

The government has given up on reviving the economy or accelerating the growth rate or promoting private investment or increasing efficiency or creating jobs

P. CHIDAMBARAM

Budget speech reveals that the government is clueless about how to address the crisis gripping the economy. Despite manipulating data, the economic crisis showed up in Budget numbers

SITARAM YECHURI

In this Budget, the Modi government has taken effective steps to rationalise the tax system and boost the basic infrastructure, which will further its resolve to make India a \$5 trillion economy

AMIT SHAH

The Budget will bring inclusive growth and equitable development with boost to wealth creation and reforms in governance

RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD

LIC IPO to lead disinvestment thrust, generate revenue

Challenges to fiscal consolidation from slower growth remain

Unimpressed Sensex closes nearly 988 points, or 2.43%, down

of Direct Taxes to adopt a Taxpayers' Charter."

The Budget deferred taxes for ESOPs in the hands of employees, which will be an important decision for the employees to own shares in the employer without getting worried about organising cash to pay taxes.

One proposal that could become contentious was tax being imposed on Indian citizens abroad if they are not taxable in their home country.

Proposed market borrowings for the coming year have been raised to ₹5.36 lakh crore, following a ₹26,000 crore hike in this year's borrowing plan from ₹4.73 lakh crore to ₹4.99 lakh crore.

The impact of lower tax rates on demand creation may not be too high, and removing tax exemptions that spur financial savings could dent an already falling savings rate. Ms. Sitharaman expects 10% nominal GDP growth in 2020-21, which suggests she doesn't share the Survey's optimism about returning to 6%-6.5% real GDP growth.

The markets reacted negatively to the Budget, with the Sensex closing nearly 2.43% or 988 points down to end below 40,000 points.

"Today being a Saturday, I'm not sure if every aspect of the stock market is open today," said Ms. Sitharaman in response to the stock market collapse. I think that many of the things we've said in the Budget will definitely have a positive impact on the stock market. I will reserve my comments till Monday."

(With inputs from PTI)

NO FIREWORKS ▶ EDITORIAL

BOOSTER SHORT

VIKAS DHOTI
NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's second Budget speech on Saturday sought to make up in length and breadth for what it couldn't deliver in the form of an effective stimulus for India's fast-slowing economy. Interspersed with some feel-good decisions, such as lower personal income tax rates and a hike in the deposit insurance cover for bank depositors (from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh), were some bold decisions like listing the Life Insurance Corporation of India and abolishing the Dividend Distribution Tax.

A caring society
Ms. Sitharaman expounded on three themes – aspirational India (a better life for all), economic development for all (yielding more space for the private sector) and creating a caring society – in her record-breaking speech of more than two-and-a-half hours, aimed at boosting in-

comes and purchasing power. Inflation, she said, was well-contained and the economy's fundamentals remained strong.

To boost farm incomes and the rural sectors, the Finance Minister allocated ₹2.83 lakh crore and fixed ₹15 lakh crore target for agriculture credit, along with 16 new and renewed measures. Another ₹1.7 lakh crore was allocated for transport infrastructure and ₹40,740 crore for the energy sector.

Taking a cue from the Economic Survey, which dwelt at length on India's ancient economic prowess, Ms. Sitharaman cited the guilds of Saraswati-Sindhu civilisation and the Harappan seals (of 3300 BCE) and commerce and trade-related words deciphered from Indus hieroglyphs that show India has been rich in skills and trade for millennia.

The Minister also accepted the Survey's call for loosening fiscal strings, taking a 0.5% deviation from fiscal deficit targets under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Law to end 2019-20 with a 3.8% deficit and a promise to attain a 3.5% deficit in the coming year.

The Survey's suggestion

INSIDE
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Insurance cover on deposits raised to ₹5 lakh PAGE 4
Government bites the fiscal deficit bullet PAGE 6
Low outlay to hit military upgrade PAGE 8
Home Ministry share up on J&K, Ladakh funds PAGE 8
Allocation for MGNREGS comes down PAGE 10

for a more aggressive approach to disinvestment was heard too, with a massive target of ₹2.1 lakh crore – 223% higher than the revised estimates for the current year. Any slip-ups on this front would make the deficit target untenable.

Taxpayers' Charter
Stating that any tax system requires trust between taxpayers and the administration, which will be possible only when taxpayer's rights are clearly laid out, Ms. Sitharaman said: "With the objective of enhancing the efficiency of the delivery system of the Income Tax Department, I propose to amend the provisions of the Income Tax Act to mandate the Central Board

FinMin offers opt-in income tax scheme to boost demand

Rates will be reduced for those giving up exemptions

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President rejects Nirbhaya convict's plea
NEW DELHI
President Ram Nath Kovind rejected the mercy petition of the second 2012 Nirbhaya gang-rape convict Vinay Kumar Sharma on Saturday. Hours later, the Centre moved the Delhi High Court arguing that the four convicts were acting in tandem to delay their execution.

NATION ▶ PAGE 18

Delhi given stepmotherly treatment, says Kejriwal
NEW DELHI
Both the Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress on Saturday criticised the Union Budget presented on Saturday. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that Delhi has yet again been given "stepmotherly treatment".

CITY ▶ PAGE 14

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Man opens fire in the air at Shaheen Bagh

No one injured; shooter, who shouted pro-Hindu slogans, detained

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

For the second time in three days, a man opened fire near the site of an anti-CAA protest in the Capital. The man, identified as Kapil Gujjar, 25, declared that only the "voice of Hindus would count" in the country as he was taken away by the police from the protest site at Shaheen Bagh.

No one was injured as Gujjar fired two shots in the air, police said on Saturday.

Chimoy Biswal, DCP (South East), said the shooter was a resident of Dallupura area. Police were trying to find out from where he had procured the pistol. An FIR has been registered under sections of the Arms Act.

"We have recovered the



Police taking away Kapil Gujjar after he opened fire in the Shaheen Bagh area of Delhi on Saturday. ▶ ANI

countrymade weapon from his possession," said a police officer. "He is in the dairy business and claimed that his family faces problems while commuting to the Lajpat Nagar area in south Delhi to shop for an upcoming wedding because of the road blockade by the protesters."

Police said they had beefed up security around the protest site and people entering the area would be frisked with the help of volunteers.

"People roaming around the protest site will be randomly checked. It is for the safety of the protesters," said

the officer.
With polling in Delhi only six days away, Home Minister Amit Shah has gone on record asking voters to press the button for the BJP on the electronic voting machine so that the "current" was felt in Shaheen Bagh.

Earlier on Saturday, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath hit out at the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) at a rally in Delhi.

"They [the AAP] don't want good quality roads, water, the expansion of the metro... all they want is Shaheen Bagh... You have to decide whether you want all-round development or Shaheen Bagh... he will waste taxpayers' money on feeding them biryani."

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BUDGET 20-21

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Currently, more than 100
exemptions & deductions ...
are provided in the Income
Tax Act ... have removed 70
of them in new, simplified
regime - Budget speech



Income levels up for tax filers

TAX BRACKETS	AY 2014	AY 2019
0 to 2 lakh	24.7%	7.1%
2 to 4 lakh	44.4%	41.8%
4 to 10 lakh	24.9%	41.1%
10 to 50 lakh	5.7%	9.5%
>50 lakh	0.4%	0.6%

Source: Central Board of Direct Taxation

Budget has put
more disposable
income in the
hands of the
common man by
the rationalisation
of the personal
income tax slabs

Ashutosh Bishnoi,
Mahindra Mutual
Fund MD



VIEWPOINT

V.S. KRISHNAN
National Leader, Tax & Eco Policy, EY India

Govt. is pro-business

The Union Budget for the year 2020-21 was presented in the backdrop of a gloomy economic scenario where all the important levers of growth namely private investments, private consumptions and exports were sputtering.

The clear message that can be discerned from the Budget is that the government is now comfortable with being perceived as pro-business and not inclined to stigmatise capitalism.

There are a number of policy announcements in the Budget which would boost private investments. These include the abolition of Dividend Distribution Tax, the exemption on interest, dividends and capital gains for investment in infrastructure projects by sovereign wealth funds and the relaxation in the limits of foreign portfolio investment in corporate bonds from 9% to 15% (of the outstanding value of the bonds). This will increase investments in the Indian bond market.

The Budget recognises that it would be difficult to kick-start growth without improvement in the business sentiment.

The Finance Minister has tried to achieve this by providing comfort to businesses in a number of her remarks. A good example of this is the 'Amnesty Scheme' for direct taxes on similar lines to the indirect tax.

Similarly, the other interesting confidence building measure is the incorporation of a charter of commitments in the direct tax statute which promises a tax-friendly environment. This is similar to the Tax Charter found in developed countries like Canada.

On the consumption side, the government has given relief for taxpayers whose incomes are up to ₹15 lakh.

These concessions are given in an innovative fashion by predating them on the taxpayers giving up their tax deductions.

The idea is to simplify tax payments by gradually phasing out exemption and having a flat rate.

It is well recognised that the best way to boost consumption is to increase good quality jobs in the formal economy. The complaint is that many companies find students graduating without the necessary job skills. 'Unemployable' is the common refrain. The Budget also talks about skill upgrading and also moots the concept of having bridge courses for categories like teachers, nurses and other semi-skilled workers who are much in demand in foreign countries.

The allocation for infrastructure industries and the social sector has been considerably enhanced but in spite of this, the Finance Minister has been able to keep the Budget deficit within reasonable limits largely on account of huge expectations from disinvestment and monetisation of assets.

These revenues really hold the key for the government to manage its finances in the coming year. A huge target of ₹2.10 lakh crore has been fixed for disinvestment next year. What is disappointing in the Budget is a lack of strategy to reduce agricultural subsidies, mainly food and fertilizers. It would be better to give assistance directly to farmers and also switch some expenditure from subsidy to agricultural R&D which is badly neglected. Food subsidies are a huge burden and arise mainly on account of government guarantees to borrowings by the Food Corporation of India which maintains a huge inventory of foodgrains of nearly 75 million tonnes when perhaps only 35 million tonnes would suffice. There is also a case for revision of issue prices from the ration shops which have not been raised for a long time. To sum up, the Finance Minister's expectations about a boost in the economy largely hinges on factors beyond her control – an uptick in global growth, improvement in investment sentiment facilitating higher disinvestment and a downturn in oil prices.

No more double taxation on dividends

Centre removes 15% tax plus applicable surcharge and cess on dividends, currently paid by companies

cess on the dividends. Further, investors that receive more than ₹10 lakh as dividend in a financial year have to pay 10% tax on such income.

"It has been argued that the system of levying DDT results in increase in tax burden for investors and especially those who are liable to pay tax less than the rate of DDT if the dividend income is included in their income," said Ms Sitharaman, while presenting her budget.

"In order to increase the attractiveness of the Indian equity market and to provide relief to a large class of investors,

I propose to remove the DDT and adopt the classical system of dividend taxation under which the companies would not be required to pay DDT. The dividend shall be taxed only in the hands of the recipients at their applicable rate," she added while highlighting the fact that the removal of DDT would lead to estimated annual revenue forgone of ₹25,000 crore.

According to experts, the effective DDT for companies was nearly 17%, which went up to more than 20% in 2014 while that for individuals it was a little less than 15%.

More importantly, the go-

vernment has also done away with the additional 10% tax on investors and the dividend will now be only taxed at the applicable tax rate based on the income slab of the individual. "Small tax payers would definitely benefit as their effective rate of tax is much lower and would result in substantial saving," said Ashok Shah, Partner, N A Shah Associates.

"Impact on taxation of large retail investors may be negative, as dividend is expected to be taxable at the maximum slab rate in their hands. The effective tax rate for individuals falling in highest tax slabs is 42.74% i.e. there will be an additional burden of 28.492%," ex-

plained Mr. Shah.

Meanwhile, the government has also proposed allowing deduction for the dividend received by holding company from its subsidiary.

According to Mr. Shah, foreign investors can now claim benefit under the double tax treaty where the tax rates range from 5% to 15%, which will result in direct saving of 20.56% for such overseas entities.

"... non-availability of credit of DDT to most of the foreign investors in their home country results in reduction of rate of return on equity capital for them... This is another bold move which will further make India an attractive destination for in-

vestment," said the finance minister.

The issue of "double taxation" was part of the pre-budget memorandum that Association of National Exchanges Members of India had presented to the government.

According to Mr. Shah, foreign investors can now claim benefit under the double tax treaty where the tax rates range from 5% to 15%, which will result in direct saving of 20.56% for such overseas entities.

Incidentally, the broker lobby had also sought restoring long term capital gains (LTCG) tax benefits on equities, which was withdrawn as part of the Finance Bill 2018. The government, however, chose not to touch upon the LTCG issue in the budget.

INCOME AND TAX SCENARIOS

The graphic looks at various scenarios of taxable income for salaried individuals and calculates the total tax payable before the proposals in Budget 2020-21 and after applying them. This is based on E&Y calculations. To try out various scenarios, download google sheet at <https://bit.ly/2uTzPEI>

Particulars	Individual -Taxable income < ₹10 lakh		...₹10 to ₹15 Lakhs		...₹15 to ₹50 Lakhs	
	Pre Budget	Post Budget	Pre Budget	Post Budget	Pre Budget	Post Budget
Income from Salary						
Basic Salary	450000	450000	850000	850000	1150000	1150000
HRA	180000	180000	150000	150000	500000	500000
LTA	75000	75000	75000	75000	150000	150000
Special Allowance	80000	80000	500000	500000	700000	700000
NPS contrib. by employer	45000	45000	85000	85000	115000	115000
Total income	830000	830000	1660000	1660000	2615000	2615000
HRA	-	-	-80000	-	-305000	-
LTA	-	-	-75000	-	-75000	-
Less: Standard deduction	-50000	-	-50000	-	-50000	-
Less: Professional tax	-2400	777600	-2400	1452600	-2400	2182600
House Property income						
SB a/c Interest	10000	10000	30000	30000	50000	50000
FD interest	40000	50000	40000	50000	25000	25000
Gross Total income	827600	880000	1297600	1705000	2057600	2690000
Section 80C	-54000		-150000		-150000	
EPF	54000	-	102000	-	138000	-
PPF	-	-	50000	-	50000	-
Section 80CCD	-45000	-45000	-135000	-85000	-165000	-115000
NPS- addnl contribution	-	-	100000	-	100000	-
NPS- Employer contrib.	45000	45000	85000	85000	115000	115000
Medical Insurance Premium	-	-	-	-	-18000	-
Interest from savings bank	-10000	-	-	-10000	-	-10000
Pre Tax Income	718600	835000	9,84,600	1620000	1714600	2575000
Income-tax	56220	50250	109420	223500	326880	510000
Less: Rebate Sec. 87A	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tax after Rebate	56220	50250	109420	223500	326880	510000
Tax payable after surcharge	56220	50250	109420	223500	326880	510000
Health & Edu Cess @ 4%	2249	2010	4377	8940	13075	20400
Total tax	58470	52260	113800	232440	339960	530400

Affordable housing gets a leg-up, but reality bites for realty sector

Extension of tax holiday a welcome step, but withdrawing exemption in new tax regime for home loans is a dampener

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI
To give further push to the government's 'Housing for All' goal, the Union Budget has yet again laid emphasis on affordable housing, giving a boost to the sector and home-buyers as well.

Last year, an additional deduction of up to ₹1.5 lakh for interest paid on loans taken for purchase of affordable houses was announced. The deduction was allowed

on housing loans sanctioned on or before March 31, 2020. Now, to ensure that more persons avail this benefit, the Finance Minister has proposed to extend the date of loan sanction for availing this additional deduction by one more year till March 31, 2021.

Referring to the tax holiday provided on profits earned by developers of affordable housing projects approved by March 31, 2020, the Finance Minister has proposed

to extend the date of approval of such projects for availing this tax holiday, by one more year. Shishir Baijal, CMD, Knight Frank, said, "The extension of benefits for affordable housing for developers as well as home buyers is a step in the right direction. But the real estate sector was hoping that the government would come up with measures to boost housing demand. However, the removal of exemption under the new income tax regime on principal and interest for home loans would be a dampener for the sector."

Vivek Chandy, joint managing partner, J Sagar Associates, said that the decision to extend tax benefit on affordable housing by one year would not give the industry the stimulus it had been seeking.

According to Rohit Gera, MD, Gera Developers, "The government has not provided the necessary stimulus to boost the real estate sector. As a result, the sector will see a slow recovery, with more pain for many home-buyers

and developers."

Dr. Niranjana Hiranandani, president, Naredco, said the Budget failed to announce much-awaited economic stimulus to fuel kick-start of \$5 trillion economy. "With economy in doldrums and acute slump in consumption, efforts on demand creation incentives are missing," he said. To minimise hardships in real estate transactions, the Budget has proposed to increase the circle rate limit of 5% to 10%.

5%. She said the reduction has been done with the objective of easing "the burden on the print media at a time when it is going through a difficult phase".

The Budget also proposes reduction in customs duty on raw materials and inputs imported by domestic manufacturers. The duty of 10% on fuel, chemicals and plastics would be fully removed.

The FM said customs duty exemption had been reviewed to weed out entries that are redundant, outdated or have outlived their utility.

As many as 80 exemptions are being withdrawn by mak-

ing suitable amendment/revision of relevant notifications. Imports under Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are on the rise. Undue claims of FTA benefits have posed threat to the domestic industry. Such imports require stringent checks.

In this context, suitable provisions are being incorporated in the Customs Act, as per the Budget proposal.

The FM said in the coming months, Rules of Origin requirements, particularly for certain sensitive items, will be reviewed to "ensure FTAs are aligned to the conscious direction of our policy."

| Import Shocker | Save for the likes of solar cells, duties have risen across items, from toy tricycles to fully built units of trucks, buses | |
| --- | --- |
| CUSTOMS DUTY (%) | EXISTING NEW |

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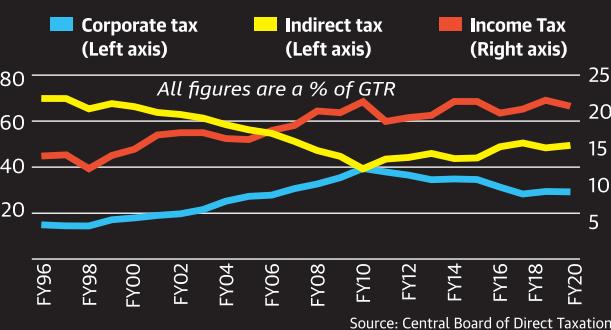
BUDGET 20-21

66
The removal of the
Dividend Distribution
Tax will lead to
estimated annual
revenue forgone of
₹25,000 crore - Budget speech



Tax reliance

Income Tax has increased substantially as a component of Gross Tax Revenues (GTR) over the last two decades. Corporate tax as a share of GTR grew till 2009-10 but fell thereafter, while the share of indirect tax, which was falling till 2009-10, increased thereafter. Graph traces tax share since FY96



If taxpayers opt for the new regime, then it will result in higher cash in their hands, leading to more spending or higher investments, both good for the country
Jaideep Hansraj,
Kotak Securities CEO



VIEWPOINT



T.T. SRINIVASARAGHAVAN

MD, Sundaram Finance

Long on words, short on numbers

Expectations, predictions, educated guesses and speculation surrounding the Union Budget are behind us and what we have now is the reality of the Budget documents placed before the Parliament! It was probably unfair to expect miracles from the Finance Minister, given the complex challenges facing the economy. Between keeping the fiscal deficit within reasonable limits, satisfying the clamour for lower rates of personal taxation and simultaneously providing a thrust to growth was clearly a Himalayan task. Be that as it may, one would still have to conclude that even the most moderate of expectations have been belied.

Corporate India, already the beneficiary of the generous tax rate reduction in September, is doubly benefited by the scrapping of Dividend Distribution Tax. But was that the priority? No doubt, the generous allocations for the rural and infrastructure sectors are in line with expectations and indeed, welcome. The latter, in particular, has been one of the key drivers of growth in recent years and deserves to be carried forward. Over the past few months, much has been written about the liquidity issues dogging the NBFC sector. However, banks have been flush with liquidity, as have many of the large and well-managed NBFCs.

In fact, the really worrying factor has been the weak demand, across the two-wheeler, passenger car and commercial vehicle segments, all of which have witnessed significant double-digit declines in sales over the past year. While it is well-nigh impossible for any Finance Minister to satisfy all sections of the public, one expected a few specific measures to spur demand; sadly, these are conspicuous by their absence.

