 157 Tuesday as search operations continued in the area, said Kassahun Abayneh, head of the Gofa Zone communications office. Gofa Zone is the administrative area where the mudslides occurred. At least five people have been pulled alive from the mud, Ayele said.

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC SL govt to apologise to Muslims over cremation policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, July 23: The Sri Lankan government Tuesday said it would formally apologise to the island nation's Muslim minority community for its controversial cremation policy adopted during the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

The mandatory order taken in 2020 to cremate the bodies of Covid-19 victims, which denied

minority communities, including Muslims, their religious rights, was later revoked in February 2021 amidst mounting international criticism.

The Sri Lankan Cabinet in a meeting Monday approved the proposal to tender an apology to the Muslim community for the enforced decision made in March 2020, according to a Cabinet note.

The Cabinet has decided "to plead the apology on behalf of

the Government, from all the communities", it said.

The Cabinet also decided to introduce legislation to prevent a repetition of such controversial moves. The note said the Cabinet also gave nod to a proposed legislation on the burial or cremation of dead bodies based on religious discretion. Attention has been drawn to introducing a law, which allows a certain person or relations to select the burial or

cremation of the dead person at their discretion.

The Muslim community had opposed the policy of forced cremation, and some even left the bodies of their loved ones in hospital mortuaries. The community members had said that either they were coerced into allowing cremations or that occurred without their knowledge. The cremation of bodies is forbidden in Islam.

# UN says nearly 40 million people had HIV in 2023

EVERY MINUTE SOMEONE DIED OF AIDS-RELATED CAUSES AS A RESULT OF LACK OF TREATMENT

ASSOCIATED PRESS

United Nations, July 23: Nearly 40 million people were living with the HIV virus that causes AIDS last year, over 9 million weren't getting any treatment, and the result was that every minute someone died of AIDS-related causes, the UN said in a new report launched Monday.

While advances are being made to end the global AIDS

pandemic, the report said progress has slowed, funding is shrinking, and new infections are rising in three regions the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America.

In 2023, around 630,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses, a significant decline from the 2.1 million deaths in 2004. But the latest figure is more than double the target for 2025 of fewer than 250,000 deaths, according to the report by UNAIDS, the UN agency leading the global effort to end the pandemic.

Gender inequality is exacerbating the risks for girls and women, the report said, citing the extraordinarily high incidence of HIV among adolescents and young women in parts of Africa. The proportion of new in-



fections globally among marginalised communities that face stigma and discrimination, sex workers, men who have sex with men, and people who inject drugs also increased to 55 per cent in 2023 from 45 per cent in 2010, it said.

UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima said "World leaders pledged to end the AIDS pandemic as a public health threat by 2030, and they can uphold their promise, but only if they ensure that the HIV response has the resources it needs,

and that the human rights of everyone are protected."

As part of that pledge, leaders vowed to reduce annual new HIV infections to below 370,000 by 2025, but the report said in 2023 new infections were more than three times higher at 1.3 million.

Last year, among the 39.9 million people globally living with HIV, 86 per cent knew they were infected, 77 per cent were accessing treatment, and for 72 per cent the virus was suppressed, the report said.

César Núñez, director of the UNAIDS New York office, told a news conference there has been progress in HIV treatments, injections that can stay in the body for six months, but the two doses cost \$40,000 yearly, out of reach for all but the richest people

with the virus.

He said UNAIDS has been asking the manufacturer to make it available at lower cost to low and middle-income countries.

Núñez said there have also been seven cases where people with HIV who were treated for leukemia emerged with no sign of the HIV virus in their system.

He said injections and the seven cases will be discussed at the 25th International AIDS Conference which began Monday in Munich.

At present, he said, daily treatment with pills costs about \$75 per person per year. It has allowed many countries to increase the number of people with HIV to receive treatment. Núñez said UNAIDS will continue advocating for a vaccine to prevent AIDS.



In her 7th record Union Budget, Nirmala Sitharaman announced key employment schemes and also revised the tax structure in the new tax regime, while the slabs in old regime remain unchanged

## CAPEX UNCHANGED

### GOVT TO PROVIDE ₹11.11L-CR TOWARDS CAPEX, VIABILITY GAP FUNDING TO SPUR PRIVATE INVESTMENT

**New Delhi, July 23:** Contrary to expectations that the NDA government would increase allocation towards capital expenditure (capex), Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman kept the same unchanged at ₹11.11 lakh crore. It was in the interim budget in February this year that Sitharaman had proposed raising the capex by 11.1% year-on-year to ₹11.11 lakh crore. Presenting the Union Budget for financial year 2024-25, she said the government will endeavour to maintain strong fiscal support for infrastructure over the next five years, in conjunction with imperatives of other priorities and fiscal consolidation.

