

No dramatic pre-poll sops as FM sticks to fiscal deficit targets; announces new urban housing scheme, more rural homes, rooftop solar solutions; turns focus to eastern States

# Puffed-up, poll-ready



FM promises a White Paper in Parliament to draw 'lessons' from the economy's 'mismanagement' prior to 2014; parries queries on likely timeline



She scotches worries about fiscal consolidation, by setting a lower than expected 5.1% of GDP target for 2024-25 from 5.8% estimated this year

Vikas Dhot  
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, presenting her sixth Union Budget and her first interim Budget on Thursday, resisted the temptation to hand out dramatic pre-poll sops such as the ones unveiled ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha election, opting instead to bank on the government's track record and promise of "unprecedented development" in the next five years.

While broadly sticking to her assurance that this 2024-25 Budget would be a "vote on account", without "spectacular announcements", Ms. Sitharaman painted an elaborate picture of India's imperfect past prior to 2014, with the economy and governance needing serious mending. She then outlined how the NDA government, with a "nation-first" approach, had enabled the transition



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ILLUSTRATION: SOUMYADIP SINHA

to a virtually perfect present.

"It is now appropriate to look at where we were then till 2014 and where we are now, only for the purpose of drawing lessons from the mismanagement of those years," Ms. Sitharaman said, promising a White Paper in the House on the mess allegedly inherited by the Narendra Modi government and the eco-

nomy's subsequent resurgence to a path of sustainable, high growth.

"People are living better and earning better, with even greater aspirations for the future. Average real income of the people has increased by 50%. Inflation is moderate," she said.

Though there were no tax breaks, some immediate promises were made,

including a scheme to enable the "deserving" urban middle class to buy or build their own homes, two crore more rural houses to be built in the next five years, and 300 units of free power a month for one crore households through rooftop solar solutions, as mooted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the Ram Mandir's consecration last month.

Finance Secretary T.V. Somanathan said the contours for the new housing scheme – which does not directly refer to urban households, but hints at them by picking beneficiaries from chawls, slums or unauthorised colonies – will be finalised before funding the plan.

Apart from a few such feel-good promises, the Finance Minister committed

to work with States and stakeholders to implement "next generation reforms" in its next tenure. At the full Budget in July, the government plans to present a detailed roadmap for its vision of a developed India by 2047, she said, enunciating some guiding principles that will drive its approach.

She also made it a point to emphasise that the go-

vernment is committed to turning the eastern parts of India – Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh – into the growth engines of the economy in the coming Amrit Kaal, a term used for the period leading up to 2047.

CONTINUED ON

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FULL COVERAGE

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It is now appropriate to look at where we were then till 2014 and where we are now, only for the purpose of drawing lessons from the mismanagement of those years

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN  
Union Finance Minister

## Inside

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Net zero gain for MGNREGS as allocation sees a 43.33% hike

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Direct tax demands up to ₹25,000 to be withdrawn

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One crore households to get up to 300 units of free electricity

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### Railways

Railways gets outlay of ₹2.55 lakh crore; up by 5.8% from last year

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## Committee will study 'fast population growth' and demographic changes: FM

Vijaita Singh  
NEW DELHI

A high-power committee will be constituted to consider the challenges arising from "fast population growth and demographic changes", Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her interim Budget speech on Friday.

The Finance Minister said the committee would be mandated to make recommendations to comprehensively address these challenges in relation to

the goal of *Viksit Bharat*, or a developed India.

The announcement comes against the backdrop of an indefinitely postponed Census, which means that there is little reliable data to back up her assertion of "fast" population growth in the country; the



little data that exist suggest that the country's fertility rate is falling below replacement levels. Despite the absence of sound statistics, security concerns in

border areas are also being highlighted on the basis of purported demographic changes.

To a question from *The Hindu* on whether the committee was aimed at population stabilisation and if it would be set in motion after the next Census, Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said: "India's demographics are an opportunity as well as a challenge. The committee will look at those aspects and

the final terms of reference will reflect the focus."

The Minister's speech suggested there has been a "fast" population growth in the country, though there is no accurate data.

The latest Sample Registration System (SRS) report for 2020 said that the total fertility rate (TFR), or the average number of children born to a woman over her lifetime, dropped to 2, from 2.1 in 2019.

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## Biased in favour of rich: Chidambaram

Sandeep Phukan  
NEW DELHI

India's demographic dividend has been "destroyed" as the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance's approach to the economy "is biased in favour of the rich", Congress leader and former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said on Thursday. He added that the party was not afraid of a White Paper analysing the previous Congress-led United Progressive Alliance's

record on handling the economy.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, in a video statement, claimed that both "vision and accountability were missing" from the interim Budget. "Any Budget has two aspects: one, to provide a status report on the previous years, and the other is to provide a vision for the next year. Both of these are missing from this interim Budget," Mr. Kharge said.

Nistula Hebbar  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi characterised the interim Budget tabled on Thursday as "inclusive and innovative", one that "carries the confidence of continuity", a reference to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's assertion that the Modi government will present the full Budget in July after the Lok Sabha poll.

"This Budget will empower all pillars of developed

India – the youth, the poor, women, and farmers. It carries the guarantee of strengthening the foundations of *Viksit Bharat* by 2047," the Prime Minister said. Stating that the Budget reflected the aspirations of "young India", he highlighted two significant announcements – that of a fund of ₹1 lakh crore for research and innovations, and the extension of tax exemptions for start-ups.

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## Inclusive, innovative, sign of continuity: PM

Nistula Hebbar  
NEW DELHI

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INTERIM  
BUDGET

## Social sector outlays low (in %)

The charts show the allocation for various social sectors as a share of total expenditure. Compared with the pre-pandemic years, the allocation to rural development, education and social welfare sectors remained relatively low.

SOURCE: BUDGET DOCUMENTS

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT SECTOR



## HIGHER EDUCATION



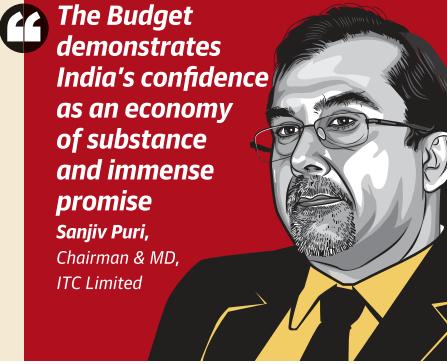
## SCHOOL EDUCATION



## SOCIAL WELFARE SECTOR



**The Budget demonstrates India's confidence as an economy of substance and immense promise**  
Sanjiv Puri, Chairman & MD, ITC Limited



## VIEWPOINT

NIRMAL JAIN  
Founder, IIFL Group

## Prudent, promises bigger things

The govt. stuck to the theme as it raised capex outlay for the coming financial year by 11% to ₹11.1 lakh cr.

**D**ays before she was to deliver Interim Budget 2024, FM Nirmala Sitharaman dropped some hints on what to expect from her speech. She said the government would orient policies towards improving the lot of four main interest groups: women, youth, farmers and poor.

In her Budget speech today, Ms. Sitharaman went a step further. The government was committed to inclusive growth and had detailed roadmap ready for a developed India by 2047.

This was a pre-election Vote-on-Account and not a full Budget, so the FM had limited leeway, and yet managed to move the needle enough to keep the interests of large swathes of the population in mind. While for the poor, there was the promise of 2-crore more houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, on top of the 3 crore already built, for the middle class, there was a commitment the government will ensure affordable housing for all. If done right, this should give a massive boost to the country's real estate sector. The Modi government's core philosophy over the last decade has been to push capital expenditure, especially in the infrastructure sector. In fact, the government's capex has nearly trebled in the last four years.

The government stuck to the theme as it raised the capex outlay for the coming financial year to ₹11.1 lakh crore, a 11% rise. Capex on infrastructure has a multiplier effect and the real

impact of this push should be visible in the coming years on old economy and construction sectors that power it.

The government needs to be commended for the fact that despite

significant economic upheavals since the pandemic, it has managed to steer a tight ship, remain fiscally prudent and keep fiscal deficit in check in the face of stiff crude oil prices.

While the fiscal deficit for FY24 at 5.8% is an improvement over the initial estimate of 5.9%, the figure for FY25 is projected at a more challenging 5.1%. This would bring India closer to achieving the fiscal deficit target of 4.5% by 2025-26.

The government has also reduced market borrowing plan for 2024-25. It has pegged gross and net market borrowing at ₹14.13 lakh crore and ₹11.75 lakh crore respectively, significantly lower than most estimates. Simply put, the government wants to cut back on market borrowings and is looking at the private sector to partner it in funding the country's massive infrastructure development push.

The government can pat itself on the back as the revenue deficit as a factor of fiscal deficit has been coming down over the years, indicating it is borrowing money to create productive assets rather than merely fund consumption expenditure.

To power the animal spirits of India's young tech entrepreneurs, the government promised to set up a ₹1 lakh crore fund for research and development in the tech space. India is on the verge of something transformational.

## POCKET | RAVIKANTH



"I'd say any budget that contains the soundbite 'vote' is an excellent budget!"

## Net zero gain for job guarantee scheme

Interim Budget allocates ₹86,000 crore for the rural employment scheme, which is an almost 43.33% rise from the allocation in the last Budget, though the total expenditure so far for the programme, as per Union Rural Development Ministry, is already ₹88,309 crore.

Sobhana K. Nair

NEW DELHI

**W**ith allocation of ₹86,000 crore for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the budget for the scheme for the financial year 2024-25 has been hiked by ₹26,000 crore in comparison with the 2023-24 Budget estimates, though it is the same as the revised estimates for the ongoing financial year (2023-24). So, the net gain for the rural employment scheme could be zero or even negative.

As per the statistics available on the Union Rural Development Ministry website, the total expenditure on the programme so



**Mounting dues:** As on February 1, the Centre owes ₹16,000 crore in wages to the State governments. THE HINDU

far has been ₹88,309.22 crore. According to some estimates, as on February 1, the Centre owes ₹16,000 crore in wages to the State governments. The government has argued that MGNREGS is a dynamic

scheme and the dues are cyclically paid. But for the last two years, the Centre has halted the programme in West Bengal, claiming corruption in implementation of the scheme. The Centre owes almost ₹7,000

crore to the State.

The 2024 Budget, though, breaks the continued trend of slashing the budget for the programme. In the 2023 Budget, only ₹60,000 crore was allocated which was 18% lower than the ₹73,000 crore Budget estimates and 33% lower than the ₹89,000 crore revised estimates for financial year 2023-24 for the scheme.

## Allocation falls short

But activists and academics said the allocation still fell way short of the sum required for efficient implementation of the programme. "Matching the revised estimates is a tacit acknowledgement of rural distress. But it takes no step to alleviate it. Simple

calculation points out that considering 5.6 crore households are registered under the programme, this sum can provide for 25 to 30 days at most of work in a year," Rajendran Narayanan, Professor at Azim Premji University, said.

The allocation furthers the trend of spending 15 to 20% of the Budget clearing the past dues.

In the present case, this includes ₹7,000 crore owed to the West Bengal government.

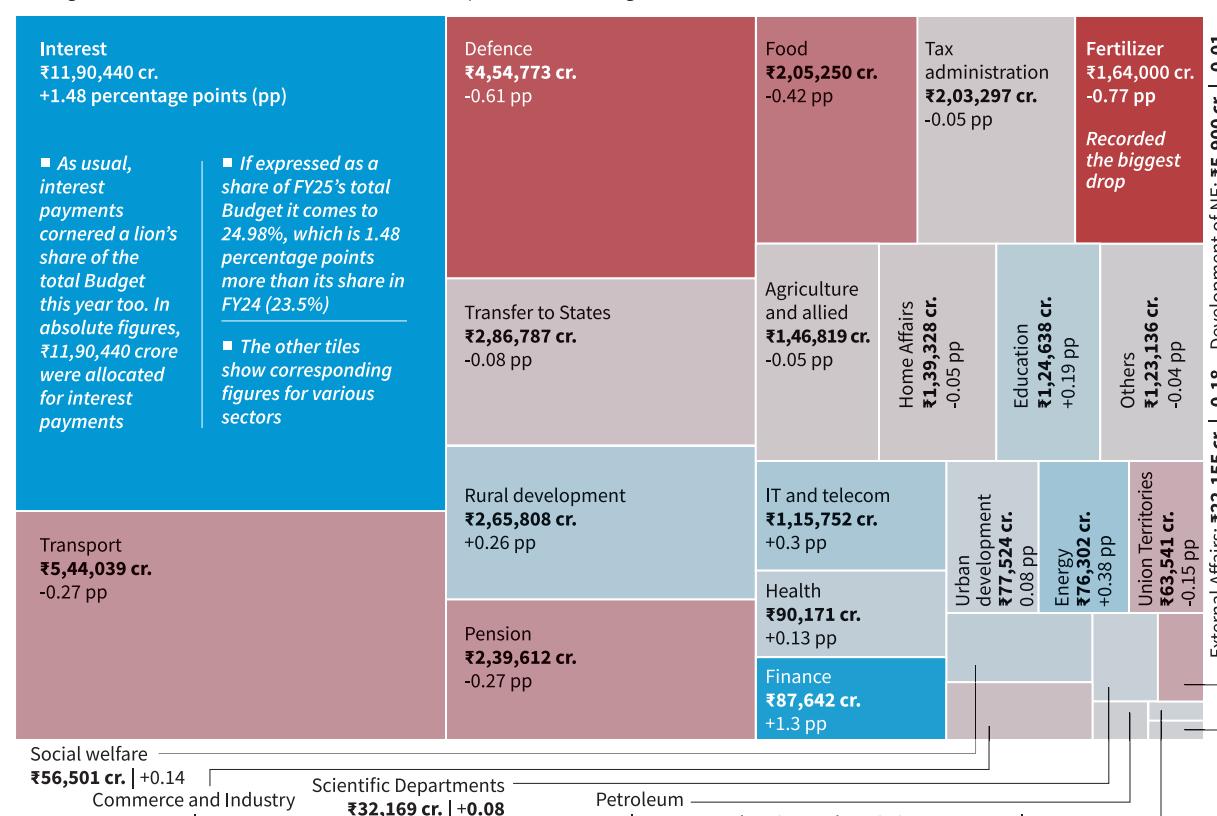
"To meet the employment needs of registered households under MGNREGS, a crucial ₹3 lakh crore is essential. However, the allocated budget falls significantly short

at a mere ₹86,000 crore. Considering the outstanding dues in West Bengal that need clearing and the additional work requirements for the workers in the State this year, coupled with the historical trend of 15 to 20% of the Budget being spent on clearing past dues, the allocation seems increasingly inadequate.

This shortfall raises serious concerns as it not only jeopardises the guaranteed right to work under MGNREGS but also constitutes a gross violation of this fundamental entitlement," Chakradhar Buddha, who is affiliated with LibTech India, a consortium of academics and activists, said.

## Budget breakdown

The graphic shows the sector-wise budgeted expenditure (₹ crore) in FY25. The bigger the rectangle, the higher the proposed spending in FY25. It also shows the change in a sector's share in total expenditure from FY24 (revised estimates). The deeper the blue, the higher the increase in share from FY24. The deeper the red, the higher the decrease in share from FY24.



SOURCE: BUDGET DOCUMENTS

## Marginal rise in allocations for farming, fisheries

Jigeesh A.M.

NEW DELHI

Maintaining that the 'anna daas' welfare is the highest priority of the Centre, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her Budget farmers' empowerment and well-being will drive India forward.

The allocation for the Agriculture Ministry is ₹1,17,528.79 crore, a rise of ₹1,997 crore when compared with the previous Budget. The allocation for the Ministry in the revised estimates was ₹1,16,788.96 crore while the actual expenditure in 2022-23 was ₹99,877.01 crore.

While schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana saw an increase in allocation, the allocation under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi remained the same at ₹60,000 crore. The PM Kisan Man Dhan Yojana, however, saw a decrease in allocation.

For agricultural research, the allocation is ₹9,941.09 crore. Ms. Sitharaman said direct financial assistance is provided to 11.8 crore farmers, including marginal and small farmers, under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi. "Crop insurance is given to four crore farmers under PM

Fasal Bima Yojana."

The Minister said a comprehensive programme for supporting dairy farmers will be formulated. "Efforts are already on to control foot and mouth disease," she said, adding the programme will be built on the success of existing schemes, including the Rashtriya Gokul Mission, National Livestock Mission, and Infrastructure Development Funds for dairy processing and animal husbandry.

The Ministry received an allocation of ₹4,521.24 crore, an increase of almost ₹200 crore when compared with the previous Budget. The Minister said a separate Department for Fisheries has resulted in the doubling of both inland and aquaculture production. The Budget, however, was silent on guaranteed minimum support price based on the M.S. Swaminathan Committee's formula.

## School, Higher Education Departments get more money in interim Budget

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Both Higher Education and School Education departments under the Union Ministry of Education received an increased budgetary allocation in the Interim Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman here on Thurs-

day. Schemes such as PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) got almost 50% more allocation than the last Budget.

The total allocation for the School Education Department is ₹73,008.10 crore. In the last Budget, it was ₹68,804.85 crore. In the re-

vised estimates of last fiscal, the amount was ₹72,473.80 crore. Actual expenditure of 2022-23 was ₹58,639.56 crore. Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN), previously known as the mid-day meal scheme, received an outlay of ₹12,467.39 crore. For PM SHRI, the allocation is ₹6,050 crore. For Higher Education Department, the total allocation is ₹47,619.77 crore. In the last Budget, it was ₹44,094.62 crore. In the revised estimates, it rose to ₹57,244.48 crore and in 2022-23, the actual expenditure was ₹38,556.80 crore.

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## Fertilizer subsidy set to decline, food subsidy sees increase

Jigeesh A.M.

NEW DELHI

The Centre has decreased fertilizer subsidies, apparently hoping the improving situation in Ukraine and increased domestic production will help in managing the situation.

The Fertilizer and Chemicals Ministry has been claiming the increase in domestic production of essential fertilizers such as urea will result in decreasing fertilizer subsidies.



**Slight dip:** Allocation for the Fertilizer Department in this Budget is down to ₹1,64,150.81 crore. THE HINDU

Allocation for the Fertilizer Department in this

crore in the last Budget. In the Revised Estimates of the last financial year, it was ₹1,88,947.29 crore. The amount actually used in 2022-23 was ₹2,51,369.18 crore, with payments for indigenous and imported urea estimated to have accounted for the bulk of the expenditure.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in the Budget that after the successful adop-

tion of Nano Urea, application of Nano Di Ammonium Phosphate (Nano DAP) on various crops will be expanded to all agro-climatic zones. She said the pandemic had led to a crisis of food, fertilizer, fuel and finances for the world, while India successfully navigated its way.

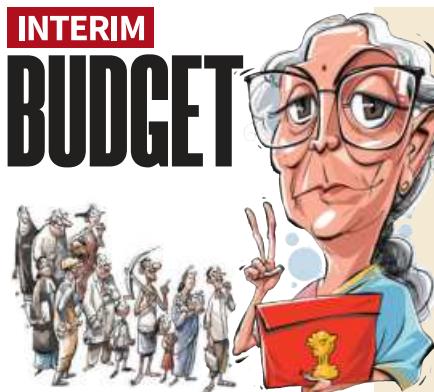
Food subsidy has seen an increase in the allocation compared with the last year. The total food

subsidy includes ₹2,05,250 crore for the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY) and ₹1 lakh crore for the Sugar Subsidy payable under Public Distribution System. In the last Budget, the amount was ₹1,97,350 crore, while in 2022-23, the actual expenditure was ₹2,72,802.38 crore.

Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman also said worries about food have been eliminated through free ration for 80 crore people.

A ND-NDE

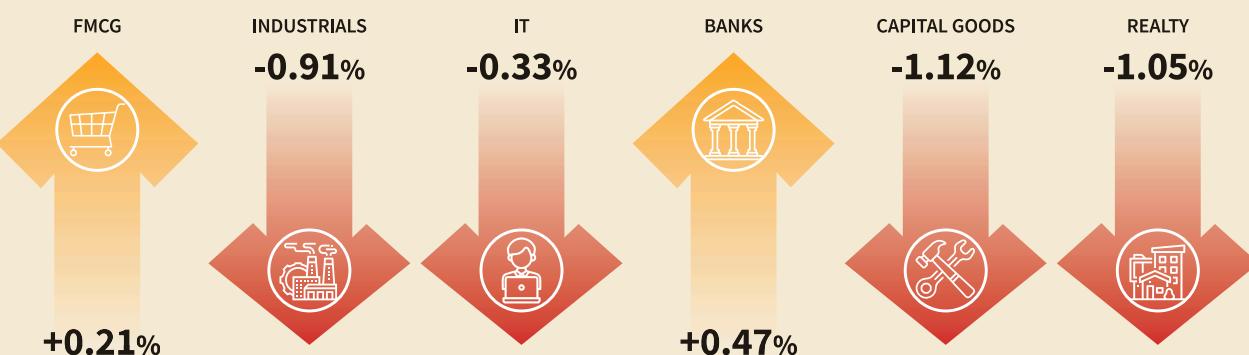
## INTERIM BUDGET



### Bearish response

The market did not react too well to the Budget speech with stock prices of most sectors declining on Thursday, except for FMCG (+0.21%) and Banks (+0.47%). Capital goods stocks underwent the biggest fall (-1.12%).

SOURCE: BSE



**"The setting up of ₹1 lakh crore corpus for long-term funding of R&D projects will enable people to take risks"**

Srivats Ram,  
MD, Wheels  
India Ltd.

Tax exemption expiry date for start-ups to be extended by a year

Mini Tejaswi  
BENGALURU

Although the interim Budget for 2024-25 did not propose any changes in existing taxation, start-ups are offered certain tax benefits by way of extension of exemptions.

According to the Budget document, certain tax benefits for start-ups and investments made by sovereign wealth or pension funds, and tax exemption on certain income of some International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) units are expiring on March 31, 2024.



### The extension of expiry date is to provide continuity in taxation and trigger growth in the sector

preneurial aspirations and generating employment for the youth, according to industry players.

The Budget's emphasis on the growth and global competitiveness of start-ups and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) reflects the government's steadfast commitment to fostering a robust ecosystem. Adequate finances, relevant technologies, and targeted training showcase a comprehensive approach towards empowering MSMEs, said K.R. Sekar, partner, Deloitte India.

According to the Finance Minister, under the PM Mudra Yojana, the government has sanctioned 43 crore loans aggregating to ₹22.5 lakh crore for entrepreneurial aspirations of the youth.

However, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed to extend the exemption expiry date by a year to March 31, 2025, to provide continuity in taxation and trigger growth in the sector. This gesture along with initiatives such as the PM Mudra Yojana, Fund of Funds, Start-up India, and Start-up Credit Guarantee schemes highlighted the government's proactive stance in supporting entre-

## In relief for small taxpayers, old demands to be dropped

Tax claims of up to ₹25,000 pertaining to the period till FY 2009-10, and up to ₹10,000 for FY 2011 to 2015 will be withdrawn; one crore people to benefit, says Finance Minister

Saptaparno Ghosh  
Lalatendu Mishra



Nirmala Sitharaman addressing presspersons after presenting the interim Budget, in New Delhi on Thursday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

While maintaining the status quo with respect to direct and indirect taxes, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in the interim Budget presentation on Thursday, proposed to withdraw small, non-reconciled, and disputed direct tax demands. This implies that tax demands of up to ₹25,000 pertaining to the period till FY 2009-10, and up to ₹10,000 for FY 2011 to 2015 will be withdrawn. Ms. Sitharaman held that that the moves were part of the Treasury's intent to improve 'ease of living and doing business'.

This turned out to be the major policy announcement as Ms. Sitharaman maintained the status quo for direct and indirect taxes, including import duties.

Elaborating the rationale for the withdrawal, she told the House that there

existed a "large number of petty, non-verified, non-reconciled or disputed direct demands", many of which went as far back as 1962. As they continue to remain on the books, they were "causing anxiety to honest taxpayers and hindering refunds of subsequent years", she said.

The Minister said the move would benefit "about a crore taxpayers".

Gouri Puri, partner at law firm Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co., said the issue [about direct

tax demands] has been pertinent to smaller taxpayers. Further, this will help address "legacy demands" that have been existing in the system but might be lacking merit.

Before announcing the tax proposals, Ms. Sitharaman had highlighted the government's prerogative to improve taxpayer services. She pointed to how the "age-old jurisdiction-based assessment system" was transitioned to "faceless assessment and appeal".

This, according to her, imparted greater efficiency, transparency, and accountability. The Finance Minister said the introduction of updated income tax returns, a new form 26AS, and pre-filling of tax returns have made filing "simpler and easier". Further, the average processing time for returns stands reduced from 93 days to 10 days at present, she stated.

### Same tax rates

Stating that she would be "keeping with the convention", Ms. Sitharaman proposed to retain the same tax rates for direct and indirect taxes, including import duties. This is in contrast to the last interim Budget (2019-20), which proposed amending Section 87A of the Income Tax Act to increase the income base for tax rebates from ₹3.5 lakh to ₹5 lakh, breaking from the convention of announcing populist measures before the country heads into election.

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI



In the upcoming session, the market may continue to respond to the aftermath of the Budget announcement

RAJESH BHOSALE

Technical analyst, Angel One

limiting the fall. Among individual stocks, One97 Communications shares plunged 20% after the RBI barred Paytm Payments Bank from accepting deposits or top-ups in any customer account.

Rajesh Bhosale, technical analyst, Angel One, said, "In the upcoming session, the market may continue to respond to the aftermath of the Budget announcement, with individual themes playing a significant role for traders seeking out performance opportunities. As the focus shifts from the key event, attention will revert to global developments, necessitating vigilance on the global front by traders."

Market unimpressed with proposals, stock indices end in red



The stock markets remained unimpressed with the proposals announced in the interim Budget and key indices, after witnessing a sea-saw movement throughout the day, ended with losses.

Whatever gains were seen prior to the presentation of the Budget were wiped out.

The S&P BSE Sensex lost 107 points, or 0.15%, to close at 71,645 points. The NSE Nifty 50 Index closed at 21,697 points, down 28 points, or 0.13%. Among the Sensex stocks, L&T was down 2.38%, UltraTech 2.26%, and JSW Steel 2.03%. This is despite several positive announcements concerning the infrastructure sector.

According to analysts, the interim Budget turned out to be a non-event, and both the Sensex and Nifty were confined to a narrow range. Eight out of 13 sectors were in the red, with PSU banks and auto stocks



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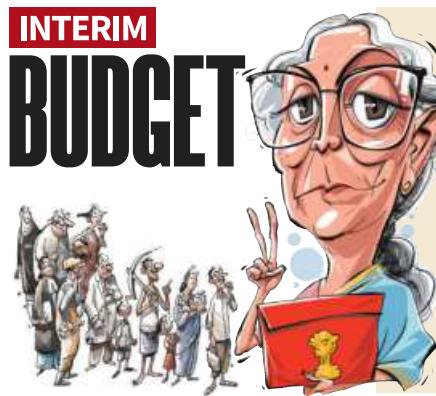
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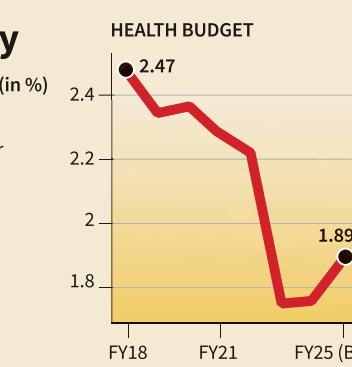
A-NODE

INTERIM  
BUDGET

## Health outlay remains low (in %)

The charts show the allocation for health sector and schemes as a share of total budget. Compared with the pre-pandemic years, allocation for health remained low. Among schemes, PMJAY's share increased considerably.

SOURCE: BUDGET DOCUMENTS



## NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION



## PMJAY

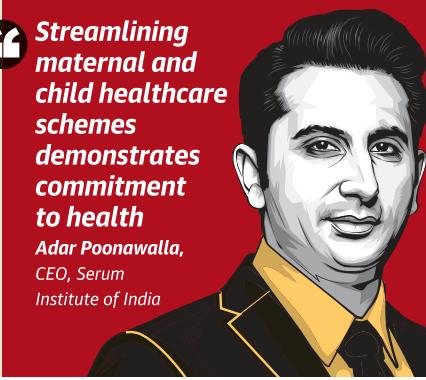


## PMSSY (SWASTHYA SURAKSHA YOJANA)



**Streamlining maternal and child healthcare schemes demonstrates commitment to health**

Adar Poonawalla,  
CEO, Serum  
Institute of India



## VIEWPOINT

ARUNDHATI BHATTACHARYA  
CEO & chairperson, Salesforce India

## Focus firmly on jobs and reforms

Technology, youth, and innovation continues to be the cornerstone of the government's strategy

India has showcased a robust and resilient growth story driven by perseverance, ingenuity, and vision. The 2024 interim Budget is an action-oriented one, with the mantra of reforming, performing, and transforming India. It is a Budget of confidence. It promises to continue to empower the four vulnerable sections of society – the poor, the youth, farmers, and women folk in order to realise India's potential.

The continued focus on increased capital investments will result in generation of employment opportunities and thereby growth of the economy. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are an integral part of our economy - locally and globally.

As of October 2023, 1.14 lakh start-ups were recognised by the government under the 'Startup India' initiative and reported the creation of more than 12 lakh jobs. The next-generation reforms focused on timely and adequate finances, relevant technologies, and appropriate training for the MSMEs to grow and also compete globally will facilitate sustaining high and more resource-efficient economic growth – creating opportunities for all.

India is the talent basket of the world and has one of the youngest populations globally; we have a humongous opportunity to unlock the potential of the country's young workforce. I am personally pleased with the 43% increase in enrolment of women in STEM courses, the

**Promoting sustainable growth is an opportunity for India to lead and has been a top-of-mind initiative for all leaders**

highest in the world. What's more, our country's population is massive and tremendously diverse - which gives us access to some of the richest datasets for AI and

innovation. India is showcasing multiple solutions through innovation and entrepreneurship of its people. Technology, youth, and innovation continues to be the cornerstone of the government's strategy. Creation of a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore with a 50-year interest-free loan is a welcome move combining the power of our youth and technology for driving more innovation.

## Sustainable growth

Promoting sustainable growth is an opportunity for India to lead and has been a top-of-mind initiative for all leaders. Bold action towards climate change for realising our commitment to becoming 'net-zero' by 2070 is much needed. We are on a high growth path with all-round development and it is encouraging to see the focus on environment-friendly alternatives such as rooftop solar, offshore wind power generation, mixing of bio-fuels with CNG etc., to ensure that such growth is sustainable.

We need more women in the workforce and women-led initiatives are an imperative. Achieving high resilient growth while ensuring sustainable and inclusive livelihood options for all remains a priority for the country. There is emphasis on programmes for this segment as well including their health and nutrition. The Budget shuns unnecessary populist measures and focuses instead on ensuring that India continues on its high-growth trajectory.

## POCKET

RAVIKANTH



"Guess what?! Rural India provides more Giga-jobs than urban places every rabi and kharif!"

CM YK

## ASHA, anganwadi staff get health cover

Interim Budget enhances allocation to Health Ministry to ₹90,658.63 crore; newly designed U-WIN platform for managing immunisation and intensified efforts of Mission Indradhanush to be rolled out expeditiously; maternity, childcare schemes proposed to be integrated

Bindu Shajan Perappadan  
NEW DELHI

Health cover under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana will be extended to all Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) and anganwadi workers and helpers, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday, announcing the interim Budget for 2024-25.

While a full Budget for 2024-25 will be announced after a new government is formed post the Lok Sabha elections later this year, the allocation in the interim Budget for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has been increased to ₹90,658.63 crore, from



**Pat on the back:** The WHO has lauded the announcement to extend health cover to all ASHA and Anganwadi workers. FILE PHOTO

₹89,155 crore in 2023-24, while the Ayush Ministry has seen the allocation increased to ₹3,712.49 crore from ₹3,647.50 crore.