But the deed is done, and the din and bustle of television debates will run their course. What remains however, is the reality of surplus capacity, depressed consumer sentiment, heightened risk aversion and an uncertain global environment. These, and more, are what we shall have to contend with in the months ahead. The Budget was long on words and short on numbers.

States' tax share to stay at 42%

Fifteenth Finance Commission to continue formula set by predecessor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Fifteenth Finance Commission Chairman N.K. Singh, left, with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. ■ FILE PHOTO

The Fifteenth Finance Commission, in its interim report tabled in Parliament on Saturday, has recommended maintaining States' share in the divisible pool of tax collections at virtually the same level of 42% set by its predecessor, for 2020-21.

To factor in the changed status of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir, the rate at which funds may be shared with the States has been reset to 41%. This is after 'adjusting one percentage point for the needs, including special ones of the two new union territories of J&K and Ladakh,' the Commission noted in its report.

An official said that the actual pool of funds available to States will be equivalent to what they were receiving from the 42% share granted by the Fourteenth Finance Commission, as the number of States are now 28 instead of 29. The one percentage point reduction is what would have been earmarked for J&K as a State.

"In the spirit of co-operative federalism, I am pleased to announce that we have, in substantial measure, accepted the recommendations of the Commission," said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech.

Having missed its original deadline of November 2019, the Commission attributed the delay to new developments that took place when its work was at an advanced stage, such as the enactment of the J&K Re-organisation Act to create two new union territories, the unpredictable and slowing global economy, and India's own sluggish economy that made revenue projections tricky.

The current slowdown in the Indian economy coincides with major 'structural reforms' such as demonetisation and GST taken over the past five years, the Commission noted.

"Short-term transitional difficulties in implementing these structural reforms can create a pessimistic view on the medium term prospects

of economic growth and revenue collections," it said, stressing that all these changes will 'take time to filter through the economy' so forecasting efforts based on current trends could be misplaced.

The Defence Ministry said that though India is currently not engaged in any conflict, the nature of threats it faces demands complete defence preparedness. The expert group to be constituted by the Commission would consider the detailed modalities and implementation plan for an alternative mechanism such as the proposed non-lapsable fund.

The Commission would submit its final report to the President during the latter part of the year, that would include the devolution formula proposed between the Centre and the States for the five-year period from 2021-2022 till 2025-2026. The interim report was submitted to provide a formula for 2020-21 alone.

Arguing that current pro-

visions are inadequate for big defence acquisitions, the Ministry has mooted disinvestment of defence public sector enterprises, levying of a cess, monetisation of surplus land and other assets, as well as the issuance of tax-free defence bonds and the creation of a non-lapsable fund.

"The defence capital outlay was less than the Budgetary provision for five years from 2011-12 to 2015-16. We have noticed a reversal in this trend during 2016-17 to 2018-19," the Commission noted in its interim report.

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FM proposes taxpayer's charter to boost trust

I-T Act to include taxpayer's rights

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed a new 'taxpayer's charter' aimed at boosting trust between citizens and authorities, in order to improve the efficiency of tax administration.

"Our Prime Minister has laid before us ease of living as a goal to be achieved on behalf of all citizens.

"An important aspect of both ease of living and ease of doing business is fairness and efficiency of tax administration," she said.

"We wish to enshrine in the statutes a 'taxpayer charter'... government would like to reassure taxpayers that we remain committed to taking measures so that our citizens are free from harassment of any kind," she added.

The charter, which would enumerate taxpayer's rights, would be incorporated in the Income Tax Act through suitable amendments, the Minister said.

"I propose to amend the provisions of the Income Tax Act to mandate the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to adopt a Taxpayers' Charter.

The details of the contents of the charter shall be notified soon," she added.

The Budget also pro-

posed several other steps to smoothen the administration of the IT regime, including enhancing the use of technology.

As part of modification of the existing e-assessment scheme, "it is proposed to amend sub-section (3A) of section 143 of the Act to, (i) expand the scope so as to include the reference of section 144 of the Act relating to best judgment assessment in the said sub-section; (ii) provide that Central Government may issue any direction under sub-section (3B) of the said section up to 31st March, 2022."

This amendment would take effect from April 1, 2020.

A provision for e-appeal has also been included as part of the drive to impart greater efficiency, transparency and accountability to the assessment process.

The e-appeal scheme would help in "eliminating the interface between the Commissioner (Appeals) and the appellant in the course of appellate proceedings to the extent technologically feasible."

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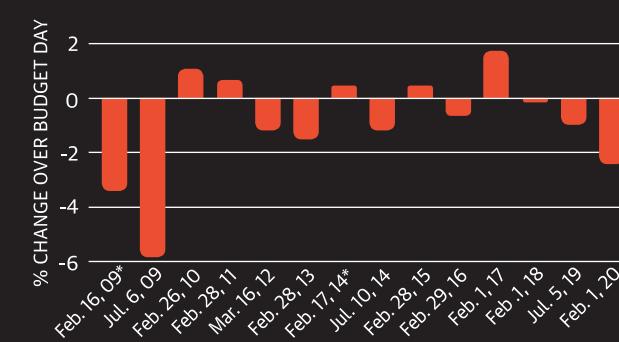
BUDGET 20-21

66
Propose to set up an Investment Clearance Cell ... [to provide] "end to end" facilitation and support, including advisory, information on land banks - Budget speech



Bear run

The Sensex fell 2.43% at the end of the day after the budget presentation by the Finance Minister. This is the worst such fall since 2019 (when the Sensex fell nearly 6% points). Stocks in the realty sector fell the most (-8%). Stocks in the IT sector registered a 1.4% increase over the day



The government should rapidly implement the National Infrastructure Pipeline worth ₹103 lakh crore. This will provide a boost to demand in the economy

Anil Agarwal,
Vedanta
chairman



VIEWPOINT

A. BALASUBRAMANIAN
MD & CEO, Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC Ltd.



Bottom-up approach to building economy

The three prominent themes of the Budget this year of Aspirational India, Economic Development and Caring Society give a direction in the way the government envisages economic growth in the country.

The Government of India has taken a bottom-up approach towards building the economy with a strong focus on reviving rural income through various agricultural reforms.

The 16 action points, all aligned to increase farm income, will go a long way in increasing employment opportunities in that segment as well as help in creating avenues of giving more money in the hands of people. This could potentially help boost rural consumption by increasing their purchasing power. There have been some measures announced to enhance employment generation by way of boosting electronic manufacturing, enhanced policies for entrepreneurial ventures and infra-focussed skill development initiatives which can have long-term benefits for the nation.

An increase in bond market investment limit in both government securities and corporate bonds is a welcome move to attract more foreign money into Indian bonds.

This will not only help infrastructure-related bonds get more participation from global investors but also ensure availability of long-term funds to such projects as part of the take-out financing in nature. The effort to deepen the bond market may also help the government get another source of funds to help its borrowing.

More money to lend

This in essence will leave more money in the hands of banks to focus on lending and also bring in the necessary stability in the interest rate.

With respect to maintaining fiscal balance, the Budget has rightly taken the provision of slipping on the fiscal by 50 basis points to boost public spending and revive the economic growth through rural agriculture-related economy, infrastructure development and also health sector-related issues surrounding the economy. It is also a well thought out tax reduction for those who don't avail any exemption and help them decide between savings and spending.

Middle income earners now can choose to have more money in their hands by availing this new tax regime and spend more or continue to stay with the old tax rate by availing the exemption and increase their long-term savings pool. Both are good in a way as income tax payers in this segment can choose as it suits each year.

The intent is to simplify the taxation system and as well as encourage better tax compliance through friendlier policies.

The abolition of DDT (dividend distribution tax) is a big benefit for minority shareholders and means more money in their hands for investing or spending. DDT removal also encourages rewarding shareholders more appropriately, leading to long-term value creation for them. It would also improve their return on equity and therefore improved valuation for companies. Of course, in each Budget we all look at what is the missing piece.

One I would assume is the expectation around removal of long-term capital gains towards equity investing and lack of focus in clearing the inventory in the real estate sector, especially in big metro cities, specifically Mumbai and Delhi.

Second, the divestment target of ₹2.1 lakh crore is a big target to achieve in a single year given the fact that this year's disinvestment target has not been fully met, falling short by ₹50,000 crore against the targeted ₹1.05 lakh crore. Despite this, the overall Budget should be seen as something that addresses the need for growth besides removing pain points in some of the sectors.

Overall, from investors' point of view, one should look beyond the Budget and repose faith in our economy to create a long-term investment portfolio through the asset allocation model, which remains permanent irrespective of the outcome of Budget.

Government moots cut in withholding tax

Finance Minister's proposal is aimed at boosting listing of bonds on the IFSC exchange

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

With an aim to boost listing of bonds at IFSC exchange, the government has proposed to reduce the withholding tax rate to 4% from 5% on interest payment on bonds listed on the bourse.

The move will attract more international investors to IFSC exchange.

"In order to incentivise listing of bonds at IFSC exchange, I propose to further reduce the withholding rate from 5% to 4% on interest payment on the bonds listed on its exchange," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman



The cut in levy will attract more international investors, says V. Balasubramanian, MD & CEO, India INX. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

Sitharaman said in her Bud-
get speech.

India International Ex-

change (India INX) MD and CEO V. Balasubramanian said the Budget announce-

ment will be "an immense boost to all issuers and immensely help them in attracting more international investors." Withholding tax is levied by countries on interest or dividends paid to a person who is resident outside that country. India INX has already listed medium-term note (debt) programme worth \$47 billion (about ₹3.33 lakh crore) with drawdown of ₹18.5 billion till date.

"This announcement should greatly incentivise issuers to choose India INX as the preferred platform for listing their international bonds and masala bonds,"

he added. India's only International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) is in GIFT City, near Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

GIFT City is a global financial and IT services hub, a first-of-its-kind in India, designed to be at par with globally benchmarked business districts. It is supported by state-of-the-art infrastructure encompassing all basic urban infrastructure elements along with an excellent external connectivity.

Companies from financial services, technology and all other services sector are targeted as potential occupants within the city.

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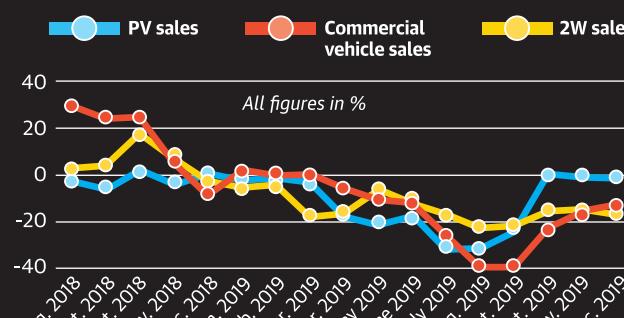
BUDGET 20-21

66
The limit for FPIs in corporate bonds, currently at 9% of outstanding stock, will be increased to 15% - Budget speech



Brakes on

Automobile sales in the country declined year-on-year (YoY) by 23.55% in August 2019, the worst drop since 1997-98. While the decline has been moderate since then, sales continue to suffer. The chart shows the YoY change in sale of passenger vehicles (PV), commercial vehicles and two-wheelers (2W)



Very happy and thankful for ESOP related changes done by Nirmala Sitharaman. Beautifully defined and sorts out many issues
Vijay Shekhar Sharma, Paytm CEO



VIEWPOINT

VIKRAM KIRLOSKAR
President, CII

CBMs in Budget enthuse industry

The Union Budget has taken multiple measures that will build the confidence of industry. These include the measures to reduce tax harassment, to enhance contract enforcement, to decriminalise business laws and simplify the processes of tax payment. These measures will considerably improve the business environment in the country.

Besides, the removal of the dividend distribution tax is genuinely commendable, as it removes the double taxation of dividends. This will enhance the rate of return on equity and has been a long-standing demand of industry.

The Budget has also focused on measures that will have a positive impact on the economy. Consumption boost will be provided by lower rates of personal income tax as also the focus on rural spending.

The Finance Minister has rightly stressed the importance of rural infrastructure and credit availability as some of the enablers for generating higher rural incomes. Health and education related spending has also been re-oriented to benefit the weaker sections.

Infrastructure push

For a revival in investment, the Budget has delivered strong measures to accelerate infrastructure building, including highways, railways, airports and ports. Reform to alleviate the financial stress of the power distribution sector is urgently required and has been mentioned as a focus area. To encourage investment in power generation, new investment by domestic companies have been granted the concessional tax rate of 15%.

Encouragingly, the financing of the National Infrastructure Pipeline has been spelt out. Infrastructure finance companies such as IIFCL and NIIF will be leveraging the allocations made in the Budget. This would be a sustainable way of financing infrastructure. In addition, sovereign wealth funds have been granted certain tax exemptions to encourage them to invest in infrastructure.

The Finance Minister has the critical task of making the Budget balance even after making all the allocations required. The economic slowdown in the current year has made this a particularly difficult task for the Minister. Yet, it is commendable that the fiscal deficit has been reined in at 3.8% of GDP, which is a slippage of 0.5% compared to the target of 3.3%. For the coming year, the Minister has proposed a reduction in the deficit to 3.5%. This will ensure that the government's borrowing remains in control.

In the coming months, the government must take forward the measures announced in the Budget and ensure that they are implemented. For example, the disinvestment target has been set at an ambitious level of ₹2.1 lakh crore. The government must make sure that it is realised unlike in the current year when only a small percentage of the target was raised.

POCKET | RAVIKANTH



LIMIT UP

FM proposes a set of reforms to deepen bond market

Steps include raising FPIs' corporate bonds investment limit, letting non-resident investors buy select g-secs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

As part of the reforms to the financial markets, especially the bond market, the government has proposed increasing the investment limit for foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) in corporate bonds, opening certain government securities for non-resident investors and launching a new debt exchange traded fund (ETF) comprising primarily of government securities.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on

Saturday proposed that the limit for FPIs' purchases of corporate bonds, currently capped at 9% of the outstanding stock, would be increased to 15%.

Muted for now?

"It may be argued that overall interest in Indian bonds is anyway muted for now and hence these expansions may amount to little in the near term," Suyash Choudhary, head-Fixed Income, IDFC AMC, wrote in a post-Budget note.

"The other view to take



could be that incremental ease of operation does bring in more flows (all other things being equal) and that especially the measure on government bonds could be in the direction of ultimate inclusion in global bond indices," added Mr.

Choudhary. The Minister also proposed to float a new debt ETF consisting primarily of government securities.

"This will give retail investors access to government securities as much as giving an attractive investment for pension funds and long-term investors," she said.

The Budget also highlighted the success of the recent debt-based ETF floated by the government.

The Bharat Bond ETF, introduced in December, raised more than ₹12,000 crore, against its issue size of ₹7,000 crore. Bharat Bond ETF invests in AAA-rated bonds issued by public sector companies.

The Minister also proposed opening specified categories of government debt securities to non-resident investors.

Separately, the Budget proposes amending the relevant laws to extend commodity transaction tax on products introduced in the commodity derivatives markets late last year.

Stock markets not enthused, equities nosedive after Budget

Sensex sheds 987.96 points or 2.43%, Nifty down 300.25 points or 2.51%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

If the stock market reaction is anything to go by, the Union Budget 2020-21 has certainly not lived up to its expectations.

The benchmark Sensex nosedived nearly 1,100 points during intra-day trades as market participants felt that the government had not taken concrete steps to revive the slowing economy.

The 30-share Sensex, which was trading around 100 points higher before the Union Finance Minister began her speech, erased all its gains and dipped in the red, even as the budget proposed removal of the dividend distribution tax (DDT) for companies and a lower income tax regime for individuals who forgo the existing exemptions.

At the fag end of the trading session, the Sensex fell below the psychological level to 40,000 to touch a low of 39,631.24, a fall of 1,092.25 points. The barometer settled the day at 39,735.53, shedding 987.96 points or 2.43%.

The broader Nifty ended the day at 11,661.85, down 300.25 points or 2.51%.

High expectations

"Market expectations were high on capital market reforms, which have not materialised, and to that extent, there could be some near-term disappointment," said Jaideep Hansraj, managing director & chief executive officer, Kotak Securities.

While the biggest loser among the Sensex pack was ITC, which lost nearly 7%, financials witnessed across-

the-board selling, with heavyweights such as HDFC, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and HDFC Bank all losing significant ground.

Interestingly, the stocks of listed insurance entities lost a lot of ground as the market was abuzz with talk that the new income tax regime that individuals can opt for by forgoing deductions could impact the sales of insurance products that are typically taken for saving on taxes.

While the shares of ICICI Prudential Life lost nearly 11%, SBI Life Insurance was down a little over 10%. HDFC Life Insurance ended the day 6% lower.

"Though the abolition of the dividend distribution tax

(DDT) looks like a positive from this budget, it still addresses only the supply side and not the demand side," said Dharmesh Kant, head-Retail Research, India Nivesh.

"There is little or rather nothing in the budget which can boost consumption. The markets, which were feeling under the pressure of the coronavirus attack, will further sink, owing to an insipid budget," he added.

FPI sell-off

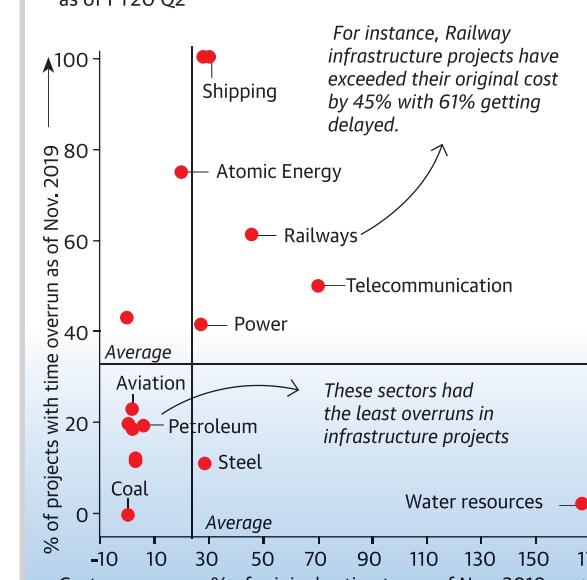
More importantly, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) for whom the government has increased the investment limit in corporate bonds were net sellers in equities, at nearly ₹1,200 crore.



BIG PLANS, POOR IMPLEMENTATION

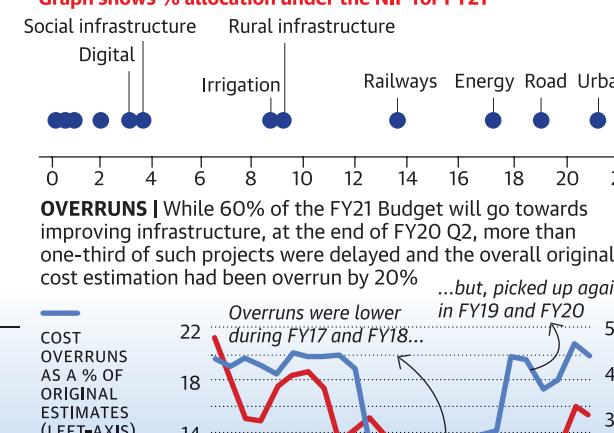
The five-year-long National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) with a total budget of ₹102.5 lakh crore is entering the second year in FY21. The ambitious plan is getting bogged down by time delays and cost-overruns across many projects

SECTORAL COMPARISON While the Railways and power sectors saw high allocation, a high share of ongoing infra projects in these sectors has been delayed as of FY20 Q2



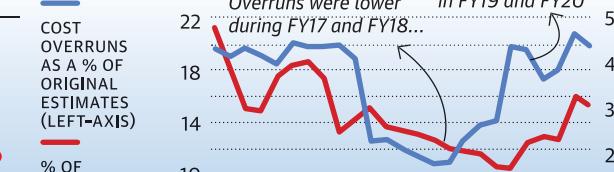
1. INFRA PUSH | About ₹19.5 lakh crore has been budgeted during FY21 as part of the NIP. Urban infrastructure, road transport, energy and Railways account for about 70% of allocation this year

Graph shows % allocation under the NIP for FY21



OVERRUNS | While 60% of the FY21 Budget will go towards improving infrastructure, at the end of FY20 Q2, more than one-third of such projects were delayed and the overall original cost estimation had been overrun by 20%

...but, picked up again in FY19 and FY20...



Source: National Infrastructure Pipeline report, MoSPI

ESOP tax can wait for five years

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

To give a boost to the start-up ecosystem, the Budget proposes to defer tax payment on income earned from Employee Stock Option Plans (ESOPs) by five years or till employees leave the company or when they sell their shares, whichever is

earliest. "However, the proposal applies only to start-ups set up post April 2016," said Dilip K, an entrepreneur.