**Fiscal deficit lowered**  
Buoyed by improvement in revenue collection, the government has lowered the fiscal deficit target to 4.9 per cent for the current financial year as against 5.1 per cent estimated in February's interim Budget. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, however, retained the fiscal deficit estimate at 4.5 per cent for 2025-26 as announced in February. "For the year 2024-25, the total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at ₹32.07 lakh crore and ₹48.21 lakh crore, respectively. The net tax receipts are estimated at ₹25.83 lakh crore."

**Borrowing target cut**  
The government has lowered its borrowings estimate for the current financial year to 14.01 lakh crore as there is an improvement in tax collection. The government has to borrow by issuing dated securities to meet its fiscal deficit target. The gross market borrowings have now been revised downward to ₹14.01 lakh crore from ₹14.13 lakh crore estimated in the interim Budget presented in February this year. The gross and net borrowings in BE 2024-25 are 9.2 per cent and 1.5 per cent lower than gross borrowings of ₹15.43 lakh crore and net borrowing of ₹11.80 lakh crore in RE 2023-24, respectively.

**Disinvestment aim at ₹50K-cr**  
The government has estimated to collect ₹50,000 crore from disinvestment and asset monetisation in the current fiscal. DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said Tuesday. Besides, the government estimates a total of ₹56,260 crore dividend from CPSEs (central public sector enterprises), more than ₹48,000 crore estimated in the interim budget.

will be promoted through viability gap funding (VGF) and enabling policies and regulations. "A market-based financing framework will be brought out," she said. The Budget has also announced launching the fourth phase of the PM Gram Sadak Yojana in 25 rural habitations and providing assistance to Assam for flood management and related projects. The minister added that the significant investment that the central government has made over the years in building and improving infrastructure has had a strong multiplier effect on the economy. In the previous two years as well the government had to increase the capex for infrastructure development by over 30 per cent to do heavy lifting as private investment was muted. Post-Covid-19, the Budget has been laying special emphasis on capex. It has kick-started a dormant cycle for the economy. During 2020-21, the government earmarked ₹4.39 lakh crore which increased by 35 per cent to ₹5.94 lakh crore in the subsequent year. Another 35 per cent hike in capex was done in 2022-23 to ₹7.5 lakh crore which subsequently reached a high of ₹10 lakh crore, an increase of 37.4 per cent.

### SECTORS REACT

#### Abolition of angel tax cheers startups

Startup and venture funds Tuesday cheered the Budget decision on the abolition of angel tax for all investor classes, terming it a "game-changer" that would remove significant barriers in growth and foster a vibrant and dynamic ecosystem. Angel tax refers to the tax that the government imposes on funding raised by unlisted companies, or startups if their valuation exceeds the company's fair market value. The angel tax issue has been a thorn on the side of startup founders and investors, and venture capitalists, startups and industry associations have long been battling for its removal. "The abolition of the 'angel tax' is a game-changer, removing a significant barrier that has long hindered the growth of startups and discouraged investment. This progressive step will undoubtedly foster a more vibrant and dynamic startup ecosystem, encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship across the country," Prateek Jain, Associate Director-Startup and Alliances, Alliance of Digital India Foundation (ADIF) said.

#### Farm sector hails 'forward looking Budget'

The Union Budget 2024 has drawn mixed reactions from the agriculture sector, with industry experts praising its focus on research and self-sufficiency, while some farmer leaders expressed disappointment. Farm industry experts hailed the Budget as "forward looking," citing its push for agri-research and self-sufficiency in pulses and oilseeds. "We trust this important mission would be adequately funded to ensure game changing results in reducing import dependence in coming years," said Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) President Ajay Jhunjhunwala, welcoming the national missions for edible oils.

#### Nothing specific: Hospitality disappointed

Hospitality players expressed disappointment with the Budget for 2024-25 citing lack of policy announcements to facilitate the development of the sector. They lamented that some key demands to revitalise the tourism and hospitality sector such as granting of infrastructure status and bringing ease of doing business and policy reforms have not been considered in the Budget. The Hotel Association of India (HAI) President KB Kachru said the tourism and hospitality sector plays a crucial role in the growth of the Indian economy. "Regrettably, however, there has been no policy announcement to facilitate the development of hotels and promotion of inbound tourism," he added.