For the health sector, the Minister said that India would utilise the services of the newly designed U-

WIN platform for managing immunisation and the intensified efforts of Mission Indradhanush. "This is to be rolled out expeditiously throughout the country," the Minister said. Other major announcements for the sector in-

cluded utilising existing hospital infrastructure under various departments to offer medical seats to students and 'encouraging' HPV vaccination for girls in the 9-14 years age group for prevention of cervical cancer. The government also proposed to combine various schemes for maternity and childcare and bring them under one comprehensive programme.

## Skill training

Ms. Sitharaman added that as part of the Skill India Mission, youth were being trained at various world-class institutes, including 15 newly constructed All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

Anganwadi centres

would be upgraded under 'Saksham Anganwadi', while Poshan 2.0 would be expedited to improve nutrition delivery and ensure early childhood care and development.

Welcoming the extension of health cover to ASHA and anganwadi workers under Ayushman Bharat, Roderico H. Ofrin, WHO's representative in India, said that various other health-related

dia in achieving health for all and meeting its disease elimination goals," he added.

The Association of Indian Medical Device Industry (AiMeD), on the other hand, said it is awaiting the Budget fine print to check whether the recommendations of the Department of Pharmaceuticals with regard to the sector had been addressed.

The Budget had seemingly fallen short of expectations for addressing the rising import graph of medical devices and soaring import bills worth more than ₹63,200 crore, said AiMeD forum coordinator Rajiv Nath.

## Centre moots ₹1 lakh-crore corpus for R&amp;D

Jacob P. Koshy  
NEW DELHI

Signalling a commitment to research and innovation for India's "tech-savvy youth," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her interim Budget speech on Thursday, mentioned a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore, that would be available on 'minimal or nil interest rates' to "encourage" the private sector to invest in R&D in 'sunrise sectors'

ing the National Research Foundation Bill. To be piloted by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), this envisages an autonomous body with a corpus of ₹50,000 crore, of which nearly ₹36,000 crore will come from the private sector and non-governmental sources.

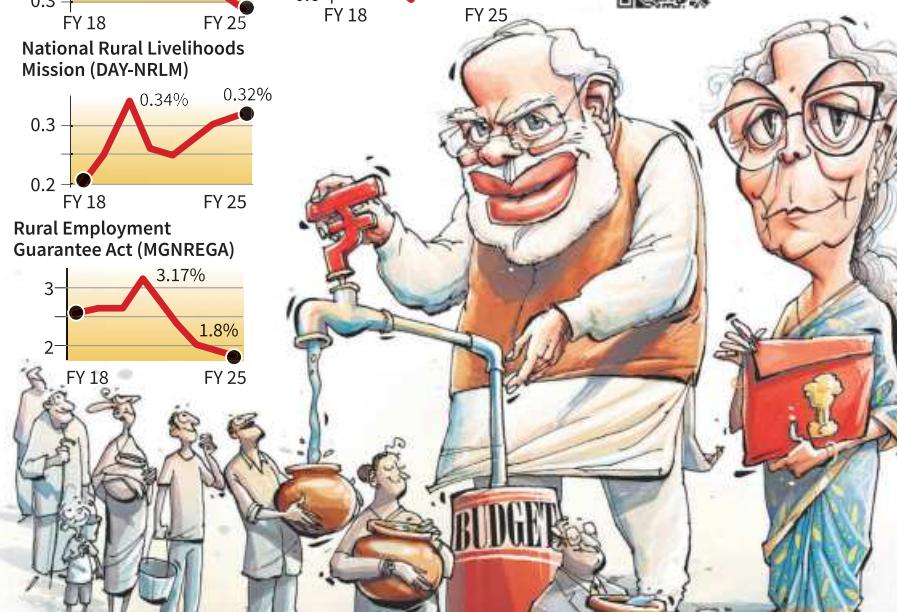
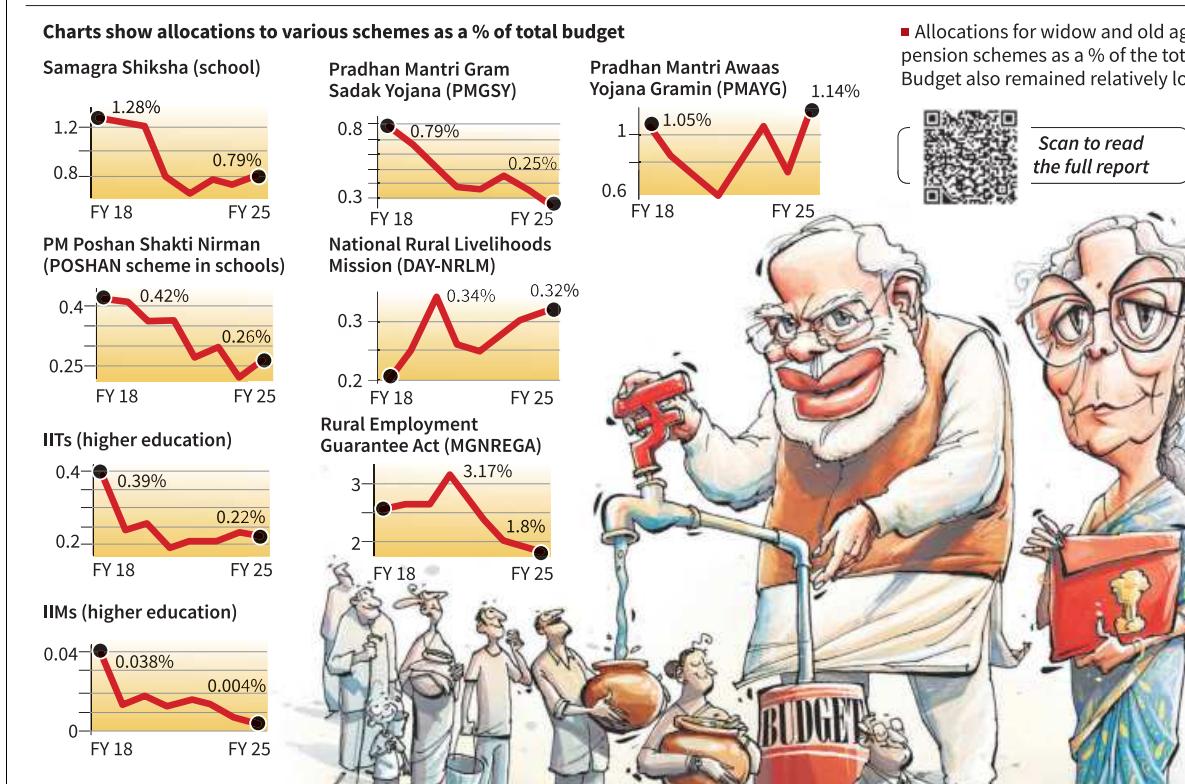
Experts said that while it was a "welcome" development, it remained to be seen how the scheme would be implemented.

"There are many possibilities at this juncture but I'm not aware of any specific discussions [on beneficiaries and implementation] and the ministries which will be involved. However, it is very good as it envisages both the public and private sector to invest in research and development," V.K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog (science and technology), told *The Hindu*.

A major long-standing concern of the government has been in getting private sector enterprises to invest in core R&D with nearly three-fourth of such expense now borne by the government. The DST has provisioned ₹2,000 crore in 2024-25 towards the NRF. The National Quantum Mission, a much talked about scheme of the DST, has for the first time been provisioned ₹2,819 crore. Ms. Sitharaman mentioned, again without details, "...A new scheme will be launched for strengthening deep-tech technologies for defence purposes and expediting 'atmanirbharta.'

## Smaller pie for social sector

Outlays to most schemes under school education, higher education and rural development in the total budget remained relatively low compared to the pre-pandemic years. Only PMAYG and NRRL recorded considerable increases



## Govt. raises Lakhpati Didi scheme target

Sreeparna Chakrabarty  
NEW DELHI

Buoyed by its success, the Centre has decided to increase the target for 'Lakhpati Didi' scheme, which aims to train women self-help groups (SHGs) to earn a sustainable income of at least ₹1 lakh per annum by setting up micro-enterprises within their villages.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, while pre-

senting the interim Budget for 2024-25, said the target for training 'Lakhpati Didi' would be increased from the existing 2 crore to 3 crore.

"Eighty-three lakh self-help groups with 9 crore women are transforming rural socio-economic landscape with empowerment and self-reliance. Their success has assisted nearly

one crore women to become 'Lakhpati Didi' already," Ms. Sitharaman said. She said that there will also be expedition of the upgrading of Anganwadi Centres under "Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0" scheme for improved nutrition delivery, early childhood care and development. Accordingly,

The total allocation for the Women and Child Development Ministry for 2024-25 is ₹26,000 crore, a marginal increase of 2.52% from the previous year's Budget.

the Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0 programmes saw the highest allocation of funds at ₹21,200 crore, followed by the Mission Shakti, which has been given ₹3,145.97 crore.

Among the significant steps taken by the Science Ministry in 2023 was clear-

## New scheme for bio-manufacturing, bio-foundry on the cards

Vasudevan Mukunth  
CHENNAI

In her interim Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman spoke of "a new scheme of bio-manufacturing and bio-foundry" to provide "environment-friendly alternatives such as biodegradable polymers, bio-plastics, bio-pharmaceuticals and bio-agri-inputs".

The announcement is part of a bid to have the bio-economy contribute



**Green goals:** The scheme will provide environment-friendly alternatives such as bio-plastics. FILE PHOTO

\$300 billion to the Indian economy by 2030, repre-

senting a jump of about ₹18 lakh crore in value from current levels, and \$1 trillion by 2047. The products of the bio-economy also play key roles in India's sustainability and 'green' economy targets.

"The way to upskill India's bio-science sector is to put money into bio-manufacturing and not only prioritise research," said Shambhavi Naik, a researcher at The Takshashila Institution.

In the 2024-2025 Bud-

get, the total allocation for the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) has been cut by 16%, to ₹2,251.52 crore, potentially slowing its recovery from the highs of the COVID-19 pandemic, when it helped develop vaccines, to the pre-pandemic level.

The Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), a public-sector enterprise under the DBT that interfaces between academia and industry,

has been allocated ₹40 crore, as in 2023-2024, even though its actual expenditure was higher.

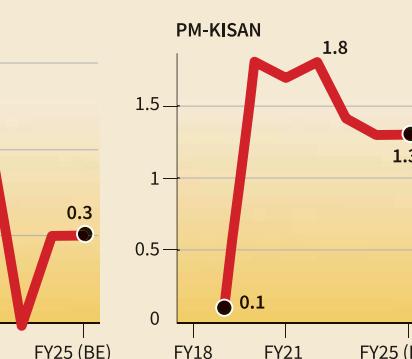
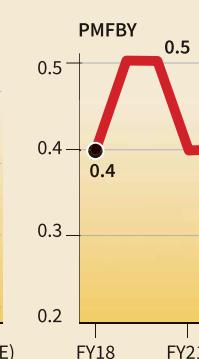
The new bio-manufacturing scheme "will also help in transforming today's consumptive manufacturing paradigm to the one based on regenerative principles," Ms. Sitharaman added. "Apart from the faux connection that increased supply will change consumption, the initiative is much needed," Ms. Naik said.

AN-ND

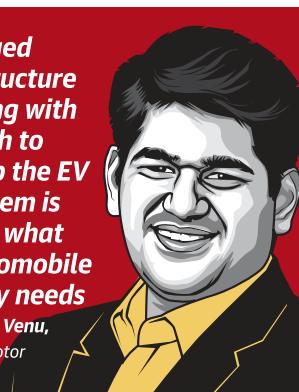
INTERIM  
BUDGETAgri outlay  
stagnant (in %)

Outlay for the agriculture sector and the two flagship schemes — PMFBY and PM-KISAN — remained stagnant in FY25 compared with FY24 (RE) and lower than the peaks recorded in previous years. Charts show allocation as a share of total budget

SOURCE: BUDGET DOCUMENTS



Continued infrastructure spending with the push to develop the EV ecosystem is exactly what the automobile industry needs

Sudarshan Venu,  
MD, TVS MotorGovt. to launch  
housing scheme  
for middle classSreeparna Chakrabarty  
NEW DELHI

Providing a boost to affordable housing, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday announced that the government would launch a scheme to help "deserving sections of the middle class living in rented houses or slums or chawls and unauthorised colonies" buy or build houses.



Two crore more houses will be built under the flagship Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Rural

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN  
Union Finance Minister

moderate-income groups.

## Two components

It has two components — PMAY (Urban) for the urban poor under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, and PMAY (Rural) for rural India under the Ministry of Rural Development.

The allocation for the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry is ₹77,523 crore, up from ₹76,431 crore in 2023-24. The total allocation for PMAY is ₹80,671 crore. The Minister said the government was working with an all-round, all-pervasive and all-inclusive development approach to make India a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.



**Green energy:** For 2024-25, the Centre has budgeted ₹4,555 crore for rooftop solar programme, say Budget documents. FILE PHOTO

surplus power back to the grid, thus offsetting their electricity bills.

Whether the government would fund new installations or only subsidise those installing new ones — the latter has been a practice for years — and the demographic that the scheme was targeting was not specified in Ms. Sitharaman's address.

Last year, the government spent ₹2,167 crore on its rooftop solar power programme, and for 2024-25, it has budgeted ₹4,555

crore, according to the Budget documents updated on Thursday.

At present, India has about 11 GW of installed rooftop solar capacity, of which only 2.7 GW is in residential units and the rest in commercial or industrial spaces. There is no centralised national estimate of how many of India's estimated 30 crore households have rooftop solar units, *The Hindu* reported last month citing estimates from experts; it is unlikely to be over 10 lakh.

Neeraj Kuldeep, Senior Programme Lead, CEEW, said in a statement on Thursday that 20-25 GW worth of rooftop solar capacity could be supported through solarisation of one crore households. Residential consumers receive subsidised electricity from distribution companies (discoms), and if such households were to be 'solarised', it would save discoms about ₹2 lakh crore over the next 25 years (the solar plant's life). "All States can leverage this opportunity as rooftop solar potential exists everywhere..." he added.

## Offshore wind

Ms. Sitharaman also announced a 'viability gap funding' to support the capital-intensive offshore wind sector, of up to 1 GW capacity. These are wind farms located in the sea.

Though no details or budgetary allocations were announced, it is expected to encourage private sector investments in the sector.



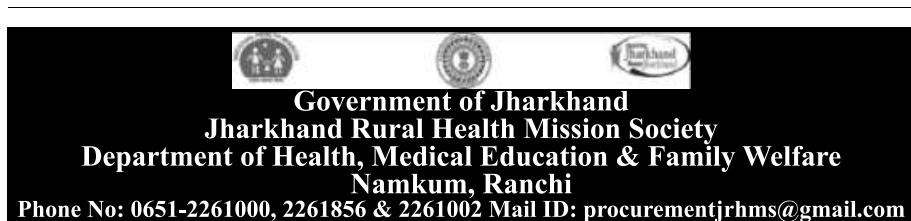
**A fillip:** Announcement on housing for middle class will propel development of real estate sector, says expert

Housing Finance Ltd., said, "We are particularly encouraged by the commitment to empower women homeowners, with a higher percentage of houses assigned to them under the PMAY-Gramin..."

Samantak Das, Chief Economist and Head of Research & REIS, India, JLL, said that the provision for two crore more rural houses over the next five years, and the housing scheme for the middle class would positively impact the residential and allied sectors.



percentage of houses assigned to them under the PMAY-Gramin..."



Tender Notice No.: NHM/Nam/01/2024 Date: 01.02.2024

In-Charge Procurement Cell on behalf of Mission Director, Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society, Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Jharkhand, Namkum, Ranchi, invites e-Tender from eligible bidders for Selection of Agency for Printing & Supply of Sickle Cell Status ID Card.

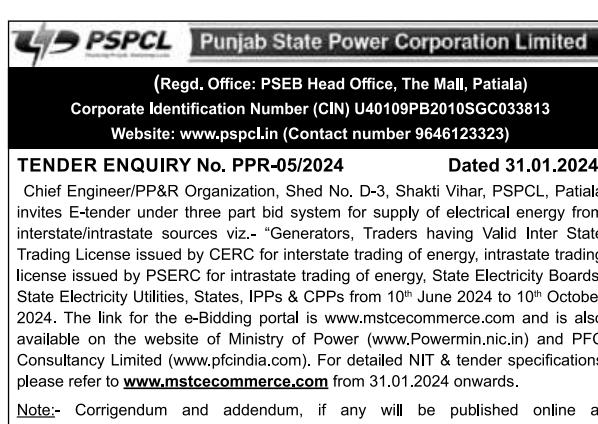
Blank tender documents with detailed conditions can be viewed or downloaded by the bidders from the website <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in> and bid should be submitted through e-procurement system only. Hard copies of technical bid and financial bid will not be entertained.

Evaluation and finalization of award of work will be based solely on e-bid submitted by the bidder. It will be sole responsibility of the bidder to scan and upload clear and legible documents for assessment, failing which the tender will be liable for rejection.

Sr. No.	Particulars	Details
1	Name of the work	Selection of Agency for Printing & Supply of Sickle Cell Status ID Card.
2	Date of Publication of Tender on website	02.02.2024
3	Pre-Bid Meeting Date and Time	07.02.2024 at 12:30 PM in Office of Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society, GVI Campus, Tata Road, Namkum, Ranchi - 834010
4	Date/Time for receipt of bids	From 15.02.2024 to 23.02.2024 Up to 06.00 PM
5	Date/Time of Technical bid opening	26.02.2024 at 11.30 AM
6	Email ID for clarifications	procurementjrhms@gmail.com
7	Tender Document Fee (Non-refundable)	Rs. 5,000/- (Through online Gateway)
8	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs. 5,00,000/- (Through online Gateway)
9	Contact no. of procurement person	9110943588

Note: The specified dates and time may change due to abrupt declaration of holidays or any other unforeseen circumstances. The same shall be informed through web-portal as and when required.

Sd/-  
In-Charge Procurement Cell  
JRHMS



No.: EE(VJN)/AE/TEND/08/2023-24 Date: 01.02.2024

## INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)

(Two Cover System) (Short Term Tender Notification) (Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)

The Executive Engineer, Vijayanagar Division, BBMP, Bengaluru invites tenders from eligible tenderers for the construction of works detailed in the table below. (Standard Tender Document - KW-4)

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Approx. Amount put to tender (Rs. in Lakh)	EMD (Rs. in Lakh)
1	Construction of 25 bedded Hospital, Dialysis center building including supplying of furniture & fire extinguishing works at GK Naidu Rangamandira in Ward No. 134 Bapujinagar in Vijayanagara Assembly Constituency.	450.00	Rs. 6,75,000/- (Rs. 1.00 lakh through e-procurement portal & the balance Rs. 5,75,000/- shall be in the form of Bank Guarantee)

(1) Tender document may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal of Government of Karnataka from 08.02.2024. (2) pre-bid meeting will be held on 12.02.2024 at 3:00 p.m. in the Office of the Chief Engineer (South), BBMP, 9th Main, 9th Cross, Jayanagar 2nd Block, Bengaluru-560011. (3) Last date for receipt of queries on 12.02.2024 upto 4:00 p.m. (4) Tenders must be submitted online through e-procurement portal on or before 4:00 p.m. on 16.02.2024 and the opening of tenders will be as per the e-procurement portal guidelines. (5) Technical bids will be opened on the website <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Vijayanagar Division on 17.02.2024 at 4:30 p.m. Further details may be obtained from the above office during office hours or website <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Vijayanagar Division, BBMP



SELECTION BASED ON BEST SCORE SECURED IN  
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Last Date to Apply February 5, 2024



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[THE HINDU businessline](https://www.thehindu.com/businessline)

[FRONTLINE](https://www.thehindu.com/frontline) [SPORTSTAR](https://www.thehindu.com/sportstar) [VINOWORLD](https://www.thehindu.com/vinoworld) [THE HINDU](https://www.thehindu.com)

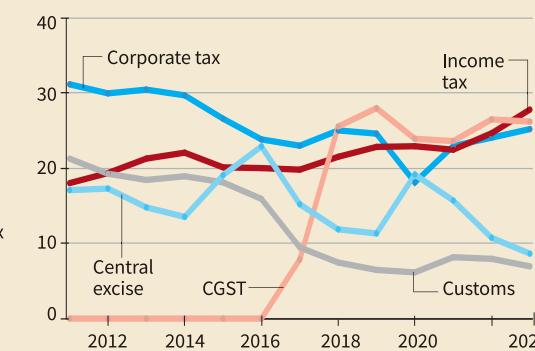
[THE HINDU](https://www.thehindu.com)

क्र. सं.	आईडी/नाम	प्रकार	कार्य का नाम	अंक में (लाख में)	अधर में (लाख पये में)	समाप्ति की अवधि
1	पतरातु	1	औरियातु रो वहेंगा दंगीतु तक पथ का सुदृशीकरण कार्य। (ले-0.20 किमी)			
2	पतरातु	2	निमी से पांची तक पथ का सुदृशीकरण कार्य। (ले-0.20 किमी)			
3	पतरातु	3	एस०ए०-०२ से हैंडल तक पथ का सुदृशीकरण कार्य। (ले-0.22 किमी)			
4	पतरातु	4	सालांग से मस्ती टाला तक पथ का सुदृशीकरण कार्य। (ले-0.15 किमी)			

INTERIM  
BUDGETTax  
build-up

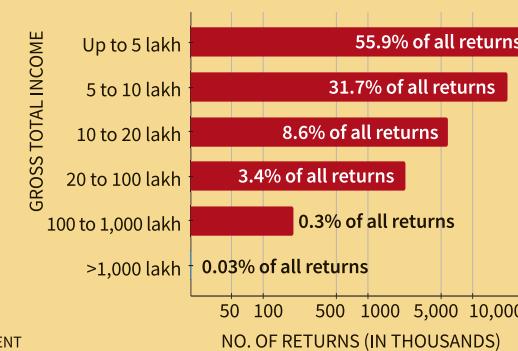
The chart shows the composition of Gross Tax Revenue for the April-November period in various years. The share of income tax in Gross Tax Revenue surpassed all other taxes in 2023

SOURCE: CGA

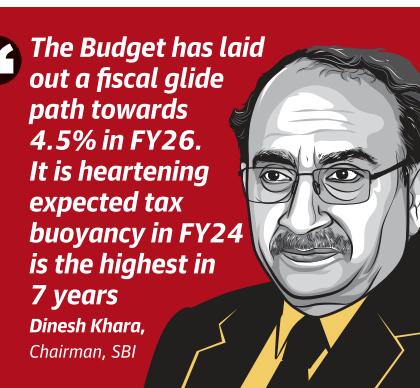
Return  
count

The chart shows the income tax returns filed across various gross income brackets of all tax payers in assessment year 2021-22. Nearly 88% of the returns were filed by those having gross total income of upto ₹10 lakh

SOURCE: INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT



**The Budget has laid out a fiscal glide path towards 4.5% in FY26. It is heartening expected tax buoyancy in FY24 is the highest in 7 years**

Dinesh Khara,  
Chairman, SBI

## VIEWPOINT

R.DINESH  
President, CII

## Capex expansion to boost infra sector

Expansion of outlay by 11.1% for FY25 will greatly bolster economic growth and boost job creation, says CII chief

The interim Union Budget 2024, laid out by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday, introduced several inclusive and growth-oriented measures that will foster sustainable and all-round development of the country.

With a focus on delivering governance, development, and performance, the interim Budget focused on ensuring continuity of earlier reforms while also laying down further steps for building a stronger India.

Several schemes and initiatives are rightly aimed at supporting and empowering India's women, youth, farmers, and other vulnerable sections. Particularly noteworthy are the announcements including the extension of healthcare coverage to all ASHA, Anganwadi workers and helpers, and various maternal and childcare schemes, which are expected to enhance women productivity.

Significant measures were also introduced to strengthen India's rural economy, such as the application of Nano DAP on various crops across agro-climatic zones, which will help promote the overall growth and productivity of farming while also boosting farmer incomes.

The focus on technology and innovation in the Budget will act as a strong catalyst for R&D. The announcement of a significant corpus for fifty-year interest-free loans for long-term financing or refinancing will help the private

sector in scaling up research and innovation in sunrise domains.

The expansion of the capital expenditure outlay by 11.1% for FY25 will greatly bolster economic growth and boost job creation by

powering the infrastructure sector further. The CII is happy to note the government's continued thrust on capital expenditure, which will maintain a high multiplier effect on the economy by strengthening the physical and social infrastructure of the country. Several projects identified under the PM Gati Shakti programme will accelerate the country's GDP growth by bringing down logistics costs and enabling multi-modal connectivity.

Sustainable growth emerged as a clear priority for the government as several measures were announced. Measures to strengthen the electric vehicle ecosystem, including the greater adoption of e-buses for public transport networks through a payment security mechanism that is very welcome, a new scheme on bio-manufacturing and bio-foundry for promoting environment friendly alternatives, and scheme for restoration and adaptation measures for promoting the Blue Economy are all welcome measures that will help facilitate India's green transition. The move to withdraw outstanding direct tax demands up to ₹25,000 until FY 2009-10 and up to ₹10,000 for FY 2010-11 and 2014-15 is very welcome.

The interim Budget also laid strong emphasis for continuing on a path of fiscal consolidation, with the aim of reaching a fiscal deficit below 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26. The fiscal deficit target for 2024-25 was set at 5.1%, in contrast to the revised estimate of 5.8% for 2023-24.

POCKET | RAVIKANTH



CM YK

## Three economic rail corridors on the anvil

Outlay for Railways goes up by 5.8%, Centre plans to revamp 40,000 coaches to Vande Bharat standards; allocation for investment in public sector units and joint ventures has been slashed to ₹31,107 crore which experts say is to open up the market to private players

Maitri Porecha  
NEW DELHI

With a thrust on investment in infrastructure, the Union Ministry of Railways has been allocated ₹2.55 lakh crore for the financial year 2024-25, up by 5.8% from last year's allocation of ₹2.41 lakh crore.

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that up to 82% of last year's allocation had been spent by the end of January.

The Budget document says the Railway Ministry could only utilise ₹1.6 lakh crore, based on the actual numbers released for 2022-23.

He said the revised operating ratio for 2023-24 was 98.7%, which is the ratio of working expenses to



On the fast track: The Ministry of Railways has been allocated ₹2.55 lakh crore for 2024-25. BISWARANJAN ROUT

traffic earnings. "All expenditure for pension is being borne from railway revenue," he added.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the Centre will implement three major economic corridor programmes – energy, mineral, and cement corridor, also being

referred to as Energy Economic Corridor; port connectivity corridor aka Rail Sagar; and high-traffic density corridors, aka Amrit Chaturbhuj.

A total of 434 projects with an investment of ₹11 lakh crore will be rolled out under these programmes, he said.

"An integrated approach to Railway planning has been undertaken by consulting 18 Ministries and this plan has been in the works for the past two years. We are in the process of preparing detailed project reports, freezing final alignments, and interacting with State governments for the smooth working of the development along these corridors," he said in response to a question by *The Hindu*.

They have been planned along the lines of PM Gati Shakti framework by tracking the origin and destination nodes of Railways.

"This allows us to understand where we need to add a railway section, which areas require doubling or multi-tracking of

routes, where we need rail-over-rail flyovers, or where we need to deploy new lines. For instance, how do we better manage passenger flow from Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha towards Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru or how do we manage large transport origin from Nashik," he said.

Over the next five years, it is planning to overhaul 40,000 coaches to provide a better passenger experience similar to that of the Vande Bharat trains. The entire exercise is expected to cost ₹15,200 crore.

"Good quality toilets, better safety standards like installing semi-permanent coupling, features like pre-

sence of charging points, automatic water measurement systems for filling up of tanks, installation of GPS and CCTV cameras will be added features in upgraded coaches," he said.

Notably, budget allocation for investment in public sector units and joint ventures decreased from ₹34,353 crore in 2023-24 to ₹31,107 crore in 2024-25. Experts say this is because the Railways is interested in opening up the market to private players.

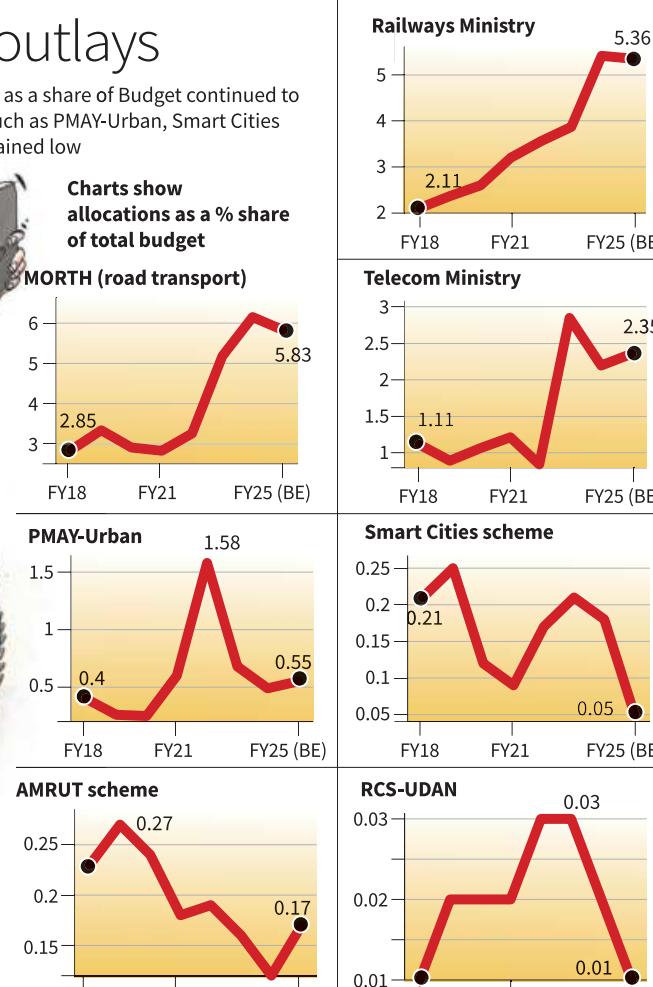
The bullet train project by National High Speed Rail Corridor has attracted the maximum chunk of allocation, up from ₹19,592 crore to ₹25,000 crore.

## Ups and downs in infra outlays

Allocation for Railways, Road Transport, and Telecom Ministry as a share of Budget continued to be high this year. On the other hand, allocation for schemes such as PMAY-Urban, Smart Cities Mission, AMRUT and regional connectivity scheme-UDAN remained low



**DATA:** Jasmin Nihalani, Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Rebecca Rose Varghese, Godhashri S, Sonika Loganathan  
**GRAPHICS & DESIGN:** Kannan Sundar, J.V.S.N. Rajasekhar, A. Ganeshan, S.T. Karthick, L. Balamurugan  
**ILLUSTRATION:** Soumyadip Sinha & R. Rajesh



## UDAN hits an air pocket, 60% cut in Budget allocation

Jagriti Chandra  
NEW DELHI

The budgetary allocation for the regional connectivity scheme UDAN (*Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik*) has been slashed by 60% after a record-high grant last time.

The fund is spent on reviving unused and underused airports in Tier-2 and -3 cities. The Centre has set aside ₹502 crore for the scheme compared with the previous Budget Estimates of ₹1,244 crore, which was also the highest-ever allocation for the scheme since its launch in 2017.

The allocation in the interim Budget marks a 40% drop from the Revised Estimates of ₹850 crore for this fiscal year.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her speech on Thursday, said the number of airports in the country had doubled to 149 since 2014, and that "expansion of existing airports and development of new airports will continue expeditiously" at a time Indian airlines have placed an order of more than 1,000 aircraft. However, this was not supported by allocation in the Budget.

As a whole, the Civil Aviation Ministry was allocated ₹2,300 crore, which is a 26% drop from the previous year's Budget Estimates.

**Air India debt**  
A debt of ₹29,464 crore was hived off from the airline at the time of disinvestment and parked in a special purpose vehicle, Air India Assets Holding Ltd., along with real estate assets. A part of this debt has since been cleared.

A sum of ₹57 crore has been set aside for the production-linked incentive scheme for drones and drone components, compared with ₹33 crore in this fiscal's Budget Estimates and Revised Estimates.

## Road sector sees a nominal hike of 2.7%

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

After a massive jump in allocation every consecutive year in the recent past, this year's budgetary allocation for the road sector saw a meagre 2.7% increase.