As per the Finance Bill, it applies to employees of the companies which qualify as eligible start-ups under Section 80-IAC, and to be eligible under Section 80-IAC,

start-ups have to get a certificate from an inter-ministerial board.

The ESOP is a significant component of compensation

and during formative years, start-ups take this route to attract and retain talent.

Currently, ESOPs are taxable as

perquisites at the time of exercising the option.

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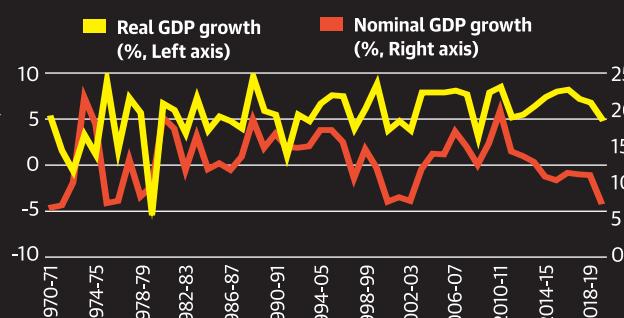
BUDGET 20-21

66
We have estimated nominal growth of GDP for year 2020-21, on the basis of trends available, at 10% - Budget speech



At historic lows

In FY20, the real GDP is expected to grow at 5% (slowest since FY09, the year of the global financial crisis) and the nominal GDP is expected to grow at 7.5% (slowest since FY76). Nominal GDP is a proxy for income growth, especially that of corporates. A slowing nominal GDP will eventually lead to low tax collections



The government has done a commendable job and the various measures announced will strengthen India, individuals and industry
Sangita Reddy,
FICCI president



VIEWPOINT

DR. PREETHA REDDY
Vice-chairperson, Apollo Hospitals Group

'A Budget that makes India future-ready'

Union Budget 2020 can be described as one well-intended to boost the economy, promote inclusive progress and that bodes well for the new decade. In particular, the three overarching themes, to improve standard of living, boost economic development for all, and building a humane and compassionate society, will certainly make the world's largest democracy a model nation.

It is said that there can be no progress without farmers and that is a definitive in an agrarian nation like India. In light of this reality, the Budget demonstrated the government's passionate will to double farmers' income, support water-stressed districts, help them monetise barrenlands by converting them into solar farms, Kisan trains for perishables and many such initiatives, which reaffirm commitment to nurture the soul of India.

Encouraging impetus

Likewise, the impetus to education and skills development was encouraging. The Budget allocated ₹99,300 crore for the education sector in 2021, including ₹3,000 crore for skills development. These allocations are valuable to build a task force ready to serve an ageing world, boost employment and at large, make India future-ready. In addition, the IND SAT exam for students of Asia and Africa to promote the "study in India" programme would also boost India's stature as a destination for higher education.

Budget 2020 also had several noteworthy measures for the health sector of India. The allocation of ₹69,000 crore in this budget is slightly up from last year and of this, around ₹6,400 crore would be for the AB-PMJAY (Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana) scheme. It includes an impetus to this flagship scheme as more than 112 aspirational districts have been identified, including Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, wherein empanelled hospitals would be set up to treat the economically weaker sections of India. A well-established fact is that addition of hospitals fuels job creation, so this would also provide job opportunities to youth in these identified districts. Moreover, a viability gap funding window is going to be set up to cover hospitals, for the priority districts that do not have hospitals empanelled under Ayushman Bharat. Similarly, availability of medicines is critical to a patient's treatment and they do add up to a considerable part of the cost of care. Hence, extending Jan Aushadhi stores to every district is a prudent measure.

C The addition of hospitals fuels job creation, so this would give opportunities to youth in the districts identified

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Qualified doctors

There is an acute shortage of qualified medical doctors. To come closer to the World Health Organisation mandate of numbers of doctors to population, India needs to at least double the number of doctors. So the Budget's proposal to attach a medical college to a district hospital in public-private partnership mode will certainly help India move towards this objective.

POCKET | RAVIKANTH



MSMEs turnover limit for audit increased

It will apply only to businesses that carry out less than 5% of transactions in cash

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

In a major relief to small retailers, traders and shopkeepers forming the Medium, Small and Micro Enterprise (MSME) sector, the Budget has proposed to raise by five times the turnover threshold for audit from the existing ₹1 crore to ₹5 crore.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that to boost the less cash economy, the increased limit would apply only to those businesses which carried out less than 5% of their transactions in cash.

Currently, businesses having a turnover of more than ₹1 crore are required to get their books of accounts audited by an accountant.

Cheap imports

To ensure that the labour-intensive sectors, critical for employment generation, are not impacted by low-quality imports, the Budget has proposed to increase customs duty on items like footwear and furniture. The rate of duty for footwear is being raised from 25% to 35%, and for "parts of footwear" from

15% to 20%. The rate for specified furniture goods is being raised from 20% to 25%.

NBFCs will be allowed to extend invoice financing to MSMEs through TReDS, and measures have been announced for debt recovery.

The government has also announced a ₹1,000 crore scheme to help mid-sized companies in export development, R&D and technology upgrade.

The scheme will help the component sector remain relevant and competitive.



Being significantly dominated by MSMEs, measures to extend invoice financing to MSMEs and creating access to working capital through a new scheme are a welcome step...," said Deepak Jain, president, Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA).

Meghna Suryakumar, founder & CEO, Creditchase, said, "The focus on enabling growth for MSMEs is encouraging." Since NBFCs could extend invoice financing to the MSMEs through TReDS, it should enhance opportunity to fuel the economy, she said.

No substantial gain likely from AGR dues

Industry players in dialogue with government to resolve the issue: Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

It may have sought almost ₹4 lakh crore from telecom and non-telecom companies in past dues but the government is not expecting any substantial windfall in the coming year.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who provisioned ₹1.3 lakh crore in receipts from telecom licence fee and spectrum usage charge for the next financial year, said the government is looking to address the dispute over what revenues should be taken for calculating dues in a more comprehensive manner.

In her post-Budget press conference, she said the issue is a complex one and the industry players are in dialogue with the government to resolve it. "I don't think I am looking at it purely from what the government will collect. This particular development in the telecom sector is something which all of us have watched, going through the proceedings of the court... it would not be right for me to just comment and say we are looking at this number or that," she said in response to a question on enhancing revenue collection target from the debt-ridden telecom sector.

The government on Saturday increased the revenue estimate from the sector by over two-folds to ₹1.33 lakh crore for 2020-21, as compared to the collection target in the current financial year, mainly on account of adjusted gross revenue dues.

A complex issue

"It is fairly complex issue. The industry and affected parties are also in touch with the government. We are engaging with them, the department is engaging with them. We will be addressing this in a more comprehensive manner," Ms. Sitharaman said.

The government expects ₹58,664.64 crore under communications head in the current financial year as against a budgeted amount of ₹50,519.84 crore in 2019-20.

"Receipts under 'Other Communication Services' mainly relate to the licence fees from telecom operators and receipts on account of spectrum usage charges," the Budget documents said.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

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Government bites the fiscal deficit bullet

It sets in motion a trigger mechanism for deviation; target for the next year is pegged at 3.5% of the GDP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The government has decided to bite the fiscal deficit bullet in the wake of lower tax collections, amid a slowing economy, by allowing fiscal deficit to go up to 3.8% of the GDP for the current financial year, compared with 3.3% projected in the previous year's Budget.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman cited Section 4(2) of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act

that provides for a trigger mechanism for a deviation from the estimated fiscal deficit on account of structural reforms in the economy "with unanticipated fiscal implications".

"Therefore, I have taken a deviation of 0.5%, consistent with Section 4(3) of the FRBM Act, both for RE 2019-20 and BE 2020-21," she said.

The fiscal deficit target for the next year is pegged at 3.5% of the GDP.

"...the return path is being laid before Parliament as a part of the Medium Term Financial Policy-cum-Strategy Statement. This fiscal path commits us to the path of fiscal consolidation without compromising on the needs of investment out of public funds," Ms. Sitharaman said.

The government said net market borrowings for 2019-20 would be ₹4.99 lakh crore and ₹5.36 lakh crore for the short term," said Abheek Barua, Chief Economist, HDFC

Finance Minister said a good part of the borrowings for the financial year 2020-21 would go towards capital expenditure of the government that had been scaled up by more than 21%.

In line with expectations

"For the bond market, the borrowing numbers seem to be broadly in line with market expectations and are unlikely to put a significant pressure on yields in the short term," said Abheek Barua, Chief Economist, HDFC

Bank. Bond markets were closed on Saturday.

No rate cut possible

However, market participants said the scope for interest rate reduction is now ruled out with a higher fiscal deficit number.

"Increase in fiscal deficit will put pressure on inflation, which is on the rise. The Reserve Bank of India will not have much scope for further rate cut," said the treasury head of a large public sector bank.

After reducing interest rate by 135 bps between February and October, 2019, the RBI decided to hit the pause button at the last monetary policy review in December, citing inflation concerns.

The RBI Governor had hinted that he would await the Budget for future course of action on the monetary policy front.

The central bank will announce the outcome of its next monetary policy review on February 6.

Revenue from telecom to double to ₹1.33 lakh cr.

A boost from increased licence fees

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Centre expects revenues from the telecom sector to more than double to ₹1.33 lakh crore in the next financial year on the back of increased licence fees and spectrum usage charges by operators, following the Supreme Court's ruling on the adjusted gross revenue (AGR), along with the upcoming spectrum auctions.

According to the government estimates, in the current financial year (2019-20), its revenues from 'other communication services' will be ₹58,989.64 crore against a budgeted amount of ₹50,519.81 crore.

"Receipts under 'Other Communication Services' mainly relate to the licence fees from telecom operators and receipts on account of spectrum usage charges," the Budget document said, adding that the Department of Telecom collects the recurring licence fees from various service providers.

According to experts, the increased revenue estimate could point to realisation of some of the AGR dues, along with the proceeds from the upcoming spectrum auctions, including those of the 5G airwaves.

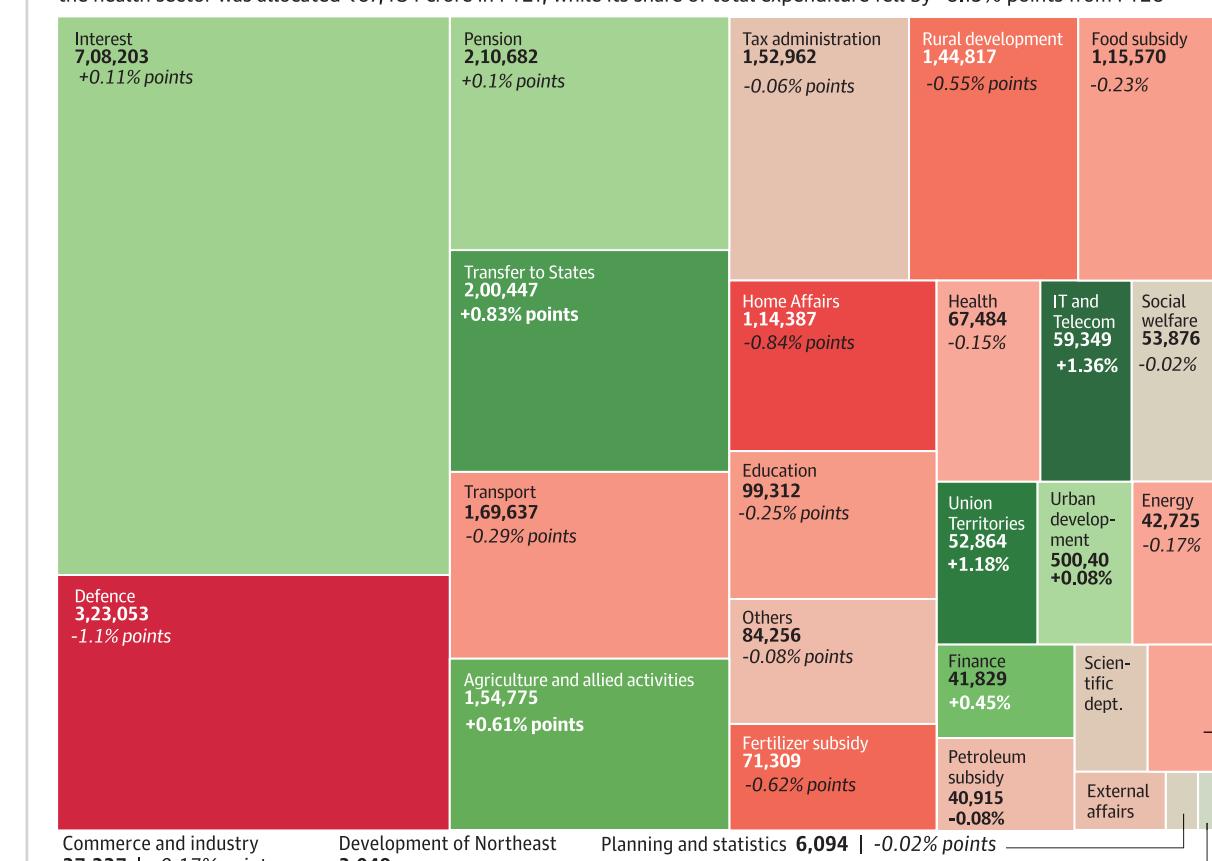
Ankit Jain, assistant vice-president, corporate ratings, ICRA Ltd, said, "Despite the deferral of spectrum payments due in FY2021 and FY2022, the higher BE for FY2021 can be attributable to some participation in 5G spectrum auctions and expectation of payments of AGR-related dues."

Following the Supreme Court's October 24 ruling on the definition of AGR, the telecom industry owes the government ₹1.47 lakh crore in licence fees (₹92,642 crore) and ₹55,054.51 crore in spectrum usage charge.

The debt-ridden industry on Saturday expressed dis-

BREAKING IT DOWN

The outlay for defence and pensions (apart from interest payments) formed the bulk of the budget expenditure in FY21. However, defence's share in total expenditure came down by -1.1% points from last year (fell from 11.72% of total expenses in FY20 to 10.62% in FY21). The graph depicts budgeted expenditure (₹ crore) in FY21 and the change from FY20. For instance, the health sector was allocated ₹67,484 crore in FY21, while its share of total expenditure fell by -0.15% points from FY20



The revenue from 'other communication services' will be ₹58,989.64 crore.

appointment with the Budget, given that none of its demands, including a reduction in levies, was addressed.

COAI upset

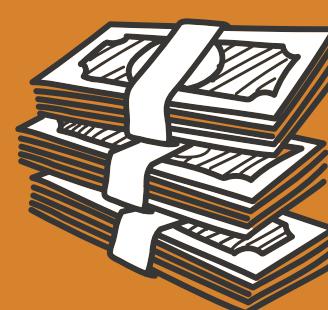
Rajan Mathews, Director-General of the COAI, said, "...it is disappointing that there were no announcements regarding the rationalisation of levies and taxes currently imposed on the various service providers.

According to experts, the increased revenue estimate could point to realisation of some of the AGR dues, along with the proceeds from the upcoming spectrum auctions, including those of the 5G airwaves.

The telecom sector, which is the backbone of the country's economy, did not receive significant support." Prashant Singh, Emerging Markets TMT leader, EY, said, "While the telecom sector will be pivotal to realising Digital India's vision, the Budget brings little cheer for it. The Budget factors in a 2.5 fold increase in communication services receipt for this fiscal at ₹1.33 trillion, which points

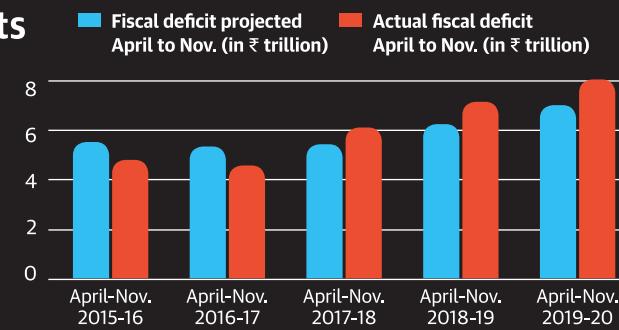
BUDGET 20-21

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We estimate a fiscal deficit of 3.8% in RE 2019-20 and 3.5% for BE 2020-21 —Budget speech



Widening deficits

The fiscal deficit of ₹8.08 trillion for April-November is nearly 15% more than the projected amount. The deficit has widened due to dwindling tax revenues, following an economic slowdown. The chart compares projected and actual fiscal deficit between April and November between FY15



"The Budget is trying to address every section of society & put India on a growth trajectory. It has many sops to revive agriculture"
Keshav Murugesh,
Nasscom CEO



VIEWPOINT

DR. Pawan Goenka,
Managing director, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd

It is sure to spur long-term growth

The expectations of Corporate India from this Budget were very high. The Budget meets the expectations in certain areas and falls short in certain others. The primary need of the hour is how to revive demand. By and large, the supply side was taken care of by many steps that were taken post July 5 till before the Budget. I think the Budget could have taken a few more measures for immediate revival of demand. For example, the fiscal deficit of 3.5%, though more than 3.3 of last year, may have gone a little higher to 3.8%. This could have put a little bit more money in the hands of the government to increase expenditure and thus revived demand.

While the overall immediate impact on demand may not be stimulated by this Budget, what it scores heavily on is mid to long term. The kind of things that have been talked about – the three themes, Aspirational India, Economic Development for all and Caring Society – will augur well for our country.

I personally see these themes as longer-term stimuli and a blueprint for the future to make India a global manufacturing base. The structural changes may not be enough to have an impact tomorrow, but will definitely give a strong impetus to the economy

and so you could look at the glass as half full or half empty depending on what you want to see. For the first time during the Budget presentation, I heard things like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Internet of Things, and the engineer in me hopes these are all well-intentioned and hopefully will be significantly supported as we move along.

I particularly liked the 16-point agenda the FM targeted under rural development. The FM spoke about doubling farmers' income by 2022, which augurs well for the farmers. Some of the steps outlined – from solar pumps for farmers, warehousing and cold storage to water-sufficiency measures for over 100 water-stressed districts – all augur well for the future.

A lot, of course, would be dependent on proficient execution by the government. This focus on the rural and farm sector, I feel, will help facilitate the smooth functioning in the sector with a rise in farm income.

For tractors, demand will be good in February and March. April to July will be dull months. Slowly demand will pick up by September. In Auto, we will see challenging times till the festive season and we will be happy with high single-digit growth.

As far as electric vehicles (EVs) are concerned, the government has done enough and now it is up to us to make EVs happen. Somehow we need to enable charging infrastructure. One thing that the government could have done is remove import duty on lithium ion cells.

Where the Budget perhaps should have done more is how to revive demand. As we have been saying all along, the biggest concern right now for the economy is how to get the demand cycle going. This is definitely a Budget that will spur mid-long term growth.

POCKET | RAVIKANTH



"I used to find cricket very exciting! But this budget got me hooked to the Sensex!!"

Major cut in financial allocation for Nepal

Development likely to cast a shadow on the work that India partners in the key neighbouring nation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Budget has made a major reduction in the annual allocation for financial assistance to Nepal. Apart from Nepal, aid to African countries has also been reduced.

The 2019-20 Budget had allocated ₹1,200 crore to projects in Nepal but Saturday's numbers show that India has allocated only ₹800 crore to the projects under way in Nepal for 2020-21. The development is likely to cast a shadow on the work that India partners in the

crucial Himalayan neighbour which has in recent months showed warmth towards China.

Substantial cut
The Budget also showed substantial reduction for "other developing countries" that will now receive ₹120 crore compared to last year's allocation of ₹150 crore.

Similar reduction was also noticed in the African department where ₹350 crore has been allocated for next year in comparison to last year's ₹450 crore. Allocation for Latin American countries

has increased and currently ₹20 crore will be spent on diplomacy with the region which is a favoured area of new Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla.

Shrinking safety net: Army personnel getting ready to airlift relief material to Nepal after the 2015 earthquake. ■ AFP



The figure for Sri Lanka has also been trimmed from previous year's ₹205 crore to ₹200 crore.

Disaster relief, a chosen area of the Modi government, has also received a jolt with only ₹20 crore being allocated compared to last year's ₹30 crore.

Bhutan tops chart
Bhutan, the usual recipient of the largest share of Indian aid, continues in the top rung with ₹2,884.65 crore. Financial support for Afghanistan continues to remain the same at ₹400 crore.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said 100 more airports will be developed by 2025 to support the UDAN scheme, aimed at better regional connectivity.