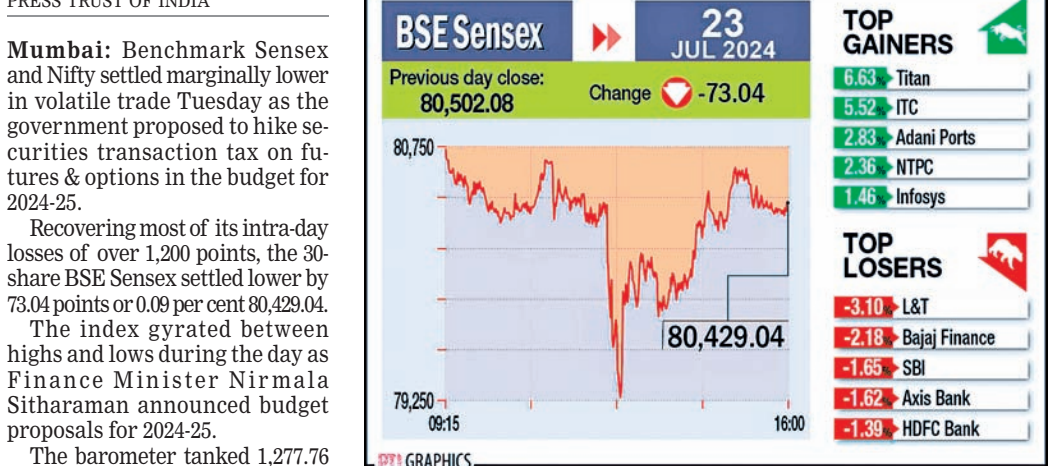
#### No duty on critical minerals: Auto Inc rejoices

The proposed exemption in customs duty on import of lithium, cobalt and other rare minerals in the Union Budget 2024-25 is likely to lower the battery production cost and help in making electric vehicles more affordable for the buyers, auto industry leaders said Tuesday. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the Union Budget for 2024-25 proposed to fully exempt customs duties on 25 critical minerals and reduce Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on two of them. Auto industry body SIAM President Vinod Agarwal said the exemption of customs duty on import of lithium, cobalt and other rare minerals and extension of concessional customs duty on Li-Ion cells till March 2026 and withdrawal of equalisation levy of 2 per cent on e-transactions is expected to propel the growth of the Indian auto industry.

#### Education sector lauds announcements

Education sector experts Tuesday welcomed the Budget announcements to offer loans up to ₹10 lakh for higher education in domestic institutions and upgrade ITIs, while also highlighting that it is equally important to recognise the gap in opportunities for students aspiring to study abroad. Besides the financial support for student loans, FM also announced measures including upgrading 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in the hub and spoke model, aligning course content with the skill needs of the industry and revision of model skill loan scheme.

## Stocks edge down on STT, LTCG hike



**Mumbai:** Benchmark Sensex and Nifty settled marginally lower in volatile trade Tuesday as the government proposed to hike securities transaction tax on futures & options in the budget for 2024-25. Recovering most of its intra-day losses of over 1,200 points, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled lower by 73.04 points or 0.09 per cent at 80,429.04. The index gyrated between highs and lows during the day as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced budget proposals for 2024-25. The barometer tanked 1,277.76 points or 1.58 per cent to hit a low of 79,224.32 as the minister announced a hike in STT on F&O trade and an increase in long-term capital gains tax on equities. However, tax exemptions and customs duty cuts helped boost consumer durables and FMCG shares, aiding stocks to recover from the day's lows. The NSE Nifty dipped 30.20 points or 0.12 per cent to 24,479.05. Intra-day, it dropped 435.05 points or 1.77 per cent to 24,074.20. Among the Sensex pack, Titan jumped over 6 per cent, followed by ITC which surged more than 5 per cent. "There was a knee-jerk reaction during the Budget speech as Sensex plunged more than 1,000 points after FM increased LTCG and STCG rates along with higher STT on F&O transactions, which had caught investors off guard," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Notably, stock markets had closed higher in the previous three budget days. Presenting the Budget for 2024-25, FM announced a hike in STT (Securities Transaction Tax) on F&O (futures and options) securities by 0.02 per cent and 0.1 per cent.

## MGNREGA ALLOCATION UNALTERED AT ₹86K-CR

| YEAR    | BUDGET ESTIMATE | REVISED ESTIMATE |
|---------|-----------------|------------------|
| 2018-19 | ₹55,000 crore   | ₹61,084 crore    |
| 2019-20 | ₹60,000 crore   | ₹71,002 crore    |
| 2020-21 | ₹61,500 crore   | ₹1,15,000 crore  |
| 2021-22 | ₹73,000 crore   | ₹98,000 crore    |
| 2022-23 | ₹73,000 crore   | ₹90,806 crore    |
| 2023-24 | ₹60,000 crore   | ₹86,000 crore    |
| 2024-25 | ₹86,000 crore   | ---              |

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed an allocation of ₹86,000 crore for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Budget 2024, the same amount as the interim budget. Launched in 2006, MGNREGA is the government's largest rural employment scheme that aims to provide 100 days of employment to rural households. According to the government, 3.2 crore households have benefited from the scheme between March 2024 till date. The government claims the scheme generated employment for 13.07 crore individuals in the current financial year. In the budget for 2023-24, the government was criticised for reducing the allocation for the scheme despite previous expenditures exceeding the allocation. With Lok Sabha elections in mind, the government increased the allocation from ₹60,000 crore to ₹86,000 crore in the vote-on-account budget. The Modi government has been accused of not paying enough attention to the scheme launched by the UPA government, which is considered a successful way to generate employment for the rural population.