The interim Budget set aside ₹2,78,000 crore for the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways as compared to the ₹2,70,434

crore in the budget estimate for this fiscal. When compared to the revised estimate of ₹2,76,351 crore, the allocation is a hike of a mere 0.5%.

Of the total budgetary grant, ₹1,68,464 is for investment in National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) for the development of national high-

ways corridors under Bharatmala Pariyojana. As of November 2023, a total of 15,045 km of the total project of 26,418 km have been completed and an amount of ₹4.1 lakh crore has been spent under Bharatmala Pariyojana up to October 2023.

Separately, a sum of ₹78,349 crore has been set

aside for road works, which includes six landing of crowded sections of the Golden Quadrilateral, road development in Naxal-hit areas and provisioning last-mile connectivity through State government's Public Works Department.

Last year, the Budget announcement saw a hike of 35%, and the year before that there was a 70% hike in grant for roads.



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## Industry welcomes plan to augment electric vehicle ecosystem

N. Anand  
CHENNAI

The Centre will focus on strengthening the electric vehicle ecosystem with supporting charging infrastructure in its move towards accelerating net zero emission, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday.

According to Ms. Sitharaman, the Centre will also push for greater adoption of electric public transport network buses with formal



payment mechanism. Mahesh Babu, CEO of Ashok Leyland's electric vehicle arm Switch Mobility, said that it was heartening to note the Centre has accorded focus on the automotive sector with plans

to enhance the EV manufacturing ecosystem and charging infrastructure for boosting green growth.

Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers president Vinod Aggarwal said the proposed move will boost the development and adoption of EVs. "The encouragement of payment mechanism for adoption of e-buses for public transport networks is also a welcome step," he added. Sudarshan Shreeni-

vas, Director of Corporate Ratings, CareEdge Ratings, said the corpus of ₹1 lakh crore for funding private sector R&D and innovation in sunrise sectors could potentially benefit companies in the EV space.

India Bank Managing Director & CEO S.L. Jain said the government's focus on infrastructure, including tourism projects, expansion of Metro Rail and Namo Bharat to more cities, and support for EV manu-

facturing and charging infrastructure, aligns with the nation's developmental goals.

French carmaker Renault India enthusiastically supports the impetus on advancing the EV ecosystem, recognising its pivotal role in sustainability, the firm's CEO and MD Venkata Mamillapalle said.

The focus on the EV ecosystem was set to catalyse business opportunities, Shriram Finance executive vice chairman Umesh Ravankar said.

A ND-NDE

# 'Political intent behind pitch for eastern region as the driver of growth'

Observers say it is difficult to miss the signalling behind Finance Minister's outreach to States that contribute 128 LS MPs; Trinamool Congress dubs the interim Budget an 'election gimmick'

**Shiv Sahay Singh**  
KOLKATA

Political observers and economists interpreted Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's interim Budget announcement that the Centre focus on the eastern region and its people as signalling an intent to win over the population of the region ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. "Our government will pay utmost attention to make the eastern region and its people a powerful driver of India's growth," the Finance Minister said on Thursday.

Later in the day, addressing a press conference, Ms. Sitharaman identified West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh as the States in the country's east that will serve as engines of growth towards the goal of 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India).

The States which the Finance Minister identified elects 128 MPs - West Bengal (42), Bihar (40), Odisha (21), Jharkhand (14) and Chhattisgarh (11) - and political commentator Biswanath Chakraborty said it was difficult to miss politics in the remarks.

"The Bharatiya Janata



**What's for us?** Farmers in South Dinajpur, West Bengal, on Thursday listening to the live broadcast of the interim Budget-2024 presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. ANI

Party (BJP) has saturated its presence in the north and the west, so it is eyeing to consolidate its presence in the east in States like West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha ahead of the Lok Sabha polls," said Prof. Chakraborty, who teaches political science at Rabindra Bharati University.

Economist Ajitava Raychaudhuri said it is probably the first time the eastern region, the gateway to East Asia, is being touted as the driver of India's growth in the future. "Infrastructure, manufacturing and agriculture - all should get emphasis here when we are talking about 'driver of growth,'" said Prof. Raychaudhuri, who

taught economics at Jadavpur University.

#### Political theatrics

The Trinamool Congress leadership in West Bengal, however, did not appreciate the push towards east and described the provisions in the interim Budget as an "election gimmick" ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

Senior party leader and West Bengal Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya expressed the party's discontent and urged the BJP to "stop political theatrics and prioritise human welfare". She criticised the interim Budget's "failure to address concerns of youth" and its

handling of inflation.

During the day, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said the West Bengal government was not allocating land for Railway projects. "The West Bengal government has no interest in Railway projects," the Minister said.

Mr. Vaishnav said the allocation to the Railway Ministry for West Bengal has increased from ₹4,300 crore during the UPA government to ₹13,810 crore under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said Mr. Modi's vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' (solidarity with everyone, development for all) will only work with "Sabka Prayas" (efforts by everyone)".

"The Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP) has saturated its presence in the north and the west, so it is eyeing to consolidate its presence in the east in States like West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha ahead of the Lok Sabha polls," said Prof. Chakraborty, who teaches political science at Rabindra Bharati University.

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## Interim Budget deliberately ignored Tamil Nadu; DMK will raise issue in Parliament, says Stalin

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Alleging that Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented an interim Budget without any concern for the development of Tamil Nadu, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin

said on Thursday that the DMK would raise the issue in Parliament and organise a protest.

"The Budget has deliberately ignored Tamil Nadu. The BJP can never create a new India as it has promised. Only the INDIA bloc will create a new India," he said.

Mr. Stalin, who is in Spain on an official visit, said it was an empty Budget. "It has not talked about the achievements of the past. Nor has it guaranteed anything for the future. People who expected a cut in the price of petro-

leum products and income-tax rates are greatly disappointed," he said.

He said there was no an-

nouncement on the mini-

mum support price for

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Mr. Stalin,

## IN BRIEF



## Sanjay Singh seeks interim bail to take oath as MP

Senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh on Thursday moved a Delhi court seeking interim bail in a money laundering case related to alleged excise scam to take oath as a member of Rajya Sabha and attend the ongoing Parliament session. Special Judge M.K. Nagpal issued notice to the ED on Mr. Singh's application and directed the central probe agency to file its reply by February 3. The anti-money laundering agency had arrested Mr. Singh on October 4. PTI

## Culpable homicide case filed after minor beaten by seniors

Twelve days after a 12-year-old boy died at a hospital after he was allegedly thrashed by senior students at a government school, the Delhi police have registered a case of culpable homicide based on the findings of the post-mortem report, which suggests that the victim died of septicemic shock as a result of blunt force trauma to the knee, police said on Thursday. The child, Kintan, died on January 20, nine days after he was reportedly thrashed by his seniors.

## HC declines interim relief to Amanatullah Khan in ED case

The Delhi High Court on Thursday declined to pass any interim order to stay the summons issued by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and MLA Amanatullah Khan in a money laundering probe. "It is made clear that this court has not issued notice on the petition nor granted any interim protection to the petitioner at this stage," the court said, deferring the hearing to February 7.

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# Uddhav blows poll bugle, says fight to 'preserve democracy'

Mocking PM's guarantees, the Sena (UBT) chief said the only guarantee Modi had offered was to set Central agencies on his political rivals

**Shoumojit Banerjee**  
PUNE

Former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday sounded the poll bugle for the upcoming Lok Sabha election during a rally at Raigad, stating that his fight was not against Prime Minister Narendra Modi or the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) but to 'save democracy' from turning into a dictatorship.

Addressing his party workers and supporters at Pen in Raigad, Mr. Thackeray, lashing out at Mr. Modi, said the PM's vaunted guarantees generally translated into summons by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), while dubbing the interim Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman "a magician's trick".

"This is the last Budget that the Modi government is presenting. Ms. Sitharaman has said the government will work for four categories of people – the poor, the women, the youth, and the farmers. I congratulate the FM for making the PM aware that there are people in this country beyond Mr. Modi's friends like industrialist Gautam Adani. It is only before the election that the BJP has realised there are



Uddhav Thackeray dubbed the interim Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman "a magician's trick". FILE PHOTO

women in this country. Why did the PM not go to Manipur and offer succour to women there? Why did he not call upon [Gujarat riot victim] Bilkis Bano?" Mr. Thackeray said, taking a jibe at the PM during his 'Jan Samvad' rally.

**BJP claim questioned**  
Questioning the BJP's claims of winning 400 Lok Sabha seats in the upcoming general election, the Sena (UBT) chief said that if the BJP was so confident, why would it need Nitish Kumar as an ally in Bihar.

Mocking Mr. Modi's guarantees, Mr. Thackeray quipped that the only guarantee Mr. Modi had offered was to set Central agencies on his political rivals from other parties.

"On the one hand, [ex-Jharkhand CM] Hemant So-

ren is arrested, but [rebel Nationalist Congress Party or NCP leader] Ajit Pawar is given a clean chit. It appears that as long as one joins the BJP, all corruption is forgiven. One is guaranteed a plum post on switching sides to the BJP. The day Nitish Kumar takes oath as CM of Bihar, the next day Lalu Prasad and Tejashwi Yadav get summons from the ED. Can the country's public afford such guarantees in the future?" the Sena (UBT) chief quipped.

"I do not desire any post, neither that of the CM of Maharashtra or PM... I can only see my Bharat Mata and the Constitution written by Babasaheb Ambedkar in front of my eyes. We are fighting to safeguard democracy," Mr. Thackeray said.

The judges pointed out that once a fresh petition is filed and numbered by the High Court registry, it is typically heard within four days under the new auto-listing system. The petition is likely to be heard on February 6.

The Bombay High Court on Thursday refused to take up for immediate hearing a PIL filed on the Kunbi-Maratha caste certificate. A Division Bench of Chief Justice Devendra Upadhyay and Justice Arif Doctor said considering that the Kunbi caste certificates were being issued to the Maratha community since November 2023 the petitioner could wait for a few more days.

Advocate Ashish Mishra, representing petitioner Mangesh Sasane, chairman of the OBC (Other Backward Classes) Welfare Foundation, had filed the public interest litigation (PIL) earlier this week seeking an urgent hearing.

Mr. Mishra argued that the State government was diminishing OBC reservations by issuing Kunbi certificates to the Marathas. "The PIL challenges five government resolutions (GRs) issued from 2004, permitting the Marathas to seek Kunbi caste certificates, including the ones issued on January 18 and 25, 2024. An interim measure must be issued to stop the further issuing of Kunbi certificates," Mr. Mishra said in court on Thursday.

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In the election, which was held on Tuesday, BJP's

Petitioner on Kunbi caste certificates told to wait

**Purnima Sah**  
MUMBAI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is likely to skip the fifth summons by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning on Friday in connection with the Delhi excise policy case, according to party sources. Mr. Kejriwal has skipped all the summonses issued by the probe agency so far.

The party did not issue a statement on the most recent summons. A day earlier, AAP chief spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar had said the party chief will act "as per law", refusing to elaborate further.



candidate, Manoj Sonkar, won the post of Mayor by securing 16 votes in the 35-member municipal corporation House, while Congress-AAP candidate Kuldeep Kumar got 12 votes. The AAP-Congress combine had accused the presiding officer of tampering with the ballot papers.

**'Don't run away'**  
Meanwhile, the BJP announced that its Delhi unit chief, Virendra Sachdeva and others will protest outside the AAP headquarters against the alleged corruption by the Delhi government.

Mr. Sachdeva had said a day earlier that the Delhi CM should not run away from the legal process and appear before the ED just like some of his other colleagues from the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc.

"The Chief Minister of Delhi holds a constitutional post. By ignoring the last four summonses, he has made a mockery of the Constitution," the senior BJP leader said.

# Kejriwal may skip fifth ED summons in excise policy case

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is likely to skip the fifth summons by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning on Friday in connection with the Delhi excise policy case, according to party sources. Mr. Kejriwal has skipped all the summonses issued by the probe agency so far.

The party did not issue a statement on the most recent summons. A day earlier, AAP chief spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar had said the party chief will act "as per law", refusing to elaborate further.

Meanwhile, senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj alleged that former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren was arrested as "he did not bow before the BJP", while Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, against whom the BJP had raised corruption allegations in the past, "is safe as he joined the Congress and left the BJP".

The AAP chief is scheduled to lead a protest outside the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national headquarters on Friday, along with other senior party leaders, including Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, against the alleged malpractices in the Chandigarh mayoral election, which the BJP candidate won by four votes.

In the election, which was held on Tuesday, BJP's

## SITUATION VACANT

## GENERAL



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## PUBLIC NOTICE

## PUBLIC NOTICE

The Name of Shri Narendra Pratap Singh S/o Late Shri Sita Ram R/o D-573, J.J. Camp, New Sanjay Amar Colony, Vishwas Nagar, Delhi-110032 (Membership No. 159) is being forwarded by the Managing Committee of the Manpower CGHS Ltd. (Reg. No. 435/GH) Kamanyi Kunj, Plot No. 69, I.P. Extension, New Delhi-110092 for draw of lots through RCS/DDA as per provisions of Schedule-VII of DCS Rules, 2007 & DCS Act, 2003. Any member/Claimant having any objection may file before the society at Manpower Co-operative Group Housing Society Limited, Kamanyi Kunj, Plot No. 69, I.P. Extension, New Delhi-110092 or before Office of the Registrar Cooperative Societies, Govt. of NCT of Delhi, Old Court's Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001 within 7 days of publication of this notice.

For Manpower Co-op. G/H/S Limited President/Secretary

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## OBITUARY &amp; REMEMBRANCE

## DEATH

V. Narasimhan (76), retired Supervisor (Canteen), The Hindu, Chennai passed away on 01-02-2024. Addr: 33/6, Sri Krishna Apartment, Car St, Triplicane Chennai - 600005. Ct: 98413 17515

For enquiries on announcements in this section, please contact our office at the following number between 10a.m. to 8p.m.

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## DEATH

With profound sadness, we share the passing of

Sri K.V. Ramachandran @ Suryanandam

(Retd. Hindu Officer, LIC, Chennai)

A Hindu scholar, Sanskrit &amp; Yoga teacher

and a beacon of spiritual well-being left

for the heavenly abode on 01.02.2024,

at 2:15 pm in Bengaluru.

Founder of Nehruji Hindustani Vidyalya

&amp; President of Divine Life Society Int'l.

Annanagar Br, his life reflected simplicity,

Gandhi principles, and a deep Hindutani

spirit. His legacy lives on through his

teachings and principles of Yogakshemam

Vahayamah and Aham Brahmasmi.

Smt. Saraswathy Ramachandran

Hermalini &amp; Rajagopal

Kalaranjani &amp; Mahavir

Srikant &amp; Meera

Ph: 9620-80

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATION DEPARTMENT NOTIFICATION		
ADVT.No.01/Agr.III/AT/2024, Dated: 02-02-2024		
Government of Telangana invites separate applications for the posts of Vice Chancellor for the following Universities.		
S.I.No.	Name of the University	Website details
1	Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University	www.pjsau.edu.in
2	Sri Konda Lakshman Telangana State Horticultural University	www.sklstu.ac.in
For details on eligibility criteria, etc, please visit website mentioned against the name of the University. Application with bio-data and other details in the prescribed format along with documentary evidence shall be received by <b>5.00 PM on 19-02-2024</b> , by registered post to the following address: The Secretary to Government, Agriculture & Cooperation Department, Room No.34, 3rd Floor, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Telangana Secretariat, Hyderabad-500 022. Phone: +91-40-23453269.		
Dt:02-02-2024 Place: Hyderabad	Sdr. M.RAGHUNANDAN RAO, IAS SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT AGRICULTURE & COOPERATION DEPARTMENT	R.O. No.:901-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2023-24, Date:01-02-2024

TAMIL NADU WOMEN EMPLOYMENT AND SAFETY PROJECT- ILO HIRING OF STAFF ON A CONTRACTUAL BASIS	
ROC No:9616/WW/2024	Date: 01.02.2024
The Special Program Implementation Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu's World Bank-funded Tamil Nadu Women Employment and Safety project (TNWeSafe) has opened positions for its Project Management Unit. <b>Three senior management and four entry-level positions are available. Candidates may obtain further information and application procedures from www.tnsdc.in.</b> The last date to submit applications is on or before <b>Feb 12, 2024.</b>	Sd/- Project Director
DIPR/102/DISPLAY/2024	

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, SOUTHERN (R&B) CIRCLE, BERHAMPUR	
Phone: 0680-2281582, e-mail: ccescbam@gmail.com	
<b>INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB) [e-Procurement]</b>	
<b>Bid Identification No. CCE, S.C (R&amp;B)-BAM-28/2023-24 No.357//Dated: 30.01.2024</b>	
1. The Chief Construction Engineer, Southern (R&B) Circle, Berhampur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in double cover system in <b>ONLINE MODE</b> from eligible contractors for construction of <b>Building Works</b> as detailed in the table below.	
2. Nature of work : <b>Building Works</b>	
3. No. of work : <b>6 Nos.</b>	
4. Tender Cost : <b>Rs.10,000/- (online)</b>	
5. Class of Contractor : <b>"A" Class and "Special" Class</b>	
6. Availability of Bid document : <b>From 12.02.2024 10.00 AM to 26.02.2024 5.30 PM</b> in the website.	
7. Date of Opening of Bid : <b>27.02.2024 at 11.30 A.M.</b>	
8. The Bidders have to participate in <b>ONLINE bidding only</b> . Further details can be seen from the website <a href="https://tendersodisha.gov.in">https://tendersodisha.gov.in</a> .	
9. Any Addendum / Corrigendum / Cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.	
Sd/- (D.C.Behera), Chief Construction Engineer, Southern (R&B) Circle, Berhampur.	
B-1715 : OPR-34103/11/0029/2324	

Public Health Engineering Department Public Health Engineering Division, Jamui SHORT RETENDER NOTICE No -10/R1/SBNQ/JAM/PHED/2023-24 National Competitive Bidding (Through e-procurement mode on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)										
1	Designation and Address of Advertiser	Executive Engineer, P.H.Division, Jamui								
2	Date of issue of Tender Notice	30.01.2024								
3	Period of sale (downloading) of tender Bid Document	10.02.24 to 18.02.2024 up to 15:00 Hrs. through <a href="http://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in">www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in</a>								
4	Date, time & place of pre-bid meeting	08.02.24 at 11.30 hrs. hrs in the Office of Executive Engineer of concerned P. H. Division								
5	Last date and time of receipt (uploading) of tender	19.02.2024 up to 17:00 Hrs on <a href="http://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in">www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in</a>								
6	Date and time of opening of technical bid	20.02.2024 at 16:00 Hrs on <a href="http://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in">www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in</a>								
7	Date and time of opening of financial bid	To be informed later after the approval of technical bid.								
8.	Details of works:									
Sl No	Gr No.	Name of Block	Panchayat	Habitation	Ward No	Nos of schemes (in a Group)	Estimated Cost (in Lakhs)	Amount of Earnest Money (in Lakhs)	Cost offenderD document( NonRefundable in Rs.)	
									BSED c BidProcecc gfee(inRs.)	
									Completion periods( in Months)	
1	SBNQ-03	Chakai	POJHA	RANGANIYA PANCHKATHIYA HARDITARI CHATWA DHUAKURWAN SIKHATHIYA BUTBARIYA GANGARAYDIH LAGMA MUSLIM TOLA MASJID KE PASS MAHESHAPATHA R AAWIASI TOLA MAHESHAPATHA R RAWAT TOLA TOLA	12	288.924	5.78	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
2	SBNQ-04		RAMCHANDRA DIH	KAILIBANK BADHIYADIH SHIMRATILHA GESHYAR LALPUR GARHI GARHI SOTARI PIPRA NARODIH NARODIH NARODIH GOSAIDIH RAMCHANDRADI H NAIYA MANDAL TOLA UOLA PER BLOCK NEHI TOLA	13	348.696	6.98	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
03	SBNQ-10	Chakai	NAWADIH	KUMADIH BABUDIH KOTHA LOTBADHBA PIPRA UDAYPUR LAPARYAR LAKHTHAI	8	256.543	5.14	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
04	SBNQ-11	Chakai	KALYANPUR BARMORIYA	KALYANPUR KASIRYATARI DUBEGDIH BARKHUDIYA GOSWARA MANGRAKURA GOHIYA MANJHLADIH	8	202.549	4.06	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
05	SBNQ-12	Chakai	BONGI KIVAJORI NAWADIH SILFARI	RAJADUMAR RAJADUMAR BINDLI BINDLI GHAGRA GHAGRA BHADWARITARN GHATIVANI JARUADIH CHARGHARA VISHODIH	11	310.463	6.21	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
06	SBNQ-13	Gidhour	KOLHUA	SEWA MOURA PASWAN TOLA YADAV TOLA SAW TOLA ADHA ADHA CHANDRADEEP Baladilh Mohamadpur Mohamadpur Dhuvdev Gaht Dhankurwa Gahlor Bathan Musahri	10	273.089	5.47	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
07	SBNQ-21	Jamui	INDPE ARSAR	SINHA TOLA BHUMIHAL TOLA MUSLIM TOLA BORDER DIGHI MAHALALIT TOLA CHANDRABANSI TOLA BARHI TOLA HIGH SCHOOL TOLA PACHONIYA TOLA BADI MASJID MOHALLA FULWARI MOHALLA RAJPUT TOLA YADAV TOLA KENUYAR DUMGIDAR NENUYAASHAR SIYATAR SIMULTALLA BAZAR DHODARI	5	219.601	4.40	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
08	SBNQ-27	Jhajha	RAJLAKALA MAHAPUR	HARNA HARNA RAJLA RAJLA RAJLA KANHAIDIH DHIPALPARI BELATARN TATWADIH	9	321.496	6.43	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
09	SBNQ-28	Jhajha	TELWA BAZAR	Pathar Chptee Letwa Tola Budhi wari Muslim Tola Telwa Singh Tola Budhi wari Sha Tola Pandaydih Dodari Pandaydih Nayka sar RAVIDASH TOLA MUSLIM TOLA GRAM BANK JIVAN TOLA CHHUCHHUNARI YA CHARGHARA	9	249.554	5.00	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
10	SBNQ-30	Jhajha	PAIRGAHA BAJILA CHHAPA	SARAYA SARAYA SANTHAL TOLA Kathbazra Paharitar Kushouna Kushouna Thakurtari Sindhu Tota Bajla chatriya Tola Tahrpar Harjan Tola RAMDIH MUSLIM TOLA RAVIDASH TOLA BHADWAYI TOLA KALUG LAHARNIYATAR N MANDAL TOLA TURI TOLA MAYOURNACHA JINATHBHANDA R GHORMARA TITIHIYACHAK BAHNU TOLA PERUYA DIH TARAKURA Charaya Charaya upri Tola Pathar Chptee RAJAK TOLA JEET JHINGOI MUSLIM TOLA MUSLIM TOLA JORBAHAR DIHAMPUR SAGDAHA BHANDRA	9	302.546	6.06	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
11	SBNQ-32	Jhajha	BARAKOLA KARHARA TELWA BAZAR BELA	GHORPADA KUSHOUNA KUSHOUNA THAKURTARI SINDHU TOTA BAJLA CHATRIYA TOLA TAHRPAR HARJAN TOLA RAMDIH MUSLIM TOLA RAVIDASH TOLA BHADWAYI TOLA KALUG LAHARNIYATAR N MANDAL TOLA TURI TOLA MAYOURNACHA JINATHBHANDA R GHORMARA TITIHIYACHAK BAHNU TOLA PERUYA DIH TARAKURA Charaya Charaya upri Tola Pathar Chptee RAJAK TOLA JEET JHINGOI MUSLIM TOLA MUSLIM TOLA JORBAHAR DIHAMPUR SAGDAHA BHANDRA	12	341.608	6.84	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
12	SBNQ-36	Khaira	HARNI CHUAN	GOPALPUR BAZAR HARKHAR KENDIH KENDIH MODI TOLA BARKURWA KEWAL FARIYATA KEWAL FARIYATA BISANPUR CHILLI SAW TOLA HARNI Womani Tola Teliyadih Dighi bajar Dighi bajar Belatand Ghorlahe Belatikur Belatikur Belatikur	10	298.388	5.97	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
13	SBNQ-46	Sikandra	MATHURAPUR BHULLO	BARMAN KHURDIH HARIHAR TURI YI TOLA NAWADIH NAWADIH NAWADIH RAMANI TOLA Bhullo kushwaha tola lachuyar mushri MAHESHWARI TILAKPUR BABU SAHAB TOLA PHULFAWARIYA TINKHUTI BARAKHUT DHOB TOLA SAT GOLUA LALILEWAR KESHOFARKA NAIYADIH CHURHAIT BHASUMHA KADB BHALSUMIYA TETARIYA BHALSUMIYA BHALSUMIYA MOHANDIH YADAV TOLA	9	279.517	5.60	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
14	SBNQ-52	Sono	RAJAUN LAKHANKIYARI SONO	PASWAN AND MUSLIM TOLA KOSBATANR KARAHARI KARAHARI CHANANTANR BABU TOLA MEDICAL MORE	7	234.914	4.70	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
15	SBNQ-55	Sono	RAJAUN LAKHANKIYARI SONO	RAMANI TOLA GORWATHIKA RAMANI TOLA MANDAL TOLA MANDAL TOLA SARMA TOLA SARMA TOLA	8	316.909	6.34	10000	As Per eproc Website	6
16	SBNQ-56	Sono	SONO	SHIVRATI JAMNIKARI <a href="http://www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar">www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar</a> से आवाज की जा सकती है। नशे को मर, बर्बाद करें सुखी परिवार।					Executive Engineer P.H.Division, Jamui	

**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM**  
**ASSAM HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT SOCIETY (AHIDMS),**  
**4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, NAYANTARA SUPERMARKET, SIXMILE, GUWAHATI-781022**

No. AHIDMS/WB/ASSIST/SMM/4/2023/37

**REQUEST FOR BIDS**  
**NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING**

Hiring of Social Media Management Agency under Assam Health Infrastructure Development and Management Society (AHIDMS).

Project Director, Assam Health Infrastructure Development and Management Society (AHIDMS) invites "Request for Bid" from reputed Organization having wide experience in Social media management for appointment of Creative Multimedia Advertising Agency for Content Development and Management of Communication Materials (Audio, Video, Print and Audio-Visual Materials) for the Assam Health Infrastructure Development and Management Society and its stakeholders.

The details may be seen in the Request for Bid document uploaded in the Assam E-procurement portal (<https://assamtenders.gov.in>) & <https://ahidms.assam.gov.in>.

The applicant must be registered with the E-Tendering system (ETS) of the Govt. of Assam. (Website: <https://assamtenders.gov.in>). The Project Director, Assam Health Infrastructure Development & Management Society reserves the right to accept or reject all bids without showing any reasons whatsoever.

Sd/-  
Project Director  
Assam Health Infrastructure Development & Management Society

Janasanyog /CF/5158/ 23/2-Feb-24

**Government of Jharkhand**  
Rural Works Department  
**JHARKHAND STATE RURAL ROADS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (JSRDA)**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, F.F.P. Building, Dhanbad, Ranchi 834004  
**VERY SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDERS**  
(National Competitive Bidding Through e-Procurement)

Re-e-Tender No.- 273/2023-24 Dated: 01.02.2024

PR No. 316088 Dated :- 13.01.2024 (2<sup>nd</sup> Call)

The undersigned on behalf of Government of Jharkhand invites item rate bids through e-Procurement from the eligible bidders registered\* in appropriate class with any State/Central Government/State /Central Government Organization for construction and maintenance for five years of the works (List of schemes shall be displayed in the website [pmgsytendersjhr.gov.in](http://pmgsytendersjhr.gov.in)) of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY-I).

The bid should be submitted online in the website [pmgsytendersjhr.gov.in](http://pmgsytendersjhr.gov.in). The bidders should have valid Digital Signature Certificate for online submission of bid.

Sl. No.	District/ Block	Repackage	Road Name	Length (in Kms.)	Cons. Cost (in Lakh)	Maint. cost (in Lakh)	Total (in Lakh)	E/M (in Lakh)	Time Completion
1	Simdega / Thethaitangar	JH-2107	Thethaitangar Bolba Road - Shankhnadi	11.10	666.840	8.695	675.535	13.52	06 Months

Details of bid submission is as under:

Procurement Officer	Place of Opening	Availability of tender (on-line) for bidding		Date & time of opening (on-line) of tender	
		From	To	Technical bid	Financial bid
Chief Engineer, JSRDA, Ranchi	Chief Engineer, JSRDA, Ranchi	05.02.2024 at 10.00 AM	13.02.2024 upto 5.00 PM	13.02.2024 at 5.30 PM	To be informed later

\* Non-registered bidders may also submit bid, however the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authority before signing the contract.

Note:-

- Amount of Bid Security should be taken as mentioned in the Bid Data Sheet of the Bidding Document.
- Cost of Bid Document (Rs. 10000) and Bid Security (as mentioned in the Bid Data Sheet) shall be deposited online in form as mentioned in Bid Data Sheet failing which the bid will be treated non responsive and action shall be taken as per Sec. 2 of ITB clause 12.2(d). Online payment through RTGS/ NEFT should not be made through SBI.
- In case, it is found, even after the award of work that the bidder has submitted/ uploaded any false/errorneous/fraudulent statement/document, he/she is liable for blacklisting and forfeiture of Bid Security.
- Bidders must submit GST registration certificate without which bid is liable to be rejected.
- Bidders whose names appear in the Debar/blacklist of RWD, any department of GoJ/Goi (including JSRDA) shall not be allowed to participate in the above bids.
- Bids submitted by bidders, who have long pending ATR(s) / made inordinate delay in execution of earlier allotted construction/maintenance works of PMGSY, may be rejected summarily.
- In case of any discrepancy/dispute about units in BOQ, units as mentioned in Current SOR on which BOQ has been prepared shall prevail.
- Participating bidders are free to submit grievances, if any, against the decision of technical evaluation within five working days from the date of uploading of decision of technical evaluation only through email at [jh-ce@pmgsy.nic.in](mailto:jh-ce@pmgsy.nic.in). Grievance submitted after stipulated period shall not be considered.
- Bidders must have valid registration with Employee Provident Fund organization under EPF and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1952 failing which the bid shall be rejected.
- Bidders must not quote rate for routine maintenance. The amount for routine maintenance as indicated in the Bill of Quantities must be acceptable to bidders.
- For unbalanced bids, extra security will be required to be deposited by the bidder by the time of Agreement.

All other details can be seen in the bidding document which is available in website [pmgsytendersjhr.gov.in](http://pmgsytendersjhr.gov.in) as per schedule mentioned above.