Presenting the Budget, Ms. Sitharaman said ₹1.7 lakh crore had been provided for transport infrastructure in 2020-21.

She also said 150 trains would run under the public private partnership (PPP) mode. Four stations would be redeveloped with the help of the private sector.

100 airports to be developed by 2025 for UDAN scheme



Your ride is here: An UDAN service from Mysuru. ■ M.A. SRIRAM

sal for setting up large solar power capacity alongside rail tracks was under consideration.

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BUDGET 20-21

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Central government debt ... got reduced in March 2019 to 48.7% of GDP from a level of 52.2% in March 2014
- Budget speech

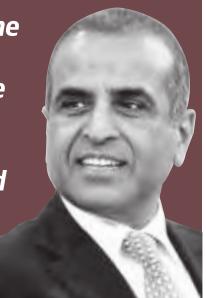


Lows across sectors

Gross value added (GVA) across most sectors fell in FY20 compared to FY19, with the manufacturing and construction sectors falling the most. Only the public administration and defence services, mostly fuelled by the government, grew robustly. The table shows the GVA growth

Year	AGRICULTURE	MINING	MANUFACTURING	UTILITIES	CONSTRUCTION	TRADE, HOTELS, TRANSPORT	FINANCIAL & REAL ESTATE	PUBLIC ADMIN & DEFENCE
2015-16	0.6	10.1	13.1	4.7	3.6	10.2	10.7	6.1
2016-17	6.3	9.5	7.9	10	6.1	7.7	8.7	9.2
2017-18	5	5.1	5.9	8.6	5.6	7.8	6.2	11.9
2018-19	2.9	1.3	6.9	7	8.7	6.9	7.4	8.6
2019-20	2.8	1.5	2	5.4	3.2	5.9	6.4	9.1

The biggest takeaway from the Budget for me was the call out from the Finance Minister that wealth creators will be respected
Sunil Bharti Mittal,
Bharti Enterprises chairman



VIEWPOINT

KUMAR MANGALAM BIRLA
Chairman, Aditya Birla Group



Taking the economic challenges head-on

The Finance Minister was presented with a tricky set of trade-offs ahead of Budget 2020. On one hand, there are immediate challenges of the slowdown in growth and investments, along with frequent global event risks – including the recent outbreak of the coronavirus. On the other, there are longer-term challenges of climate change, demographic shifts and technological disruptions.

In the limited fiscal room that the government had, the Finance Minister has announced several measures and initiatives to address these challenges and built them around the themes of Aspirational India, Economic Development and Caring Society.

Many of these have an element of continuity from the initiatives taken in the past. For example, the option of migrating to a lower tax structure by forgoing exemptions, that was given to the corporates in September, has now been given to cooperatives and to individual taxpayers up to an income of ₹15 lakh. The latter would boost consumption at the bottom of the pyramid, which is quite crucial in the current economic context.

The FM has rightly acknowledged the issues that have been hampering the competitiveness of Indian

Review of rules of origin norms under the FTAs and provisions against dumping are welcome steps

manufacturers in certain areas – including the rising trend in imports from FTA partners. The review of rules of origins requirements under the FTAs, strengthening of the provisions related to safeguard duty and the provisions against dumping are welcome steps to ensure a level playing field for Indian companies.

The National Infrastructure Pipeline envisaging an investment of ₹103 trillion that was announced a few weeks back is going to play the most important role in realising India's growth potential over the medium-term and in achieving the ambitious goal of a \$5-trillion economy.

The Budget has made sizeable provisions to get this pipeline going. Timely implementation of these projects will also require concerted and coordinated actions to expedite clearances, to iron out any ground-level issues and to address sectoral policy concerns that may come up.

Given the slowdown in tax collections and the need to maintain spending in a slowing economy, sticking to the original fiscal deficit targets was always going to be difficult. Still, the FM has managed to limit the deviation from the original deficit trajectory to 0.5% of GDP. The next year's ambitious disinvestment target – which includes selling of stake in LIC and some strategic divestments – will be helpful in this regard.

The sizeable provision of almost ₹1 lakh crore for the education sector, along with the steps to get more private sector play and foreign investment in higher education, are exciting.

The FM talked of different initiatives to link the skilling programmes to the needs of the employers (including special bridge courses to prepare teachers and nurses for the demand in other countries), which is the right way to go.

POCKET

| RAVIKANTH



"I am all for working hard and getting into robotics if the robots do all my assignments then on!"

Green signal for more private trains

Budget promises increased investment for passenger amenities and safety-related works, including track renewals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

road over/under bridges.

The ₹1.61 lakh crore outlay comprises ₹70,000 crore from budgetary support, ₹250 crore from the Nirbhaya Fund, ₹7,500 crore from Internal Resources and ₹83,292 crore from Extra Budgetary Resources.

An amount of ₹12,000 crore has been allocated for construction of new lines, ₹10,599 crore for track renewal, ₹2,250 crore for gauge conversion, ₹700 crore for doubling, ₹5,786.97 crore for rolling stock and ₹1,650 crore for signalling and telecom. For passenger amenities, the allocation is ₹2,725.63 crore.



Cushy ride: The Budget has expressed intent to introduce more Tejas-type trains to connect iconic tourist destinations. ■ G. MOORTHY

The government expects its revenue receipts to increase by ₹23,880 crore to ₹2.25 lakh crore. In the next fiscal, the Indian Railways expects earnings from passengers to grow to ₹61,000 crore from ₹56,000 crore in 2019-

20, and from goods to grow by more than ₹12,000 crore to ₹14,700 crore.

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Aiming to provide
piped water supply
to all households, we
have approved 3.6 lakh
crore for the Jal Jeevan
Mission - Budget speech



In search of jobs

The number of people in
salaried employment has
remained stagnant in the
last few years. Growth in
employment in this period was
seen only in the self-employed
category, which includes gig
workers like Ola/Uber cab
drivers. The data were sourced
from the CMIE database



We welcome the village
storage schemes that
will be run by women.
Indian Bank will
provide adequate
training through
our INDSETIs and
fund them
Padmaja Chunduru,
Indian Bank CEO



VIEWPOINT

ASHOK HINDUJA
Chairman, Hinduja Group of Companies

Should India have taken more risk?

Budgets are becoming more an indicator of policy orientation rather than unleashing big bang reforms. Three themes laid out by the FM on Aspirational India, Economic Development for All and Caring Society raised the expectation for the afternoon.

Farm economy occupied the centre stage for Aspirational India and rightfully so, given the degree of stress that that part of the world is going through. The 16-point agenda is possibly the most comprehensive detailing of policy objectives, that included farm market liberalisation, focus on 100 water stressed districts, solar power usage, village storage system, NBFC & Cooperative Banks getting NABARD refinance for agricultural funding are clear wins.

Wellness, the second pillar of Aspirational India, got an allocation of ₹69,000 crore with emphasis on private/public partnership of creating hospital infrastructure is clearly in the right direction but given the dismal state of health care, this is a sector that could with more focus.

Education, the third pillar of Aspirational India, needs to deal with an India that by 2030 has the largest working population on the planet.

FM's second theme on Economic Development for All was not inspiring. Industrial Development in terms of End-to-End Clearance Portals, Boosting Manufacturing in Electronics, 5 New Smart Cities to manufacture Networked Products were some of the mentions.

Clearly more work requires to be done to move India into the global supply chain.

Infrastructure development, the second pillar of the FM's Economic Development theme also went along expected lines. Fast track clearance of road projects, public/private participation in railways, inland water development, 100 more Udaan type airports, and electrification of discom reforms are worthy mention.

Caring Society, the third theme of the FM focused on Women & Child as its first pillar. Gross enrolment of girls across all stages of schooling exceeds boys is clearly a worthwhile achievement.

Governance was the second theme under Caring Society, and decriminalization of Offences under Companies Act is a laudable move we have long advocated to attract foreign investors. Debt recovery entitlement for NBFCs, privatization of IDBI Bank were some of the noteworthy mentions. MSME, the largest employer by sector was paid lip service with the Factor Regulation Act being announced that will allow NBFC to participate in the factoring market.

There was more to cheer for in Part 2 of the budget. Given the slowdown of consumption, reduction of Individual Taxes for income brackets ₹5-15 lakh resulting in ₹40,000 cr. revenue loss is positive for consumption.

Given that the macroeconomic fundamentals are sound, currency is stable, inflation manageable, commodity prices are low, could it have taken more risks to pull the country out of its growth quagmire? That question does remain.

POCKET | RAVIKANTH



"Till it happens, we can do with some laughter, the best medicine."

Cheer for science as key departments get a raise

Allocations increase by 13% more than what was spent last year; biotechnology gets largest hike

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

There is cheer for science in the Budget, with key scientific departments receiving an across-the-board increase of 10% or more.

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) posted the largest increase, with an outlay of ₹2,786 crore, a 17% increase from the ₹2,381 crore it spent last year.

The Department of Science and Technology got a 14% hike, at ₹6,301 crore, over its expenditure last year, the Earth Sciences Mi-

nistry posted a 14% hike at ₹2,070 crore and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research got a 10% hike at ₹5,385 crore.

Overall, the science Ministries received ₹16,542 crore, 13% more than what was spent last year.

The civilian science Ministries work on budgets that are much lower than, say, the Department of Atomic Energy that got ₹18,228 crore and the Department of Space that got ₹13,479 crore.

In previous years, science

departments generally posted percentage hikes that were in the single digits, and this is the first time in at least three years that all departments have posted double digit percentage hikes.

"Generally, the hikes involve round 7%, but this time there's been a significant signal of the government's encouragement to scientific endeavours," said Renu Swarup, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology.

"The genomics initiatives as well as encouragement to set up knowledge transfer clusters are among the key sectors that have got a

boost," Ms. Swarup added.

The DBT has embarked on projects to map the genes of Indians as well the genetic structure of every plant variety. Another official said the government's expenditure on science had nearly doubled since 2014.

'Fluctuations present'

"There are fluctuations within the year...the Finance Minister has stressed on quantum technologies," said Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology.

"This will be largely led by the Department of Science and Technology, though those allocations are not reflected in this Budget."



The Department of Biotechnology posted the largest increase by 17 per cent. ■ ISTOCKPHOTO

Gender budget sees a drop

FM proposes panel to look into raising of marriageable age

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

However, in absolute terms there has been an increase of 8.9% as compared to last year's gender budget of ₹1,31,700 crore.

The last Budget announcement proposed setting up of a committee to look at Budget through the gender lens which would suggest ac-

to ₹30,007 crore in financial year 2020-2021 from ₹26,184 crore in the current fiscal.

The schemes that have seen an increase include the scheme for adolescent out-of-school girls, which has gone up from ₹150 crore to ₹250 crore; working women hostel where the allocation has tripled from ₹45 crore to ₹150 crore.

There is also a 92% increase in the allocation for One Stop Centre, which has gone up from ₹385 crore to ₹500 crore.

Clearly more work requires to be done to move India into the global supply chain.

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Governance was the second theme under Caring Society, and decriminalization of Offences under Companies Act is a laudable move we have long advocated to attract foreign investors. Debt recovery entitlement for NBFCs, privatization of IDBI Bank were some of the noteworthy mentions. MSME, the largest employer by sector was paid lip service with the Factor Regulation Act being announced that will allow NBFC to participate in the factoring market.

There was more to cheer for in Part 2 of the budget. Given the slowdown of consumption, reduction of Individual Taxes for income brackets ₹5-15 lakh resulting in ₹40,000 cr. revenue loss is positive for consumption.

Given that the macroeconomic fundamentals are sound, currency is stable, inflation manageable, commodity prices are low, could it have taken more risks to pull the country out of its growth quagmire? That question does remain.

POCKET | RAVIKANTH



"Till it happens, we can do with some laughter, the best medicine."

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

There is cheer for science in the Budget, with key scientific departments receiving an across-the-board increase of 10% or more.

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) posted the largest increase, with an outlay of ₹2,786 crore, a 17% increase from the ₹2,381 crore it spent last year.

Overall, the science Ministries received ₹16,542 crore, 13% more than what was spent last year.

The civilian science Ministries work on budgets that are much lower than, say, the Department of Atomic Energy that got ₹18,228 crore and the Department of Space that got ₹13,479 crore.

In previous years, science

departments generally posted percentage hikes that were in the single digits, and this is the first time in at least three years that all departments have posted double digit percentage hikes.

"Generally, the hikes involve round 7%, but this time there's been a significant signal of the government's encouragement to scientific endeavours," said Renu Swarup, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology.

"The genomics initiatives as well as encouragement to set up knowledge transfer clusters are among the key sectors that have got a

boost," Ms. Swarup added.

The DBT has embarked on projects to map the genes of Indians as well the genetic structure of every plant variety. Another official said the government's expenditure on science had nearly doubled since 2014.

'Fluctuations present'

"There are fluctuations within the year...the Finance Minister has stressed on quantum technologies," said Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology.

"This will be largely led by the Department of Science and Technology, though those allocations are not reflected in this Budget."



The Department of Biotechnology posted the largest increase by 17 per cent. ■ ISTOCKPHOTO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

However, in absolute terms there has been an increase of 8.9% as compared to last year's gender budget of ₹1,31,700 crore.

The last Budget announcement proposed setting up of a committee to look at Budget through the gender lens which would suggest ac-

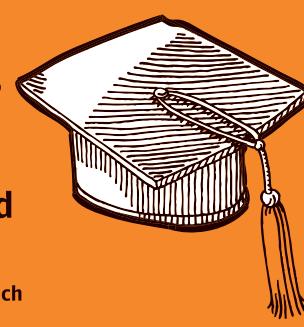
to ₹30,007 crore in financial year 2020-2021 from ₹26,184 crore in the current fiscal.

The schemes that have seen an increase include the scheme for adolescent out-of-school girls, which has gone up from ₹150 crore to ₹250 crore; working women hostel where the allocation has tripled from ₹45 crore to ₹150 crore.

There is also a 92% increase in the allocation for One Stop Centre, which has gone up from ₹385 crore to ₹500 crore.

BUDGET 20-21

66
Government proposes
to provide ₹99,300
crore for education
sector in 2020-21 and
₹3,000 crore for skill
development -Budget speech



VIEWPOINT

NIRMAL JAIN,
Founder & chairman, IIFL

Balanced Budget under circumstances

On the whole I think the Budget by the Finance Minister is a mixed bag, primarily because expectations were too many – few things have been addressed and few have not been. Market has reacted sharply today because foreign investors would not have been there. But I am not so pessimistic and I think under these circumstances, this is a balanced Budget.

Since in the run-up to the Budget there has been a lot of discussion about the economy slowing down and the government being sensitive about it, people thought a lot more would be done to kick-start the economy. The market expected that there would be some exemption on LTCG, something more concrete for banks, which didn't happen. For insurance sector the disappointment is because so many exemptions and deductions are taken away. If the idea was to make income tax simple without any deductions and exemptions then it should have been lowered much more. It should have been dramatic like it happened for corporate taxes, but this is gradual so the benefit would be muted.

Also when there is a plan to do an initial public offering for Life Insurance Corporation of India, then

Government has kept its focus on rural, infrastructure while not going overboard on fiscal deficit

companies act and many other acts, also the Vivad Se Vishwas scheme to do a trust based thing are positive moves. Also government has kept its focus on rural, agriculture, infrastructure while not going overboard in terms of fiscal deficit. They are trying to keep it within the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) leeway provided. So, I would say it is a balanced act given the circumstances.

There is very little for the private sector investment. In fact, while the dividend distribution tax has been taken away, which helps foreign investors, the domestic entrepreneurs and promoters are penalised on their profits twice because first they are taxed as company and again taxed on dividends, which in a way is a retrograde step because profits should taxed only once. You could have a higher tax rate that is acceptable but what is happening is that entrepreneurs or investors who reinvest in ventures and drive jobs will be discouraged with this double taxation.

While housing for all by the year 2022 has been the stated mission of the government, unfortunately the tax paid on the exemption for the housing loan is taken away.

This may not be good for the millennial or first time home buyers, particularly when interest rates are high. So, I think there are few steps that might work as a counter to what government objectives are like flow of savings into insurance or home loan tax benefits for new buyers.

POCKET | RAVIKANTH



Health care in focus with ₹69,000 cr. outlay

Maximum allocation of ₹6,400 crore for PMJAY; Jan Aushadhi Kendra Scheme to be expanded

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday announced an outlay of about ₹69,000 crore for the health sector in the 2020-21 Budget with ₹6,400 crore earmarked for the Centre's flagship health insurance scheme, Prime Minister Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY).

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare gets ₹65,011.8 crore up from ₹62,659.12 crore in 2019-20. The Ministry of AYUSH has been allocated ₹2,122.08

crore while there is an allocation of ₹2,100 crore to the Department of Health Research.

Ms. Sitharaman said there are now more than 20,000 empanelled hospitals under the PMJAY.

We need more in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities for poorer people under this PMJAY scheme. It is proposed to set up Viability Gap funding window for setting up hospitals in the PPP (private-public-partnership) mode. In the first phase, those aspirational districts will be covered, where presently there

are no Ayushman empanelled hospitals," the Minister said.

The Finance Minister also announced expansion of the Jan Aushadhi Kendra Scheme to all districts, offering 2,000 medicines and 300 surgicals by 2024.

The government, in order to boost domestic industry and to generate resources for health services, has proposed a nominal health cess of 5% on imports of specified medical equipment. Also Mission Indradhanus has been expanded

to cover 12 such diseases, including five new vaccines.

The government has proposed setting up of medical colleges in existing district hospitals under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode to address the shortage of qualified doctors.

The Finance Minister said the government will encourage large hospitals with sufficient capacity to offer resident doctors diploma and fellow of National Board (DNB/FNB) courses under

the National Board of Examination.

Speaking on the Budget, Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan said: "Budget estimates for the Department for Health and Family Welfare show an appreciable increase of 3.75%, while there has been a 10% hike in the allocation for the Department for Health Research.

This indicates the strong focus of the government on the health sector. The Budget has positioned health as a prime mover in the journey of development and growth of the country".



Loan distress

The NPA ratio of all sectors, except agriculture, saw a reduction in 2019 as compared to 2018. NPAs in the agriculture sector saw an increase of 27.5% in this period. Table shows gross NPAs in ₹ crore in 2018 and 2019 and the % change:

SECTORS	GNPA 2018	GNPA 2019	% CHANGE IN GNPA
Agriculture	75,274	95,938	27.5%
Micro & small enterprises	82,094	73,381	-10.6%
Other priority sectors	30,143	28,016	-7.1%
Non-priority sector	6,57,964	5,12,774	-22.1%
Total NPAs	8,45,475	7,10,109	-16.0%

With focus on income savings and increased fund allocation for health, education, transport, infra. and agriculture, the Budget is a holistic one

Punit Goenka,

Zee Entertainment CEO



Allocation for MGNREGS slashed by ₹9,500 cr.

Scheme will get ₹61,500 crore in 2020-21, a 13% drop from the 2019-20 revised estimates of ₹71,000 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Despite a slowdown in the rural economy and the need to stimulate rural demand, the Centre has slashed budgetary allocation for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme by ₹9,500 crore for the coming year.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced ₹61,500 crore for the scheme in 2020-21, a 13% drop from the 2019-20 revised estimates of ₹71,000 crore.

MGNREGS, which provides 100 days of unskilled work for every rural household, helps generate rural employment and provides a social safety net. Before the

Budget, a number of economists had suggested that putting money directly into the hands of rural consumers at the bottom of the pyramid would be needed to create liquidity and spur consumption demand.

'Will meet demand'
Asked about the cut, Economic Affairs Secretary Atanu Chakraborty said that if additional allocations were required for the scheme, it would be given later in the year.

"MGNREGS is a demand-driven scheme. This year, we went up because there was a demand for this in certain areas and the full money was provided. For the next year,



Flagship scheme: A file photo of people building a tank under the MGNREGS in Karnataka.

it's a usual, normal level of funding, which has been provided for MGNREGS. If there is an additional demand from some areas which comes up, we will again meet it accordingly at RE stage," he said in response to *The Hindu*'s query during a post-Budget press interaction.

As of last week, the scheme had already run through its original budgetary allocation for 2019-20, and 15 States were already in the red. The additional money granted in the revised estimates provides some breathing space. However, groups representing rural workers said the lower allocation would have a disastrous impact on rural economy.

"This is a travesty for the rural poor, for whom the MGNREGS is a potential lifeline," said Rajendran Narayanan, an assistant professor with the Centre for Sustainable Employment at Azim Premji University. "Rural distress has risen to alarming levels."