## GOLD CRASHES AFTER CUSTOM DUTY CUT ON BULLION

**New Delhi:** Gold prices tumbled by ₹3,350 to ₹72,300 per 10 grams in the local market here Tuesday amid subdued demand by jewellers after the government announced the customs duty cut on the yellow metal and silver to 6 per cent. According to the All India Sarafa Association, silver prices also nosedived by ₹3,500 or 4 per cent to ₹87,500 per kg. In the previous session, it had closed at ₹91,000 per kg. The precious metal rates dropped by ₹3,350 or 4.6 per cent to ₹72,300 per 10 grams. On Monday, the precious metal rates had closed at ₹75,650 per 10 grams. In addition, gold of 99.5 per cent purity plummeted by ₹3,350 to ₹71,950 per 10 grams. It had settled at ₹75,300 per 10 grams in the previous session. Traders attributed the decline in gold prices after the government slashed customs duties on a range of products, including gold and silver, to cut input costs, increase value addition, promote export competitiveness and boost domestic manufacturing. Silver declined by ₹6,900 in the past five sessions since July 18, when it had fallen by ₹400 to end at ₹94,000 per kg.

## Budget growth-oriented: India Inc

**New Delhi, July 23:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has delivered a growth-oriented inclusive Budget maintaining fiscal discipline with a focus on job creation, India Inc said Tuesday. Reacting to measures announced in the maiden Budget of Modi 3.0 government, they said it balances equitable growth with fiscal sustainability and is people-centric. Vedanta Ltd Chairman Anil Agarwal pointed out that the focus on job creation with three innovative employment-linked schemes is timely. "The abolition of angel tax will give a big boost to our startups and young entrepreneurs who are the job creators of the future. The commitment to speed up IBC resolution will lead to 12,000 businesses restarting operations and many more jobs. I am delighted to see the announcement related to Critical Minerals Mission," he said. Industry body Ficci President Anish Shah termed the Budget 2024-25 as a "growth-oriented" one that has delivered both short-term demand stimulus and actions focused on medium- to long-term growth imperatives, while maintaining fiscal discipline. He said the Budget is inclusive, with a strong thrust on quality job creation and skilling. Similarly, CII President Sanjiv Puri also described it as a "people-centric" Budget which balances equitable growth with fiscal sustainability. The government has unveiled a comprehensive roadmap for sustainable and equitable growth while retaining the focus on job creation, he added. Likewise, ASSOCHAM lauded Sitharaman for maintaining policy continuity with a "bold" Budget while investing for the long-term and no easy giveaways. "This is a Bold budget by the government keeping in view longer-term fiscal prudence. With no easy giveaways, it focuses on a longer, more sustainable path of job creation through manufacturing in the country and a strengthened role of the MSMEs," ASSOCHAM President Sanjay Nayyar said. Bharat Forge Chairman & MD Baba Kalyani said the Budget lays strong emphasis on strengthening the fundamental pillars that would propel the Indian economy towards a Viksit Bharat. "The focus on natural farming and agricultural productivity, incentivising job creation and employment, continued impetus to bolster MSMEs, modernising urban cities and policies aimed at accelerating India's energy transition will have a long-standing affect that would significantly improve economic resilience in an otherwise volatile world economy," he said.

## Census, NPR unlikely in 2024 too

The Budget 2024-25 Tuesday allocated ₹1,309.46 crore for census, a significant reduction from 2021-22 when ₹3,768 crore was allocated for the decadal exercise, an indication that it may not be carried out even after a significant delay. A meeting of the Union cabinet December 24, 2019 had approved the proposal for conducting census of India 2021 at a cost of ₹8,754.23 crore and updating the National Population Register (NPR) at a cost of ₹3,941.35 crore. The house listing phase of the census and the exercise to update the NPR were scheduled to be carried out across the country from April 1 to September 30, 2020 but were postponed due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The census operation continues to be on hold and the government has not yet announced the new schedule.

## In a first, private sector gets nod to invest in atomic energy

India's atomic energy got a positive nudge today with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman saying, "Nuclear energy is expected to form a very significant part of the energy mix for Viksit Bharat." India is now set to develop small reactors and conduct research to develop small modular reactors. In another big announcement, the private sector has been allowed to partner in setting up nuclear plants for the first time.