Chief Engineer JSRDA, Ranchi

PR 317642 Rural Work Department(23-24.D

### Public Health Engineering Department

Public Health Division, Barahat

SHORT RE-TENDER NIT No. -21/PHED/BARAHAT/2023-24 (SBF)

National Competitive Bidding

(Through e-procurement mode on [www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in](http://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in))

1	Designation and Address of Advertiser	Executive Engineer P. H. Division, Barahat.
2	Date of issue of Tender Notice	30.01.2024
3	Period of sale (downloading) of tender Bid Document	10.02.2024 to 15.02.2024 up to 15:00 Hrs. through <a href="http://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in">www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in</a>
4	Date, time & place of pre-bid meeting	12.02.2024 at 11.30 hrs. in the Office of Executive Engineer P.H. Division, Barahat.
5	Last date and time of receipt (uploading) of tender	15.02.2024 up to 17:00 Hrs on <a href="http://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in">www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in</a>
6	Last date and time of submission of hard copy of EMD (In original).	16.02.2024 up to 15:00 hrs in the Office of:- A . Executive Engineer, P.H. Division, Barahat. B . Superintending Engineer, P.H. E. Circle, Bhagalpur. C . Zonal Chief Engineer, Bhagalpur Zone, Bhagalpur.
7	Date and time of opening of technical bid	16.02.2024 at 16:00Hrs on <a href="http://www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in">www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in</a>
8	Date and time of opening of financial bid	To be informed later after the approval of technical bid.
9	Details of Work:-	

Group No.	Block	Panchayat	Habitation	Ward No.	No. of schemes in a Group	Estimated Cost (In Lakh)	Amount of Earnest Money (In Lakh)	Cost of Tender Document (non-refundable) In Rs.	BSEDC Bid Processing Fee (In Rs.)	Completion Period (In months)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
SBF-01	DHORAIYA	LOGAI	LOGAI	1	06	241.226	4.825	10,000	As per eproc2 Website	06 Months
	DHORAIYA	LOGAI	LOGAI	2						
	DHORAIYA	LOGAI	CHANDPUR	7						
	DHORAIYA	LOGAI	SHASHAN	9						
	DHORAIYA	LOGAI	BASTA	10						
	DHORAIYA	LOGAI	YOGIDIHA	12						
SBF-02	DHORAIYA	GHASIYA	BELDIHA	1	06	254.509	5.091	10,000	As per eproc2 Website	06 Months
	DHORAIYA	GHASIYA	GHASIYA	8						
	DHORAIYA	GHASIYA	KHAJURI GARIYA	10						
	DHORAIYA	GHASIYA	BHAGWANPUR	11						
	DHORAIYA	GHASIYA	NAWABANDH	12						
	DHORAIYA	GHASIYA	FATEHPUR	13						
SBF-03	BOUNSI	SANGA	MANDAL TOLA	6	07	284.032	5.681	10,000	As per eproc2 Website	06 Months
	BOUNSI	SANGA	JITYAJOR	6A						
	BOUNSI	SANGA	NAI TOLA	9						
	BOUNSI	SANGA	SANGA	10						
	BOUNSI	SANGA	BUDWATARI	10A						
	BOUNSI	SANGA	DHAWAKURA	12						
SBF-04	BOUNSI	SANGA	KUMARBHAG	12A	07	271.107	5.423	10,000	As per eproc2 Website	06 Months
	BOUNSI	GOKULA	MENKA PAHARI	1						
	BOUNSI	GOKULA	MARUWARAN	2						
	BOUNSI	GOKULA	LOBANDO	3						
	BOUNSI	GOKULA	NARAYAN TOLA	4						
	BOUNSI	GOKULA	PARASII	9						
SBF-04	BOUNSI	GOKULA	PARARIA	11						
	BOUNSI	GOKULA	JHUKURIA	11A						

विस्तृत जानकारी [www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar](http://www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar) पर देखी जा सकती है।

Executive Engineer  
Public Health Division, Barahat

PR- 16350 (P H E D ) 2023-24

नशे से बचनी दूरी है, यांकी परियार जरूरी है

**इंटो प्रोक्यूरमेंट सेल**  
**कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय, भवन निर्माण विभाग, भवन प्रमण्डल, गढ़वा**  
अतिअल्पकालिन निविदा (इंटो प्रोक्यूरमेंट नोटिस)

दिनांक— 01.02.2024

1. कार्य का विवरणी

क्रम	कार्य क
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## IN BRIEF



## Sharmila writes to DGP, seeks more security, escort vehicle

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee president Y.S. Sharmila has written a letter to Director General of Police K.V. Rajendranath Reddy, requesting him to increase her security, and also provide her a police escort vehicle. It may be recalled that TDP Polit Bureau member Ch. Ayyanna Patrudu had alleged that Ms. Sharmila faced a threat from Jagan Mohan Reddy, the Chief Minister and her brother. The police, meanwhile, said they would review her security cover.

## Chandrashekhar Rao takes oath as MLA in Telangana

Former Telangana Chief Minister and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) chief K. Chandrashekhar Rao took oath as an MLA on Thursday. Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar administered the oath to Mr. Rao, who was recovering after a hip surgery. He had fractured his hip bone days after the Assembly poll results were announced last month and was confined to his house in the city for recovery. He had won the Assembly poll from the Gajwel constituency.

## 6 Bills pending with Governor, says Karnataka Minister

Karnataka Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil said on Thursday that six Bills passed by the State Legislature are pending with Governor Thawarachand Gehlot and his department and the Raj Bhavan are involved in correspondence over them. Speaking to reporters after the Cabinet meeting, he said the Governor has not given his assent to six Bills. "The Governor has asked for some information," the Minister said.

+  
Ex-Minister Chinmayanand acquitted in 2011 rape case

## Press Trust of India

Former Union Minister of State for Home Swami Chinmayanand was on Thursday acquitted by a district court here in a 2011 rape case filed against him by a disciple, his lawyer said.

Additional District Judge Ehsan Hussain of the local MP-MLA court acquitted Mr. Chinmayanand, 77, due to lack of evidence, his advocate Firoz Hasan Khan said.

The founder of Mumukshu Education Institute located in Shahjahanpur city, Mr. Chinmayanand had been accused of sexual exploitation by the victim, who was a student at the college and had started teaching there.

On her complaint, a case was registered in November 2011, and after completing an investigation, the police filed a charge sheet.

Mr. Khan said that six witnesses were presented by the prosecution.

In 2018, the Uttar Pradesh government had sent a letter to the court through the district magistrate to withdraw the case, but the victim had objected, with a bail warrant subsequently being issued against Mr. Chinmayanand.

Subsequently, the former Minister filed appeals in the High Court and the Supreme Court, but failed to get any relief, but got anticipatory bail in the case on December 19, 2022, from the Allahabad High Court.

Mr. Chinmayanand was a three-time MP from Uttar Pradesh, and a junior minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpeyi government.

## CPI(M) joins Rahul's yatra in Bengal; Cong. allying with enemy, says Mamata

## Shiv Sahay Singh

KOLKATA

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) leadership, including party's West Bengal State Secretary Mohamed Salim, on Thursday joined the Congress party's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Murshidabad district.

The development assumes significance as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has maintained that her party will go it alone in the Lok Sabha polls.

The Trinamool Congress chairperson has been targeting the Congress for allying with "her enemy", the CPI(M).

"Bengal will show the path to uproot the BJP from the Centre. Our party will contest in the Lok Sabha polls alone. We wanted



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Murshidabad district of West Bengal on Thursday. PTI

to share seats but the Congress did not respond. I agreed to give them two seats but they wanted more. The CPI(M) has joined hands with the Congress to help the BJP," Ms. Banerjee said on Thursday

while addressing a gathering in State's Nadia district.

## Show of solidarity

The CPI(M) leadership met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in the neighbouring Murshidabad district.

"We have come here to express our solidarity. Our presence in the *yatra* is an expression that we are in favour of justice and against injustice," Mr. Salim said. The meeting has taken place a day before the *yatra* entered Jharkhand.

During the day, as the *yatra* marched through Murshidabad, the CPI(M) flags were seen along with the Congress flags. The Congress and the CPI(M) have been in electoral alliance since 2016, even though it brought little electoral success in West Bengal. Earlier, the CPI(M) leaders from Darjeeling district had joined the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

The *yatra* has, so far, covered 523 km across six West Bengal districts under its second phase.

The Kerala government expects to complete the Sabarimala airport project in a time-bound manner once all clearances from the Centre are through.

The Centre has already given site clearance and defence clearance for the project, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan told the Assembly on Thursday. The State is now waiting for security clearance from the Home Ministry, he said.

He was replying to a calling attention motion by K.U. Janeeshkumar on the need for expediting the Sabarimala airport project. The airport is scheduled to come up at Kanjurappally taluk in Kottayam district.

Mr. Vijayan said the State had prepared an en-

## Sahara investors protest govt. failure to refund deposits

## Vijaita Singh

NEW DELHI

Hundreds of people who invested in four cooperatives run by the Sahara group protested in Delhi on Thursday against the government's failure to refund the deposits. The small time depositors had come from several parts of the country to protest at Jantar Mantar.

The protesters said the portal launched by Union Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah in July 2023 to refund the money of investors, the majority of them from rural and semi-urban areas across 26 States, had been a non-starter.

The maximum refund that can be claimed has been capped at ₹10,000, irrespective of the total amount invested.

"My daughter-in-law is fighting cancer. I need the refund. We had to even pay bribe to people at the Common Services Centre [CSC] to upload the documents. I had invested ₹10 lakh in Sahara, have not received even a penny," Kuldeep Jain, a small-time businessman from Nowrangon, said.

Pikku Kumar from Mokama, Bihar said the portal was a fraud done with the people. "This government only works for the industrialists. They waive off their loans but when it comes to people they do nothing," Mr. Kumar, who was an agent for Sahara, said.

Chandrashekhar, a grocery store owner from Telangana, said he had ap-



Sahara investors protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

plied on the portal but did not get even ₹10,000 as refund.

On July 18, 2023, the Central government set up the Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies (CRCs) portal for small investors in four cooperatives, registered from March 2010 to January 2014, in Lucknow, Bhopal, Hyderabad, and Kolkata, under the provisions of the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.

The investors got the promised returns, around 7%-11% interest on principal amount for the first few years. From 2017-2018 onwards the returns stopped.

The Supreme Court in 2012 ordered Sahara to deposit ₹25,000 crore in the "Sahara-SEBI Refund Account" to refund the high-net worth investors of two other companies – the Sahara India Real Estate Corporation Limited (SIRECL) and Sahara Housing India Corporation Limited (SHICL). Most high-net investors never showed up to claim the money.

## Kerala Opposition walks out over acquittal of rape-murder accused

## G. Anand

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) trooped out of the Kerala Assembly on Thursday in protest against the State government's "failure" to obtain a conviction in the rape and murder of a six-year-old girl belonging to a Scheduled Tribe at Vandiperiyar in Idukki in 2021.

The victim hailed from a family of tea plantation workers. In December, a court had acquitted the lone accused in the case.

The Congress's Sunny Joseph sought the leave of the House for an adjourn-

court found the police investigation "belated, unscientific, unconvincing, and lethargic".

Its damning verdict triggered a public outcry against the State police for "denying" the victim's family justice by allegedly succumbing to the pressure of the ruling party.

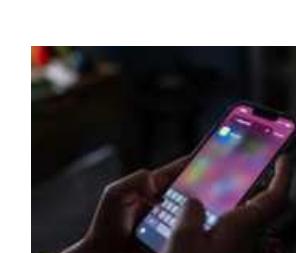
Hours after the walkout, the Left administration suspended the police officer who investigated the matter. The suspension order indicates that the action has been taken based on the adverse observations by the trial court against the officer.

(With PTI inputs)

## Karnataka plans digital detox initiative with game developers, NIMHANS

## Press Trust of India

BENGALURU



Online and offline centres will be set up across the State to provide counselling. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

digitally empowered Karnataka through responsible use of technology."

**Toll on mental health** Observing that mental health issues, shrinking attention spans and fraying real-world relationships are the outcomes of digital dependence, the Minister said that technology had woven itself firmly into the fabric of everyone's lives, and being glued to screens has become the norm in this hyper-connected age.

This initiative will enable an environment of meaningful and constructive use of technology, an official release said.

while minimising its adverse effects," he assured.

The government of Karnataka will work with AIGDF and the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) to raise awareness about mindful technology.

Through this initiative, both online and offline digital detox centres will be set up across the State of Karnataka, which will offer personalised guidance, where trained professionals will provide counselling and support to individuals seeking to navigate their relationship with technology.

"This initiative will enable an environment of meaningful and constructive use of technology, an official release said.

# SPOTLIGHT



The Kitchen Garden at Radhakrishnapur High School, Sagar island, West Bengal, where students and teachers grow vegetables which are used for their midday meals. DEBASISH BHADURI

# The teachers in Sundarban struggling to keep students afloat

**Amid large-scale migration from the delta area, schools on Sagar island are trying various ways of retaining children, from smart classrooms and activity corners to kitchen gardens and home visits. Preventing dropouts is a battle against changing weather conditions, better job opportunities in other States, marriage of girls, and trafficking, finds Shiv Sahay Singh**

**T**he children who study in the government-run Radhakrishnapur High School, in the Sundarban area, love geography. They particularly enjoy it because the room the subject is conducted in has a projector, audio-visual tools, and a smart board. Located on West Bengal's southernmost tip, on Sagar, the biggest island in the archipelago, the school in Radhakrishnapur village, in Dakshin Dinajpur district, has mostly first generation learners. On the LED screen, students navigate their way through diagrams of low- and high-pressure over land and sea, 'book' knowledge only adding to geographical concepts they have seen play out in their lives.

All have stories to tell of extreme weather conditions, particularly cyclones. Amphan in May 2020 and Yash in May 2021 were both super cyclonic storms that battered the region, with the latter damaging 28% of the mangroves, as per a report by the United Nations University (UNU)-Institute for Environment and Human Security.

Jaydeb Das is the headmaster of Khansabeh Abad High School, about 7 kilometres away from Radhakrishnapur High School. He has 1,381 students in his school and says 20% drop out at the secondary level. "There are no employment opportunities here, so they are forced to leave," he says. He is teaching children to farm in little plots of land. "With generations leaving, the old skills of farming are easily forgotten," he adds. Teachers like him are taking a personal interest in their students' lives.

In this low-lying area, where cyclones inundate the land and cause destruction to the ecosystem and homes, the risk of marginalised, already vulnerable people plunging deeper into poverty is high. Twenty-six of the world's 35 deadliest cyclones have originated in the Bay of Bengal, says Weather Undergound, an organisation specialising in weather data.

Agriculture is not bankable, with the threat of cyclones that could ruin crops and rising salinity in the soil. In a bid to secure economic stability, Bengalis from here migrate to other States for work, either leaving children behind with family, where care may not be optimal, or taking them along for a short period and then dropping them back, disrupting education.

Many girls drop out because they are married early. A *Lancet Global Health* article this year observed that while child marriage declined across India between 1993 and 2021, seven States registered an increase. Of these, the "largest absolute increase in headcount was observed in West Bengal, representing an increase of 32.3%". However, some girls dream of a better life outside Bengal and migrate for work or are deceived into being trafficked. Up to 40,725 women and 10,571 girls were missing from West Bengal in 2022, as per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the highest in the country.

Dhiman Acharya, the headmaster of Radhakrishnapur Bahirpur Plot Free Primary School, feels that the vision is now no longer just teaching and making sure children understand concepts;

Together we earned ₹7,000 a week at a brick kiln there [in Tamil Nadu]. But the 'head sir' [headmaster] kept calling... urging us to return and get the children readmitted in school

**SABITA**  
Migrant to Tamil Nadu from West Bengal

it is to keep children in school. "This requires considerable effort," he says. "Since students come from the most marginalised homes, we need to support them with books, notebooks, and school uniforms, sometimes from our own pockets," Acharya says.

#### School as protector

Debosree Mondal stands out in a crowd of uniformed students in Radhakrishnapur High School. She has on her favourite red sweater because it's her birthday. "After Amphan, I was in school with my parents for 45 days," Debosree, a Class IX student, says.

Every student spends the summer vacation in school when cyclones ravage the islands, threatening to destroy homes and livelihoods. They are islands of safety, doubling as cyclone shelters to thousands of people and their animals, when the sea surges over the embankments and inundates landmass.

With a fresh coat of powder blue and cerulean paint, the newly renovated double-storeyed school building with neatly trimmed lawns stands out as the most stable structure among the huts and single-storeyed houses in southwest Sagar.

Kuheli Gayen, the headmistress, says the biggest challenge she faces is to retain her 352 students and ensure there are no dropouts. "Every weekend we take stock of children who are not coming to the school. We have dropouts each week. We follow up by making telephone calls or sending teachers to their homes," Gayen says, noting an increase over the years.

She is concerned about students like Debosree, whose father works as a migrant worker in Kerala. He returned home a week ago, and the headmistress fears the whole family may leave now. Almost half the number of students here have close relatives migrating to other States for work. There are many whose parents have left to work outside of Bengal.

Ashish Khanra is one such child, whose parents are in Tamil Nadu. The Class IX student has been staying at the school hostel. A wooden bed, a mattress, and a box for books are the only belongings Ashish has, in a room with unplastered

walls. After school hours when other students go home, the 15-year-old, one of the few hostellites, feels lonely.

What keeps him going is the kitchen garden that the children maintain with their teachers, across about 7,000 square feet of land inside the school premises. A group of students, in most cases a boy and a girl, are assigned a small plot of land to grow vegetables on. "I like growing cauliflower, cabbage, and radish," he says, adding that the produce from the kitchen garden goes to the school and is used in the midday meal programme. In return students get some money to cultivate more vegetables.

#### Students front and centre

The idea of engaging students with smart classrooms and a kitchen garden came to the island four to five years ago. Sabuj Sangha, a non-governmental organisation started helping schools augment their infrastructure and include modules of digital learning.

Ansuman Das, the director of Sabuj Sangha, says that out of 32 government-run senior secondary schools on the Sagar island, his organisation has supported the installation of smart classrooms in 15 schools. This will soon be extended to all schools over the next few years.

"Students dropping out early not only increases unsafe migration, but also early marriage and trafficking," says Das, whose organisation has been working in the area since the 50s, even before it was registered as an NGO. Under Parivaritan, its "holistic rural development programme", Sabuj Sangha has also introduced libraries, laboratories, and safe drinking in schools. For primary schools, they have set up an activity corner with toys, to make learning fun.

Studies have shown that coastal erosion triggered by the rising sea level poses a major challenge for Sagar island, home to about 2.12 lakh people, as per the 2011 census. The island lost a quarter of its total supratidal area within 144 years (from 284.55 sq km in 1851-55 to 219.26 sq km in 1997), as per a study in the *Indian Journal of Earth Sciences*.

Even though Sagar island is being eroded from the south, it is a confluence of one of the biggest religious pilgrimages of the country, called the Ganga Sagar Mela. Every year, lakhs – the claim was one crore in 2024 – descend on the island in the second week of January to celebrate Makar Sankranti, and to take a dip at the confluence of the Ganga and the Bay of Bengal. The ghats in front of the Kapil Muni temple where devotees offer prayers, have been severely eroded. After spending ₹25 crore on dredging, the government said they were helpless before nature.

Prof. Tuhin Ghosh, a senior lecturer at the School of Oceanographic Studies, Jadavpur University, says that about 30 years ago the remnants of the earlier temples were visible. "There were sand dunes and vegetation, followed by a flat beach. Gradually, the vegetation and undulations were cleared and made flat for extension of the Ganga Sagar Mela ground. Since these barriers were done away with, the attacks of waves have increased. This is mostly created by human interventions," Prof. Ghosh says.

#### Risk and uncertainty

Away from the din of the religious gathering, Gauranga Mondal, 30, is busy stitching his fishing net beside a mangrove plantation in Bahirplot area of Radhakrishnapur. Women under the banner of a self-help group have planted mangroves on sandy beaches to arrest erosion.

Mondal and his wife Sabita, 27, have two children and have returned from Tamil Nadu only about a year ago. "Together we earned ₹7,000 a week at a brick kiln there. But the 'head sir' [headmaster] kept calling over the telephone, urging us to return and get the children readmitted in school," Sabita says. The children couldn't attend school there because the medium of education was Tamil. "We sacrificed our earnings and came back so that the children could go to school in Sagar. But there is no work here and we are surviving on the fish in the sea," says a worried Mondal, standing outside his hut.

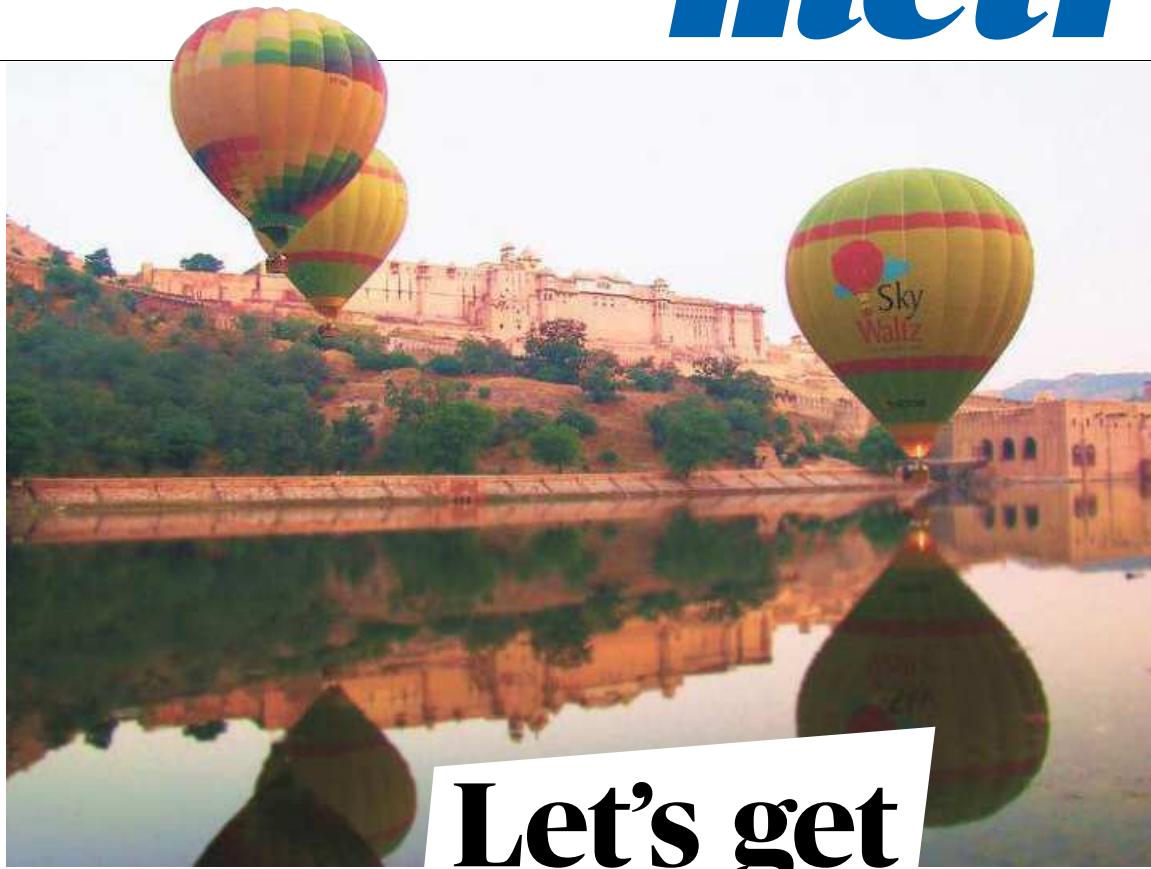
At the Ganga Sagar Mela, Acharya decides to do some shopping. He buys four sets of clothes. "These are for my students. Migration has posed serious challenges for families. Sometimes men who are out working year after year do not return to their families, leaving their wives and children helpless," the school headmaster says. Sometimes men and women start new families in other States and the children are left without a strong support system.

As winter recedes, so does the catch of fish. Mondal is restless. "I cannot stay like this. I will return to Tamil Nadu in March," he says, resolute that he will go alone. His family is unsure. Sabita is worried they will have to go too, leaving the school in Sagar behind.



Radhakrishnapur High School on Sagar island; (right) the smart classroom with an LED board. DEBASISH BHADURI





## Let's get carried away

The mention of hot air ballooning conjures up images of floating over Cappadocia in Turkey, but the activity is picking up in India too, from Jaipur and Pinjore to Hampi and Agra

Amarjeet Kaur  
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**A**t the crack of dawn, when twilight peers through the winter haze, a big balloon prepares to kiss the sunlit sky. On it, ride the early birds pointing their viewfinders to the panoramic landscape from some 500 metres above the ground. Chandigarh-based Ishmita Marya, 21, sums up the experience in a Bollywood song of the 1990s, 'Aaj main upar, aasman neeche' (Today, I am soaring with the sky below me).

On January 17, she took her first hot air balloon ride in Pinjore, around 23 kilometres from Chandigarh, with Jaipur-based air ballooning company Skywaltz Balloon Safari. "I arrived in Pinjore at 7.30am, the crew ignited the burner and began to fill air inside the huge balloon. The pilot, Imo Singh, gave us few instructions, which included not leaning outside the basket, maintaining requisite weight, bending the knees and keeping the back straight while landing etc. When the balloon took off, we were at 2,300 feet above sea level in no time," she recalls.

A little while after, the balloon propelled further up by 500 feet and Ishmita spotted the sunrise. "Soaked in sunlight, the sky looked beautiful; however, it was the land underneath that caught my attention in the backdrop of the Lower Shivaliks. After getting our first flight certificates and some group photographs, our cab arrived and we departed with a promise to fly again," she shares. The

ride, including pick and drop, cost ₹5,960.

Like Ishmita, many are now thronging Pinjore where Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar inaugurated a hot air balloon safari project in November last year. Pinjore happens to be Skywaltz Balloon Safari's second operational spot. Its founder Naveet Bali is planning to expand to Hampi soon.

### In business

"In 2002, I was in Germany for a business conference, when I saw a hot air balloon from the taxi. The driver told us it is catching up in Europe. That's when the seeds of running this business in India were sown," informs Naveet. On January 2, 2008, Naveet started Skywaltz under his company E-Factor

Adventure Tourism. In the last 15 years, Skywaltz has flown nearly one lakh passengers besides marking its presence at the Taj Balloon Festival, Kashi Balloon Festival, Araku Balloon Festival and Meghalayan Age. "We are presently doing the Bundelkhand Gaurav Mahotsav," says Naveet. He is one of only two hot air balloon operators whose companies are registered with the DGCA. The other one is Gajendra Singh Rathore, who founded Tiger Balloon Safaris while looking for an auxiliary adventure activity at his property Pench Jungle Camp in Pench Tiger Reserve.

"We started in 2010. Landing at a desirable spot was a major challenge because the reserve is a forested area and is skirted by farmland," says Gajendra. The company, after a

All set for take-off Skywaltz Balloon Safari at Amber Fort. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



### Fly away to

**■ Jaipur:**  
Take-off location: Samode (pick and drop is included in the package) Time of flight: 6.30am Cost of flight: ₹13,500 + tax

**■ Chandigarh (Pinjore):**  
Take-off location: Kalka (pick and drop is included in the package) Time of flight: 6.30 am Cost of flight: ₹13,500 + tax

**■ Hampi (February 5 onwards):**  
Take-off location: Maurya Helipad (pick and drop is included in the package) Time of flight: 6.30 am Cost of flight: ₹13,500 + tax

**■ Agra (February 19 onwards):**  
Take-off location: Hathi Ghat (pick and drop is included in the package) Time of flight: 6.30am Cost of flight: ₹13,500 + tax

**■ Goa (February 10 onwards):**  
Take-off location: Asolda Village Panchayat Ground Time of flight: 6.30am Cost of flight: ₹12,000

strict regulations of the DGCA, which views hot air ballooning as any other aviation company. "They give a permit and NSOP (Non Scheduled Operator's Permit) for operating balloon flights and the scheduled operators have to comply," says Gajendra.

There are other bottlenecks too, like the availability of DGCA-approved pilots. Gajendra shares that there are only seven-eight DGCA-approved pilots, but they too are not commercial pilots. "So, we have to source pilots from Europe, the cost of which runs high. Even then we have to seek permission from DGCA," he adds.

There are, however, other hot air balloon companies across India, including in Manali, Jaipur and other tourist destinations, offering tethered flights, which clock 10-15 minutes, and are relatively easy on the pocket, starting anywhere between ₹1,200 and ₹1,500.

However, neither the companies, nor their balloons or pilots are registered under the DGCA. Shaobai Zaidi, owner of Fly High Adventure, says, "We make our own balloons. Tethered flights are stationary unlike traditional air balloon rides and are tied to a rope. The DGCA is not involved because we do not fly above 400 feet. There's no particular policy for us. We fly in Manali and Nainital and have even participated in the Brahmaputra Carnival in Guwahati," he says.

**The flying squad**  
Originally from Pune, Captain Sangram Prakash Pawar is content with his choice of profession – a hot air balloon pilot. For one, he gets to travel the world. Also, he makes a handsome sum while working just four hours a day. He is now in Al Ula,

Saudi Arabia, flying over UNESCO Heritage Site Hegra. "I am the only Indian pilot here. Soon, I will be headed to Dubai for three months," he says. Since ballooning is a seasonal activity, which lasts from October to April in West Asia and the rest of Asia, and May to October in Europe and the US, Sangram is seldom out of work. "I've flown in France, Spain, the Philippines, Oman, the US and Nepal. I flew the first-ever hot air balloon in Oman in 2019," he shares.

Sangram earned his commercial pilot licence at Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 2018 after completing a four-month course. "In India, my licence number is 24, meaning that since 1947 till date there have been only 24 balloon pilots in India, and the country has maybe just six to seven pilots now. Unlike aeroplanes and helicopters, balloons have no breaks, accelerators or any steering controls. So, we fly in the direction and at the speed of the wind, which means the landing place is undecided until five minutes before landing time. The pilot has to understand weather, and wind speed and direction. Ballooning contributes to only .5% of the total accidents in the history of aviation. The best time to fly one is during sunrise as the wind is stable," he adds.

Captain Hugo Hall, who is in India, flying with Skywaltz, couldn't agree more. "My worst flight was with an ex-girlfriend at home in the UK. We took off in the middle of the day and got something called wind shear, which is a change in direction. It squished the balloon and it plummeted into a field; we survived, though," he recounts.

Hugo lists Meghalaya as one of his top destinations. "It's forested and mountainous. The sight of waterfalls makes it all the more amazing. Flying in a forested area is challenging, but that is what makes it fun," he says. Hailing from Bristol, Hugo took to ballooning at the British Balloon and Airship Club.

**The global Indian**  
While there are several destinations in India that offer hot air balloon rides, Cappadocia in Turkey tops the global list. Coimbatore-based couple Arun Karthik and Swetha Arun Karthik took a ride in South Africa's Pilanesberg National Park in September last year, which cost them ₹27,200 per person. "We started at around 4.45am and we had a 360-degree view of the land, its flora and fauna," says Arun. "The ride lasted 30 minutes, but the experience left a lasting impression. We want to do it again," Arun says.

## STEPOUT

### Tied by tradition

Modern Tribal - Connecting Traditions, is an exhibition celebrating the convergence of tribal and contemporary art, with a spotlight on Gond and Bhil paintings. This initiative showcases the dynamic evolution of indigenous art forms, emphasising the rich cultural heritage of tribal art from central India and art of First Nations, Australia. At Main Gallery, Bikaner House, until February 5, 2024; 11am to 7pm.



### Tribal voices

The vibrant and profound visual voices of Adivasis take centrestage in the art exhibition and book launch of ROOTS: Art from the Tribal Heartland of India, at the Visual Arts Gallery, curated by Alka Pande and Mitchell

Critics. The featured artists include Faguni Bai Baiga, Hema Baiga, Belgur Mandavi, Jairam Mandavi, Jangarh Singh Shyam, Narmada Prasad Tekam, Akash Ukey and others.

At India Habitat Centre, from February 2-14, 11am to 8pm.

Neha Rajive

"I did not choose art, art chose me," says ceramics artist Efrat Eyal. It was a pottery class she enrolled in as a hobby, which inspired Efrat, who is also an art therapist, to make it her profession. The artist is currently in town for the second edition of the Indian Ceramics Triennale Arthshala, Delhi. It features 34 projects by more than 60 artists from over 12 countries.

Efrat, who also has a background in Biology, says she was captivated by pottery and ceramics, and how it gives one the ability to mould one's art according to one's imagination. Although she always wanted to be an artist, being a mother, it was only after she got her own studio that Efrat was able to focus on her work completely.

Her artistic language is based on the deconstruction of formal conventions. She takes everyday objects, images and symbols from the history of art and ceramics

## Sculpting new norms by breaking the mould

Israeli artist Efrat Eyal talks about her work at ICT 2024



**Fascinated by pottery** Israeli artist Efrat Eyal. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

andreassembles them in contemporary contexts, often relating to gender and social issues.

Her work at the Triennale titled Attendance Check, is a site-specific wall installation which consists of a partial grid. The handmade ceramic pieces are fragments of

moulded ready-made objects, all different from one another and unique, that represent the grout between the invisible bricks.

The Art Wife Project, features women doing everyday chores. "One of the subjects I frequently deal with, is the constant tension

that accompanies female artists who practise their art and at the same time, tend to their home and family," she says.

It examines how femininity is perceived in society, and the expectations that format the female gender identity. "As a mother and housewife myself, I feel the work we do is equally important. It is art."

With the difficult war condition back home, Efrat says art has become her saviour. "Art is a humane thing. While the atrocities break my heart, I think it's nice we have art. It gives us a voice and space for expression."