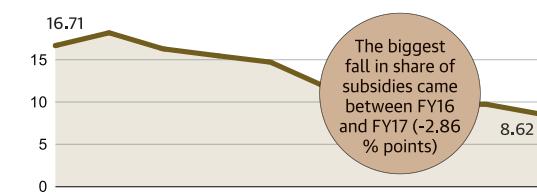
As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) of 2017-18, rural unemployment has increased by 8% from 2011-12, and overall unemployment is the worst in 45 years. In conjunction with double-digit food inflation levels, this is a serious concern. The situation is much worse for the landless depending on casual manual labour, who constitute more than half the rural population."

Rakshita Swamy of the People's Action for Employment Guarantee, an advocacy group for MGNREGS, said pending liabilities have been amounting to nearly one-sixth of each year's allocation.

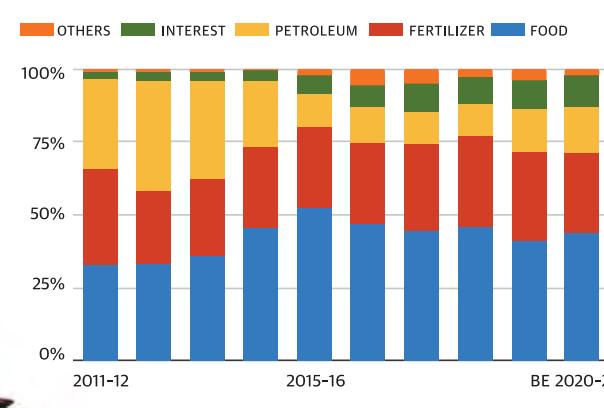
DOWNWARD TREND

The proportion of subsidy in the overall budget in 2020-21 has come down by 1.15 percentage points, compared to the revised estimates of 2019-20. The drop in subsidy also reflected in a decline of food subsidy (proportion in overall Budget came down by 0.23% points). This has raised questions regarding the government's ability to procure produce from farmers

SLUMP IN SUBSIDIES | The share of subsidies in the total expenditure has been on a constant decline, with the share in FY21 estimated at 8.62%, down 9.6% points from FY13



SUBSIDY BREAKDOWN | The share of fertilizer subsidies has fallen in FY21 compared to FY20, while the other subsidies saw a marginal increase. Graph shows % share of subsidies:



PROCUREMENT PANGS

As of Nov. 2019, less than 3% of the sanctioned amount of pulses and oilseeds were procured under PM-AASHA scheme. Reduction in food subsidy, which plays a major role in procuring such produce, will exacerbate the situation forcing farmers to sell at relatively lower mandi prices

Tables show % procurement till Nov. 2019 under the scheme

Commodity	% procurement
Moong	14.32
Groundnut	4.38
Soyabean	0.62
Arhar (Tur)	0
Sesamum	0
Urad	0.000013
Grand Total	2.88

Source: Budget documents, Lok Sabha

Spending on space goes up by 8%

Outlay for DoS pegged at ₹13,479 cr; third trip to moon among missions on anvil

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU

The Department of Space (DoS) gets a proposed 8% increase in the outlay for fiscal 2020-21, a year when it plans to send our expensive missions such as a third trip to the moon and a test flight ahead of an actual astronaut mission.

The Budget allocation has increased to about ₹13,479 crore, from about ₹12,473 crore that was earmarked in the Budget for 2019-20.

The department's nodal

and planned for the turn of 2020, would cost about ₹600 crore, he had said.

Bulky spend

During the ongoing fiscal year 2019-20, space technology got the bulk of allocation at ₹8,407 crore; this spending is expected to touch ₹8,991 crore as per the revised estimates released on Saturday.

The new Budget sets aside ₹9,761 crore, or 72%, of the outlay towards this head. The head "space technolo-

gies" covers development of spacecraft, launchers, payloads on satellites and the ground system that receives, interprets and provides data for various uses, according to an ISRO official.

Space entrepreneur and policy professional Narayan Prasad said the budget for the Space programme had not seen a massive increase as "the government has already provided for 30 PSLV and 10 GSLV missions – which should keep ISRO busy for some time."

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Sops to retire thermal plants

Budget proposal aimed at ensuring cleaner air in cities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

With several thermal power plants getting flak for not complying with emission norms, the Finance Minister in her Budget speech announced a scheme to encourage State and city governments to eschew old power plants.

Speaking on the Budget, Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan said: "Budget estimates for the Department for Health and Family Welfare show an appreciable increase of 3.75%, while there has been a 10% hike in the allocation for the Department for Health Research.

This indicates the strong focus of the government on the health sector. The Budget has positioned health as a prime mover in the journey of development and growth of the country".

BUDGET 20-21

“

Govt. has taken steps to rationalise tax system, boost infrastructure, strengthen banking, promote investment and ease of doing business

AMIT SHAH,
UNION HOME MINISTER

“

The main issue is unemployment. I did not see any concrete, strategic idea to help youngsters get jobs... I did not see any central idea in the Budget

RAHUL GANDHI,
CONGRESS LEADER

“

I am shocked & appalled to see how the Central govt. plans to ambush the heritage & legacy of public institutions...

MAMATA BANERJEE,
WEST BENGAL CM

“

This is the longest non-budget, Budget speech... no plan of recovery from economic slowdown; complete state of denial, no road map to overcome slowdown

SITARAM YECHURU,
CPI(M) LEADER

“

For the first time in the history of the country, priority has been given to farmers, poor and rural areas. This is a boon to the farmers

B.S. YEDDYURAPPA,
KARNATAKA CM

“

Budget will reduce spending power of common man, increase disparity! Subsidies are getting reduced. Farmers & common man equally unhappy with it

TEJASHWI YADAV,
RJD LEADER

VIEWPOINT

M.S. MANI,
Senior director, Deloitte India

Renewed focus on domestic business

The changes proposed on the Customs duty front indicate that there is going to be a renewed focus on promoting and protecting domestic business. The focus on protecting and promoting domestic businesses is brought out in various ways such as tariff increases, abolition of exemptions, provisions relating to safeguards and anti-dumping duties, regulating Free Trade Agreement (FTA) imports, etc.

There have been quite a few increases in the Customs duty rates that we have seen in this Budget, including several items on which the earlier lower rates or exemptions have been removed. This includes items such as vegetable fats and oils, butter, cheese, molasses, footwear, furniture, etc.

Interesting list

Many of these items are made by the MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) sector, which has been finding it difficult to handle the recent slowdown in the economy. The list of items on which there has been an increase in the Customs duty rates is interesting as many of the items are those where there are sufficient domestic players, especially in the SME space, who manufacture these products.

The introduction of the Health Cess on certain items such as medical equipment could also lead to more domestic manufacturing.

The comparative dynamics in terms of make in India or import into India would undergo a significant shift in favour of make in India on account of these rate changes. There is also an overall movement in respect of various products where the Customs duty rates on inputs and raw materials have been reduced, while they have been increased on finished products to encourage more domestic manufacturing.

Safeguards increased

The provisions relating to safeguards and anti-dumping duties have also undergone significant changes. It has been stated that the objective is to prevent an import surge that adversely impacts the domestic industry. There have been several domestic businesses that have faced the brunt of cheap imports in recent times, who would benefit by these measures. It is clear that the objective is to provide a level playing field for domestic businesses that have been grappling with a demand slowdown and a working capital squeeze in recent times. New provisions have been proposed to avoid cases where the description, name or composition of an imported article is altered in order to overcome the anti-dumping duties imposed on that product. Similarly, any attempt to circumvent the anti-dumping duty provisions by changing the trade practices, pattern of trade or channels of trade would also not be possible in future. There is also an umbrella provision that has been inserted to take care of any other case where the anti-dumping duty imposed is rendered ineffective by any measure adopted by the exporter or importer.

FTA imports

A need has also been felt to regulate imports from FTA (Free Trade Agreement) countries as there is a view that several entities are taking undue advantage of the benefits provided by FTAs. Unregulated imports under the existing FTAs appear to be causing distress to domestic producers. The norms relating to rules of origin, value addition requirements etc., would be more effectively enforced in order to ensure that only those imports that fulfil the FTA requirements are permitted.

The Customs duty changes are oriented towards promoting and protecting domestic businesses and ensuring that they have a level playing field whilst they deal with global headwinds.

Govt. has given up on reviving economy: Cong.

Chidambaram says there is nothing in the Budget that leads us to believe that growth will revive in 2020-21

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Reacting to the Union Budget, Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said the government had given up on reviving the economy or accelerating the growth rate, and former Congress president Rahul Gandhi stated that there was no strategic idea or anything concrete in the Budget to counter the growing unemployment rate.

At a press conference at the Congress headquarters, Mr. Chidambaram said, "The government has given up on reviving the economy or accelerating the growth rate or promoting private investment or increasing efficiency or creating jobs or winning a greater share of world trade."

When asked to rate the

Budget on a scale of 10, he said, "There is both 1 and 0 in 10, you can choose between the two."

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget speech completely missed the mark, he stated. "The government is in complete denial that the economy faces a grave macroeconomic challenge and the growth rate has declined in six successive quarters. There is nothing in the Budget that leads us to believe that growth will revive in 2020-21. The claim of 6 to 6.5% growth next year is astonishing and even irresponsible."

The Indian economy was demand constrained and investment starved and both these challenges have not been acknowledged by Ms. Sitharaman. "I think this Budget is also done nothing



Not convinced: Congress leaders P. Chidambaram and Randeep Surjewala addressing the media. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

for three job creating sectors - mining, construction and manufacturing," he said.

There was nothing in the Budget to tackle Consumer Price Index inflation, which was currently over seven%, and food inflation, which was over 10% since subsidies on food and fertilizer had been reduced. "The govern-

ment does not believe in reforms and certainly not in structural reforms, The FM has outright rejected every - and I repeat, every - reform idea contained in the Economic Survey. Did the FM read the Economic Survey?

Was the Chief Economic Adviser privy to the contents of the Budget speech? I think the answer to both questions is in the negative," he said.

Ms. Sitharaman's Budget speech was two hours and 40 minutes long had "multiple themes, segments and programmes" leaving the listener dazed and confused. "I am pretty certain that even the most loyal BJP MP or supporter cannot latch on to any idea or statement in the Budget speech and take it to the people," he said. If the ongoing programmes had failed the people, how can throwing more (or in some cases less) money into the ongoing programmes change anything, he asked.

It was hollow: Rahul

Mr. Gandhi told reporters, "The main issues confronting this country today are unemployment and economy. I did not see any con-

crete idea, any strategic idea that would help our youngsters get jobs. I saw a lot of tactical stuff, redundant things, I did not see any central idea." The Budget described the government quite well, which was of "all talking" and nothing concrete. "The government's approach is visible in this Budget. It did not have anything in it. It was hollow." The Finance Minister did not give any details on how growing unemployment rate would be tackled, he stated.

In a tweet, Mr. Gandhi said, "Our youth want jobs. Instead, they got the longest Budget speech in Parliamentary history that said absolutely nothing of consequence. PM & FM both looked like they have absolutely no clue what to do next".

A Budget delinked from election cycle

Raring to go



Team Budget: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and MoS Finance, Anurag Thakur on their way to present the Budget. For the second time, Ms. Sitharaman carried documents in a 'Bahi-Khata' (ledger) wrapped in a red cloth. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

A long speech and an abrupt end

At 2 hours and 41 minutes, it was the longest Budget speech in independent India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

On Saturday, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman added two firsts to her second budget - at two hours and 41 minutes, it was not only the longest Budget speech in independent India but also the first left incomplete with the Minister stopping two pages short of ending her speech.

In the length of her speech, Ms. Sitharaman beat her own record - the interim

Budget speech last year lasted two hours and 17 minutes. She peppered this speech with poetic flourishes, making a point of quoting Kashmiri poet Dinanath Kaul, Tamil sage Thiruvalluvar and ancient Tamil poetess Avvaiyar.

The nod to Kashmir through a poem elaborating the concept of "watan" (nation) was one of the few political tones added to what was a budget delinked from any election cycle.

In the length of her speech, Ms. Sitharaman beat her own record - the interim

Ms. Sitharaman paused while speaking at the end of her marathon speech and sat down as she reportedly felt unwell. She took a sweet, a sugar boost, and was seen wiping sweat off her forehead.

Two pages left unread
Her blood pressure reportedly fell and she was advised to sit. Colleagues appeared to offer her candy. Union Minister Harshimrat Kaur was seen giving her a glass of wa-

ter. As she appeared reluctant to continue, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh asked her if she was well enough to continue. She told Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla that there were only two more pages and the Budget should be considered read.

Later, the Finance Minister said she was "feeling better" and went to the Rajya Sabha to place the Budget in the House, and went on to complete her post-Budget engagements.

NISTULA HEBBAR

NEW DELHI

For those looking for any angles in the Union Budget referring to the ongoing electoral cycle in Delhi, there was a bit of a kerfuffle when Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that the tax rates were being revised downwards for certain slabs. But once the finer details came out, that search too ended.

This was a Budget that was delinked from polls, and BJP spokespersons who were to appear on TV debates were told to keep the focus on "simplification and transparency" rather than any big ticket idea that caught the political imagination.

The tax breaks present an either/or option, which weighs in a non-exemption regime with a lower tax liability with the choice of going with a tax regime with exemptions and a higher rate. It is a blessing with riders and hence, again, difficult to sell politically.

The larger picture projected on the Budget by the party is that it continues the thrust on infrastructure announced by Ms. Sitharaman earlier, with a step towards amalgamating the "infrastructure pipeline" with a single window clearance of investment in these projects.

This, it is hoped will help get projects off the ground and completed.

For the rural economy too, a 16-point action plan talks of getting the produce out from field to market through Kisan Rail, Udan and warehouses to be set up

via Public-Private Partnership (PPP), but the much expected hike in the Prime Minister's Kisan Samman Nidhi was a no-show. What was announced was an allocation of Rs 2.83 lakh crore for agriculture and allied activities, irrigation and rural development. Of this, Rs 1.60 lakh crore was for agriculture and allied activities alone (a jump from Rs 1.52 lakh crore announced in the interim budget).

NEWS ANALYSIS

Allocations to the Rural Development Ministry also saw a marginal increase from last year, from ₹1,19,000 crore to ₹1,22,000 crore, with the largest chunk (₹61,500 crore) reserved for the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), once referred by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "monument to the failures of the UPA government".

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Opposition gives Budget the thumbs down

Terms Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's speech a classic case of filibuster

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Opposition parties gave the thumbs down to the Union Budget, saying Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman failed to give a clear road map on how to pull the economy out of the slump and her two-hour and 40 minutes speech was a classic case of filibustering.

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury called it the longest 'non budget' Budget speech by any Finance Minister. "The less you have to say, longer will be the speech," he said. The Budget had

completely failed to address the current economic slowdown. It did not have a road map for a turnaround of the economy. The economy was bordering on recession and Ms. Sitharaman failed to answer the crucial question of how to boost public consumption. The Finance Minister was hiding the real numbers. Instead of mentioning tax revenue, she listed out receipts that include ₹1.76 lakh crore payout by the RBI and the funds received by privatisation of public sector units, he added. NCP leader Supriya Sule

not a single word on the minimum support price. So how will they do it? This is just another 'jumla' and she just reiterated hackneyed phrases," she said.

Samajwadi Party Akhilesh Yadav said the Budget did not lay down a road to bring in investments. "We all were hopeful but the Budget was deeply disappointing. This is a bankrupt Budget. The entire banking sector has collapsed, agrarian crisis is still going on, there are no jobs and yet the Budget didn't provide answers to any of these questions," he said.

Biju Janata Dal Lok Sabha member Pinaki Misra said the Budget failed to address the Odisha government's concern over delayed GST payouts. "I think it was needlessly too long, full of platitudes and very low on actual content," Mr. Misra said.

Trinamool Congress MP Derek O'Brien said the Budget took the country from the value of their rent-free residences, conveyance facilities, sumptuary allowance and medical facilities.

CPI general secretary D. Raja said the Budget was a shameless declaration that the government was abdicating all its responsibilities. The proposal, contained in the Finance Bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha on Saturday, also seeks to withdraw similar income tax exemptions that had been extended to the Chairman, Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and its members.

All benefits taxable
In the case of the CEC and the two Election Commissioners, the government has decided to make taxable all benefits extended to them as are applicable to a judge of the Supreme Court under Chapter IV of the Supreme

Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Act, 1958, and associated rules. Under the 1958 Act, each judge of the Supreme Court is entitled to an official car and 200 litres of fuel every month or the actual consumption of fuel per month, whichever is less, and a sumptuary allowance of ₹34,000 per month.

Now, the CEC and the two Election Commissioners will have to pay income tax on this from the assessment year 2021-22.



CEC, panel members will have to pay income tax on perks

This will apply to UPSC Chairman and members too

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Centre has decided to withdraw income tax exemptions extended to the Chairman, Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and its members.

CM **YK**



No fireworks

Whether the Budget flies or falls flat will depend on its ability to fuel growth

Nirmala Sitharaman's second Budget is not a spend-and-stimulate exercise despite the fact that it has overrun the 3.3% target on fiscal deficit by as much as 0.5 percentage point. Nor is it a feel-good budget even accounting for the new tax regime for personal income tax with lower rates. It reflects the difficult circumstances under which it has been drawn up: falling tax revenues, rising borrowings and the need to rein in spending. It will certainly disappoint those who were expecting a big bang stimulus in terms of increased public spending or additional boost for investment. There were calls in the run-up to the Budget for the Finance Minister to relax the fiscal deficit target so that she could spend to revitalise the economy. In the event, as things turned out, Ms. Sitharaman did oblige them on the deficit front but that was more to compensate for the less-than-expected growth in revenues and not for extra spending. She has taken cover under a clause in the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act that gives her leeway to breach the set target.

That said, the Budget has been built on the assumption of a nominal GDP growth rate of 10% in 2020-21, which does appear optimistic given the state of the economy now. The nominal growth rate for fiscal 2019-20 as per government estimates is 7.5%. The recovery from here has to be sharp to justify next year's projection. The gross tax revenue growth projection of 11.99% also appears very optimistic especially because it has been built on the premise of an 11.54% rise in corporate tax collections. Given the slowdown in profit growth and the lower corporate tax rate now, it is debatable if this projection can be met. And then, there is the huge ₹2,10,000 crore revenue assumed under disinvestment proceeds. This is based on the successful culmination of the disinvestment process in Air India and Bharat Petroleum, both of which have been set in motion, and on the planned disinvestment of equity in the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) through an IPO. In addition to this, the government has also budgeted for receipts from the telecom players – of ₹1,33,027 crore – which, apart from the regular licence fees and spectrum charges, also includes the arrears that they would now have to pay consequent to the Supreme Court verdict that went against them. Just to put the importance of these two non-tax revenue items in perspective, they together account for over 11% of total receipts budgeted for the next fiscal. On the expenditure side, the Minister has extended a tight fist with allocations for major social sector schemes being maintained at about the same level as the budgeted estimates of 2019-20. In the case of MGNREGA, the allocation of ₹61,500 crore is lower than the revised estimate of ₹71,002 crore in 2019-20, though it is marginally better than the budgeted estimate of ₹60,000 crore last year. The spending on most heads of social sector schemes in 2019-20 has been much lower than the budgeted levels, including in the much spoken about PM KISAN scheme where the government spent only ₹54,370 crore compared to an outlay of ₹75,000 crore. The projected outlay of ₹75,000 crore under this head in the coming year shines only because of the lower spending in 2019-20. In fact, this can be said for most schemes such as the PM Gram Sadak Yojana, Ayushman Bharat and BharatNet where this year's outlay appears higher only because of the much lower spending in 2019-20 compared to what was budgeted for. The compression in spending is a reflection of the extent of revenue shortfall this fiscal.

A highlight of the Budget is the proposal for a new scheme of taxation on personal IT where assessee can pay lower tax rates if they agree to forgo all exemptions. Though this has attracted maximum attention, the fact is that to most taxpayers, it may not be as attractive as it appears. It may benefit those who do not claim deductions on housing loan repayments and who do not pay large insurance premium. Most of the popular exemptions and deductions like housing loan repayments, house rent allowance, leave travel concession and the concessions under Section 80C such as on life insurance premium, public provident fund contribution and under Section 80D on medical insurance premium will not be available to those who opt for the new scheme. The lower tax rates they will enjoy will be negated by the absence of these sizeable deductions for those who are already claiming them. If the taxpayers feel they are disappointed, it is understandable.