**The triennale is on till March 31, from 11am to 7pm excluding Mondays.**

## The spirit of the wood

Jeram Patel's experimentation with materials led to the blowtorch series, focussing on abstraction and invoking strong imagery

### Dhriti Mankatalia

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**P**alette Art Gallery is currently hosting a captivating exhibition titled A Reconstruct, featuring some of the rare and seminal works of the renowned artist Jeram Patel (1930-2016).

Fondly known as Jeram bhai, Patel was a maestro who embraced experimentation, particularly with the blowtorch on wood medium. The exhibition showcases 28 curated works that span from the 1960s to 2016, offering a unique insight into the evolution of Patel's artistic journey.

Patel led a simple life in Vadodara and was one of the founders of Group 1980, whose manifesto emphasised 'the reality of the image rather than the image of reality,' showcasing a commitment to pushing the boundaries of artistic expression.

Originally planned for 2006 or 2007, A Reconstruct faced an unexpected setback when Patel fell ill, leading to its cancellation. However, now, in its current manifestation, the exhibition takes viewers through different rooms in chronological order, in a retelling of his artistic narrative.

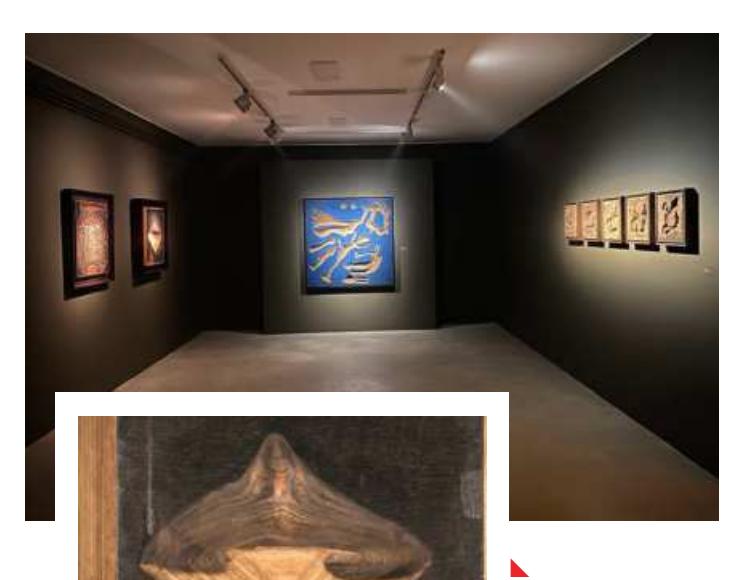
As one walks through the exhibition, one wonders why Patel never explicitly identified as an abstractionist. His ink-on-paper works beckon the

viewer to imagine and construct forms within their minds. Using Chinese ink on paper, a rarity in his time, Patel's obsession with the colour black becomes evident.

Its extensive use creates an aura that distinguishes his works from others.

A standout piece from the exhibition is a blowtorch-on-laminated-wood artwork from 1960, that seems to appear as if light is radiating from it, showing Patel's mastery over technique.

The artist learned this method, also known as Shou Sugi Ban in Japanese, during



**Experimental**  
A view of the ongoing show at Palette Art Gallery; (left) a piece from the blowtorch series. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

his time in Japan and later pioneered it in India, making it a hallmark of his practice. Rejecting colour and representation, Patel's early works relied on the natural rendering of burnt wood, underscoring his dedication to material and the elimination of form.

Jeram Patel's art, as reconstructed in this exhibition, reveals a nuanced exploration of medium, technique, and form.

**At Palette Art Gallery, 14 Golf Links Road, till February 17.**

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

**January records increased power consumption**

**133.83** in billion units. India's power consumption in January, saw a 6% increase compared to the year-ago period. The highest supply of power in a day increased to 222.32 GW in January. PTI

**The number of vehicles exported by China in 2023**

**4.91** million vehicles. China became the world's largest vehicle exporter in 2023. This position was previously held by Japan, which exported 4.42 million vehicles in 2023. China's vehicle exports grew 58% more than the last year. AP

**The rise in coal production of Coal India Ltd. in January**

**9.1** in percentage. The state-owned CIL's rise in coal production was at 78.4 million tonnes (MT) in January. The company had produced 71.9 MT of coal in the corresponding month of the previous fiscal. PTI

**The direct flights Spice Jet is now operating to Ayodhya**

**8** Spice Jet now offers flights to Ayodhya from Darbhanga, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Jaipur, Patna, Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. Earlier, successful air services had commenced from Ayodhya to Delhi, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Bengaluru. ANI

**Iran begins building more nuclear power plants**

**4** more nuclear power plants are being built by Iran with an expected total capacity of 5,000 megawatts, the official IRNA news agency reported. Iran seeks to produce 20,000 megawatts of nuclear energy by 2041. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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# On Israel's obligation to prevent genocide

What provisional measures did the International Court of Justice order in the case South Africa brought against Israel on its war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip? Can the interim ruling be enforced by the ICJ? What is the verdict's impact and what happens next?

## EXPLAINER

Aaratrika Bhaumik

### The story so far:

In a historic ruling, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Israel to take measures to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza, but stopped short of calling for an immediate ceasefire as requested by South Africa. A final verdict can only be pronounced after hearings on jurisdictional challenges and the merits of the claim are concluded, which will likely take several years. However, Friday's ruling strongly indicates that the judges believe that there is a "plausible" genocidal risk to Palestinians, thereby clinching an undeniable victory for South Africa. As established in the Court's *LaGrand* judgment in 2001, such provisional rulings are binding, and non-compliance entails the breach of an international legal obligation. However, whether Israel will choose to abide by the ruling is debatable since the ICJ does not have an enforcement mechanism of its own. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu slammed the ICJ ruling as "outrageous" while underscoring that Israel is fighting a "just war like no other." He reiterated the claim that Israel is defending itself against Hamas.

**Can South Africa move against Israel?** The Genocide Convention has been ratified by an overwhelming number of states, including South Africa (1998) and Israel (1950). Article IX allows any state party to institute a case against another in the ICJ, even if it is not directly involved in the conflict. This is because the prohibition of genocide is considered a peremptory norm of international law (*jus cogens*) from which no derogation is permissible. This is the basis on which South Africa, a party that is technically unrelated to the conflict, instituted the ongoing proceedings. For instance, in December 2022, the Court ruled that Gambia could bring a genocide claim against Myanmar for its treatment of the ethnic Rohingya population.

Upholding South Africa's standing to sue, the Court noted that "all States parties to the Convention have a common interest to ensure the prevention, suppression, and punishment of genocide" and thus any of them can seek compliance of such *erga omnes obligations* (obligations towards the international community as a whole) in any given case.

**What was the basis for the ruling?** The Court ascertained that the standard to order provisional measures had been met, that there is a "plausible" link between the rights sought to be protected by South Africa (the rights of Palestinians to be free from genocidal attacks) and the measures it requests as well as a risk of irreparable harm and genuine urgency. This was an unsurprising declaration given the relatively low threshold for an interim ruling – the Court did not have to determine conclusively that genocidal acts in Gaza had, in fact, occurred. A *prima facie* determination is sufficient.

Relying on various statements from UN officials, special rapporteurs, and other international bodies regarding the catastrophic situation in Gaza, it observed that "the facts and circumstances mentioned above are sufficient to conclude that at least some of the rights claimed by South Africa and for which it is seeking protection are plausible." Notably, the Court took note of genocidal rhetoric from several senior Israeli officials to arrive at its conclusion. In



Towards justice: ICJ President Joan Donoghue speaks at the ICJ prior to the verdict announcement in The Hague on January 26. AFP

particular, it referred to a statement by the Defence Minister of Israel Yoav Gallant calling for a "complete siege" of Gaza and indicating to the troops that they were "fighting against human animals." Reference was also made to the President of Israel Isaac Herzog's remark that there were no innocent civilians in Gaza since "the entire nation" was responsible. The cognisance of such statements is significant as they could establish the "genocidal intent" required to eventually arrive at a definite finding on the commission of the crime. Highlighting the need for emergency measures, the Court observed that "the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is at a serious risk of deteriorating further" before it can render a final judgment.

**What are the provisional measures?** Declining South Africa's request, the Court refused to issue an immediate ceasefire order as it had done previously in the *Ukraine versus Russia* case. However, Ukraine's situation is factually and legally distinguishable from Gaza. In the case instituted by Ukraine against Russia, both parties were also the two involved in the conflict, while Hamas, as a non-state actor, is not a party to the ongoing proceedings.

The Court ruled that Israel must, in accordance with its obligation under the Convention, take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all genocidal acts against Palestinians in Gaza, such as causing serious bodily or mental harm, killing civilians, and imposing measures intended to prevent births, among others. Furthermore, during the proceedings, South Africa accused Israel of furthering genocide through its state organs including the military. It pointed out that high-level Israeli politicians made genocidal statements, which were then echoed by soldiers on the ground in Gaza while making TikTok reels. Addressing such concerns, the Court directed Israel to ensure "with immediate effect" that its military does not commit any genocidal acts either.

The Court also ordered Israel to permit the entry of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance into the Palestinian enclave. South Africa had alleged that Israel's blockade of food, water, medicine, and other essential supplies had pushed Palestinians to the "brink of famine."

Additionally, Israel was ordered to preserve evidence relating to the claim. This will ensure that vital evidence is not lost or destroyed before the merits phase of the case, when the Court has to conclusively determine if Israel has committed genocide or not. Such evidence will also be relevant for proceedings before the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is already investigating the possible commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity by both Hamas and Israel. However, South Africa's request to permit fact-finding missions, international mandates, and other bodies access to Gaza to assist in the retention of evidence was not entertained by the Court.

With respect to compliance, Israel was directed to submit a report to the Court on all steps undertaken to abide by the measures imposed by the Court within one month of the ruling. South Africa will have a chance to respond to this report. This will also provide an opportunity to present more evidence such as the recently declassified cabinet minutes explaining Israel's intent behind the hostilities.

Although no interim order was issued, the Court said that it was gravely concerned about the fate of the hostages abducted during Hamas' attack on October 7, 2023, and called for their immediate and unconditional release.

**What happens next?** The UN Security Council (UNSC) is set to meet next week to deliberate upon the decision. The meeting has been called by Algeria, whose Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it would give a "binding effect to the pronouncement of the International Court of Justice on the provisional measures imposed on the Israeli

occupation." The UNSC has long been divided on the conflict, with the U.S. having used its veto power multiple times to shield Israel from demands for a ceasefire. However, experts say that Washington's veto of an ICJ-approved decision could undermine U.S. President Joe Biden's calls for others – especially its adversaries Russia and Myanmar – to uphold the Court's rulings.

Following the verdict, nearly a dozen Western countries including the U.S. have suspended funding for the United Nations' refugee agency for Palestinians (UNRWA) owing to allegations that its staff were involved in the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israel. Established in 1948, the UNRWA provides education, health, and emergency aid services to about two-thirds of Gaza's 2.3 million population and has played a pivotal role during the war. Although many have been left disappointed by the Court's refusal to order a ceasefire, experts say that this was expected. Thomas Macmanus, a law professor at Queen Mary University in London, told *Al Jazeera* that he was not surprised that the Court did not ask for a ceasefire because, in a way, it would "render Israel defenceless against an attack, and that's not really within the purview of the Court in this case."

According to Tuqa Nusairat, the Director for Strategy, Operations, and Finance at the Atlantic Council's Middle East Programs in Washington, the ruling should make U.S. rethink any further diplomatic, economic, and military support to Israel. "The Court's initial decision puts to rest the Biden administration's claim that the case is 'meritless,' and should force the United States to come to terms with the fact that its support for Israel is not only rejected by much of the international community, but it is now subject to possibly defending itself against accusations of supporting a possible genocide in Gaza. The fifteen-to-two vote by the Court on almost all the provisions speaks to how united much of the world is in its view of how Israel has conducted its military operations in Gaza," she asserted.

## THE GIST

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Israel to take measures to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza, but stopped short of calling for an immediate ceasefire as requested by South Africa. A final verdict can only be pronounced after hearings on jurisdictional challenges and the merits of the claim are concluded, which will likely take several years.

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The UN Security Council (UNSC) is set to meet next week to deliberate upon the decision.

## IN THE LIMELIGHT



A still from *Kaatera*.

## 'Kaatera' and the future of family dramas in Kannada cinema

The success of *Kaatera*, starring Darshan and directed by Tharun Sudhir, partly revived the family drama genre, which is facing an uncertain future in the Kannada film industry. The time is right to question if the industry sees the idea of a family drama as a thing of the past

Vivek M.V.

Puneeth Rajkumar's *Yuvarathnaa* was all set to become a blockbuster family drama when the second wave of the pandemic stopped its promising run in theatres. The Kannada superstar passed away a few months later, and since his untimely demise, the Kannada film industry has witnessed only a handful of family dramas anchored by A-list stars.

A family drama is a film that excites people of all age groups in a family. It bodes well for the movie if, in particular, women are interested in watching. The recently-released Darshan starrer *Kaatera*, a film that attempts to fight for the farmers' cause, enjoyed a favourable response from women across several small towns of Karnataka. Director Tharun Sudhir refined the old-school family drama template with intense storytelling to make *Kaatera* appealing to youngsters who preferred a modern touch to a commercial pot-boiler.

### A bygone era?

*Kaatera*'s success partly revives a genre that's facing an uncertain future. Stars of Kannada cinema are either in an experimental mode or are attempting to cash in on the pan-India wave. The time is right to question if the industry sees the idea of a family drama as a thing of the past. It seems so, going by the line-up of Kannada stars for the coming years.

Veteran actor Shivarajkumar followed up his two period action dramas, *Bhajarangi 2* and *Vedha*, with MG Srinivas' heist film *Ghost*. After the success of Rajinikanth's *Jailer*, in which Shivarajkumar played a cameo, the Kannada veteran has gradually accepted opportunities from other industries. Yash,

after the gigantic success of the *KGF* films, was perhaps burdened by expectations as he took an unusually long time to announce his next. He will star in Geetu Mohandas' *Toxic*, touted to be a crime-action drama. Sudeep's next is *Max*, an action film. The actor will then return to direction (after ten years) for *KK*. The genre of the film isn't known yet.

Unlike today, when one can't predict the next choice from an actor or a filmmaker, the bygone era was more systematic. Famous production houses were known for churning out a particular genre of films in the 1970s and 80s. If Abhay Naidu was a pioneer in producing family dramas, M.P. Shankar's Bharani Chitra bankrolled films about animal and environmental welfare. Dwarkish's ambitious production company, Dwarakish Chitra, made action-adventure movies on a grand scale.

Well-known actors specialised in a specific genre. Ambareesh featured in political-action dramas (*Antha, New Delhi*) while Shankar Nag grew popular with action movies involving martial arts, earning him the moniker 'Karate King'. Only Dr. Rajkumar excelled in all genres, from the mythological (*Bhakta Prahalada*) and detective thrillers (*Operation Diamond Racket*) to the historical (*Ranadheera Kanteerava*) and relationship dramas (*Naa Ninna Mareyalare*). The only other actor who proved his calibre in all kinds of roles before championing the family drama genre was Dr.

Vishnuvardhan. In the early 2000s, he developed a strong following for his portrayals of a benevolent senior or brotherly figure (*Vayamana, Hrudayavantha*) who would go to any length to save his family. Ananth Nag's comedy dramas also enticed the family

crowd.

### Reviving a genre

Vishnuvardhan's passing dealt a blow to the family drama genre. After Kaashinath's adult comedies surprised viewers in the late 80s, Upendra's *Om* signalled the era of gangster movies in Kannada cinema. In addition, the rise of remakes pushed the family drama genre to the backburner. Once in a while, Ravichandran brought families together in cinema halls with his remakes of hit films, such as *Ramachaari* and *Kanasagara*.

The start of the new millennium also saw yesteryear stars passing on the mantle to upcoming actors. The legacy of Dr. Rajkumar got carried forward by his youngest son, Puneeth Rajkumar. Puneeth became the face of the family drama genre with his consistent choice of movies that had something for all. Even in his off-beat movies, Puneeth ensured that the family-friendly nature of the story remained intact.

Another important development was how Ramesh Aravind, who revelled in heart-breaking romantic dramas, gave way to Ganesh. In films such as *Mungaru Male, Gaalipata*, and *Maleyali Jotheyala*, Ganesh was the gentlemanly hero who made people laugh and cry, offering the perfect dose of entertainment required for a family viewing. That said, Ganesh's career stagnated due to his poor choice of scripts, and filmmakers unable to provide him fresh characters.

After cementing his stardom, Sudeep chose to star in ensemble-led family dramas such as *Maanikya* and *Ranna* before jumping into the pan-India bandwagon. Darshan, who became the favourite star of the working-class community with his 'mass'

action films, resurrected his career not once but twice by taking the risk of doing a historical drama, and mythological film, both films which catered to all audiences.

All the while, Shivarajkumar, who went on to become a big box office draw, gave us some of the all-time family drama classics, such as *Janumada Jodi* and *Nammoora Mandara Hoove*. However, the actor got pigeonholed in gangster movies following the gargantuan success of *Jogi*.

Amid the new-generation wave that produced path-breaking films in Kannada, the family drama genre experienced small moments of triumph. Dhananjaya, who has developed a connection with the middle-class community, starred in two hit family entertainers *Badava Rascal* and *Rathnan Prapancha*. The Rs of Kannada cinema – Rakshit Shetty, Rishab Shetty, and Raj. B. Shetty – also managed to entertain the masses with *777 Charlie, Kantara*, and *Ondu Motteya Kathe*, respectively.

The three films showed the power of universal aspects in cinema. The presence of an adorable dog, which performed brilliantly, helped *777 Charlie*, while *Kantara*'s divine element in its plot impressed the audience. *Ondu Motteya Kathe*'s clean humour won immense appreciation. The frenzy witnessed for these movies is reminiscent of *Apthamithra*'s long run in theatres. The film's horror element lured youngsters, children, and elders for repeated viewings on the big screen.

*Kaatera*'s success has proved that a family drama, once in a while, is good for the fans and people of the industry. Those doubting the notion must revisit history.

Of course, the primary task of filmmakers is to serve old wine in a new bottle.

## THE DAILY QUIZ

A Pakistan court sentenced former Prime Minister Imran Khan to 10 years in prison after finding him guilty of revealing official secrets. A quiz on Pakistan's Prime Ministers

Radhika Santhanam

### QUESTION 1

This Prime Minister never completed any of his three terms in office. In 2023, he returned to Pakistan after a self-imposed exile. Who is this person, who once battled with inadequate gear against the West Indies during a warm-up match before the 1987 cricket World Cup?

### QUESTION 2

This leader is remembered in India as the architect of the Kargil War. He was found guilty of high treason by a special court in Pakistan and sentenced to death for subverting the constitution. He once said that the person he admired the most was Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Who is he?

### QUESTION 3

This leader was educated at Aligarh. A few years ago, the U.P government announced that it would acquire land in Muzaffarnagar that once belonged to him. The first governor-general of Pakistan once called this leader "my right hand." Who is he?

### QUESTION 4

This leader was deposed in a military coup. He was the brain behind Operation Gibraltar. Who is this leader, who called India a "great monster" and wanted to wage a 1,000-year war against it?

### QUESTION 5

This leader was Speaker of Parliament. There was an assassination attempt on him for which the Pakistan-based Taliban claimed responsibility. He was disqualified from office. Who is he?



Visual question:  
Who is the woman sitting next to Indira Gandhi?

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Until 2016, the budget was presented on this day. Ans: It was presented on the last working day of February

2. The number of years for which the railway budget was presented separately. Ans: 92 years

3. The period during which the Finance Ministry staff can emerge only once the Finance Minister completes her Budget speech. Ans: Lock-In Period

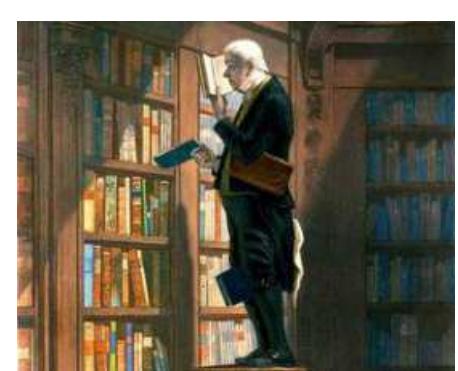
4. Until 2018, Finance Ministers carried the budget in a leather briefcase. This Minister established this for the first time. Ans: R.K. Shanmukham Chetty

5. This person has presented the most number of budgets. Ans: Morarji Desai

Visual: Identify this former Finance Minister.

Ans: Yashwant Sinha; He presented the budget at 11 a.m., for the first time, instead of doing it at 5 p.m.

Early Birds: C. Saravanan| Vineet Giril| Vinod Joshi| M. Suresh Kumar| Sunil Kannada



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

# Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

"Mr. M.B. J. Pancras, Melthindal, wants to know whether it is correct to say 'I am having...'"

"There are two kinds of verbs. One is called static and the other dynamic. Static verbs refer to states and dynamic verbs refer to actions. Static verbs do not go with the progressive as they describe a state. Verbs like see, hear, smell, hate, know, like, understand are static verbs. I love him and not I am loving him. I know him and not I am knowing him. I understand it and not I am understanding it. Either you understand or don't understand. There is no notion of progress in this and hence the progressive is not used with verbs like 'understand'. When 'have' is used as a static verb, it does not go with the progressive.

I have a car.

I have a good job.

You don't say 'I am having a car.' 'Have' is used with the progressive when it is used to refer to a process or activity. An action has a beginning and an end. When 'have' is used as a dynamic verb, it can go with the progressive.

He was having dinner when I went to meet him.

We are having a nice time here.

He is having some trouble with his boss. So when 'have' is used in the sense of 'eat, enjoy, experience, drink, take, etc.', it can be used in the progressive.

I have a car. It means I possess a car. Here 'have' is a static verb. I am having some trouble with my car. I am experiencing some trouble with my car. 'Have' here is a dynamic verb and is used in the progressive."

"Ms. Bannerjee, New Delhi, wants to know the difference between 'I have lived in Delhi for twenty years' and 'I lived in Delhi for twenty years'."

"I have lived in Delhi for twenty years" means that I started living in Delhi twenty years ago and I continue to live in Delhi. 'I lived in Delhi for twenty years' means that sometime in the past, I lived in Delhi for twenty years but I don't live in Delhi any longer.

I have worked in this office for five years.

I worked in this office for five years."

"Ms. Shekhar wants to know the difference between 'shy' and 'coy'."

"A shy person is a reserved person, one who doesn't want to push himself/herself forward. A person who is shy is nervous, self-conscious. 'Coy' means 'assumed or affected shyness, often with the further implication of coquetry'. 'Coquetry' is from 'coquette'. 'Coquette' is a woman who tries to attract the attention of men just for the fun of it."

I tell you she is not shy. She is coy."

"Mr. R. Muthu Kumaran, Malleswaram, Bangalore, wants to know the meaning of 'knee-jerk reaction'."

"A knee-jerk is 'an involuntary jerk of the leg when a tendon below the knee is struck.' 'Tendon' is 'a strong cord of tissue that binds the muscle to the bone.' A knee-jerk reaction is an unthinking, predictable reaction."

He is a knee-jerk traditionalist.

We are familiar with the knee-jerk reaction to communism."

Published in The Hindu on December 25, 1990.

## Word of the day

### Derogation:

a communication that belittles somebody or something; the partial taking away of the effectiveness of a law; a partial repeal or abolition of a law

### Synonyms:

depreciation, disparagement

### Usage:

It requires a derogation from the European Convention on Human Rights.

### Pronunciation:

bit.ly/derogationpro

### International Phonetic Alphabet:

/dərə'geɪʃən/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Text & Context'.

CM YK



## Poll posture

**Slowing growth and rising inequality must both be tackled head-on**

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's sixth consecutive Budget speech was an election-eve, self-congratulatory report card on the economic achievements engendered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the two governments he has led since 2014. Echoing the Finance Ministry's review of the economy's performance, and stating that Mr. Modi had inherited a situation replete with 'enormous challenges' when he assumed office, Ms. Sitharaman asserted that those were surmounted through 'structural reforms, pro-people programmes and the creation of opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship'. A reinvigorated economy had helped ensure that the fruits of development started reaching the people at scale, imbuing them with a sense of purpose and hope, and translated into a bigger mandate five years ago, she averred. In a clear sign that the Bharatiya Janata Party-led regime is far more confident of returning to power this time around, Ms. Sitharaman eschewed any announcements that could be seen as targeting a particular constituency of voters. Instead, the focus was on talking up the commitment to 'an inclusive and sustainable policy approach that had led to the attainment of a more comprehensive GDP of governance, development and performance'. A nonchalant observation that the government would detail a road map for attaining a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 in its full Budget in July, was premised on the certainty of winning a 'resounding' electoral mandate.

The Budget numbers posit a continuing journey on the path of fiscal consolidation, with the Revised Estimates (RE) pegging the current year's fiscal deficit at 5.8% of the GDP, a 10 basis points improvement from last February's Budget Estimate (BE) of 5.9%. This, the Minister has achieved by pruning effective capital expenditure by ₹1 lakh crore in the RE, a moderation in nominal growth estimates notwithstanding. For 2024-25, she has projected a sharper consolidation and pegged the deficit at 5.1% by factoring in a 14% jump in revenue receipts on a BE basis, that is expected to help offset an 11% increase in estimated capital expenditure to ₹11.11 lakh crore. Ms. Sitharaman, who emphasised a tripling in the capital spending outlays over the past four years that had had 'a multiplier impact on growth and employment creation', however, glossed over the fact that the budgeted increase in capital spending next year is set to be sharply lower than the 28% jump in the RE versus last fiscal's actuals. At a time when official estimates for private consumption spending show growth at its lowest ebb since the pandemic, the Budget's stress on fiscal prudence does carry the risk of undermining economic momentum. The bigger challenge is the more worrying possibility of rising inequality.

## Change in Jharkhand

**Central agencies must be allowed to function freely**

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Hemant Soren stepped down as the Chief Minister of Jharkhand on Wednesday moments before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested him on allegations of money laundering. Mr. Soren faces charges of benefiting from tribal land transactions based on forged documents. The judiciary will examine these allegations, but what necessitates the arrest of an accused is a serious question that the judiciary needs to settle in clearer and enforceable terms. The ED, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), commands sweeping powers of arrest. Barriers for bail are very high in PMLA cases. Petitions challenging the July 2022 judgment of the Supreme Court upholding these powers are pending before it. Meanwhile, the ED has raised the stakes by arresting a Chief Minister of an Opposition party, which cannot be viewed as a routine law enforcement event. Mr. Soren's lawyers mentioned in the Court on February 1 that this has implications for the polity of the country, seeking an urgent hearing of his plea against the arrest. Meanwhile, the ED has asked Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal to appear before it on February 2, after his failure to turn up for questioning four times. Mr. Soren has called for 'a war against a feudal system that oppresses poor, dalit and tribals', terming the case against him an assault on the tribal communities that he represents.

Faced with allegations, politicians often seek cover behind their community identities, but it is undeniable that the long arm of the Indian law reaches the weaker sections of society more easily. The JMM's troubles did not end with Mr. Soren's arrest. The selection of a new Chief Minister became entangled in a family feud. Instead, as a compromise, it will be a veteran fighter for tribal rights, Champai Soren, but the Governor has not yet invited him to form the government. The Jharkhand police has filed a first information report based on a complaint by Mr. Soren under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, but it is unlikely to stand. That said, ED investigations have now established a pattern that fits perfectly with the political designs of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. Mr. Soren's arrest follows the reengineering of the alliance in Bihar that brought the BJP back to power, where the Governor acted swiftly to facilitate it. As on multiple occasions, leaders under the ED's scanner magically turned clean once they joined hands with the BJP. The distinction that central agencies make sometimes appears to be not between the corrupt and the clean, but whether one is with the BJP or not.

**W**ell before Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman rose to present the Interim Budget for 2024-25, there were indications as to what its focus would be. Doubts that this would be anything more than a vote-on-account had been settled when Prime Minister Narendra Modi publicly declared that "when polls are this close, the government presents an interim budget" – and went on to say with confidence of a victory in the polls, "we will bring a full budget when a new government is formed".

Meanwhile, an 'interim Economic Survey', innocuously titled "The Indian Economy: A Review", has presented a survey of post-Independence economic development, with a periodisation that divides those years into the pre- and post-Modi government eras. In language reflective of an electioneering pamphlet, peppered with the Prime Minister's own assessments of his government's record, the document concludes that the decade 2014-24 was one of "transformative growth". Periods of significant or even high episodes of growth prior to that transformative decade are identified as wanting, on the grounds that such growth either left structural challenges unaddressed or was the result of an unsustainable credit boom that damaged the banking sector.

### A eulogy

Given this background, it was to be expected that the Budget speech would be a vocal expression of this eulogy of the two governments of the last 10 years. For years, Part A of the Budget speech has been a tiresome recounting of policies already adopted, and to be adopted, many of which have little to do with the issues of resource mobilisation and allocation and the strategy they signal, which must be the actual concern. That has been true of this year's Interim Budget as well, which focused on all the "welfare" schemes, in areas varying from housing to food, which have been largely attributed to the Prime Minister. It is another matter that the Prime Minister has in the past dismissed such schemes as representative of a "revdi" (sweet gifts) culture when implemented by non-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State governments.

With the Interim Budget being identified as a mere vote-on-account, Part B of the speech was a declaration that while pursuing consolidation in the sense of achieving periodically revised fiscal deficit to GDP ratios, the government will be stepping up spending on infrastructure and welfare. In the circumstances, what can be assessed from the detailed Budget documents is the fiscal performance of the Centre in the current (rather than next) financial year, 2023-24. Even that exercise is fraught with difficulty



**C.P. Chandrasekhar**

is an economist and columnist based in New Delhi

because the practice of presenting Budgets on February 1 adopted in recent years has meant that "revised estimates" for the financial year incorporate projections relating to most of the last quarter of the financial year extending to March 31.

### CGA data sheds more light

The only substantial figures at hand are the estimates of actual expenditure under different broad heads for the first three quarters of 2023-24 provided by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), which can be compared with the estimates for the whole year provided in the Budget. This is, in certain areas, quite revealing. For example, if we take the estimates for the Department of Rural Development, under which the all-important Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme falls, as compared to budgeted expenditures of ₹1,57,545 crore for 2023-24, the revised estimates are placed at a much higher ₹1,71,069 crore. That points to a significant step up relative to that budgeted, despite claims that the NREGA scheme is being inadequately funded, wages are in arrears and job card holders are being excluded from work because wage payments are to be linked to Aadhaar.

But a comparison of revised and budgeted expenditures conceals what is actually occurring. The actual expenditure on the MGNREGA scheme was ₹1,11,170 crore in the COVID-19 year 2020-21 and ₹98,468 crore in 2021-22. That came down to ₹90,806 crore in 2022-23 and the revised estimate projects spending on the programme in 2023-24 at an even lower ₹86,000 crore. The figures clearly do not match the government's pro-poor rhetoric. Interestingly, the CGA reports that expenditure of the Department of Rural Development till December 2023 amounted to only ₹1,07,912 crore or 63% of the total projected in the revised estimates. So, more than a third of the estimated expenditure for the financial year is projected to occur in the last quarter of the year.

That deviation between revised expenditures over the financial year and the actual till December 2023 is even larger in the case of the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, under which the much-touted Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme of transfers falls. The budgeted expenditure for 2023-24 for that department was placed at ₹1,15,532 crore and the revised estimate is projected at ₹1,16,789 crore. The actual till December is placed at ₹70,797 crore by the CGA, or 61% of the revised estimate. Spending on the PM-KISAN scheme alone, which amounted to ₹66,825 crore in 2021-22, fell to ₹58,254 crore in 2022-23 and is projected at ₹60,000 crore in 2023-24.

There are two ways in which such deviations between actual spending till December and the revised estimates in the Budget can be interpreted. One could be that the Finance Minister has chosen to inflate revised estimates of spending to back her claim that the government has provided massive support to farmers and rural workers. The other could be that, despite tardy spending till December, the government plans to launch a pre-election spending blitz in areas where it believes it can swing votes in favour of the BJP. Being election season, the latter is a possibility. But trends of the kind noted with regard to spending on the MGNREGA scheme suggest that the government believes that rhetoric can be a substitute for actual allocations. Thus, despite claims that free rations for 80 crore people are a huge expansion of food support under the National Food Security Act, the total food subsidy has fallen from ₹5,41,330 crore in 2020-21 to ₹2,88,060 crore in 2021-22 and a projected ₹2,87,194 crore (RE) in 2023-24.

### Estimates and projections

At the macroeconomic level, the Budget's claim is that in 2023-24, the central government has managed to ensure that its receipts other than borrowing are almost equal to that budgeted. This is because it has met budgetary expectations with respect to tax revenues as well as expects to raise its non-tax revenue receipts by 25% relative to budget. The explanation for that hefty increase is that income from dividends and profits is slated to rise from ₹99,913 crore in 2022-23 to ₹1,54,407 crore in 2023-24 (RE). This is because, as compared with a budgeted ₹48,000 crore to be received as dividend/surplus from the Reserve Bank of India and nationalised financial institutions, the revised estimates suggest that the actual inflow will be more than twice that figure at ₹1,04,407 crore, largely because of transfers from the central bank. This has more than made up for a projected fall in miscellaneous capital receipts, consisting of receipts from disinvestment from a budgeted ₹61,000 crore to ₹30,000 crore. It is not clear whether even the figure of ₹30,000 crore can be realised, since the CGA estimates that 'other non-debt capital receipts', consisting of disinvestment proceeds, just crossed ₹10,000 crore by December.

Estimates and projections of this kind allow the Finance Minister to claim that even while ensuring total expenditure in line with the budgeted, she has managed to keep the fiscal deficit, at 5.8% of GDP, marginally below the budgeted level, hoping to please financial markets with her government's prudence. Whether it would please voters to give the National Democratic Alliance a "resounding victory", as she hopes, is yet to be seen.

# Interim Budget 2024 – in campaign mode



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crore households would obtain 300 units of free electricity every month through rooftop solarisation. While each household is expected to save between ₹15,000 to ₹18,000 annually, this would help in the creation of solar assets, especially in rural parts of the country.

### Some weak spots in the capex story

Notwithstanding the unambiguous policy focus on government capex, there seems to be a slowdown in capex spending by public sector enterprises (PSEs). The PSE capex budget for FY24 has been axed from ₹4.88 trillion in initial Budget estimates to ₹3.26 trillion in the revised estimates. This will result in PSE capex contracting by approximately 10% in FY24. Going forward, PSE capex is budgeted to increase modestly to ₹3.43 trillion in FY25, implying a growth of approximately 5%. As a ratio to GDP, PSE capex is slated to moderate to 1.0% in FY25, the lowest in recent history.

The high point of this Budget is fiscal consolidation. While subdued PSE capex takes away some sheen from the overall capex thrust by government agencies, this is getting compensated by the better-than-expected pace of fiscal consolidation – the FY25 Interim Budget has pegged the fiscal deficit target at 5.1% of GDP, lower than the consensus expectation of 5.3%-5.4%.

With gross gsec borrowing now slated to moderate to a three-year low of ₹14.13 trillion, the private sector would benefit from better availability of lendable resources, hopefully at a lower rate (the 10Y gsec yield closed 8 bps lower at 7.06%, its lowest levels in six months). This would bring collateral benefits to the overall economy. Fiscal rectitude and conservatism have been the hallmarks of this government's Budget making.

density corridors, and 40,000 normal rail bogies will be upgraded to meet Vande Bharat standards

Defence capex, a niche priority segment under the Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign, will see a record high allocation of ₹1.72 trillion (although it is budgeted to remain unchanged at 0.5% as a ratio to GDP between FY24 and FY25). This will be supplemented with the launch of a new scheme for strengthening deep-tech technologies for defence purposes and expediting 'atmanirbarta'.

Loans and advances (form of capital transfers) is budgeted to jump to ₹1.71 trillion in FY25, implying a 20% annualised growth. This will enable States to continue marching in lock step on capex creation at the ground level. After all, States play an equally important role in the creation of regional infrastructure – on an annualised trailing basis, States had a share of approximately 44% (as of December 23) in general government capex.

### A tango with the capex push

While the focus on hard infrastructure is easily palpable, the government has also been active in pushing forward its inclusion agenda with interlinkages with the infrastructure sector. In this context, despite its limitations, the FY25 Interim Budget has placed an adequate and timely emphasis on the housing sector. With the target of three crore houses for PM Awas Yojana (Grameen) being nearly met, the Finance Minister expanded the scope to include two crore additional houses in the next five years. This has the potential to boost affordable housing, which in turn would support rural infrastructure demand.

Further, the capex thrust is also seen to be integrating the government's green energy ambitions. As per the FY25 Interim Budget, one

Fiscal rectitude and conservatism have been the hallmarks of this Budget exercise

selected four segments of society, i.e., kisans, women, youth and poor. There has been no change in income-tax slabs. There is no measure to create wealth nor is there anything to generate an atmosphere of trust.

**S.K. Khosla,** Chandigarh  
The Interim Budget deserves praise as it shuns populist measures and strikes a fine balance between continuity and progress. The

announcement of the creation of a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore along with 50-year interest-free loans for research and development in the sunrise domains will no doubt bolster the country's digitisation march while creating opportunities for emerging entrepreneurs. A higher outlay for infrastructure will not only help boost the economy but will also spur investment in the long run.

**M. Jayaram,** Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu

The expectations of the salaried class that they would get some relief have been belied. There has been no hike in the standard deduction limit nor has the maximum deduction for tax benefit under Section 80C (it has been static for years now) been hiked. Successive Budgets have ignored the salaried class. Obviously, the salaried class has no lobby to plead its case unlike the corporate sector which has much more reach and can use its proximity to the levers of

power to achieve its goals.

**C.V. Aravind,** Bengaluru

**Arrest, questions**  
All right-thinking citizens want that corrupt leaders, above party lines, are punished but the moot question is whether such unbiased inquiry is conducted by investigating agencies. Under the BJP, the ED has acted only against the Opposition and has gone slow on fugitives.

**Kshirsagar Balaji Rao,** Hyderabad

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Budget, a closer reading

The Interim Budget sounds more like an election campaign pamphlet than a Budget that addresses critical issues. One of the most worrying areas the nation is facing is the young and the educated, the real strength of the country, leaving the nation in search of a better life. Sadly, Budgets come and go, but taxation policies are often sidelined. Worst hit are employees and pensioners, with no relief in sight from battling

inflation and paying taxes. Tall talk of development, infrastructure and growth would mean very little to those struggling.

**Balasubramanian Pavani,** Secunderabad  
The Indian masses, who are already facing unprecedented inflation and alarming unemployment, pinned their hopes on the Interim Budget, but to no avail. The Finance Minister has failed to announce any big jump in the allocation for the

# A political, feel-good statement

The Budget is an account of the achievements of the present regime and refuses to address shortcomings such as lack of employment, wage growth, or deficiencies in specific sectors

**O**ften, Budget speeches are political statements – more so, with impending general elections. There is a lot less to expect from an interim Budget. The Finance Minister's Budget speech was short in substance and loud in claiming credit for the decade of supposedly spectacular growth, moderate inflation, and a record of social welfare.

#### Positives in the Budget

What are the positives? The Budget statement attributed post-COVID growth revival to public infrastructure investment and proposes to continue the same in the coming year with a 1% rise in capital expenditure. However, the government proposes a moderate expansion in public investment as it claims that private investment has revived. Moderating public investment, in principle, is expected to free up resources for the private sector, preventing "crowding-out" (displacing) of private investment.

In the last 3-4 years, the government has steadily raised public infrastructure investments, mainly on highways and communications, which seems to have contributed to turning around GDP growth rate in the post-pandemic years. Faced with the uncertain

global energy supply situation after the war in Ukraine, it seems to have encouraged public sector oil, electricity and coal public sector undertakings to step up investment to improve energy security – setting aside the disinvestment and privatisation agenda for the moment. These decisions seem to have boosted public investment and output and stabilised the macroeconomic situation.

An item of public investment was 50-year interest-free loans offered to States (with conditionalities). The Budget proposes to extend the scheme in the coming year. This is perhaps a welcome move for growth as its utilisation by States has been substantial despite hiccups. Perhaps the scheme can be fine-tuned by taking into account State-specific requirements of its conditionalities.

The Budget proposes to replicate a similar scheme for promoting innovation and R&D for the private sector with a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore. The idea seems interesting if it helps boost industrial R&D. India's R&D expenditure as a ratio of GDP has remained stagnant at 0.8% for decades now. India and China had similar levels of R&D to GDP ratio at 0.8% in 1996. After more than two decades, China's ratio moved up to 2.2% of



A worker at the First Solar manufacturing facility in Sriperumbudur. AFP

GDP, while India's slipped to 0.6%. If the proposed long-term interest free loans could reverse the trend, the Budget proposal could be a game-changer.

The Budget applauded the recently announced scheme to set up rooftop solar in 1 crore households. This is welcome as India lags behind in tapping the 'free' natural source. But unless the new scheme addresses the pricing of electricity and differential pricing for small consumers, the ambitious scheme is unlikely to take off.

The Budget claimed that FDI inflow during 2014-23 doubled to \$596 billion compared to the previous 10 years. This is misleading.

FDI inflow as a ratio of GDP peaked in 2007-08 at around 3.5% and never regained that level. Further, as there have been more exits by private equity capital (the main source of FDI) from India, net FDI to GDP ratio is just about 1%. Much of FDI has flown into services and only modestly in manufacturing, and that too for acquiring existing factories and companies, not for green field investment. So, the modest FDI hardly adds to the economy's fixed investment growth.

#### The larger picture

The political message in the Budget was 'all is well' and the coming

days will be better. It seems to ignore many hard facts about the economy and potential threats from the (fracturing) global economy. Despite a satisfactory recovery from the COVID pandemic, the employment situation remains grim, as per official statistics. For example, the Periodic Labour Force Survey data show that regular salaried employment during the last five years has stagnated. Most of the employment generated is unpaid family labour, a clear evidence of disguised unemployment. Real wages in agriculture have declined. These data points tell us that the benefits of the supposedly stellar output growth have accrued to those receiving rents, interests, and profits who form a tiny share of the population or households. Such a growth outcome can hardly be considered equitable or inclusive.

The long term growth of a poor, over-populated economy lies in the structural transformation of its workforce away from rural/agriculture to modern industry and services in urban areas where labour productivity is much higher. During the last 10 years, we have witnessed a rise in the agriculture workforce and a slight decline in employment share in manufacturing. So, what we are witnessing is

premature de-industrialisation. While the Budget and the economic review seem complacent about the aggregate growth and stable external balance, their composition display areas of concern. One such area is the growing dependence on China for industrial inputs. The trade deficit with China has steadily widened over the years, accounting for one-third of India's trade deficit. Despite 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan', India's industrial output and investment growth rate has decelerated on a trend basis over the last 5-7 years. The gravity of the problem is better captured by the much-ignored estimates-based Annual Survey of Industries than the macro aggregates in the National Accounts Statistics.

The Budget is an account of the achievements of the last decade of this regime, with a promise to press ahead with the same. It refuses to address shortcomings such as the lack of employment, wage growth, or the critical deficiencies in sectors such as manufacturing. It also seems to ignore potential threats arising from geopolitics or strategic risks posed by dependence on China for critical inputs. Such a head-in-the-sand approach hardly augurs well for long-term national interest.

# Ignoring an agricultural sector in distress

The revival of agricultural growth from its long-term slump requires imaginative policy shifts and decisive fiscal measures, but the Budget provides no indications of such a plan or intent

**T**he report released by the Finance Ministry and the vote-on-account presented by the Finance Minister are concerned more about portraying a glowing image of the government than about the financing plans for 2024-25. For the same reason, one is constrained to confine the discussion on the Budget to one question: was the distress in agriculture over the past decade alleviated by policy, or has it been exacerbated?

#### Incomes and profitability

All official data appear to indicate the latter. First, there was a strong downward pull on agricultural prices leading to a squeeze on farmers' incomes. The sectoral deflator in agriculture and allied sectors – estimated as the difference in the growth rates of gross value added in current and constant prices – declined from 9.4 in 2013-14 to 5.0 in 2019-20 and 3.7 in 2023-24.

Second, the stagnation or fall of agricultural prices in the market was not ameliorated by any rise in minimum support prices (MSP). For major foodgrain crops, the MSPs rose by an average of 8-9%

per annum between 2003-04 and 2012-13, but only by about 5% between 2013-14 and 2023-24. The refusal to adequately raise MSPs affected the government's ability to intervene effectively in the market to control prices – on the farmers' side as well as on the retail side.

Third, a promise was made that real incomes of farmers would be doubled between 2015 and 2022. But the issue appears to have disappeared from policy and media discourse in recent years. In fact, real incomes of agricultural households from cultivation fell by about 1.4% between 2012-13 and 2018-19. The fall of incomes from cultivation was not only owing to the stagnation or fall of agricultural prices, but also due to a sharp rise in the costs of inputs in agriculture, particularly fertilizers.

Fourth, rural unemployment rose between 2011-12 and 2018-19. For rural men, the rise was from 1.7% to 5.6%. For rural women, the rise was from 1.7% to 3.5%. Rural unemployment rates fell after 2018-19 but their levels remained higher than in 2011-12 in 2022-23: at 2.8% for men and 1.8% for women. More importantly, the fall of rural unemployment was accompanied by a rise in the share of self-



A potato farm on the outskirts of Varanasi. AFP

employed women among all women workers. And most of this rise in the rural areas was in agriculture. In short, there was a crowding of the agricultural sector by unemployed workers from the non-agricultural sectors at a time when agricultural prices were not rising and agricultural incomes were falling.

Fifth, real wages in rural India have never risen after 2016-17 and have even fallen after 2020-21 – particularly in the context of the crowding of the agricultural labour market. These trends have been true for agricultural wages

and non-agricultural wages in the rural areas. All rises in nominal wages were wiped out by inflation.

Finally, public investment in agriculture, in general as well as in specific fields like agricultural research and extension, were stubbornly stagnant, and occasionally even fell, over the past decade. Consequently, capital investment in agricultural and allied sectors did not rise. Most of the long-term bank credit supplied to agriculture was also diverted away as short-term loans to corporates and agribusiness firms.

It is thus clear that incomes and

profitability in rural India were under severe stress across the two terms of the Union government.

#### Painting a rosy picture

Yet, the Finance Ministry's report and the Budget speech attempt to paint a totally different picture. They cherry-pick and cite absolute numbers on the increases in agricultural production. But they ignore the fact that the index numbers of production of all principal crops grew by 3.1% annually between 2003-04 and 2010-11, but only by 2.7% annually between 2011-12 and 2022-23. If we consider the index numbers of yield, the fall was sharper: from 3.3% per year to 1.6% per year. In short, the fortuitous spurt of agricultural growth during the pandemic years was inadequate to reverse the long-term decline of agricultural growth beginning from the early-2010s.

The Budget Estimates for 2024-25 also do not inspire confidence. There is no plan in the Budget to substantively reverse the decline of growth in agriculture – either through welfare measures or through investment measures.

In 2024-25, the most important heads and flagship schemes in agriculture and allied sectors are

to face a spending cut. Fertilizer subsidies are to fall from ₹1.9 lakh crore in 2023-24 to ₹1.6 lakh crore in 2024-25. Food subsidies are to fall from ₹2.1 lakh crore in 2023-24 to ₹2 lakh crore in 2024-25. The allocation for the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana is to decline from ₹17,000 crore in 2023-24 to ₹12,000 crore in 2024-25. If ₹90,000 crore was the spending under MGNREGS in 2022-23, the allocation for 2024-25 is only ₹86,000 crore. The transfers under the PM-Kisan scheme remain the same as during its inception in 2019, implying a fall in the real value of cash transfers.

There was much mention in the Budget speech on blue revolution in the fisheries sector, but the budgeted allocation for the sector has been increased by only ₹134 crore. The budgeted allocation for the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying has increased only by ₹193 crore between 2023-24 and 2024-25.

The revival of agricultural growth from its long-term slump requires imaginative policy shifts and decisive fiscal measures. But the interim Budget provides no indications of such a plan or even intent.

# The problem of moving attention away from services

In the absence of gainful employment opportunities, and the looming job crisis, the continued neglect of the social sector exacerbates the perpetuation of inequalities

**I**n her speech, the Finance Minister focused on the government's broad achievements over the last 10 years and also gave some indications for what might be in store in the coming years, in terms of new expenditures (assuming that the NDA comes back to power). The Budget, a vote on account, did not include major announcements on the revenue or expenditure accounts. Unlike the interim Budget presented by this government before the 2019 general elections, where the PM-KISAN scheme was announced with retrospective effect, there were no grandiose announcements this time. Therefore, although the Budget does not say much, it reiterates this government's view that the economy is on the path to recovery and gives the impression that everything is in an upswing, with much of the progress being a direct result of the policies of the last 10 years.

**Poverty and income**  
The Finance Minister said that 25

crore people have been brought out of multidimensional poverty (MPI) in the last 10 years. The limitations of the MPI in estimating changes in poverty have been discussed extensively. For instance, the MPI does not tell us about the trends in income poverty, a useful indicator of economic well-being. While this used to be captured by the consumption expenditure survey of the National Sample Survey, no data on this are available for the period after 2011-12. The further claim that the "average real income of the people has increased by 50%" is also misleading. Average incomes are just that – averages – and do not tell us much about how the lives of the poor changed. To know about the incomes of the majority of the people, what really matters is the distribution of the national income.

According to the last Economic Survey, the real per capita income in 2003-04 was ₹42,995 and increased to ₹68,572 in 2013-14. The advanced estimates for 2023-24 place per capita income in 2011-12



MGNREGS workers in Purulia.  
DEBASISH BHADURI

prices at ₹1,04,550. So, in both periods, the per capita increased by a similar factor of 1.5 (1.59 and 1.52). On the other hand, if we look at real wages during this same period, there has been a stagnation. As reported in a recent report by an international periodical, "In 2004-05 the average rural worker earned an adjusted \$3 per day. That jumped to \$4.80 by the time Mr. Modi took over and has remained flat ever since". There is other evidence to

show that the incomes of the poor are depressed. This is also reflected in the poor growth in private final consumption expenditure. Structural change in employment is seeing a reversal with the share of agriculture in total employment going up, which is an indication that there are not enough jobs available outside of agriculture. Even the increase in women's labour force participation rates in the last 4-5 years seems to be a sign of distress, as most women are in unpaid family labour and not in gainful employment. The Budget speech, however, was fairly upbeat; it stated, "People are living better and earning better, with even greater aspirations for the future".

The demand for jobs under MGNREGS is still high despite the low wages being given and the various bottlenecks in accessing the Scheme. This is reflected in the fact that as per the Revised Estimate (RE) for 2023-24, the outlay for MGNREGS is ₹86,000 crore compared to the Budget Estimate

of ₹60,000 crore, which is also the budgeted allocation for FY2025. A number of estimates show that to meet the full demand and increase wages to at least minimum wage levels, much more would be needed.

#### Allocations for social sector

The Budget allocations for most social sector schemes and departments remain more or less the same as last year. The allocations for school and higher education as well as the health and family welfare departments show some nominal increases compared to last year's BE, about 6-8%. Although upgrading of Anganwadi centres was mentioned in the speech, the budget for Saksham Anganwadi at ₹21,200 crore is slightly lower than the RE of ₹21,523 crore for 2023-24. The budget for PM-POSHAN (school mid-day meals) is ₹11,600 crore compared to the RE of ₹12,800 crore for 2023-24. It must be remembered that in real terms, most of these schemes have seen reductions of 25-30%

over the last 10 years. The allocation for the National Social Assistance Programme, which includes old age, widow and disability pensions, in nominal terms, was ₹10,618 crore in 2014-15 and is now only ₹9,652 crore.

This approach of moving attention away from provision of services has also meant neglect of basic education, health, and nutrition services with all focus being diverted to certain high-profile visible schemes such as the Awas Yojana or sanitation. While these are important assets for the poor, it doesn't take away from the fact that health, education, and social security budgets remain woefully inadequate even as these services suffer from poor infrastructure, huge vacancies, and inadequate resources. In the absence of gainful employment opportunities, and the looming job crisis, the continued neglect of the social sector exacerbates the perpetuation of inequalities across generations. A truly aspirational India cannot shy away from this.



**Dipa Sinha**  
teaches Economics at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi

**From Page One****Puffed-up, poll-ready**

Another plausible poll signal was the constitution of a high-powered panel to consider the challenges arising from "fast population growth and demographic changes", although she parried queries on the intent of this move in her post-Budget press conference.

Terming 'social justice' an effective and necessary governance paradigm, the Minister argued that what was mostly a political slogan in the past has been achieved by this government, through a "saturation approach of covering all eligible people" to address systemic inequalities in society. "This is secularism in action, reduces corruption, and prevents nepotism," she asserted, adding that the four major castes identified by the PM - the poor, women, youth, and farmers - would receive primacy in policy.

There were no philosophers or poets quoted in her speech, which was about 25% shorter than the President's Wednesday address that had also embellished the government's achievements. Instead, Ms. Sitharaman invoked the PM's speeches and beliefs about half a dozen times before she wrapped up.

While some hopes - for measures to spur consumption and rural demand against the backdrop of a poor monsoon, and to prod private investments - were dashed, Ms. Sitharaman's fiscal discipline surprised most economists, who had expected this year's fiscal deficit target (5.9% of GDP) to be breached. The FM not only revised the deficit estimate for this year to 5.8% of GDP, but also committed to hit the 5.1% mark in 2024-25, with a firm eye on bringing the fiscal gap to or below 4.5% of GDP in 2025-26.

Capital expenditure plans for the coming year got a modest but assured 11.1% increase, rising to an ostensibly auspicious number of ₹11,111 crore, and interest-free capex loans to States were raised to ₹1.3 lakh crore. Yet, gross and net borrowings planned in 2024-25 have been lowered from this year's levels to ₹14.13 lakh crore and ₹11.75 lakh crore, respectively.

"Now that the private investments are happening at scale, the lower borrowings by the Central government will facilitate larger availability of credit for the private sector," the FM hoped, marking a prudent return to the tradition of keeping interim Budgets low on profligacy and high on intent.

**Panel to study 'fast population growth'**

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 for 2019 to 2021, released in May 2022, stated that the TFR declined from 2.2 to 2 at the national level, in comparison to the last such survey held in 2015 and 2016. NFHS-5 said that there were only five outlier States which had a TFR above the replacement level of 2.1 - Bihar (2.98), Meghalaya (2.91), Uttar Pradesh (2.35), Jharkhand (2.26), and Manipur (2.17).

Sabu Mathew George, a girl child rights activist, says the NFHS data do not give a complete picture as its sample size is too low and the survey is spread over many years. "SRS, which is released every year, gives us a better statistical picture than NFHS. Notably, the SRS for the year 2020 was published in 2022," Mr. George said.

At the annual Director-General of Police conference in 2021, police officers from Uttar Pradesh and Assam submitted a research paper flagging concerns about demographic changes in districts along the International Border with Nepal and Bangladesh. They highlighted an increase in the number of mosques and seminaries, as well as a high decadal growth in population in these areas.

**Inclusive, innovative, sign of continuity: PM**

"We set a big goal, achieve it, and then set an even better goal for ourselves," he said, referring to the target to build two crore more houses for the poor under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, and create three crore 'Lakshpati Didis' as part of women's empowerment. He added that keeping the fiscal deficit under control at a time when the total expenditure had seen a historic rise to ₹11,111 crore in this Budget was "in the parlance of economists, hitting a sweet spot".

"It will create millions of new employment opportunities for the youth along with the creation of modern infrastructure of the 21st century," Mr. Modi said. He made a special mention of the tax remission scheme announced in Thursday's Budget speech that is expected to provide relief for one crore tax payers caught up in disputes with tax authorities over petty amounts.

**Biased in favour of rich: Chidambaram**

Addressing a press conference at party headquarters, Mr. Chidambaram slammed the Budget's provisions for key sectors, including the youth, women, and farmers, as well as the policy of "minimum government and maximum governance".

While Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had talked about youth, she did not acknowledge the "rampant" unemployment, said the Congress leader, adding that she had not mentioned that over 30,000 farmers and agricultural labourers had died by suicide between 2020 and 2022, nor the low participation of women in the labour force.

# Budget reveals BJP's confidence in comeback

The underlying message is that Modi government will return to power and present a full Budget in July, on the strength of its record, and last-minute sops are not required to go to the polls

**NEWS ANALYSIS**

**Nistula Hebbar**  
NEW DELHI

**F**inance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget speech on Thursday followed the norm of not announcing any new tax proposals as the country gets ready for the Lok Sabha election in a couple of months, but her political messaging was clear - that the Modi government will return to power to present a full Budget in July, on the strength of its record, and that it did not need announcements of last-minute sops to go to the polls. "Confidence over continuity," as Prime Minister Narendra Modi put it in his post-Budget remarks.

"In the full Budget in July, Mr. Speaker, our government will present a detailed road map for the pursuit of 'Viksit Bharat,'" she said to thumping of desks by the Treasury benches. Later, Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav tweeted this portion of Ms. Sitharaman's speech with the caption "In July 2024....", to reiterate the point.

Almost two-thirds of Ms. Sitharaman's speech was based on "achievements"



**Great hopes:** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman holding a folder-case containing the Budget papers. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

of the government in its 10-year tenure.

One of the most politically interesting announcements was on the programme to provide rooftop solar power generation to one crore households, as part of the Pradhan Mantri Surjodaya Yojana. It has come as a response to guarantees of free power by different political parties in different States, including in Delhi and Punjab by the Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress in others.

Mr. Modi has spoken out against the *revaldi*, or freebie, culture, and therefore, this announcement of making provisions for free power, not by declaring it

as free but under a subsidy model for the initial installation of solar panels and some outlay by the beneficiary themselves, is a political-economy response to what is now a political and fiscal challenge in many States in India. "Imagine you have given free power without driving the State exchequer and power distribution companies bankrupt," said a source in the government.

There was also an acknowledgement that subsidised housing under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana had continuing demand as more and more families have come within its ambit, and therefore, an

announcement that two crore more houses will be made was done.

An announcement with political ramifications was of setting up a committee to look at the whole issue of population and changes in demography. "Since it was announced by the Finance Minister, you can be sure that this committee will be looking at the question of population not just as a demographic issue but also economic, which will inform policies after that. Till now, the question of growing population or certain population trends was only a demographic question," said a source in the government.

The Budget also saw the announcement that a White Paper to look at where the economy was in 2014, and where we are now, only for the purpose of drawing lessons from the mismanagement of those years. The government will lay a White Paper on table of the House, Ms. Sitharaman said.

"The White Paper is basically going to look at the change in the way the economy was handled under Prime Minister Modi, of growth generated by expenditure," said a source.

# Space gets nominal hike, likely boost for spaceflight start-ups

**Vasudevan Mukunth**  
CHENNAI

tellite propulsion systems, new launch vehicles, and technology transfer to the industry.

In her Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore, with five-decade interest-free loans, to boost private sector investment in research and development. While the details are not clear, India's nascent private spaceflight sector and its 200 or so start-ups are expected to benefit from this infusion. The revenue expenditure of IN-SPACE, the nodal agency setup by the Union Cabinet in 2020 to oversee the activities of this sector, also increased 24%. Similarly, revenue for space technologies - which includes work on Chandrayaan-3 mission. The ISRO also launched the Aditya-L1 mission to study the sun and the XPOSat - short for 'X-ray Polarimetry Satellite' - mission to track and study neutron stars and black holes from space. India also signed the Artemis Accords to participate in the U.S. multilateral programme to return humans to the moon by 2025.

The 8% increase in the allocation for space technologies is, however, out of keeping with the work planned on Chandrayaan-4 and the Lunar Polar Exploration mission, a partially reusable launch vehicle, and others. Then again, the Department of Space underutilised its allocation for space technologies in 2023-24 by more than ₹1,500 crore. Finally, expenditure for INSAT satellite systems was halved from ₹531 crore in 2023-24 to ₹276 crore in 2024-25.

# Budget for Census slashed, population count may not take place in first quarter

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has been allocated ₹2.02-lakh crore in the interim Budget, a marginal increase of 1.4% over the Revised Estimates for the 2023-24 fiscal year.

The Budget for Census Survey and Statistics has been slashed to ₹1,277.8 crore from ₹1,546.65 crore allocated in 2023-24, a further indication that the Census exercise that was to be initially completed in 2021 is not planned in the first quarter of the fiscal.

The allocation for the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network Systems (CCTNS), which will enable the implementation of the three criminal laws, has been increased. The allocation for the CCTNS has



been increased to ₹520 crore in the interim Budget from ₹221 crore in 2023-24. The allocation for the I4C has been increased to ₹150 crore from ₹94 crore.

A sum of ₹1.32 lakh crore was given to the police, which includes the Central Armed Police Forces. The Union Territory of J&K has been allocated ₹37,277.74 crore.

Ladakh got ₹5,958 crore, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands ₹5,866.37 crore, Chandigarh ₹5,862.62 crore, Puducherry ₹3,269 crore, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu ₹2,648.97 crore,

Lakshadweep ₹1,490.1 crore and Delhi ₹1,168.01 crore. A sum of ₹1,248.91 crore was given to the Cabinet under which the expenditure on the Council of Ministers, Cabinet Secretariat, Prime Minister's Office come.

While the Intelligence Bureau has been allocated ₹3,195.09 crore (₹3,268.94 crore in 2023-24), the Delhi Police was given ₹11,177.50 crore (₹11,940.33 crore), and the Special Protection Group (SPG) ₹506.32 crore (₹446.83 crore).

The Budget allocated ₹3,199.62 crore for security-related expenditure and Special Infrastructure Scheme for Left-wing extremism-hit areas, ₹335 crore for Border Area Development Programme, ₹214.44 crore for safe city projects, and ₹330 crore for the Land Port Authority.

The allocation for the

# India increasing allocation for Maldives, ₹400 crore revised to ₹770.9 crore

**Kallop Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

India's neighbourhood received a substantial share of the annual allocation for the Ministry of External Affairs in the interim Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday. Out of all the countries in the neighbourhood, Bhutan has received ₹2,398.97 crore as allocation for the current fiscal year, while Nepal has come second with ₹650 crore for various development projects currently under way in the Himalayan country.

For 2024-25, Nepal has received an allocation of ₹700 crore.

The Maldives, which has been in the news recently because of anti-India protests and remarks from its top leadership, has seen a substantial bump in allocation. The allocation for the



**Foreign aid:** For current fiscal, Bhutan leads with more than ₹2,398 crore in allocation.

Maldives for 2023-24 was ₹400 crore which went up to ₹770.9 crore this time. This indicates that India is increasing investments in the archipelago nation.

Indian projects in Bangladesh under current fiscal will receive ₹130 crore. A sum of ₹220 crore has been allocated for Afghanistan which is governed by the Taliban that is yet to find official recognition from India.

Sri Lanka will receive ₹60 crore of the allocation for the current fiscal. Conflict-struck Myanmar has received ₹370 crore in the current fiscal.

**Island nations**  
Among the island nations of the Indian Ocean, the Seychelles and Mauritius have received ₹9.91 crore and ₹370 crore, respectively, in the current fiscal. The port of Chabahar in Iran will receive ₹100 crore as funding. A sum of ₹3,849 crore has been allocated for Lines of Credit under the Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme.

Reflecting India's growing engagement with African nations, the Budget has allocated ₹200 crore for the African development projects; the figure is as per revised estimate for current fiscal.

# Allocations for Social Justice and Tribal Affairs Ministries see a marginal increase

**Abhinav Lakshman**  
NEW DELHI

The interim Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for the financial year 2024-25 on Thursday left the allocations for the Social Justice and Tribal Affairs Ministries largely unchanged with marginal increases seen in the estimated allocations for both Ministries compared with the 2023-24 Budget Estimates.

While ₹4,225 crore has been set aside for the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, ₹13,000 crore has been allocated for the Tribal Affairs Minis-



**Fresh figures:** The interim Budget saw an allocation of ₹13,000 crore for Tribal Affairs Ministry for the next fiscal year. FILE PHOTO

try and Social Justice Ministry, respectively, from the allocations set aside in the Budget Estimates.