But savers and investors have reason to be happy as the insurance cover on bank deposits has been increased to ₹5 lakh from ₹1 lakh now. This will give them a measure of security in these uncertain times when bank frauds and defaults are becoming more frequent. But savers who are also investors have reason to complain as they will now be liable to pay tax on dividend income. The ill-conceived dividend distribution tax has been abolished and with this the reforms on the corporate tax front have taken another big step forward. The other noteworthy proposal is the disinvestment in LIC where the government proposes to sell a part of its stake, unspecified as yet, through an IPO. That this is not going to be easy to put through is evident as unions have already raised the banner of revolt. The government has also adjusted import duties on a laundry list of items ranging from walnuts and toys to catalytic converters and fans. Some amount of thought seems to have gone into this as this list is largely made up of products where India has the manufacturing capability but has been a victim of cheap imports, sometimes riding on advantages from free trade agreements. In sum, there is nothing spectacular about this Budget which rides on optimistic growth estimates. Whether it flies or falls flat depends on how growth pans out in the economy in the next four quarters.

An exercise bereft of macroeconomic vision

The government has been unable to raise its spending at a time when circumstances demand a proactive fiscal policy



C.P. CHANDRASEKHAR

Though Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman laboured for well over two hours when delivering the Union Budget speech, it is likely that the aspect of the speech that will receive popular attention would be the restructuring of income tax slabs and reduction in rates that would benefit the tax paying middle class. That was obviously also the intention of the exercise.

Budget 2021-22 was being presented at a critical time for the economy, with growth decelerating sharply, and evidence of adversity not just in the informal economy but in the corporate sector as well. With official data suggesting that, even prior to 2019-20, unemployment was at a record high and agriculture was languishing, news of slowing growth was disconcerting. The pressure on the Finance Minister to show that she is making an attempt to kick-start the economy was considerable.

Window dressing

But her hands were clearly tied by circumstances and ideology. Tax revenues, that fell short in 2019-20, could not be expected to rise sharply in the coming financial year, when growth would remain sluggish. Obsession with reporting (not necessarily achieving) only a small deviation from the medium term target of 3% of GDP, limits debt financed spending. And the experience of 2019-20 seemed to suggest not too much could be garnered from disinvestment when times were bad. In the circum-

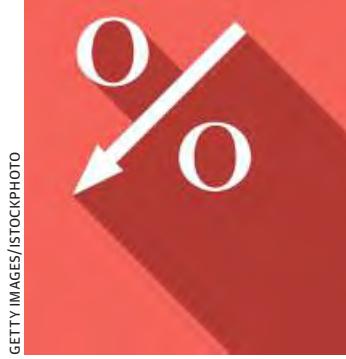
stances, even showing a reasonable increase in expenditure, let alone an effort at a major stimulus, had to be an exercise in window dressing.

No comparisons

Faced with those constraints, the Finance Minister has chosen to shift the attention of those listening. She wore down her audience and herself, with a long discourse on her government's achievements and plans centred ostensibly around the three themes of "aspirational India, economic development and a caring society". Not all the points made and examples provided fell easily under those labels. But it gave people enough to want the speech done with and not complain that they were not getting the detail they needed to assess what the government plans to do to address a bad situation.

Moreover, departing from past practice, allocations made in different areas such as agriculture, sanitation and nutrition were reported as absolute figures with no comparison either to the previous year's Budget or revised estimates. The tone in which the numbers were read sought to signal that the sums involved were large, though subsequent comparison of these figures with the previous year's Budget estimates indicate that there has been no major step up in expenditure. Overall, the ratio of total expenditure to GDP that was budgeted at 13.6% of GDP in 2019-20, and estimated to touch 13.2%, is projected at 13.5% in 2020-21. That amounts to near standstill.

It was to strengthen the attempt at diversion, the Finance Minister possibly chose to offer, following her bonanza for the corporates in September last year, significant tax concessions to a middle class for which much of annual income



falls in the ₹5 lakh to ₹15 lakh range. She also removed the dividend distribution tax currently levied on corporates and left dividend income to be taxed as income of the recipient. If estimates reported in the speech turn out correct, these together would entail a revenue loss of ₹65,000 crore.

On the fiscal deficit

These revenue losses should make things even more difficult when it comes to staying close to the fiscal deficit target, even at the modest expenditure levels projected. Yet, according to the Budget speech, despite significant shortfalls in revenue in 2019-20, the fiscal deficit was at 3.8% rather than the targeted 3.3%, and that in 2020-21, it is projected at 3.5% as compared with the medium-term target of 3.0%. Underlying those numbers is the assumption of significant tax buoyancy in a period of depressed growth, a sharp increase in non-tax revenues from communication services of an estimated ₹74,000 crore following the Supreme Court's judgment on computation of licence fees and spectrum charges, restrained expenditure estimates, and off-budget transactions. A telling example of the last of these is the food subsidy bill for 2019-20, which was a year when the Food Corporation of India

(FCI) was saddled with huge stocks and would have to be compensated for the difference between the economic cost and price at which the grain is sold through the Public Distribution System. Since the FCI would have paid for procurement and incurred carrying costs and had to be compensated for food sold, the actual requirement of subsidy in a year when procurement and stocks were at record levels should have been high. But as against the provision of ₹1,84,220 crore in the Budget for 2019-20, the revised estimate for food subsidy is placed at ₹1,08,688 crore or 40% lower than the Budget estimate.

Falling allocations

Despite such adjustments, the Finance Minister has not been able to match her claims of ensuring development for all and a caring society with matching allocations. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act programme on which ₹61,815 crore was spent in 2018-19 and ₹71,002 crore in 2019-20 (RE), is allocated only ₹61,500 crore in 2020-21. The scheme for the development of Scheduled Castes on which spending fell from ₹7,574 crore in 2018-19 to ₹5,568 crore in 2019-20, is allocated ₹6,242 crore in 2020-21. Such examples are legion.

Despite such massaging and pruning of the numbers, getting the needed fiscal-deficit-bottom-line has required reliance on ambitious targets for receipts from disinvestment. In the Budget for 2019-20, the Finance Minister had provided ₹1,05,000 crore from disinvestment. However, even by January 2020, receipts under this head stood at around a mere ₹8,000 crore. Yet, the "revised estimates" for 2019-20 (which are still projections) for receipts from

disinvestment presented in the Budget papers for 2020-21 are placed at ₹65,000 crore. Obviously, the Finance Minister hopes for a big push on the disinvestment front in February and March. Such assumptions explain the marginal deviation from the fiscal deficit target in the current year.

But the disinvestment push cannot end this year. The Budget provides for disinvestment receipts of a whopping ₹2,10,000 crore in 2020-21. Of this, ₹1,20,000 crore is to come from disinvestment of non-financial public sector enterprises and another ₹90,000 crore from disinvestment of equity in public sector banks and financial institutions. Since the latter is accompanied by a call for public sector banks to turn to capital markets to raise resources from recapitalisation rather than rely on the government, the government's share in equity could well reach levels where it loses control. In its desperation, the government also claims it plans to divest a part of its holding even in institutions such as the Life Insurance Corporation of India.

The inability of the government, despite such manoeuvres, to significantly raise its spending at a time when circumstances demand a proactive fiscal policy has a larger implication. It speaks of the absence of any macroeconomic vision for the management of the economy. That absence was clear in the text of the Budget speech that did not recognise the severity of the crisis that has engulfed the economy and the fisc and offered no way out of the crisis other than a promise to privilege wealth creation.

C.P. Chandrasekhar is former Professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

A budget for the middle class

Higher personal tax rates and slabs have been modified to the benefit of the middle class, boosting consumer demand



T.C.A. RAMANUJAM &
T.C.A. SANEEETHA

Even if you are in the right track, you will get run over if you move slowly.

At the height of the debate on the economic slowdown, two ideas were being discussed. Should the government resort to heavy expenditure on infrastructure and the social sector? Or should it put more money in the pockets of the individual so that it can raise or push up consumer demand. The Finance Minister, in the Union Budget speech on Saturday, has accepted both ideas. Heavy expenditure is contemplated in Part A of the speech. This is the acceptance of the Keynesian concept of pump priming. Higher personal tax rates and slabs have been modified to the benefit of the middle class. This will certainly push up consumer demand. The fiscal deficit has been breached and will

grow to 3.8% because of exceptional circumstances.

The middle class tax payer was upset that in September last the Finance Minister had chosen to confer a bonanza of ₹1,46,000 crore by way of lowering corporate tax rates with the individual getting nothing. Now, the concessions offered in the Budget will entail revenue foregone of ₹40,000 crore per year. This is all for the good.

The highest marginal rate has not been touched. India's richest 1% have more wealth than 70% of the poorest. The combined total wealth of 63 Indian billionaires is more than the total Union Budget of India for the fiscal year 2018-19, which was ₹24,42,200 crore. Do they need relief? Certainly not.

Dividend distribution tax

The Finance Minister has done well to abolish the dividend distribution tax. It is a fact that it amounted to double taxation. The classical system of taxing dividends in the hands of individual shareholders is now accepted. The individual taxpayer can be aggrieved that there is no relief in the taxation of dividends in the hands of individuals. Probably a basic ex-



emption of say ₹10,000 could have been granted to the individual shareholder. The new system also involves an element of double taxation. Just as interest on capital is made deductible, can interest on capital of the shareholders on an estimated basis be made deductible?

It was expected that a scheme such as the samadhan for service tax and central excise would be announced. Litigation is unending and prolonged. Huge moneys are locked up. The success rate of the department in appeals is very low. The Finance Minister has announced a scheme under which the taxpayer can pay just the disputed tax and get a complete waiver of interest and penalty. This will

take us nowhere. The time limit is short and the compromise is no compromise at all. Under the "Sabka Vishwas Scheme" for indirect taxes, the taxpayer was allowed to get away by paying 30% or 40% depending on the case. Why this discrimination?

Corporate tax collections are pegged at ₹6,81,000 crore for 2020-21 up from ₹6,10,500 crore last year. Income-tax collections are estimated to be ₹6,38,000 crore for 2020-21 as against ₹5,59,000 crore last year. This despite the revision of tax rates and slabs. Does it show a fall in collections? Certainly not. There will always be criticism of anything and everything done by this government. The Budget is a critique of the economy and what it can achieve. This way it is a good budget and the Finance Minister deserves full compliments.

Tax administration

The Finance Minister has taken note of complaints of tax harassment and has promised a tax payers charter. This is frequently resorted to by Finance Ministers. To be effective, this should be part of the statute book and enforceable.

ble. It will also ensure accountability.

N.A. Palkhivala once called the Income Tax Act a national disgrace. It had suffered hundreds of amendments. The Finance Minister has removed around 70 out of 100 exemptions and deductions provided in the Income Tax Act and promised a review and rationalisation of the law in order to simplify the tax system and lowering the tax rate. It was this Finance Minister who thought of the option of a higher rate with exemptions and a lower rate without deductions. Millions have seen apples falling from trees. But it was only Isaac Newton who wondered why. There can be no question of doing away with the Income Tax law. We wish the Finance Minister luck in her attempt to simplify the law.

Budget objectives may look ambitious. There can be no question of slowing down and the implementation has to be fast and forceful.

T.C.A. Ramanujam is a former Chief Commissioner of Income Tax. T.C.A. Sangeetha is a practising advocate of the Madras High Court

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name with initials.

The fine print

At first look, the Union Budget 2020 proposes reductions in income-tax slabs in a new tax structure which could perhaps put more money in the hands of the people to boost overall consumption. However, removing existing exemptions under the new structure could have a negative impact on crucial saving options such as insurance and deposits. Although the present tax structure has been retained for those wishing to claim exemptions as being done at present, it would have been wiser to continue with such exemptions in the new structure also, possibly with reduced upper limits than at present. In short, encouraging consumption at the cost of savings would not be very healthy for balanced, long-term economic growth.

A. MOHAN,
Chennai

■ On Saturday, we watched the excellent presentation of the Union Budget. On announcing changes to the

IT slabs, and illustrated with examples, everybody

clapped as if they had finally been granted some benefits at last. To their dismay, the Finance Minister announced it to be "optional" as to avail this long-awaited benefit one would have to forgo all "exemptions" we enjoy. Why such gimmickry?

RAVI SANKAR K.A.,
Thripunithura, Kerala

The government needs to explain to the people the economic logic behind the move to list the Life Insurance Corporation on the stock exchange. The LIC does not need any fresh capital nor is there any urgency to expand. It has been consistently growing at an average rate of 20% annually despite competition from private players and continues to maintain a nearly 70% market share. Through listing, big corporates are sure to enter the boardroom of LIC and start influencing its investment policy which has till date been robust and prudent, based on the principle of people's money

for people's welfare.

MURTY K.S.V.S.N.,
Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh

A Budget exercise that is designed for stressed times

The FM deserves credit for keeping the capital expenditure steady amid receipts shortfall; but her plan does not meet market expectations of sweeping reforms



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The Finance Minister's job is a greatly coveted one but no politician would want to be in Nirmala Sitharaman's shoes today. The Indian economy has slowed to a 5% crawl. The financial system is under considerable stress. Assumptions about tax revenues have gone awry. The clamour for government to 'do something' to get the economy going is deafening but there are simply no quick fixes.

What is the best any Finance Minister could have done in the Budget? Two things. One, nudge growth along through a higher

than-normal increase in government capital expenditure. Two, put in place reforms that would result in pay-offs over the long term. The Budget does surprisingly well on the first account. On the second, however, its performance will fall short of market expectations of a whole slew of structural reforms.

Most people thought that with the government facing a shortfall in total receipts of anything in the range of ₹1,50,000-₹3,00,000 crore, the axe would fall on government capital expenditure. The biggest positive in the Budget is that this has not happened in 2019-2020 and it is not projected to happen in 2020-2021 either.

Capital expenditure in 2019-2020 turned out to be ₹1,338 crore more than the Budget estimates, a rise in 13.4% over the actuals of 2018-2019. In 2020-2021, it is expected to rise by 18% over the figure for 2019-2020.

Capital expenditure as a percentage of GDP was 1.7% in 2019-2020 and is projected to rise to 1.8% in 2020-2021, assuming that the revenue projections hold substantially. The Finance Minister deserves credit for wanting to maintain the momentum of capital expenditure at a time of faltering growth.

Tax revenues below estimates

The receipts for 2019-20 are not as alarming as many had thought. Tax revenues (net to the centre) have

fallen short of budgetary estimates by around ₹45,000 crore. The reduction in corporate tax rate last year cost the government nearly ₹1,00,000 crore. The fall in tax revenues has been offset somewhat by a rise in non-tax revenues of around ₹32,000 crore, mainly on account of a larger-than-projected transfer of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) surplus to the government. Disinvestment receipts have fallen short of budgetary estimates by ₹40,000 crore. In effect, the total disappointment in receipts has been of the order of ₹1,50,000 crore, which is at the lower end of market estimates.

A complete surprise is a reduction in revenue expenditure of ₹98,000 crore, mainly on account of a reduction in food subsidy. The net effect of the differences in receipts and expenditure with respect to budgetary estimates is an increase in the fiscal deficit by ₹63,000 crore, or about 0.3% of the budgetary estimate of GDP for 2019-2020. Factor in a lower-than-expected growth in the denominator, nominal GDP, and you end up with a fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio that is 0.5 percentage points higher than the budgetary estimate, that is, 3.8%. The Finance Minister has justified this by saying that it is within the deviation of 0.5% permitted by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act.

If the disinvestment estimate of ₹2,10,000 crore is not met, it would upset the budgetary arithmetic. The fiscal deficit target of 3.5% of GDP could then be breached

For 2020-2021, the Finance Minister has projected a fiscal deficit at 3.5% of GDP, again a deviation of 0.5% from the plan given earlier. It is hard to fault the Finance Minister for not opting for an even bigger fiscal stimulus – after all, capital expenditure growth is not being compromised. Provided, however, the rest of the arithmetic for 2020-2021 holds up. Will it? Let's take a look at the key numbers.

The projected growth in net tax revenue to the Centre, of 8.7%, is eminently reasonable, given a projected nominal growth of 10%. As for non-tax revenues, dividends and profits from public enterprises and the RBI have been assumed at a lower level than in 2019-2020. This suggests that transfer of surplus from RBI in the next year has been correctly assumed to be lower.

Disinvestment target

The big 'if' is about disinvestment receipts. The government expects to rake in ₹2,10,000 crore, way above the receipts of ₹65,000 crore in 2019-2020. The projected re-

ceipts include ₹1,20,000 crore from disinvestment in public sector undertakings and another ₹90,000 crore from disinvestment in LIC and IDBI Bank. The latter will, no doubt, be seen as significant reform of the financial sector by market analysts. However, both the intended sales raise issues. LIC performs a useful role in shoring up the stock market when required. It is also an important investor in the capital of public sector banks.

If institutional and retail investors are given a stake, the larger public role performed by LIC may be called into question. It would be best if a stake sale in LIC were referred to a Committee of Parliament. As for selling the government's holding in IDBI Bank, the sale price could become a contentious issue until the bank effects a significant turnaround.

If the disinvestment estimates are not met, it would upset the budgetary arithmetic and the fiscal deficit target of 3.5% of GDP. There is not even a pretence of meeting the FRBM target of 3% of GDP in the near future, not even by 2022-2023. Perhaps the time has come to revisit the target itself and the maximum deviation permissible from the plan. The suggestion that the government should aim to meet the target of 3% over an entire business cycle and not in any given year is worth considering.

There is some relief for income

tax payers in the lower slabs. They have the option of choosing a lower tax rate or sticking to the existing one with exemptions. This makes the income tax system messier. Besides, some of the exemptions have to do with encouraging savings. If taxpayers shift away from exemptions in large numbers, it could have adverse implications for the domestic savings rate.

Market analysts expected the Budget to announce sweeping reforms. The Economic Survey listed a number of items that lend themselves to reform, like the Essential Commodities Act; drug price controls; foodgrain markets, etc. These find no mention in the Budget. Apart from stake sale in IDBI Bank, the public sector banking system has been left untouched. There is also no significant initiative in respect of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs). Asset monetisation is said to be the next frontier for raising revenues. The Budget mentions monetisation of roads covering 6,000 km by 2024 but one can't find any corresponding numbers in the budgetary figures.

The Economic Surveys of the last two years have made the case for a serious thrust towards reliance on markets and private investment and a shrinking role for the government. There is no sign yet of any dramatic shifts. The political preference for caution and gradualism has not waned, which is just as well.



Another lost opportunity to revive growth

The Budget has failed to provide any kind of stimulus for the revival of consumer or investment demand; nor has it been able to contain deficits



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is Counsellor,
Takshashila Institution

The Union Budget this year was presented in the background of a slowing economy, poor investment climate, declining consumption demand and stagnant exports. It was hoped that the strong electoral mandate that the government had received in 2019 would propel it to embark on substantial structural reforms to reverse the trend and revive the investment climate to accelerate growth.

In fact, the Economic Survey that

preceded the Budget presentation declared, "The government must use its strong mandate to deliver expeditiously on reforms, which will enable the economy to strongly rebound in 2020-21".

Alas, that has not happened. In fact, there is a complete disconnect between the Economic Survey and the Budget. There is no measure to create wealth in the Budget, as pronounced by the Survey, nor is there anything to generate an atmosphere of trust.

A disappointing speech

The Budget speech read out by the Finance Minister was perhaps the longest in history, running to almost two hours, until the Minister herself could not carry on any longer. However, the markets were not impressed.

Almost two-thirds of the Budget speech was devoted to subjects that come within the constitutional domain of the States and, in the remainder, there was not much to cheer about.

The response to even issues such as the abolition of dividend distribution tax, which otherwise should have been received well, was muted. There was endless wait, with a fond hope that some important announcement would be made over the long duration of the Budget speech, only to end in disappointment.

A disappointing speech

The Budget speech read out by the Finance Minister was perhaps the longest in history, running to almost two hours, until the Minister herself could not carry on any longer. However, the markets were not impressed.

It was difficult to find in it either the gravitas fit for the occasion, the annual Budget presentation of a country of 1.3 billion people, or the economic intelligence necessary to address the present, two attributes one would expect.

Low on economic intelligence
In a Budget speech, the government is expected to provide a review of the state of the economy and how it will be addressed via revenue and expenditure operations being proposed.

After Manmohan Singh's performance in 1991, the country expects a slightly higher level of economic intelligence, if not analysis, on display in the Union Budget. While not all Budget presentations since have measured up to this standard, this one fails miserably.

Going by the Budget's thrust, the government is either clueless as to what the economy needs right now or has chosen to brazen it out. The slowing of the economy has been remarked upon for at least two years by now, and the cries have by

almost two-thirds of the Budget speech was devoted to State subjects like agriculture, irrigation, rural development and health; the allocation to Centrally sponsored schemes in these areas for the year was abysmal

ment. The slippage in fiscal deficit from the target set in the Budget estimate in 2019-2020 was a foregone conclusion. This is mainly due to: the nominal GDP growth being 7.5%, as against the estimated 12% in the Budget; the expectation that the tax revenue was to increase at 18.3% over the pre-actuals of the previous year; and, lastly, the progress in disinvestment being tardy and that only about ₹18,000 crore of the budgeted ₹1.05 lakh crore has been realised so far.

It is not surprising that the fiscal deficit for the current year stands estimated at 3.8% of GDP and the target for the next year is 3.5%. Thus, the slippage for both the years is 0.5 percentage point to GDP. Of course, off-Budget financing has continued and that makes the reported deficit numbers somewhat of doubtful validity. Besides, there are questions on whether even these estimates will be real-

ised when the actual numbers are finalised.

It remains to be seen whether the total estimate of ₹65,000 crore of disinvestment proceeds will be realised, which implies that the government will have to fast-track disinvestment to collect ₹47,000 crore in the next two months. Besides, the revised estimate of tax revenue for the current year is over 14% higher than the actual for 2018-2019, perhaps predicated on the hope that the scheme, "Vivad se Vishwas", of allowing the settlement of disputed tax to be paid without interest and penalty.

There are downward risks in achieving the targeted fiscal deficit of 3.5% in 2020-2021 as well. The nominal GDP growth looks reasonable but it is not clear how the other non-debt capital receipts will be realised.

The capital expenditure is estimated to increase by 18%. Despite this, the revenue deficit is higher at 2.7% of GDP as compared to 2.4% this year and is almost 77% of the fiscal deficit.

Echoes from the past

The abolition of dividend distribution tax and taxing it in the hands of the shareholders at applicable rates was expected. In fact, there has been considerable zig-zag on dividend taxation policy over the years.

The reforms in individual income tax, however, are clearly disappointing. The best practice approach to tax reform is to broaden the base, reduce the rates and reduce the number of brackets to make it simpler. Clearly, the main objective of any tax should be to raise revenue.

The government could have simply phased out the tax concessions, indexed the brackets for inflation and reduced the rates of tax, with appropriate adjustment in brackets. Instead, it has created six brackets which takes us back to the pre-1991 era of income taxation.

The protectionist stance for import substitution in the name of "Make in India" has also continued, which too takes us back to the pre-reform era.

Drop in revenue expenditure

On the expenditure side, there has been a sharp compression of revenue expenditures by 4% and the capital expenditure is shown at 3% higher in 2019-2020 over the previous year.

Much of the compression in revenue expenditures was in the Central sector (12%) and Centrally sponsored schemes (4%). In 2020-2021, the revenue and capital expenditures are estimated at 12% and 18%, respectively, higher than the current year.

Despite many announcements in the Budget on schemes relating to subjects in the States' domain such as agriculture, irrigation, rural development and health, the expenditure on the Central sector and Centrally sponsored schemes is budgeted to increase at 7.6% and 7.3%, respectively, next year.

In other words, a considerable part of the expenditure compression in 2019-2020 was borne by the States, and while the overall expenditure of the Centre is budgeted to increase by 12.7% next year, the increase in the transfers on account of the Central sector and Centrally sponsored schemes would be just about 7.4%.

On the whole, the Budget fails to provide any kind of stimulus for the revival of consumer or investment demand. Nor has it been able to contain the deficits and that leaves very little room for further cuts in repo rates by the monetary policy committee.

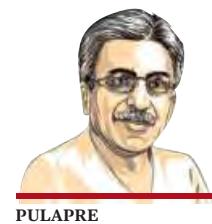
The Budget is also supposed to provide clear policy signals. Mere announcements that there will be a doubling of farmers' incomes and there will be ₹102 lakh crore investments in the next five years are not likely to revive the sentiments.

In short, the country has missed yet another opportunity to retrieve the economy from the throes of stagnancy.



A government that is clueless on the economy

Listening to the Budget speech, one would hardly get any indication of either the economic slowdown or the unemployment rate, which is the highest in decades



P. BALAKRISHNAN
is Professor, Ashoka University

It has long been suspected that the Narendra Modi government lacks a deep understanding of India's economy, how it works and how to assess its condition at any point in time. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget speech of over two-and-a-half hours was mainly an exercise in tom-tomming the achievements of the govern-

ment, particularly "the Prime Minister", with an announcement of some income tax cuts thrown in for good measure.

It was difficult to find in it either the gravitas fit for the occasion, the annual Budget presentation of a country of 1.3 billion people, or the economic intelligence necessary to address the present, two attributes one would expect.

Low on economic intelligence
In a Budget speech, the government is expected to provide a review of the state of the economy and how it will be addressed via revenue and expenditure operations being proposed.

After Manmohan Singh's performance in 1991, the country expects a slightly higher level of economic intelligence, if not analysis, on display in the Union Budget. While not all Budget presentations since have measured up to this standard, this one fails miserably.

Going by the Budget's thrust, the government is either clueless as to what the economy needs right now or has chosen to brazen it out. The slowing of the economy has been remarked upon for at least two years by now, and the cries have by

now almost reached a crescendo. Slowing growth is only part of the story. Less visible in the data optics is the high unemployment rate, the highest in close to half a century. Listening to the Budget speech, one would not get the slightest sense of this. We are told that the fundamentals are strong, that the economy is set to attain the projected \$5 trillion level on time, and that the government is committed to macroeconomic stability (read 'deficit reduction').

Modinomics and tax reforms
This Budget only takes forward 'Modinomics' with its emphasis on 'minimum government' and fascination with digitalisation, IT start-ups and foreign direct investment. There is room for all of these on their own but to think that they make up a package of measures to address the present state of the economy would be naïve.

If there is a core to the Budget, one that may be taken as the strategy it embodies, it would be the attempt to stimulate growth through tax reforms. The Budget is quite elaborate in this area

and individuals (Income Tax) and speaks for amending the IT Act to allow for a "taxpayer's charter" which will set taxpayers free from harassment, for the Finance Minister a sequel to the ending of the "dreaded inspector Raj". Then there is the 'Vivaad se Vishwas' scheme to settle tax disputes speedily and smoothly; tax compliance is to be strengthened; the tax refund process simplified; and taxation of Employee Stock Options (ESOPs) deferred for up to five years.

But the cherry on the cake is surely the reduction of the income tax rates on income less than ₹15 lakh, which the Finance Minister clarified will leave income tax rates in India the lowest they have ever been. By lowering the income tax rate, the programme of cutting tax,

which had commenced with the lowering of the corporate tax rate in 2019 has been carried forward.

We are not given the rationale for the tax cut, perhaps because that would draw attention to the fact that the economy is slowing and the target of \$5 trillion by 2025 is unlikely to be achieved now. But one thing is clear.

An income tax cut is unlikely to restore the rate of growth to the level at which it last peaked, around 8% in 2016-17.

Actually, the question is whether it will even reverse the current slowing. Income taxpayers are such a small percentage of the population that the size of their purses is unlikely to make a serious enough dent on the fortunes of the economy.

Need for public investment

The present moment in India had called for a Budget that implements an expenditure thrust in the form of greater public investment. The Minister repeated the government's statement, made last year, that there will be ₹100 lakh crore worth infrastructure spending in the next five years but did not refer to a specific infrastructure spending

This is not surprising as the ₹100 lakh crore is to be made up by substantial private outlays projected under Public Private Partnership (PPP). PPP, as a mode of building infrastructure, was first envisioned during the United Progressive Alliance's second term, and has shown itself to be an unviable arrangement. There is no reason to believe that it will succeed this time.

While infrastructure spending is what will determine the long-term trajectory of the economy, the immediate growth impact of the Budget will be governed by the spending over revenues or the 'fiscal deficit'.

We are told that the revised estimate for this deficit in the current year is 3.8% of GDP and the Budget estimate for 2020-2021 is 3.5%. If a fiscal deficit of 3.8% could not prevent the economy from slowing further last year, reducing it is only likely to aggravate it.

There is of course always the possibility that private investors are sufficiently enthused by the Budget to spend. Early indications from the stock markets is that this may not be the case.



Timings

DELHI

SUNDAY, FEB. 02
RISE 07:10 SET 18:01
RISE 12:02 SET 00:31
MONDAY, FEB. 03
RISE 07:09 SET 18:02
RISE 12:38 SET 01:26
TUESDAY, FEB. 04
RISE 07:08 SET 18:03
RISE 13:19 SET 02:22

Delhi Weather

max min

Delhi City 20 06

Safdarjung 20 06

Palam 20 07

Delhi Palam Today

19°C Haze/mist is likely during cold morning. Sunny sky is

likely during the day.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow

19°C Shallow fog is likely in some parts. The day will

remain comfortable and sunny.

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THE HINDU

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Air Quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi 306	Gurugram 201
Ghaziabad 297	Faridabad 324
Noida 281	Greater Noida 286
Good 0-50	Satisfactory 51-100
Poor 101-200	Moderate 201-300
Very Poor 301-400	Severe >400
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) Source: CPCB	

DELHI TODAY

Exhibition: "Baolis of Delhi", a group show by Urban Sketchers Delhi at 'o' Delhi Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Sacred Architecture of Kashmir", an exhibition of photographs depicting the state's architectures like the temples, stupas, mosques and khangahs, presented by the Indian National trust for Art & Cultural Heritage, Kashmir on display at Annexe Art Gallery, India International Centre (IIC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: Bruno Art Gallery presents a group paintings and art installation exhibition at Experimental Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Aarambh", a group show of sculptures and painting at Altiraash Art Gallery, 147, DLF South Court, Saket, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

(Mail your listings for this column at cityeditordelhi@thehindu.co.in)

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

REMEMBRANCE

He taught us to walk

A. Ganesan, M.A. Ph.D., Former Vice Principal, Saraswati Narayana College, Madurai.

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MARUTI SUZUKI

Delhi again given stepmotherly treatment in Budget, says CM

Congress criticises Centre, says the Budget will hamper the city's development

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Both the Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress on Saturday criticised the Union Budget presented on Saturday.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that Delhi has yet again been given a "stepmotherly treatment".

"Delhi has been given stepmotherly treatment in the Budget yet again. If Delhi is not the BJP's priority, why should Delhites vote for them? If the BJP is disappointing Delhi before the elections, what will they do after?" Mr. Kejriwal tweeted.

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) chief Subhash Chopra termed the Budget "very disappointing" and said it will hamper the city's development.

"There is no provision in the Budget for improving the law and order situation in the Capital, providing houses to the poor and creating jobs. The Budget is a 'jumla' to confuse and mislead people," Mr. Chopra said.

Delhi Finance Minister Manish Sisodia termed the Budget a "failure". At a press



People watch a live telecast of the Union Budget in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

meet, he said: "Budget for education has come down from 3.6% to 3.2%. This is a fraud. At many points in the Budget, it seems that they are cheating."

He added: "In this Budget, Delhi's share in Central taxes has not been increased. It has been ₹325 crore since 2001-02. Delhi deserves its legitimate share in Central taxes to finance various de-

velopmental projects. The government had requested the Centre multiple times to enhance the allocation to at least ₹7,000 crore."

Stagnant allocation'

Mr. Sisodia said the Delhi budget has increased from ₹8,739 crore in 2001-02 to ₹60,000 crore in 2019-20, whereas the share in central taxes remains frozen.

"There was a lot of expectation that the salaried class will get some rebate on Income Tax. However, the Central government has deceived the salaried class by its complicated announcement, which means nothing in real-term savings of hard-earned money. If one will not get any exemption on savings, what is the use of the new option?" he asked.

Shaheen Bagh incident: protesters question inaction of Delhi Police

JNU students to hold march in show of solidarity today

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Following Saturday's firing incident near the ongoing anti-CAA protests in Shaheen Bagh, volunteers and protesters raised questions over the role of the authorities in ensuring the safety of citizens.

The incident at Shaheen Bagh comes just two days after a young man shot a anti-CAA protester near Jamia Millia Islamia, in the presence of police.

An eyewitness to Saturday's incident, Mehraj Khan, said: "Two men arrived in a car. They walked to the first barricade at the protest site. Soon, one of them fired in the air in close proximity to the protesters. The police took away the man in a private car and not a PCR van."

"Both the Jamia incident and the firing at Shaheen Bagh took place in front of the police. What is the administration doing? We are in

constant discussion with the administration to sort out what is happening."

Protesters at Shaheen Bagh called for "urgent mobilisation", especially with the Assembly polls inching closer. "As we approach the Delhi elections on February 8, we request the citizens to join us at Shaheen Bagh on Sunday in solidarity with our cause of defending the Constitution. We are increasingly fearful of the consequences of the politicisation of these

peaceful protests and maintain that we are a non-partisan gathering," read a statement issued by the protesters.

Meanwhile, the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union has called for a "Shaheen Bagh Chalo" march on Sunday. "This is the second incident in a disturbing trend of targeting protesters. We appeal to the student community to rally in support of the Shaheen Bagh incident," it said.

The JMI administration also directed the students to report any unauthorised entry

people of Delhi, please pay attention to improving the law and order situation," he said in a tweet.

"Amit Shah, what have you done to Delhi? Bullets are being fired in broad daylight. Law and order situation is in tatters. Elections will keep coming, politics will also continue, but for the sake of the



Policemen inspecting the site of firing in Shaheen Bagh on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

peaceful protests and maintain that we are a non-partisan gathering," read a statement issued by the protesters.

Meanwhile, the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union has called for a "Shaheen Bagh Chalo" march on Sunday. "This is the second incident in a disturbing trend of targeting protesters. We appeal to the student community to rally in support of the Shaheen Bagh incident," it said.

The JMI administration also directed the students to report any unauthorised entry

people of Delhi, please pay attention to improving the law and order situation," he said in a tweet.

"Amit Shah and the BJP are conspiring to postpone the

If I've done work, vote for me'

Aam Aadmi Party MLA Somnath Bharti vows to turn Malviya Nagar into a model Assembly constituency

NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI

Around 25 people holding flags and wearing AAP caps walked through P-Block of Malviya Nagar raising slogans. Using a microphone attached to a speaker, a man shouted: "Malviya Nagar ki janata se appeal hai ki aap ke neto. Somnath Bharti, aap ke gali aur mohalla mei, aap se milne aaye hain. (An appeal to the people of Malviya Nagar, your leader Somnath Bharti has come to your street to meet you)".

"Malviya Nagar ki janata se appeal hai ki aap ke neto. Somnath Bharti ko ghar se baahar aa karke aashirvad de rehi he, aayiye, aap bhi aashirvad digiye (People of Malviya Nagar are coming out and blessing Somnath Bharti. You also come and bless him)," he continued.

Mr. Bharti, the sitting AAP MLA from Malviya Nagar, smiled at the people and while shaking their hands said: "Jhadoo ko vote dena (Please vote for jhadoo)." The jhadoo (broom) is AAP's election symbol. As the group moved on foot, two autorickshaws followed playing Hindi tunes dubbed into election songs for the AAP leader.

"I am telling the people, if I have worked, then vote for

CCTVs, porta-cabins for security guards and benches in parks," said Rita Bhandari, 52, a resident of B-Block. "Our children do not study in government schools but I have heard that they have improved," she added.

"Mujhe koi benefit nahi mila hui (I have not received any benefits)," said Sachin Aurora, 40, who runs a stationary shop in G-Block. "When he [Mr. Kejriwal] came to power we thought that he is from IIT and he will transform Delhi into a world-class city. But look outside, this road is the same as it was five years back," he rued, adding: "You do not need any expertise in giving free things. But he will get votes for sure."

Showing a four-page "report card" of work done, Mr. Bharti said: "I am the first MLA in the area to give a report card of the work done. Even though a lot of things are under the civic body [run by the BJP], I will get it done. Whatever your demands are, I will get it done after [February 8] election day."

"Victory digiye log

"(Please show victory sign)," an AAP supporter said as Mr. Bharti got ready to click a photo with a group of women.

In a first, Congress, RJD tie up in Delhi

They have arrived at 66-4 seat-sharing arrangement

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Congress has firmed up an alliance with the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls, said leaders of both the parties on Saturday.

Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra said the party will support the RJD on four seats: Uttam Nagar, Palam, Kirari and Burari. The Con-

gress will contest the elections on 66 seats.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav will hold two roadshows and two public meetings between February 2-4, said party spokesperson Manoj Jha.

"This is the first time in Delhi that the Congress and RJD have formed an alliance for the State polls... There is a heavy concentration of Purvanchalis in the Capital," said Mr. Chopra. Stating that "free water and electricity" will be of no use if "citizen ship itself comes into question", Mr. Jha appealed to Purvanchali voters to support the alliance.

Adityanath launches attack on Kejriwal

He accuses AAP leader of supporting anti-CAA protesters

JATIN ANAND

NEW DELHI

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday alleged that Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal will waste taxpayers' money on "feeding biryani to anti-CAA protesters sitting on dharna at Shaheen Bagh, if re-elected".

At a poll meeting in support of BJP's Karawal Nagar and Mustafabad candidates – Mohan Singh Bisht and Jagdish Pradhan – Mr. Adityanath criticised both the Congress and AAP, saying "their people wanted protests like the one in Shaheen Bagh".

"By doing anti-CAA dharnas, raising slogans in support of Pakistan, indulging in arson and violence; the Congress, Mr. Kejriwal and their people...what do they want to prove?" he said.

He accused AAP of setting the "worst example of political blackmailers operating in

the people of this country safe from these elements," he added.

"He [Kejriwal] does not want good roads, potable water, expansion of the metro... all he wants is Shaheen Bagh... you have to decide whether you want all-round development or Shaheen Bagh... he will waste taxpayers' money on feeding them [protesters] biryani," he said.

Mr. Adityanath also questioned Mr. Kejriwal's commitment to women's safety, ending corruption and enactment of the Lokpal.

He further accused Mr. Kejriwal of seeking support from "a Pakistani Minister", and held him responsible for air pollution in the city.

Exemptions, clauses for new income tax slabs irk citizens

Some say move will streamline paperwork, filing process

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The new income tax slabs announced in the Budget on Saturday evoked mixed reactions from the public.

While some hailed the move, others stated that there will not be "much gain" as taxpayers will have to forego a host of exemptions.

Sayan Kundu, a 30-year-old development researcher, said: "A person who claims exemption automatically reduces his taxable income. Here, the taxable income remains higher but the rate is lower. It does not look like this reduction [lower rate but higher taxable income] is sufficient. For someone who is not using the full extent of the 80C deductions, their losses will no doubt be less, but the gains are marginal.

This is surely not the reform needed for faltering demand in a stagflation economy."

Stating that the "supposed tax cuts make for good optics", Gurugram-based software engineer Siddhartha Tiwari said: "I am waiting for the deduction list. If deductions like HRA, 24B and 80C have been removed, then I

think it [new tax regime] helps me as I no longer have to pay cumulative taxes, but people in my office say it might be a problem for them because they won't get exemptions

AKSHAY GUPTA, 27
Credit manager

I don't think it has any benefit because even if you reduce the direct tax that we pay, things will get more expensive because people do not have the income to consume

SOHAM BHISAS, 25
Employee at a start-up

have been short-changed."

Pranoy Maxwell, a civil service aspirant, said: "It seems that the central government has done this in desperation to get out of the economic slowdown. The Modi government

Tronica City
factory fire: kin
of victims seek
owner's arrest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GAZIABAD

The family members of two workers, who were charred to death in a blaze at a factory unit in Tronica City industrial area on January 30, staged a sit-in with the bodies at Sabhpur checkpost on Saturday demanding the arrest of the factory owner.

The family kept the bodies Sunder Pal (35) and Akash Kumar (19) in a truck on the roadside of Ram Park Colony main gate and staged a protest demanding the owner's arrest. On Thursday night, a fire had broken out due to a short-circuit at the vehicle filter manufacturing unit that caused a blast in the boiler. The resin chemical drums, which are used as adhesive to manufacture the vehicle filters, also caught fire and spread on the floor.

Sunder and Akash could not escape as their feet got stuck to the floor and were charred to death, SP (Rural) Neeraj Kumar Jadaun said. Our protest will continue till our demand of a 50-metre housing plot and ₹20 lakh each for their families is not provided, he added. The police assured them of legal action against Ahuja following which the bodies were taken for cremation.