The Social Justice Ministry was able to spend only small percentages of the

amounts set aside for key schemes, such as the SEED scheme for Denotified, and the NAMASTE scheme, as per the Revised Estimates. Similarly, the Tribal Affairs Ministry fell short in spending on its flagship project of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) and on transfers to States under the PM Adarsh Gram Yojana.

Despite this, the government has prioritised spending on these schemes for the next financial year. For instance, the Social Justice Department has increased the allocation under the NAMASTE scheme to ₹116.94 crore.

As for the Tribal Affairs Ministry on its flagship EMRS project, the Ministry has set aside ₹6,399 crore to be spent over the next fiscal.

The PM-JANMAN programme targeted towards the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups saw an allocation of ₹240 crore under the transfers to States head, with a ₹25 crore allocation for the Central sector component of it under the Tribal Affairs Ministry.

Apart from this, ₹1,600 crore has been set aside to be disbursed as grants under Article 275(I) of the Constitution for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes. The Revised Budget for the Ministry in 2023-24 was ₹2,608.93 crore. The allocation for total education empowerment of minorities was slightly decreased.

# Allocation for Minority Ministry remains same

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Budget Estimate for the Union Minority Ministry remains almost unchanged with marginal increase for a couple of schemes and programmes. The Budget allocation for the Ministry has been increased from ₹3,097.6 crore in the financial year 2023-24 to ₹3,183.24 crore for financial year 2024-25.

The Revised Budget for the Ministry in 2023-24 was ₹2,608.93 crore. The allocation for total education empowerment of minorities was slightly decreased.

# Govt. to consolidate the demand of three Services in defence allocation

Total allocation for Defence Ministry stands at ₹6.2 lakh crore for 2024-25, which is 13.04% of the total Union Budget; it is 4.72% higher than the Budget Estimates and marginally lower by 0.38% from the Revised Estimates for 2023-24

**Dinakar Peri**  
NEW DELHI

In a significant measure to bring jointness in the procurements of the armed forces, the government has decided to consolidate the demand of the three Services in the capital head of the defence budget based on similar items of expenditure such as land, aircraft and aircraft engines, heavy and medium vehicles and others.

In the interim Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, there was no significant change in the allocation for defence with the total allocation for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) standing at ₹6.2 lakh crore for 2024-25. "This will bring flexibility in financial management by enabling the MoD to reappropriate the fund among the three Services keeping in view the inter-



**Budget briefing:** Nirmala Sitharaman presents the interim Budget, 2024 at the Lok Sabha in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

services priority," the Ministry said in a statement.

This is a measure towards bringing in jointness in procurements among the three Services and addresses the shortfall often faced between committed liabilities, milestone payments to be made for past deals, versus the allocation for each Service which was faced by the Navy and Air Force in the past. For major capital procurements, the authority to prioritise is the Chief of Defence Staff and once cleared is sent to the Defence Acquisition

new procurements stood at ₹1.72 lakh crore, 5.78% higher than the BE of last year.

Budget data shows that from BE to RE of 2023-24, the Defence Ministry returned ₹5,371.8 crore from the capital component while it received an additional ₹28,548.61 crore under revenue expenditure, other than salary, meant for sustenance and operational commitment.

For FY 2024-25, the revenue allocation, minus pay and allowances, is ₹92,088 crore which the Ministry said is aimed at providing the best maintenance facilities and support system to all platforms, including aircraft and ships. It also facilitates the procuring of ammunition, mobility of resources, movement of personnel, catering to day-to-day expenditure of armed forces in strengthening the deployment in forward areas

and keeping the forces always ready to take care of any eventuality, it stated.

On the capital allocation, the Ministry said that this was in line with the Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan of the three Services aimed to fill the critical capability gaps through modernisation of the armed forces by "maturing some big ticket acquisitions in FY 2024-25."

Planned modernisation of the existing Su-30 fleet along with procurement of 12 more aircraft, acquisition of new engines for MiG-29 jets, induction of C-295 transport aircraft and acquisition of missile systems will be funded out of the budget being allocated.

"The financial provision made during the budget this year, will also boost socio-economic development in that region along with promoting tourism," the Ministry stated.

# Biden administration notifies U.S. Congress of 31 MQ-9B UAV sale to India

**Dinakar Peri**  
NEW DELHI

**The deliveries will begin three years from the signing of the contract. Defence officials stated**

release. Detailing the process in response to a query, a U.S. Embassy Spokesperson said, "Congress now has 30 days to review the proposed sale. Upon conclusion of their review, India and the U.S. may conclude the sale with a Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LoA)."

As the UAVs would be armed, the deal also includes 170 AGM-114R Hellfire missiles; 16 M36E9 Hellfire captive air-training missiles; 310 GBU-39/B laser Small Diameter Bombs (SDB); and 08 GBU-39/B LSDB guided test vehicles with live fuses among others.

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) had accorded the Acceptance of Ne-

cessity (AoN) for the procurement of 31 MQ-9B UAVs from General Atomics, 15 Sea Guardians for the Indian Navy, and 16 Sky Guardians – eight each for the Indian Army and Air Force, on June 15, 2023 and the MoD had stated that the AoN noted the estimated cost of \$3,072 million provided by the U.S. government. Following this, just ahead of the talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the G-20 summit, MoD issued the Letter of Request to the U.S. Government.

**A formality**  
Defence officials had stated earlier that the deal could be concluded this year and deliveries begin three years from the signing of the contract. Earlier, officials on both sides had expressed confidence that the Congressional approval is a formality.

**Bajrang Dal man held for cow slaughter, frame-up**

**Ishita Mishra**  
NEW DELHI

A Bajrang Dal leader from Moradabad's Kanth area was arrested on January 31, along with three of his aides, for allegedly slaughtering a cow and hatching a plot to implicate a Muslim man. Moradabad Senior Superintendent of Police Hemraj Meena told *The Hindu* that the police had arrested Monu Bishnoi, Raman Chaudhary, Rajiv Chaudhary, and Shahabuddin.

On January 16, the head of a cow was found on Kanwar Path.

"On January 29, the police received information of cow slaughtering happening in the forest area of Chetampur village," Mr. Meena said. A pair of track pants with the phone number of one Mehmood and his photo were recovered.

On interrogation, he said he had a feud with Shahabuddin. The police recovered the call details and phone locations of Mr. Shahabuddin, who later revealed he had sought the Bajrang Dal leader's help to frame Mr. Mehmood.

## Hindu priest offers prayers at cellar of Gyanvapi mosque



A priest performing prayers in the basement of the Gyanvapi mosque following a court order. PTI

**Ishita Mishra**  
NEW DELHI

barricades placed outside the cellar and reviewed the necessary arrangements needed to be done to perform worship at the spot.

"The court order has been complied with," Mr. Rajalingam told *The Hindu*.

The judgment came while hearing the application filed by one Shaileendra Kumar Pathak, priest of Acharya Ved Vyas Peeth temple, in September 2023, which had sought worship of visible and invisible deities in the basement of the mosque.

Pictures from inside the cellar showed giant stones placed evenly to make a platform over which a safron cloth was placed. The entry of devotees inside the cellar is not allowed.

## Governor invites Champai to form govt.; Hemant in judicial custody

**The Hindu Bureau**  
RANCHI/NEW DELHI

Jharkhand Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan invited Champai Soren to form the government late on Thursday. Mr. Champai will take oath as the Chief Minister on Friday.

Mr. Champai was elected leader of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) Legislature Party following Hemant Soren's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate on January 31 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) after he met the Governor and submitted his resignation as Chief Minister.

Earlier in the evening, Mr. Champai, accompanied by Congress leader Alamgir Alam, Rashtriya Janata Dal MLA Satyanand Bhokta, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) MLA Vinod Singh and Congress MLA Pradeep Yadav, went to the Raj Bhavan and staked their claim to form the government.

After meeting the Governor, Mr. Champai said, "We have staked claim to form the government. I urged the Governor to allow us to form the government.

The ED had sought 10 days' remand for the former CM. The 48-year-old executive president of the



**Leadership shift:** Champai Soren will take oath as the Chief Minister on Friday. ANI

ment. The Governor said that he will soon inform us."

While a delay on the part of Mr. Radhakrishnan in calling Mr. Champai to form the government sparked criticism from the ruling camp, the Governor gave his nod late in the day. Till 5 p.m., the MLAs were hoping that the Governor would invite them, Mr. Champai said.

Meanwhile, a special PMLA court on February 1 sent Mr. Hemant Soren to judicial custody for a day. He was taken to Hotwar Central Jail in Ranchi after the court reserved its order for Friday.

The ED had sought 10 days' remand for the former CM. The 48-year-old executive president of the

JMM will spend the night in the upper division cell of B-block in Central Jail.

Mr. Hemant Soren, meanwhile, urged the Supreme Court to hear his plea against the arrest. Appearing before a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, senior advocates Kapil Sibal and A.M. Singhvi said such arrests of sitting Chief Ministers "affect the polity of the country". Chief Justice Chandrachud agreed to consider listing the case before an appropriate Bench on February 2.

Ruling coalition MLAs had been housed at the Ranchi Circuit House since February 1 morning, waiting for the Governor's call. The JMM released a video 'roll call' on social media in

**Branding and marketing to push tourism**

**Sreeparna Chakrabarty**  
NEW DELHI

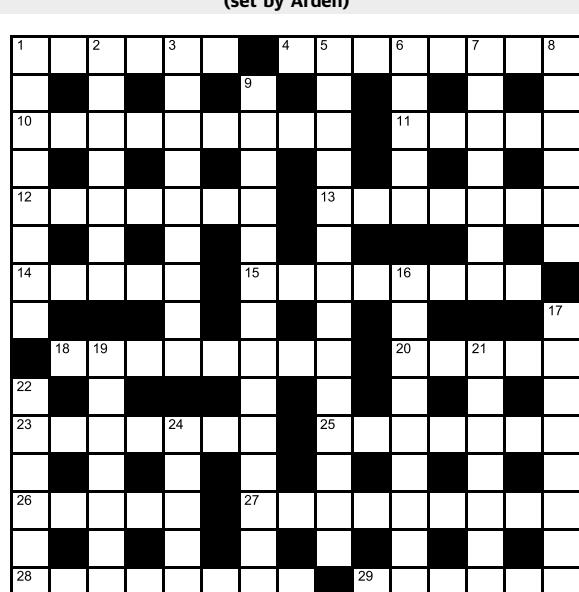
The Centre will work with the States for the comprehensive development of iconic tourist centres and their branding and marketing at a global scale in order to promote Indian tourist destinations within the country as well as abroad.

A framework for rating of the centres based on quality of facilities and services will also be established, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday. The Central government will provide long-term interest-free loans to States for financing such development on a matching basis.

Ms. Sitharaman also announced that in order to address the emerging fervour for domestic tourism, special projects would be taken up for port connectivity and tourism infrastructure. "...amenities will be taken up on our islands, including Lakshadweep.

The total allocation of the Union Tourism Ministry has increased marginally to ₹2,449 crore in 2024-25.

## TH CROSSWORD + 14087



- To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>
- SCAN TO PLAY**
- Crossword Clues:**
- 1 Across: United States Democrat briefly had become a recluse (6)
  - 4 Male singer, to survive eats fixed ration (8)
  - 10 Bar exit on both sides, it means drunk can enter (9)
  - 11 Filthy lucre makes one heartless (5)
  - 12 Agreement with leading college on line... (7)
  - 13 ...seconds later he ran out of control (7)
  - 14 Reversing a game, next some of them will give you the runs (5)
  - 15 "with steam it's working!" - give a false account... (8)
  - 18 ...later in some part of the world there is lack of energy (8)
  - 20 Dance to odd, not even beat (5)
  - 23 While in Bangalore, leisurely she used to sing (7)
  - 25 During war Damascus evacuated, facing the centre (7)
  - 26 Fill contents in, but it has to be erected (5)
  - 27 Necessarily want completely at the back (9)
  - 28 Greek Aristocrat getting refuge finally in French city (8)
  - 29 In test, a tussle to get a rank (6)
  - Down:**
  - 1 Draws small boats (8)
  - 2 Dog breed essentially to maintain peace (7)
  - 3 Nothing comes in - in way of a healer (9)
  - 5 "Against his order", it means these drugs will fight allergies (14)
  - 6 Pay for keeping dog behind home (5)
  - 7 "Not possible to stop the whimper" - that's rich! (7)
  - 8 Sign up for silent shot (6)
  - 9 Misplaced idealism, no one accepts new line, perhaps (3-11)
  - 16 Became very angry to see criminal art thief drinking whisky (5,1,3)
  - 17 It's a kind of shirt, in case OK, will shine in the dark (4,4)
  - 19 Starters salami and Ravioli, later eat fish (7)
  - 21 Arm twisting and conspiracy, he will spoil everything (7)
  - 22 Go bald, perhaps an ugly woman (3,3)
  - 24 Abandon final project, construction in bits and pieces all around (3,2)

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle									Solution to yesterday's Sudoku								
C	A	M	T	B	C	T	C		7	5	1	8	2	4	3	6	9
A	U	S	T	E	R	E	L		8	9	4	1	3	6	5	7	2
S	S	N	R	O	I	D	P		3	6	2	9	5	7	8	1	4
D	R	A	C	H	M	A	B		4	2	3	6	9	5	7	8	1
R	A	L	E	T	E	R	E		5	1	8	7	4	3	2	9	6
A	L	I	G	H	A	D	U		6	7	9	2	8	1	4	3	5
L	I	N	T	E	N	A	T		1	3	6	4	7	2	9	5	8
I	N	T	E	N	A	D	U		2	8	7	5	6	9	1	4	3
N	T	E	N	A	D	U	T		3	9	4	5	3	1	2	8	6
T	E	N	A	D	U	T	E		4	5	3	1	2	8	6	7	9
E	N	A	D	U	T	E	N		5	6	7	9	4	3	2	8	1
N	A	D	U	T	E	N	A		6	7	9	2	8	1	4	3	5
A	D	U	T	E	N	A	D		7	8	1	4	3	5	6	9	2
D	U	T	E	N	A	D	U	</									

**ISLAMABAD**

Pakistan Taliban are backed by al-Qaeda, Afghan regime, says UN



The banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terror group has been receiving support from al-Qaeda and other militant factions for executing attacks in Pakistan in addition to support from the Afghan Taliban. This was disclosed in a report submitted to the UNSC Committee by ISIL and al-Qaeda/Taliban Monitoring Team. PTI

**WASHINGTON**

Biden imposes sanctions over 'intolerable' Israeli settler violence



The U.S. on Thursday imposed sanctions on a handful of Jewish settlers as President Joe Biden said the level of violence against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank had reached intolerable levels. The sanctions marked a rare move by the United States against Israelis as war rages with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. AFP

**ISLAMABAD**

Pakistan police raid central secretariat of Imran Khan's party



The police and security officials raided and took control of Imran Khan-led PTI's central secretariat here and stopped members from entering the premises, Dawn News said on Thursday. The raid happened a day after Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi were sentenced to 14 years of rigorous imprisonment each in a corruption case. PTI

**GENEVA**

New cancer cases to soar 77% from 2022 to 2050, says WHO



New cancer cases will rise to more than 35 million in 2050 — 77% higher than the figure in 2022, the World Health Organization's cancer agency warned on Thursday. The WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) cited tobacco, alcohol, obesity and air pollution as key factors in the estimated rise. AFP

## EU agrees on new €50 billion relief package for Ukraine

Hungary, which had opposed the move for weeks, lifted its veto in a quick manner; EU leaders had agreed in December that the \$54-billion package would run from 2024 through 2027

**Associated Press**

BRUSSELS



**Team effort:** Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel at a press conference at the EU summit in Brussels on Thursday. REUTERS

The leaders of the 27 European Union countries sealed a deal on Thursday to provide Ukraine with a new €50 billion (\$54 billion) support package for its war-ravaged economy despite weeks of threats from Hungary to veto the move.

European Council President Charles Michel announced the agreement that was reached in the first hour of a summit he was chairing in Brussels.

"We have a deal," Mr. Michel said in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter. He said the agreement "locks in steadfast, long-term, predictable funding for Ukraine," and demonstrated that the "EU is taking leadership and responsibility in support for Ukraine; we know what is at stake."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy welcomed it as a "very important" decision.

That Hungary lifted its

veto, and so quickly, came as a surprise. On the eve of the summit, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban posted on X: "We will stand up for the voice of the people! Even if the bureaucrats in Brussels black-mail us."

Mr. Orban raised staunch objections to the financial aid package in December and blocked its adoption, and he had threatened to do the same in recent days. The populist leader's government

has been in a dispute with the EU's executive commission over Hungary's alleged democratic backsliding and had some of its own funding withheld as a result.

In December, the 26 other leaders agreed the \$4-billion package would run from 2024 through 2027. They also agreed to make Ukraine a candidate for EU membership, which Mr. Orban reluctantly accepted.

But the financial pack-

age was part of a review of the EU's continuing seven-year Budget, which requires unanimous approval.

**Review in two years**

An EU official, who asked not to be named because the summit was ongoing, said the leaders agreed that the bloc's executive branch, the European Commission, would propose a review of the Budget in two years, if deemed necessary. Such a review would not include an opportunity for a future veto, the official added.

Almost two years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the war has ground to a halt, and Ukraine's economy desperately needs propping up. But political infighting in the EU and in the U.S. has held up a long-term source of funding.

"Continued EU financial support for Ukraine will strengthen long-term economic and financial stability," Mr. Zelenskyy wrote on Thursday on X.

India on Thursday expressed "deep concern" over Israel's allegations that dozens of employees of the UN-led organisation for Palestinians – UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) – were involved or linked to Hamas and other groups involved in the October 7 attacks on Israel. Israel's allegations, which were made last Friday, have led to a pause in funding for the agency that is already grappling with Israel's bombing of Gaza, as well as the deaths of at least 101 of its own staffers in the first two months of the bombardment.

## India 'concerned' over allegations of UNRWA staff's Hamas attack links

**Suhasini Haidar**

NEW DELHI



**Mercy plea:** Palestinian women protest against the suspension of UNRWA funding in Beirut on Thursday. REUTERS

increased in 2020. Most recently, India released a tranche of \$2.5 million to the agency in December 2023.

**India-Israel talks**

Apart from the U.S., countries that announced a pause in UNRWA funding this week included Canada, Australia, Britain, Germany, France, Japan, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, Estonia, Austria and Romania. However, Belgium, Ireland, Norway, Denmark, and Spain are among those who have not so far done so. India is a regular donor, with an annual pledge of \$5 million, which was increased in 2020. Most recently, India released a tranche of \$2.5 million to the agency in December 2023.

The statement by the

Ministry of External Affairs followed days after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar spoke to Foreign Minister Israel Katz and discussed a number of issues pertaining to the Israel-Hamas conflict. "Discussed the ongoing situation in West Asia. Spoke about India's views, assessments and interests in that regard. Agreed to stay in touch," Mr. Jaishankar had posted on social media after the conversation on Monday.

The MEA and the Israeli Embassy in Delhi did not respond to a question about whether the two Ministers had also discussed the Israeli allegations

against UNRWA.

"India is an important development partner of Palestine. We have been extending assistance to them both bilaterally and through multilateral institutions. But at the same time, we have a policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism," Mr. Jaiswal said, in response to a question from *The Hindu* on where India stands on the issue. Mr. Jaiswal also said India has "taken note" of last week's verdict of the International Court of Justice on provisional measures to prevent Genocide by Israel in Gaza, where the Court, that includes an Indian Judge, criticised Israel's actions and statements by its leaders, but didn't call for an immediate ceasefire.

The accusations, contained in a six-page "dossier" released to many countries and international news organisations prepared by Israeli security agencies, alleged that 190 UNRWA employees had helped Hamas and other militant organisations, although it only identified 11 of the employees with names and photographs, according to reports.

## Journalists, lawyers, activists spied using Pegasus in Jordan

**Agence France-Presse**

Israeli-made Pegasus spyware was used in Jordan to hack the cellphones of at least 30 people, including journalists, lawyers, human rights and political activists, the digital rights group Access Now said on Thursday.

**Government's role**

The hacking with the spyware made by Israel's NSO Group occurred from early 2020 until last November,

Access Now said in its report. It did not accuse Jordan's government of the hacking.

One of the targets was Human Rights Watch's deputy director for the region, Adam Cooley, who said it was difficult to imagine who other than Jordan's government would be interested in hacking those who were targeted.

"We believe that the true number of victims is likely much higher," Access Now said.

## U.K. judge throws out Trump's charges against 'Russia file'

**Agence France-Presse**

LONDON

A U.K. judge on Thursday dismissed a claim by Donald Trump against a former spy who compiled a salacious dossier containing allegations of the former U.S. President's links to Russia.

Mr. Trump took legal action against Christopher Steele's company Orbis Business Intelligence, but High Court judge Karen Stenn said there were "no compelling reasons" to allow the claim to proceed to trial.

Similarly, she threw out Mr. Trump's claim for compensation, stating that he had "chosen to allow many years to elapse – without any attempt to vindicate his reputation" in the U.K. courts since the dossier came out.

**TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS : TIRUPATI**  
Office of the Chief Engineer Tender Notice  
Adv.No.93/23/CE/TTD/2023-24 & NIT No.381/SE-II/TTD/2023-24 Dt:01-02-2024  
**Name of works:1)** Facility Management Services for housekeeping, sanitation and maintenance of PAC-I, PAC-II, Sudarshan Choultry, Govardhan Choultry & Kamaraj Choultry at Tirumala for the years 2024-27 (3 years), Open Tender Type, Time for completion 36 months.  
NOTE: For full details log on to the website <https://www.tirumala.org/>  
Rec.No.PRA/13963/Adv.No.360/PRO/2024, Dated:01-02-2024

**KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice**  
Tender No : 213/2023-24/PHC/KNR(Re-tender), KIIFB-WSS to Mattannur and Irity Municipalities- Phase II- Package II-Distribution system - Irity municipality - Providing new distribution system in Irity Municipality and providing FHTCS- Pipeline Work, EMD : Rs. 5,00,000/-, Tender fee : Rs. 19,518/-, Last Date for submitting Tender : 15-02-2024 03:00pm, Phone : 04972705902  
Website : [www.kwa.kerala.gov.in](http://www.kwa.kerala.gov.in), [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in) Superintending Engineer, PH Circle, Kannur

**ANDHRA PRADESH POWER GENERATION CORPORATION LIMITED VIDYUTH SOUDHA :: VIJAYAWADA Tender Notice No.610001454**  
APGENCO invites Competitive Bids (in two parts) on APGENCO e-procurement platform from eligible Bidders for "Lifting of washed coal form M/s. MCL IB valley washery and transportation of washed coal from washery to nearest railway siding by road mode, stacking and loading of washed coal into railway wagons from siding and delivery to APGENCO Thermal Power Stations". Schedule available date and time: From 15.00 Hrs on 31.01.2024. Bid submission closing date and time: 15.00 Hrs on 12.02.2024. For details, visit: [www.apgenco.gov.in](http://www.apgenco.gov.in) or <https://etender.apgenco.gov.in> DIFR 2657PP/CL, Dt: 01-02-2024

**TIRUNELVELI CITY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION Opposite to Exhibition Ground S.N.High Road, Tirunelveli - 627 001, Tamil Nadu.**  
Tender Notice No.52/2023-24  
Sealed Tenders are invited from the eligible bidders for the below mentioned work taken under financial assistance from German Development Bank (KfW) assisted Sustainable Municipal Infrastructure Financing in Tamil Nadu Phase - III. Single Stage two envelope e-bidding procedure is to be followed. A pre bid meeting will be held on 01.03.2024 at 11.00 am at main office meeting hall in Tirunelveli Corporation. To obtain the bidding documents from 12.02.2024 10.00 am to 28.03.2024 3.00 pm visit website [www.tntenders.gov.in](http://www.tntenders.gov.in) In the last date for downloading the tender document and the last date for uploading / submission of filled up tender document upto 3.00 pm on 28.03.2024. The received tenders will be opened at 3.30 pm on 28.03.2024. Further to obtain further information bidders should contact : The City Engineer, Tirunelveli City Municipal Corporation (9442201304) and any information regarding prebid meeting send to [commr.tirunelveli@tn.gov.in](mailto:commr.tirunelveli@tn.gov.in)

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Value put to tender Rs. in lakhs
1	Design, Engineering, Build and Commissioning of 58.00 MLD Capacity of Sewage Treatment Plant at Ramayanpatti with Sequential Batch Reactor (SBR) Including Operation and Maintenance for Ten Years at Ramayanpatti, Tirunelveli City Municipal Corporation	9004.00

Commissioner,  
Tirunelveli City Municipal Corporation  
DIPR/ 568 /TENDER/2024

**APPEAL**  
Master Harsh Tonde, son of Prem Chand Tonde 13 years admitted in Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre is suffering from Thalassemia Major. He requires regular investigations, Immunosuppression & other Medications Post Allogenic Bone Marrow Transplant. The approximate cost of treatment will be Rs.5,00,000/-  
Please send donation however small and save the boy. Cheque/D/M/O favouring Save Poor Lives A/Hars

Tonde, Our Account Details: S/B Account No.20000913487, State Bank of India, R.A.Puram and IFSC CODE: SBIN001865. You can donate through Google pay No.9884607377, UPI Id: [savethepoorlives@ksbi](mailto:savethepoorlives@ksbi). All donations are exempted under 80G of I.T. ACT.

SAVE POOR LIVES REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST, Flat No.A1, Ceebros Garden, Ground floor, Old No.76 Kamraraj Salai, Raja Annamalaiapuram, Chennai - 600028, Contact No.044-42044165 & 044-35691848, Mobile: 9884607377 Email: [savethepoorlives@gmail.com](mailto:savethepoorlives@gmail.com) Our website: [www.savethepoorlives.com](http://www.savethepoorlives.com)

**SMART CITY THIRUVANANTHAPURAM LIMITED CIN U75302KL2017SGC05027 E-TENDER NOTICE**  
E-Tenders are invited for the following projects of Smart City Thiruvananthapuram Limited Project  

Sl. No.	Name of Project	E-Tender ID	PAC Amount	Bid Submission Last Date
1	Development of Smart Roads and Underground Drainage including Shoring of Wall Supply and Power lines in ABD area Under Smart (Corporate Roads) in Thiruvananthapuram + Pumping Station Road (ID 46)	2023_SCLT_617140_5	Rs.4,97,44,352/-	09/02/2024

(Sd/-) CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SMART CITY THIRUVANANTHAPURAM LTD.

**KENDRIYA HINDI SANSTHAN**  
(Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)  
Agra-282005  
**Admission Notice : 2024-26**  
**Only for Non-Hindi States**  
Applications are invited for Two Year courses recognized by NCETE - Hindi Shikshan Nishnat. (Equivalent to M.Ed.), Hindi Shikshan Parangat (Equivalent to B.Ed.) and Hindi Shikshan Praveen (Equivalent to D.El.Ed.). Details (Entrance Examination, Qualification, Fee etc.) are available on Sansthan website [www.hindisansthan.in](http://www.hindisansthan.in). Opening Date for filling online application is 15.02.2024 and closing date is 15.03.2024. Last Date for submission of application form hard copy to the Registrar, Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra -282005 is 31.03.2024.  
- Dr. Chandrakant Tripathi Registrar

**GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN Department of Information Technology & Communication**  
No. F13(01)/DoIT&C/2024/ML-4067 Jaipur, Date: 31.01.2024  
DoIT&C invites online bids from the eligible bidders for the following:-  

NIB No./Date/Unique Bid No.	Particulars	Last Date of Bid Submission
F13(01)/DoIT&C/2024/ML-4058 Date: 31.01.2024 (UBN No. ITC2324SSOB00045 Dt. 31.01.2024)	RFP for 'Empanelment of Event Management Agencies'	19.02.2024

Details can be seen on the websites: <http://sppp.raj.nic.in>, <http://www.rajahtan.gov.in> (Sonja Chaturvedi Additional Director)

**कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, जन स्वास्थ्य अभियानीकी दिवाग,**  
अजमेर ज़िल, लोहापुरान, टेम्पो स्टैडिंग के पास, अजमेर

दूरध्वम् : 0145-2970165, E-mail address: [seajm.phed@rajasthan.gov.in](mailto:seajm.phed@rajasthan.gov.in)

दिनांक : 18.01.2024

**निविदा संचाना संख्या 68/2023-24**

राजस्थान के गजपाटन की ओर से निम्नलिखितलाई द्वारा निविदा संचाना संख्या 68/2023-24 पंचांगीकृत संघर्षों से आसाधारित इंट्रोवर्क्सेट वेबसाइट पर 19.01.2024 से संबंधित प्रत्येक निविदा प्रत्येक संघर्ष से आसाधारित की जा सकती है। उक्त निविदा की अनुसारी द्वारा दिनांक 19.02.2024 को प्राप्त 11.30 बजे खाली जायगी।

**PERFECT RECORD**

India has won both the Tests it has played at Visakhapatnam



The India-England Test from Friday will only be the third one at Visakhapatnam. In 2016, India beat England by 246 runs through fine performances from captain Virat Kohli (167, 81) and R. Ashwin (five for 67, three for 52). In 2019, India defeated South Africa by 203 runs, thanks to twin tons from Rohit Sharma (176, 127).

**HAPPY SKIPPER**

Stokes says he has succeeded in making 'a bowler' out of Root



England skipper Ben Stokes is glad that he has succeeded in his promise to make a bowler out of Joe Root. "I did always say to Joe I thought he under-bowled himself as captain, and when he walked off with four-for I did say to him, 'see, I told ya I'd make a bowler out of ya'."

**SETTING THE TONE**

Crawley-Duckett duo vital to England's Bazball approach



Captain Ben Stokes said the opening partnership between Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett was crucial for England and its brand of cricket. "Their partnership has been incredible. They set the tone and put the new ball bowlers under pressure. They also get the scoreboard rolling at a very good rate, which is good for us."

**SCARY THOUGHT**

Pant reveals he feared leg amputation after car crash



India wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant revealed that he feared the amputation of his right leg after the horrific car crash he suffered 13 months ago. "If there was any nerve damage, there was a possibility of amputation. That is when I felt scared," said Pant. Two people pulled the cricketer out of his SUV before it went up in flames.

# Can Rohit and his men ground the high-flying Bazball?

If they do, it will be remarkable, not just because they are facing an exceptional team riding a wave of confidence, but also because they are without three of their best players — Kohli, Rahul and Jadeja; Kuldeep likely to play

**ENGLAND IN INDIA****P.K. Ajith Kumar**

VISAKHAPATNAM

As the Indian cricketers drove to the Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy Stadium for their training session, the scenery may have made them feel a sense of déjà vu — the mountain on one side, the sea on the other.

Barely a month ago, they were in another city with a similar backdrop to play a Test match. Cape Town is a bit like this beautiful city of Andhra, though its South African counterpart is admittedly more stunning with its imposing Table Mountain, pristine beaches and vast landscapes.

Both the grounds are guarded by mountains, in fact. The similarity doesn't end with geography.

The Indian team had arrived in Cape Town trailing 0-1 against South Africa. The scoreline is identical against England, but there is of course a big difference: this is a full five-Test series.

The Indians had drawn the short series in South Africa 1-1, winning the Cape Town Test inside two days on the fast, bouncy track at Newlands. They will be desperate to score a win in the second Test against the Bazballing England, which begins on Friday.

If they do, it will be a remarkable victory, not just because they are facing an exceptional team high on confidence, but also because they are without three of their best players.

The absence of Virat Kohli, K.L. Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja makes the Indian batting less formidable. Jadeja's left-arm spin, which has given India 280 wickets



**Who will it be?** In a toss up between Patidar and Sarfaraz, the former seems to have the edge. K.R. DEEPAK

from 69 Tests, could be missed too.

Making up for Jadeja's twin skills could be the biggest challenge for the team management. Kuldeep Yadav seems the most likely choice to replace bowler Jadeja, and the left-arm wrist-spinner could pose a question or two to England's aggressive batters, but he doesn't pretend to be an all-rounder.

So if India wants to retain the depth in batting, the off-spinning all-rounder Washington Sundar could be an option, though that may mean India could be playing just one seamer (Jasprit Bumrah). Like what

England did at Hyderabad, where it won after conceding a lead of 190.

There are two contenders for the batter's slot left behind by the injured Rahul — Rajat Patidar and Sarfaraz Khan; the former appears the front-runner.

India's woes are not just limited to selection. More runs are needed from Shubman Gill, who is going through a rough patch, and Shreyas Iyer. The entire batting line-up, in fact, needs to put up a much more spirited show than it did in the second innings at Hyderabad; it failed badly while chasing a target of 231.

England has no such worries. The sweep and reverse-sweep worked superbly — especially for the Player-of-the-Match Ollie Pope — in the first Test. As did its bowling, which, however, sports a different look.

The ageless Jimmy Anderson is coming in for Mark Wood, while 20-year-old off-spinner Shaib Bashir will debut, in place of the injured Jack Leach. It was a debutant, left-arm spinner Tom Hartley, that caused India most trouble in Hyderabad.

India should be hoping to bounce back, a la Newlands.

**The teams:**

**India (from):** Rohit Sharma (Capt.), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Rajat Patidar, Shreyas Iyer, K.S. Bharat, R. Ashwin, Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Jasprit Bumrah, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Sarfaraz Khan, Mukesh Kumar, Saurabh Kumar and Dhruv Jurel.

**England (playing XI):** Ben Stokes (Capt.), Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Jonny Bairstow, Ben Foakes, Rehan Ahmed, Tom Hartley, Shaib Bashir and James Anderson.

**Umpires:** Chris Gaffaney and Marais Erasmus; **TV umpire:** Paul Reiffel; **Reserve umpire:** Rohan Pandit; **Match referee:** Richie Richardson.

**Match starts at 9.30 a.m.**

**SETTING THE TONE**

Crawley-Duckett duo vital to England's Bazball approach

# India has always bounced back well, says Bharat

**P.K. Ajith Kumar**

VISAKHAPATNAM

Cricket fans are expected to turn out in large numbers for India's second Test against England, starting here on Friday. They should be hoping for more of the exciting cricket witnessed in the first Test at Hyderabad, some 600 km away.

They have another compelling reason: local lad K.S. Bharat. The wicket-keeper is all set to play his first Test on his home ground. "Playing in front of your home crowd is definitely special," he said. "But emotions aside, I am looking at this as any other Test for my country."

As you travel to the Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy Stadium, you could see posters



Bharat. K.R. DEEPAK

of Bharat on the road. "There will be good noises, bad noises, but the thing is you will have to be in the present moment," he said.

"But if you look at the bigger picture, there is a Test game to be played and my, and the team's, whole focus is definitely on that."

He said the Indian team

was looking to bounce back. "That is something we have always done well," he said.

Bharat said England played the sweep and the reserve-sweep well. "They played really good shots. Pope batted us out in the second innings. In cricket and in any sport you have to learn and move forward.

"It is not that we don't know how to sweep, reverse-sweep or pedal, but on that particular day, it depends on the situation.

"We also practised the reverse-sweep before the first Test, but playing them in the game is an individual plan. If the team demands us to play in a certain way, then we are up to it. But individually we all have separate plans and are looking to do well as batters."

# Stokes looks to make good use of Anderson's experience

**Sports Bureau**

VISAKHAPATNAM

Two bowlers of varying ages will be in the limelight for England in the second Test. Shaib Bashir is 20, James Anderson is 41.

Anderson had missed the first Test. Mark Wood was England's seamer.

The master of swing, however, has now replaced the genuine quick. Anderson had come in as a substitute fielder in Hyderabad.

"I think that is just Jimmy's attitude," praised his captain Ben Stokes. "Even people when they are not part of the playing eleven, they have a huge influence on a Test match. They are contributing to everything that is going on in the field."

Stokes believes Anderson's experience will



**Seasoned pro:** Anderson's inclusion a value addition. K.R. DEEPAK

count. "I think it goes under the radar how good his record in India is. Considering what Jimmy is known for — 'the Swing King' and all that — it just proves how good a bowler he is. He has different skill-

sets that I will be able to exploit in the Indian conditions. It's not just picking Jimmy for the new ball, it's the other stuff he possesses as well. People should look up to Jimmy, considering he is where he is at 41."

# Hamilton could switch to Ferrari for 2025 season, says reports

**Agence France-Presse**

PARIS

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton could be about to make a surprise switch to Ferrari for the 2025 Formula One season, according to several reports on Thursday.

The Italian team wants the 39-year-old Briton to partner current driver Charles Leclerc, according to the BBC, Sky, Autosport, Italian newspaper *Gazzetta dello Sport* and other media.

The BBC reported that Mercedes team members were called to a briefing with boss Toto Wolff on Thursday at which it was likely he would announce Hamilton is leaving.



**Surprise?** Hamilton has signed a two-year contract with Mercedes reportedly with a clause allowing him to leave after one. REUTERS

clause allowing him to leave after one season.

Hamilton won the last of his world titles in 2020 but lost the 2021 championship in controversial fashion to Max Verstappen

when the race director ignored the safety car rules, effectively blocking the Briton's route to victory in both that grand prix and the championship.

The Dutch Red Bull driver, who is 13 years younger than Hamilton, has dominated ever since.

Hamilton finished sixth in the drivers' standings in 2022 and third in 2023.

Ferrari, which has admitted it held discussions with Hamilton in 2019 about joining it in the future, declined to comment on the reports it was negotiating a switch for the 2025 season. A Ferrari spokesman said: "We do not comment on rumours."

Mercedes did not reply when contacted by AFP.

# 'India should have had its best players against Pakistan'

**S. Dipak Ragav**

CHENNAI

Tennis legend Vijay Amritraj felt India should have had its best players in the Davis Cup tie against Pakistan starting on Saturday. "I think Davis Cup is something you must put your best team forward, irrespective of who you are playing. I don't think, under any conditions that I can possibly think of, that anyone should say no to Davis Cup," said Amritraj here on Thursday.

India's charge will be led by Ramkumar Ramanathan, Yuki Bhambri, N. Srikanth Balaji, Niki Poonacha and Saketh Myneni, with the country's top-ranked singles player Sumit Nagal



Amritraj. SUDHAKARA JAIN

making himself unavailable for the tie.

"We are still the better team at the end of the day. If Ramkumar gets 80% of his first serves in, he is going to get out of trouble. Ajit Qureshi and Aqueel Khan are experienced on

grass, and the fact that it is a two-day event, best of three sets, and if the grass is not good, it could favour them."

Amritraj said Nagal should make use of the upcoming Chennai Open Challenger to break into the top-100. "Sumit has got a good opportunity to make a run to the semifinals or the final... the next thing you know, he is into the top-100 and gets into all the Grand Slams. Once you get into the Slams, every time you win a match or two, you are going to stay there."

"It is often harder to get there (top-100) than to stay there because you have access to more points once you get there," he said.

# Indian High Commission hosts Davis Cup team

**Press Trust of India**

ISLAMABAD

The Indian High Commission hosted the national Davis Cup team, travelling to Pakistan for the first time in 60 years, ahead of its clash against the Asian neighbours at the Islamabad Sports Complex.

Gectika Srivastava, the first woman to head the Indian High Commission in Pakistan, accorded a warm welcome to the Indian players and officials on Wednesday.

"It's an honour to host the national Indian team here. It's a historic occasion that an Indian team is visiting Pakistan after such a long time," Srivastava said.

It would be a surprise move given that Hamilton has signed a two-year contract with his current team Mercedes for the 2024 and 2025 seasons, but the deal reportedly contains a

## IN BRIEF



## Lions pacers Potts and Carse restrict India-A to 192

The pace duo of Matthew Potts (six for 57, in pic) and Brydon Carse (four for 52) bowled out India-A for 192 to give the England Lions an upper hand in the third and final unofficial Test in Ahmedabad on Thursday. Devdutt Padikkal (65) and Saransh Jain (64) did the bulk of the scoring. At stumps on the opening day, the Lions were 98 for one, with Alex Lees batting on 48.

**The scores:** India-A 192 in 50.2 overs (Padikkal 65, Saransh 64, Potts 6/57, Carse 4/52) vs. England Lions 98/1 in 34 overs (Lees 48 batting).

## India finishes fifth in FIH Hockey5s Men's World Cup

India clinched an exciting 6-4 victory over Egypt in its final match of the FIH Hockey5s Men's World Cup Oman 2024 in Muscat on Wednesday to finish fifth. Mohammed Raheel (eighth minute), Pawan Rajbhar (ninth), Maninder Singh (10th, 23rd), Mandeep Mor (11th), and Uttam Singh (13th) scored for India while for Egypt, captain Amr Sayed (14th and 19th), Mostafa Ragab (23rd) and Karim Atef (24th) found the back of the net. Netherlands defeated Malaysia 5-2 to clinch the title.

## Anirudh and Vijay exit from Montpellier ATP event

Anirudh Chandrasekar and Vijay Sundar Prashanth lost 6-2, 3-6, [10-7] to third seeds Lloyd Glasspool and Henry Patten in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the €651,865 ATP tennis tournament in Montpellier, France.

**Other result:** \$40,000 ITF women, Porto: Doubles, quarterfinals: Veronika Erjavec (Slo) & Dominika Salkova (Cze) bt Yvonne Cavalle-Reimers (Esp) & Vasanti Shinde 6-4, 6-3.



## Ronaldo to miss match against Messi's Miami due to injury

Cristiano Ronaldo will miss the chance of a reunion with Lionel Messi because of an injury, Al-Nassr coach Luis Castro said on Wednesday. Ronaldo is recovering from a reported calf injury and will not be fit in time to play in the exhibition match between Al-Nassr and Inter Miami in Riyadh on Thursday. "Cristiano is in the final stage of his recuperation before rejoining the team. We expect that in the next few days he will start working with the team. So, obviously, it will mean he is absent for the game," Castro said.

## RANJI TROPHY SCHEDULE

**Elite: Group A:** Jharkhand vs. Manipur (Jamsedpur); Haryana vs. Services (Rohtak); Maharashtra vs. Saurashtra (Solapur); Rajasthan vs. Vidarbha (Jaipur).

**Group B:** Bengal vs. Mumbai (Kolkata); Bihar vs. Andhra (Patna); Chhattisgarh vs. Kerala (Raipur); UP vs. Assam (Kanpur).

**Group C:** Gujarat vs. Tripura (Ahmedabad); Railways vs. Karnataka (Surat); Chandigarh vs. Punjab (Chandigarh); Goa vs. Tamil Nadu (Porvorim).

**Group D:** Odisha vs. Pondicherry (Cuttack); Delhi vs. Baroda (Delhi); Himachal vs. MP (Dharamshala); J&K vs. Uttarakhend (Jammu).

**Plate:** Sikkim vs. Meghalaya (Rangpo); Nagaland vs. Arunachal (Dimapur); Hyderabad vs. Mizoram (Hyderabad).

## La Reina primed to deliver in Stayers' Trial Stakes

## RACING

BENGALURU: La Reina, who has been well-tuned, is expected to score in the Stayers' Trial Stakes (2,400m), the chief event of the races to be held here on Friday (Feb. 2). False rails (width about 2.25m from 1,600m to the winning post) will be in position.

1. VANI VILASA SAGARA PLATE (2,400m), rated 00 to 25, 2-0. p.m.: 1. Greely (4) S. John 62.5, 2. Double Vision (9) Indrajeet S 61.5, 3. Sacred Creator (6) M. Rajesh K 61.5, 4. Burning Arrow (3) Angad 61, 5. Firefinch (12) R. Pradeep 60.5, 6. Maybach (8) Inayat 60.5, 7. My Visionary (11) Chethan K 60, 8. Eco Friendly (5) Afzar Khan 59, 9. Marco Polo (2) C. Umesh 59, 10. Infinite Spirit (10) Shreyas S 57, 11. Pettes Love (1) M. Naveen 57 and 12. Star Citizen (7) Arshad 51.

1. GREELEY, 2. MARCO POLO, 3.

## PETTES LOVE

2. KADAMBI FALLS PLATE (DIV. II), (1,400m), rated 20 to 45, 5-y-o & over, 2-30: 1. Solid Power (7) S. Saqlain 60, 2. Singhisaab (2) C. Umesh 59.5, 3. Croissantin (9) B. Nayak 57, 4. Ring Master (5) R. Pradeep 56, 5. Way To Life (3) A. Ramu 55.5, 6. Mega Success (6) Jagadeesh 55, 7. Raffles (4) P. Sidaraju 55, 8. Emeraldo (1) S. Shareef 54 and 9. Flying Brave (8) Salman Khan 53.

1. SOLID POWER, 2. SINGHISAAB, 3. RAFFLES

3. FEBRUARY STAKES (1,100m), rated 20 to 45, 3-00: 1. Immortal Beauty (7) P. Siddaraju 61.5, 2. Adjustment (2) Antony 60, 3. Fast Response (9) Koshi K 60, 4. Striking Memory (12) Shreyas S 58.5, 5. Sunway Lagoon (11) Afzar Khan 57, 6. Phoenix Surprise (4) Inayat 55.5, 7. Vayu (6) G. Vivek 54.5, 8. Contractor (10) A. Ramu 54, 9. Sun Flare (1) I. Chisty 54, 10. Smile Of Beauty (5) Toufis 53.5, 11.

1. VANISILA SAGARA PLATE (2,400m), rated 00 to 25, 2-0. p.m.: 1. Greely (4) S. John 62.5, 2. Double Vision (9) Indrajeet S 61.5, 3. Sacred Creator (6) M. Rajesh K 61.5, 4. Burning Arrow (3) Angad 61, 5. Firefinch (12) R. Pradeep 60.5, 6. Maybach (8) Inayat 60.5, 7. My Visionary (11) Chethan K 60, 8. Eco Friendly (5) Afzar Khan 59, 9. Marco Polo (2) C. Umesh 59, 10. Infinite Spirit (10) Shreyas S 57, 11. Pettes Love (1) M. Naveen 57 and 12. Star Citizen (7) Arshad 51.

1. GREELEY, 2. MARCO POLO, 3.

## TROPICAL MIST

3. PETTES LOVE

4. KADAMBI FALLS PLATE

5. FEBRUARY STAKES

6. MARSHAL CUP

7. RAFFLES

8. SINGHISAAB

9. STAYERS' TRIAL STAKES

10. VAYU

11. WINDCASTLE

12. XMAS STAKES

13. SUN FLARE

14. VENUS

15. VIBRANT

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# Practice and winning mentality key to India's success in Paris: Baek

The Korean coach, who guided his country's women to gold medals in the 2012 Olympics, says the new system of rigorous selection trials and incentives for impressive performances would do the Indian archers a world of good

## **Y.B. Sarangi**

**A**s the Indian archers prepare to earn more Olympics quota places for the country in about five months' time, foreign coach Baek Woong Ki feels intense training and winning mentality can fetch the country success in Paris 2024.

Baek, who joined last year to train the Indians for the Paris Olympics, wanted the archers to prepare like champions.

### **Target a medal**

"For the Paris Olympics, the Indian archers should target a medal of any colour, be it gold or silver or bronze. I feel they should target to reach the final. Because by entering the final, you can ensure India's first Olympic medal," Baek told *The Hindu*.

While keeping a close eye on the technical aspects of the archers' game and assessing whether they are shooting well or not, Baek shared his winning mantra.

"Everyday the target should be to aim to win – whether it is the qualification round or the elimination rounds, like the quarterfinals, the semifinals and the final and win the gold medal. The motto should be to practice and win."

The 62-year-old, who coached the Korean women to gold medals in individual and team events in the 2012 London Olympics, advocates a comprehensive approach for the Indians in order to achieve their long-cherished dream of claiming a medal in the Olympics.

Mental training is needed. The gym training is for bow control only. While competing, the goal should be reaching the final. And one should go step by step, one match at a time. First finish one, then go for another. One needs to practice winning."

Giving an example of the Korean way of archery, Baek said the Koreans shoot 600 to 700 arrows per day and work on 'shooting focus' and 'self control' to get success.

According to Baek, the new system of rigorous selection trials and incentives for impressive performances would do the Indian archers the world of good.

"All the good things from China, Japan and Korea have been brought together and mixed in this Indian system. It's a good system."

"The archers need to focus on shooting. The more they practice, the



AFP

better they become. Now Indian archers are shooting 500 arrows a day. It does not happen automatically.

### **Muscle memory'**

"When you practice well, you shoot automatically. If they shoot 500 arrows a day, then they develop muscle memory. If they shoot less, then there is a chance of picking up mistakes. If there are less mistakes, you get high scores. If mistakes are more, scores become lesser."

The Indian recurve archers' improved showing in the 2023 calendar should encourage Baek. The country's archers bagged five medals in the World Cups, with B. Dhiraj contributing in three team

medals apart from securing an individual bronze.

In the Asian Games, the archers claimed medals in men and women team events after 13 years. It was a fine performance considering the fact that several top countries, including traditional powerhouse Korea, competed in the continental show-piece event.

The Indian archers also did well in team events in the World championships in Berlin. The men and women's teams earned top-eight finishes by entering the quarterfinals and boosted their rankings, which might help the country in winning quota places. The Indian men's team is in a good position while the women's team is

improving step by step in the run-up to the Paris Olympics, said Baek.

While Dhiraj earned an individual quota place in the Asian qualifying event in Bangkok to ensure Indian archery's continued presence in the Olympics, other archers would try to make the cut through the remaining qualifying event, the Final qualifier scheduled in Antalya, Turkey, from June 14 to 17.

As several top countries have already qualified for the Olympics, the Indians would like to give their best and notch up team quotas in Antalya as it would help the country field full teams, consisting of three men and as many women, and maximise its medal chances in Paris.

## My dad always believed in hard work, and everything I have is a result of that: Sarfaraz

### **Press Trust of India**

VISAKHAPATNAM

The mountain of runs that he scored in domestic circuit might have opened the doors of Indian cricket to him, but for Sarfaraz Khan the learning never stops.

Sarfaraz has been recently drafted into the India squad for the second Test against England starting here from Friday after K.L. Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja were ruled out due to injuries.

The prolific Mumbai batter turned into a fan-boy while discussing his learning process.

"I like to watch Virat Kohli, A.B. de Villiers, Sir Vivian Richards, and even Javed Miandad because my dad has told me that I play like him. I watch Joe Root's batting also."

"Anyone who is succeeding, I am watching them to see how they are doing it so I can learn and apply it. I want to continue doing this, whether it's in the Ranji Trophy or playing for India in the future," Sarfaraz told JioCinema.

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

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

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



R.V. MOORTHY

In the 2015-2016 domestic season, Sarfaraz opted to play for Uttar Pradesh after he ran into trouble with Mumbai selectors during an under-19 game.

Sarfaraz said his dad would travel to UP or wherever the team played to watch him bat.

"Even when I moved from Mumbai to UP, he would take

flights to come and see me. He would start bowling to me on the terrace or the road itself before selection trials. Now I realise the impact and importance of those efforts," he added.

After two modest seasons with UP, Sarfaraz decided to return to Mumbai after gaining a NOC from UPCA and the 26-year-old admitted it was a tough moment for him.

But Sarfaraz said his father was the pillar of strength in this phase. "When I came back to Mumbai from UP, I was scared if this would bring a halt to my career and I strongly felt there was no future ahead of me. But my dad always stood by me. There's no guarantee in life if you don't get opportunities," he said.

But there were opportunities galore for him in Mumbai and his career blossomed there. Now, Sarfaraz has 3,912 runs from 45 First Class matches at an average of 69.85 with 14 hundreds and 11 fifties.

Even in the red-ball format, Sarfaraz strikes at 70.48, making him a standout performer.

So, how does he score so consistently? Sarfaraz revealed the secret. "My strength is that I am not easily satisfied. I play 500-600 balls every day. If I don't play at least 200-300 balls in a match, I feel like I haven't done much. It's a habit now."

"If you want to play five-day cricket, you have to stay patient and practise every day. I play cricket all day and that's why I can stay on the pitch for a long time," Sarfaraz added.

## No buzz in Islamabad for Davis Cup contest



Bonding: Members of the Indian squad in Islamabad for the Davis Cup tie against Pakistan. PTI

### **Press Trust of India**

ISLAMABAD

Never has the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) received requests for passes for a Davis Cup match from regions as far as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, but the city of Islamabad is not giving the remotest of hints of hosting a high-profile India-Pakistan contest.

Nothing, not even a single poster, in this city suggests that an Indian team has crossed the border for a Davis Cup match after 60 long years.

The PTF has pinned hopes of revival of the sport in the country on this tie but the promotion of the match through branding, advertisement, marketing and interviews is woefully lacking.

The Islamabad Sports Complex, the venue for the World Group I match, is not having any buzz either, and the sprawling complex is out of bounds even for local media.

To top it, only 500 guests and fans will be inside the complex Saturday and Sunday, the match days. The entry will be on invitation, and PTF is picking only a niche tennis audience to attend.

The security is such that the Indian players will not be able to enjoy Pakistani hospitality. They have access just to the venue and the team hotel as the city will remain out of bounds for them.

"We would have made it a grand show for the Indian contingent but are forced to keep it as a low-key affair," a key PTF official told PTI when asked why the buzz is missing. "It has to be like that because of the security concerns raised by the Indian Federation. ITF has approved a plan, and we have to follow that. We would have splashed the city with the posters of the players from India and Pakistan but our hands are tied."

PTF treasurer Muhammad Khalil Chughtai lamented the fact that the tie is being played in a restricted environment.

# SCIENCE

# A touch of sun: the impact of heat events on children

Effects on the very young can be significant, including low birth weight and prematurity, learning loss during the school years, and heat-related illness and death. Excessive heat can impact young children's development and health both in the moment and across the lifespan

Ramya Kannan

**T**here is sufficient evidence to show global warming is causing temperatures across the globe to rise significantly enough to cause disruptions. Heat waves are occurring with greater frequency and are lasting longer than ever before, with the World Meteorological Organisation declaring that 2023 was the hottest year on record. While humans have adapted and acclimatised themselves to several variations in climate, there is believed to be a limit beyond which our bodies cannot process this change. The correlation between health outcomes and environmental conditions is something that has been broadly hinted at, but not studied in detail. It is about time to do that.

The first of a series, this working paper from the Early Childhood Scientific Council on Equity and the Environment, Harvard University, (*Extreme Heat Affects Early Childhood Development and Health: Working Paper No. 1, 2023*) explores how extreme heat can affect young children's biological systems and disrupt development, as well as the many ways it can amplify the effects of systemic inequities.

The authors also indicate the powerful effects that extreme temperatures can have during pregnancy and early childhood, including impacts on learning, sleep quality, and mental and behavioural health. It also explains how heat amplifies systemic inequities, including air quality, access to nutritious foods, and structural disadvantages. In addition, it provides some practical solutions to mitigate climate change, slow the heating of our environment, and provide new ways of cooling our communities. This includes tips on how to mitigate the impact of extreme temperatures, finding new ways of cooling the communities where children live, and grow, along with some community initiatives that have reportedly started to bear fruit.

While the dangers of excessive heat for older people and those with heart and lung conditions are well known, the effects of heat during pregnancy, infancy, and childhood get less attention, and this is what the paper tries to set right. Effects on these groups can be significant, including low birth weight and prematurity, learning loss during the school years, and heat-related illness and death. Excessive heat can impact young children's development and health both in the moment and across the lifespan, the paper underlines.

It stands to reason that extreme heat affects infants and young children more than most adults because their smaller bodies heat up more quickly, and their capacity for body temperature modulation is still under development and therefore, far less efficient. Infants and young children also can't seek out cooler environments or get water to drink without relying on adults. The paper adds that children and adolescents with chronic health conditions, such as asthma, obesity, or diabetes, are even more susceptible to heat-related illnesses.

#### How does heat impact humans?

In an attempt to further explain the science, the authors of the paper provide a blow-by-blow account of how excessive heat works on every part of the human



Temperature increases will manifest most negatively among children. Image for representational purpose only. GETTY IMAGES

body. The human body responds to excessive heat primarily by redistributing blood flow toward the skin so heat can transfer out of the body and into the environment through sweat which evaporates on the skin, bringing body temperature down. The blood flow cooling method is especially important for young children. As long as the air temperature is cooler than the body's temperature, heat dissipates through the skin to the outside environment. When temperatures rise, the brain regulates these physiological responses, with additional input from temperature-sensitive nerve cells in the skin and throughout the body.

Cells also produce heat shock proteins, which act as "chaperones" that stabilise the structure of other proteins that high temperatures could damage. Every cell in the body contains heat shock proteins, protecting a variety of other proteins that are critical to life, including hemoglobin, which carries oxygen to our cells. Over short periods of time, heat shock proteins are effective and helpful in regulating body temperature, but when temperatures stay too high for too long, they lose their ability to function, and the proteins they protect start to break down.

This could mean a higher susceptibility to infections and a decreased response to vaccines, only a couple of the cascade of reactions that can occur as a result of the breaking down of proteins. How does this affect various organs, then?

**Brain** – The hypothalamus acts as a thermostat for the entire body, sensing temperatures and reacting to keep core temperatures within a healthy range. Continuous, high temperatures prevent the hypothalamus from shutting off these cooling responses. Also, when the heat shock proteins break down, the body identifies them as invaders and sends out immune cells to fight them, thus keeping them from their main task of fighting infections.

**Skin and Gut** – In response to heat, pores in the skin open to allow more sweat to pass through and evaporate, increasing the body's ability to cool itself. The lining of the gut can become leaky allowing bacteria to pass through to other parts of the body. Over a period of time, this can increase the likelihood that harmful bacteria and toxins will reach the



Heat amplifies systemic inequities, including air quality, access to nutritious foods, and structural disadvantages

body's vital organs via the circulatory system.

**Heart and Other Muscles** – In response to excess heat, the heart rate increases to send more blood to the skin, releasing the body's core heat into the environment. Consequently, less blood is sent to the muscles, which can constrain muscle growth, cause muscle fibres to break down, and contribute to kidney dysfunction, the authors write.

**Dehydration** – Is the most commonly understood symptom of heat strokes, but what does it actually do to the body? Not having enough water in the system thickens the blood, which can lead to increased blood clotting and heart failure from blockages in the arteries.

When sustained over time, all these responses can lead to what is known as "heat stress." When this happens, the body begins to break down and critical functions shut down, increasing the likelihood of damage to the heart, lungs, and kidneys as well as the risk of heat-related death.

**Pregnant women and children** In pregnant women, high temperatures may result in reduced blood flow in the placenta, dehydration, and inflammation, which can trigger preterm birth. There is evidence that during times of high temperatures, there are increased rates of stillbirth, as well as more premature and lower birth weight babies, again, linked to a greater risk of a range of poor outcomes later in life, including impaired cognition, reduced growth, and chronic health issues such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes in adulthood.

Given children's fledgling ability to achieve homeostasis, apart from the immediate physical effects on a child, the authors argue that heat can disrupt development through three distinct pathways: **Learning loss** – heat is linked to slower cognitive function and reduced concentration ability. Learning loss may

occur because heat's effects on the brain can produce slower reaction times and an inability to focus and can have lasting effects on learning outcomes. Hotter school days two, three, and even four years prior to a test correlate to lower scores. **Sleep quality** – getting enough good-quality sleep is essential for healthy growth and development. A growing body of evidence shows associations between less sleep in infancy and childhood obesity, and sleep habits in childhood may impact weight well into adulthood.

The third crucial factor is **Mental and behavioural health** – because children's brains and bodies are developing rapidly and are highly sensitive to their experiences, early childhood is a period where threats to well-being can have long-lasting effects on mental health. Because of this, treatment and prevention efforts in the early years can have much larger effects on children's long-term psychological health and well-being than efforts that begin later, the paper advises. The brain detects extreme heat as a threat to well-being, which activates the stress response system. While heat affects everyone, the paper highlights how it also amplifies the effects of systemic inequities in housing, neighbourhood density, community infrastructure, and economic opportunity, contributing to an unequal burden of dangerous conditions for families from marginalised groups and with lower incomes.

#### Tackling extreme heat

Because the effects of climate change are so interrelated, all efforts to address the root causes – and inequality more broadly – will boost the impact of efforts to mitigate the effects of extreme heat on children. The paper recommends policies that target emissions, immediate action to reduce harm from heat events, and adapting infrastructure to better handle the increase in heat. This would include improving structural cooling options in buildings, including greening campaigns, installing air conditioning and other cooling mechanisms; providing accessible links to the power grid; and developing proper heat plans. The experts have advised highlighting some models that work in all these segments.

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Continued disclosure depends on the support available at the point of confiding. GETTY IMAGES

## Addressing the issue left in the closet: male child sexual abuse

Zubeda Hamid

Child sexual abuse (CSA), is a subject people are evasive about and reluctant to discuss. When it comes to the sexual abuse of boys, the problem is exacerbated – even though one in six boys worldwide experience sexual abuse during childhood, this is an under-researched and under-addressed area. Additionally, how male survivors' view their abuse experiences, their lives after it, their disclosures of it, and the support they receive, can all be shaped by patriarchal notions and socio-cultural norms of what is expected of boys and men, says Alankar Sharma, senior lecturer, School of Health and Society, University of Wollongong Australia.

Abuse can have profound and long-lasting impacts on survivors' mental and physical health, says Dr Sharma. There's research that shows even older men continue to experience significant physical, mental and sexual health issues. "That's not to say that every survivor experiences the same adverse effects or the severity of these effects is the same. But many struggle emotionally," he points out. Some struggle with substance use or alcohol dependence. Women tend to

#### Older men continue to experience significant physical, mental and sexual health issues

internalise experiences, whereas men externalise. "There is greater permissiveness within patriarchal societies for men to talk about sex and to engage in sexual activity," he says, and so, with men, this can play out with, struggling with fidelity, sexual compulsivity or sexual addiction. For women, the outcome could be more of avoidance rather than addiction.

When a boy gets abused in a patriarchal society, what many survivors make of this is that their masculinity has been damaged, or eroded, says Dr Sharma. "And as a consequence," he says, "they may overcompensate through hyper-masculine activities, for example, by participating in violence. This could be physical violence, emotional violence, or even sexual violence." It could also be expressed in other ways, hitting the gym or building their bodies.

Dr. Sharma says there long-standing research literature on the sexual abuse of girls and women, but it is only over the last 20 years that male child sexual abuse has been looked at seriously, globally. In India, he says, a lot of the research is prevalence studies, which go on to establish the fact that CSA is everywhere. Much of the research is also from a biomedical standpoint, he points out, and while there is a place for these studies, they're also limited in what they're able to examine and explore, because the overwhelming majority of CSA survivors never seek professional support.

Is disclosure the first step to healing? Dr Sharma believes it can be. "I think there is power in being able to share emotional experiences, physical experiences, vulnerable experiences and be supported," he says. And the reason people don't disclose often has to do with shame or guilt. In the last 10-15 years, Dr Sharma says, the understanding of disclosure has also progressed. "Our current understanding is: it's not a one-time event," he says. It's a process, and many disclosures happen over many years. "The support one gets when they disclose," he emphasises, "really qualitatively influences, when or how that person is able to disclose again."

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## THE SCIENCE QUIZ

### World Cancer Day: closing the care gap

Saumya Kalia

#### QUESTION 1

In India, 70% of cancer related deaths occur in the first year, with lung cancer being the leading cause of death. What is the major cause of this type of cancer?

#### QUESTION 2

India became the second highest contributor to the disease burden in Asia in 2019. Apart from India, which two other countries are witnessing rising cases?

#### QUESTION 3

This cancer is the top-five cancers among women in Asian countries. It is entirely preventable, and the Indian Government recently announced an

indigenously developed vaccine against it. Name the cancer and the vaccine.

#### QUESTION 4

This region has the highest rate of cancer in India, despite being the second-least populated State. Researchers think it's due to static lifestyle and dietary patterns associated with the endogamous tribal population. Which State is this?

#### QUESTION 5

Some cancers persist, others fade from history. This type of cancer is known by two names, was first documented in early literature in 1945, and was thought to be caused by cloth tied around the waist. It is no longer recorded in India but when it was, it was cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma. Name the common name for cancer(s).

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Visual: She is a doyen of cancer research in India, who became the face of the Cancer Institute and turned it into a leading site of cancer care. She passed away on January 19, 2021. Name this stalwart.

#### For feedback and suggestions

for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'