An FIR has been registered under IPC section 304A (causing death by negligence) against the factory owner and the unit supervisor, Mr. Jadaun said. An inquiry has also been set up by Loni Sub-Divisional Magistrate to ascertain the cause of the fire and to probe negligence of the owner for not installing fire extinguishers in the unit, the SP said. Report expected in three days.

1 dead in ammonia leak at Noida unit

Around 300 people had to be evacuated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GAZIABAD

One man died and at least seven suffered injuries following ammonia gas leak at a Haldiram's unit in Noida's Sector 65 on Saturday, the police said.

DPC (Zone 2, Noida) Harish Chandra said that the deceased has been identified as 42-year-old Sanjeev who worked as a gas operator in the unit.

"Prima facie, it seems, he died due to inhaling the poisonous gas. We got a call at noon regarding the incident and called the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). Around 300 people inside the building had to be evacuated," he said.

"Sanjeev died during treatment. The rest of the victims were discharged after treatment," Mr. Chandra said, adding cause of the leakage is being probed.

Deputy Commandant (NDRF) Ravindra Singh Kushwaha told *The Hindu* that a team of around 40 personnel in protective suits

were deployed after getting a call about the incident at 12.30 p.m. "By the time the team reached the spot, the workers who had inhaled the gas were taken to a hospital by Haldiram's team," he added.

Effect lasted three hours

"Ammonia is used as a refrigerant. When it leaks, it first comes out in liquid form. It causes a burning effect in the respiratory system as well as on the skin. It can cause lung damage and even death. It seems the gas leaked from a welded spot in the pipeline. The staff had closed the regulators on both ends of the pipe but by that time, the damage had been done. It is a matter of investigation whether those who went inside to check the leakage wore the required safety gear or not."

Mr. Kushwaha said that it took around three hours for the effect of the gas to subside. Firefighters were also pressed into service, he added.

IN BRIEF

Minor fire in building at AIIMS, none injured

NEW DELHI

A minor fire broke out at a building on the premises of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Saturday. No one was injured in the incident. The fire was reported around 5 p.m. in the laboratory on the ground floor of the AIIMS Cardio-Neuro Centre. "Ten fire tenders were rushed to the spot and the blaze was quickly brought under control," a Delhi Fire Service official said. Evacuated patients were shifted back to the wards by late evening.

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Two youth
drown in
Bawana canal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Two youth drowned in a canal in outer Delhi's Bawana, the police said on Saturday.

The victims have been identified as Raj Kumar (24) and Shiv Kumar (21), they said. A fire official said they received information about the incident on Friday night. The Fire Department, the Department of Delhi Disaster Management Authority and Boat Club started the rescue operation at 12.40 a.m. on Saturday.

The bodies were found and handed over to the police, the fire department said.

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Sessions will commence from 4th February 2020

Highlights :

Customised inputs based on your bio data/service preference/personal profile.

Get valuable tips and techniques to face the interview

Enjoy the advantage of early preparation for best results

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SRI CHAITANYA IAS ACADEMY

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Ph: 01145609516/17, 9667402779

LIFE MADE SIMPLE

MATRIMONIAL**BRIDEGROOMS WANTED****INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL****BRIDEGROOMS WANTED****BRIDES WANTED****BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED***Classification common for Brides, Bridgrooms, Brides & Grooms***Assamese****Awadhi****Bengali****Bhojpuri****Bihari****Chhattisgarhi****English****Gujarati****Haryanvi****Hindi****Kannada****Kashmiri****Konkani****Malayalam****Manipuri****Marathi****Marwari****Nepali****Oriya****Parsi****Punjabi****Saurashtra****Sindhi****Tamil****Telugu****Tulu****Urdu****Advocate****Business****Defence****Doctor****Engineer****Finance/ Banking****Government/ Quasi-Govt.****IAS/ Allied Services****Information Technology****MBA/ CA/ ICWA****NRI****Cosmopolitan****Divorcee****Physically Challenged****MARRIAGE BUREAUS****WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS****BENGALI****WANT BENGALI** Brahmin Groom at least Post Graduate holding Govt Regular Post Pay 7 CPC Level 6 or above for our daughter of unknown birth source while of one month age lawfully adopted from Mother Teresa Mission, Kolkata now average in look 27' 5" doing PhD Chemistry W/P 9433889900**COSMOPOLITAN****EZHAVA GIRL** Aristocratic family Tcr-34/162cm beautiful, Aayilam PG Brithiversity University Seeks alliance from highly placed professionals below 37 Mob 9605575333**DIVORCEE****Tamil Muslim** very very fair / BE/ 30/175cm married at very young age and got divorced within short period seeks well educated employed broad minded groom below 35 years. Email: idemressubbers@yahoo.com Contact: 9486277087**REDDIAR VEG.** FC TN 38/160 M.Sc Officer Pvt. Bangalore 10A/ PA divorcee issueless seeks FC/BC Emp. Groom 9042582350**HINDU MURTHUVAR** (OBC) Lady Doctor Paediatrician, 29, 160, Kartika, invites alliance from professionals. Contact No. 9474553519**SC, AD**, 28 years,163cm, Doctor, MBBS, MSc(OG) Fair, Girl, Father Doctor, own Hospital, seeks MD, MS, DM, MCh Doctor Groom below 32 years. Ct number: 9788655756**HINDU MARUTHUVAR** (OBC) Lady Doctor Paediatrician, 29, 160, Kartika, invites alliance from professionals. Contact No. 9474553519**THULUVA VELLALAR** 27/167 Pooradam-Danusu, MBBS, very fair, Chennai settled, Father Businessman, affluent family with good network seeks same/any Mudaliar Community preferably MBBS/MD. Ct:9381076963/ 9940011245**MD Paediatrics** final year, 27y, Telugu Devanga, Chennai seeks alliance from MD Doctor. Ph:9884614168**SC-AD** 27/157 BE-Sr.SWE,90,000/pm TCS seeks SameCaste groom working in Chennai / Bangalore.Ct:9952147216**NAIDU** 47 yrs, widow, st. Govt. officer seeks well settled Groom**TAMIL****WANTED US** Based Grooms Not More than 38yrs for a God Fearing Christian Girl 34yrs Settled in California.Mt:usgroom1985@gmail.com**ANILJA VELLALAR** 29 Swathi MBA MNC Veg fair & good looking seeks professionally qualified groom Cn- 9941348103**ENGINEER****ANILJA VELLALAR** 29 Swathi MBA MNC Veg fair & good looking seeks professionally qualified groom Cn- 9941348103**BRIDEGROOMS WANTED****ENGINEER****IYER/ 27/ M.** Engg/ wkg Germany seeks Europe based yrly groom upto 31 yrs. call 9994176042**HINDI****PQM4** Garg girl 28/54' fair b/ful, MBA wrkr. C. Govt. PSU Delhi seeks PQ well settled Boy M: 800542393**SC-AD****CHRISTIAN**, 31, 168 PG, Media Manager, B.Sc, M.Com, 28 years,Brinda seeks a Groom working in State/Central Govt/ Permanent Job in Private Sector - 9443952465**CSI PROTESTANT****AD Christian** 29/153 Grad. Std. 11+pm seeks similar Employed Groom**SC-AD****ZOHRA VELLALAR**, 25, 165cm, B.E. (CEC) Tall Fair Looking girl, Lives in Trichy. Family is Financially well, Looking for a compatible, Well educated and employed groom, from the same community. Ct No : 9384223791, 9842031460**HINDU****21/167 Fair** 31yrs 4'11"Ms Phd Delhi Govt Teacher seeks professor. Lecturer Officer in community. Ct:9759226889**NAIDU****PROTESTANT AD Christian** 29/153 Grad. Std. 11+pm seeks similar Employed Groom**SC-AD****ZOHRA VELLALAR**, 25, 165cm, B.E. (CEC) Tall Fair Looking girl, Lives in Trichy. Family is Financially well, Looking for a compatible, Well educated and employed groom, from the same community. 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NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

Notification No.: C/143/Notification/
BALLUPUR HALT (HG-1)/2020
Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, North Eastern Railways, Itanagar for and on behalf of the President of India invites applications in the sealed envelope for the appointment of halt agent on Commission basis residing in concerning district of mentioned halt station at BALLUPUR HALT (HG-1).

Name of the Halt Station: Ballupur Halt (HG-1). Serving station: Rudin. Period of work: Five years. Cost of Application form (Including GST): Rs. 1,180/- (One Thousand One Hundred Eighty rupees Only with GST) In Form of demand Draft Issued in favor of F.A.&C.A.O., N.E. Railway by any Nationalized Bank & Payable at Bareilly. Earnest Money: Rs. 6,000/- (Six Thousand rupees Only) In Form of Demand Draft Issued in favor of F.A.&C.A.O., North Eastern Railway by any Nationalized Bank & Payable at Bareilly. Last Date & time to obtain application forms from office: From the office of Divisional Rail Manager, Commercial, Itanagar in any working day from the date of publication till Date 27-02-2020 and time 16.00 hrs. • Date & time of Dropping applications in application Box: From Date 24-02-2020 to date 28-02-2020 till time 15.00 hrs. • Date & time opening of applications: On Date 28-02-2020 till time 15.30 hrs. • Complete Details of Application Form, Eligibility of Notification, Terms & Condition can also be seen & Downloaded from website www.ner.indianrailways.gov.in or can be obtain from the office of Divisional Rail Manager, Commercial, Itanagar in any working day. Without application form cost & Cost of Earnest money the application will not be considered valid. Applications receipt by late neither will be accepted nor will be considered. Railway administration has all the rights to cancel or reject any application or whole process of appointment of an Halt agent at any stage without giving any reason.

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager
CPRO/Vaniya-218, Itanagar
About any passenger amenity complaint
SMS on Mob. No. 09794849595

Never travel on
roof and foot boards.

कार्यालय परियोजना प्रबंधक,
यूनिट-18, कन्स्ट्रक्शन एण्ड
डिजाइन सर्विसेज,
उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम,
(उत्तर प्रदेश का उपभोग)
सी-20, दी-103/वार्षा-01 सिटी, सी-103/वा

यूनिट बलूं एस्टेट के पाठे,
रामगंगा विहार, मुख्याद-244001
प्राप्त कार्यालय : ई-सी-38वी
विभूति खण्ड, गोमती नारा,

तालुक-228001
गोमती नारा जल निगम, ई-प्रेस्ट

निवास संखा नं: 134/ए-18/14
दिनांक: 30.01.2020
ई-निवादा संखा

अव्याधि, उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम, को और से
अधिकारियों का द्वारा जनन-दूषणावाद में

Construction of Transit Guest House at District Judge Compound In Distt-Moradabad (U.P.) को

अनुमति दी गयी अन्तराल से जल निगम, ई-प्रेस्ट

दिनांक 16.03.2020 के अपने हाथ 17:00 बजे

तक ई-निवादा प्रपत्र दिनांक 10.02.2020

से दिनांक 16.03.2020 के नये उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार की e-procurement वेबसाइट

<https://e-tender.up.nic.in> से आनंदोलन किये

जा सकते हैं, तथा ई-निवादा दिनांक 17.03.

तक कार्य हुए हैं निवादा प्रपत्र दिनांक 01.02.2020

से दिनांक 16.03.2020 के नये प्रदेश सरकार की द्वारा

ई-निवादा प्रपत्र दिनांक 07.03.2020

प्राप्त करने के लिए जायेंगे। निवादा संखा 134/ए-18, सी-एण्ड

परियोजना प्रबंधक, यूनिट-18, सी-एण्ड

सिटी, सी-103/वा सिटी, ई-प्रेस्ट

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Indians flown in from China quarantined

324 passengers from Wuhan land in Delhi on special Air India aircraft, shifted to special camps

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The first Air India flight evacuating 324 Indian nationals from Wuhan, China landed in Delhi on Saturday. This came on a day when the death toll due to the novel coronavirus (nCoV) infection shot up to 259, with confirmed cases surging to 11,791.

The plane, carrying 211 students, 110 working professionals and three minors from Wuhan, reached Delhi at around 7.30 a.m., a senior Health official said.

Even though only asymptomatic Indians have been flown back, they will be housed in the quarantine facility in Haryana's Manesar, set up by the Indian Army.

"The Indian Embassy had informed the Indians that they would be tested before the flight and would undergo a 14-day quarantine period after reaching India. They had been informed that only asymptomatic persons would be brought back. A second Air India flight left on Saturday afternoon to pick up other Indians in China," said the Health official.

The incoming Indian passengers will be quar-



Ground check: Passengers being screened by doctors of the Air India's B747, the aircraft that airlifted Indian nationals from Wuhan, in New Delhi on Saturday. ■PTI

tined for 14 days at the two Quarantine Centres set up at Manesar [managed by Armed Forces Medical Services] and Chawla Camp [managed by ITBP]. All proposed male passengers [approximately 280] are proposed to be sent to Manesar Camp and families/females [approximately 90] can be housed in the ITBP camp," the Health Ministry had said.

Meanwhile, passengers arriving from Thailand and

Singapore will also be screened at airports, in addition to those coming from China and Hong Kong, for possible exposure to the virus, the Union Health Ministry said.

Review meet

The decision was taken at a high-level review meeting held by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba here on the preparedness to deal with the virus amid mounting global

concern over increasing number of cases in China and several other countries.

"Apart from passengers coming from China and Hong Kong, passengers coming on flights from Singapore and Thailand shall also be universally screened at the airports, henceforth," noted a statement issued by the Health Ministry.

A total of 52,332 passengers from 326 flights have been screened as of Saturday

Six students stopped from boarding flight

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Six Indian students were prevented from boarding a special evacuation flight from Wuhan after their body temperatures were found to be higher.

Of the 324 passengers who flew to Delhi, three were minors, 211 were students and were 110 working professionals, officials said.

and a total of 97 symptomatic travellers picked up and referred to the isolation facilities. About 98 samples have been tested, of which 97 have been found to be negative.

The condition of the medical student in Kerala, who has been admitted to the isolation ward of Thrissur Government Medical College Hospital, is satisfactory, according to Kerala Health Minister K.K. Shylaja.

Nirbhaya case convict's plea rejected

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind rejected the mercy petition of the second 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape convict Vinay Kumar Sharma on Saturday.

Hours later, the Centre moved the Delhi High Court arguing that the four death row convicts were taking the judicial process for a "joyride" and were acting in tandem to delay their execution.

Hours after Sharma's clemency plea was dismissed by the President, Akshay Thakur, 31, a third convict, filed his mercy petition. Earlier, another convict, Mukesh Singh had filed a mercy petition that was swiftly rejected by the President.

A trial court on Friday postponed the execution of the four men scheduled for 6 a.m. on February 1 in Tihar jail. The original date of the hanging was January 22. In the order, the judge noted that if an appeal or an application is made by even one convict, the execution of the death warrant shall be postponed in the case of the co-convicts also.

Following the Centre's plea, the High Court sought the response of the four convicts, DG (Prisons) and Tihar Jail authorities. It will hear the matter again on Sunday.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta argued that the convicts were testing everyone's patience. "This was one of the cases which shook the conscience of the nation and the society is waiting for justice," he said. The Centre contended that the trial court judge had acted beyond its jurisdiction in postponing the death warrants.

A.P. Vigilance Commissioner asked to shift to Kurnool

Chairman of the Commissionate of Inquiries also to be relocated from the Secretariat at Velagapudi

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

The office of the Vigilance Commissioner and the Chairman of the Commissionate of Inquiries will be relocated to Kurnool from the Interim Government Complex, Secretariat, located at Velagapudi. The government has issued an order to this effect.

On administrative

grounds, orders have been issued to shift the office of the Vigilance Commissioner and the offices of the members of the Commissionate of Inquiries immediately.

The Commissionate of Inquiries is the first government Department to be shifted from the temporary capital officially, after the government announced the establishment of the three

capitals. The State government has announced to set up an executive capital in Visakhapatnam, a legislative capital in Amaravati and a judiciary capital in Kurnool.

On January 20, the Assembly passed the Andhra Pradesh Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of all Regions Bill, 2020, and the A.P. Capital Region Development Authority Repeal

Bill, 2020. They passed the Bills to the A.P. Legislative Council, which in turn referred them to a select committee after a heated argument.

Opposing the government's move to set up the three capitals, villagers have been organising protests for the last 46 days.

The government has reportedly issued oral instruc-

tions to the heads of certain departments to search for suitable places in the proposed executive and judiciary capital areas.

The Kurnool Collector and the Engineer-in-Chief will take steps in identifying suitable buildings at Kurnool to relocate the offices of the Commissioner of Inquiries and its members, according to the order.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

SIGNAL & TELECOMMUNICATION / MADURAI DIVISION

E-TENDER NOTICE No. U-SG-11-2019-1 Dated: 30.01.2020

Senior Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer, Southern Railway, Madurai Division for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tender for the following work as per detailed tender notice given in our e-tender portal www.reps.gov.in. The tenderer(s) intending to apply need to get enrolled in the e-tender portal www.reps.gov.in and only online tenders will be accepted. The cost of tender form & EMD can be made only on online gateway payment through multiple banks, net banking, debit card & credit card. The date of closing is 13.02.2020 at 15.00 hrs. All relevant credentials & supporting documents are to be scanned and uploaded along with the offer.

Name of the work: Annual Zonal Works contract of S&T gears under the jurisdiction of DSTE/SW/MDU, ADSTE/TEN and ADSTE/MDU for the period of one year.

Divisional Railway Manager (S&T), Madurai

SUPPLYCO

THE KERALA STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED

MAVELI BHAVAN, P.O.No.3020, GANDHINAGAR, KOCHI – 682020

Ph No: PABX: 0494 2206775, 2206795, PADDY Section: Ph No. 0494 2207923

E-Mail:ampaddy@supplykerala.com | Website:www.supplykerala.com

No.ES-2534/20 Date: 25.01.2020

E-TENDER NOTICE

ONLY THROUGH ELECTRONIC TENDERING SYSTEM

The Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation intends to auction flood affected/damaged paddy rice through e-tender, which will be accepted up to 12.00 Noon on 11.02.2020 and will be opened thereafter on the same day. Tender Form and Terms & Conditions may be downloaded from the website www.supplykerala.com or www.etenders.kerala.gov.in. For additional details, please contact at the above address. Only tenderers possessing digital signatures will be permitted to participate in the e-tender.

Sd/-
Chairman & Managing Director

Divisional Railway Manager (S&T), Madurai

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 19-DEE-OP-MAQ-2019-2020

Dated: 31.01.2020 Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer / Operation (Sr.DEE/OP/PGT), Southern Railway, Palakkad - 678 002, invites e-tender for the following work.

Sl. No. Description Name of work

1 Tender Notice No. 19-DEE-OP-MAQ-2019-2020 Dated: 31.01.2020

2 Name of work with its location SECURITY, UPKEEP & MAINTENANCE OF RUNNING ROOM AND ITS PREMISES INCLUDING GARDENING, WASHING OF LINENS, ARRANGING OF BEDS, COOKING AND SERVING OF FOOD TO THE OCCUPANTS IN THE RUNNING ROOM AT SUBSIDIZED RATES, HANDLING OF LINE BOXES OF CREW & GUARD, CALLING OF CREW & GUARD AND SUPPLY OF NEWSPAPERS & PERIODICALS IN RUNNING ROOM AT MANGALORE JUNCTION FOR A PERIOD OF ONE YEAR

3 Advertised Contract Value ₹ 75,58,919/- (Rupees Seventy Five Lakhs Fifty Eight Thousand Nine Hundred and Nineteen Only)

4 Cost of tender form ₹ 5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand Only)

5 Earnest money to be deposited ₹ 1,51,200/- (Rupees One Lakh Fifty One Thousand Two Hundred only)

6 Completion period of work One year

7 Tender closing date & time 19.02.2020 at 15.00 hrs

8 Website particulars www.reps.gov.in

Divisional Railway Manager (Electrical / Operation), Palakkad

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice No.

FROM PAGE ONE

FinMin offers opt-in IT scheme to boost demand

The changes are a reduction in the number of days that an Indian citizen can be granted non-resident status for tax purposes from 182 to 120; citizens who don't pay taxes anywhere will be deemed to be a resident of India, and the definition of 'not ordinary resident' has been tightened.

'240 days'

"Now in order to become a non-resident, one has to stay out of the country 240 days," said Mr. Pandey.

"In many cases, we have found that some people are resident of no country in the world but stay a certain number of days in different parts of the world," he said.

"If any Indian citizen is not a resident of any country, then he will be deemed to be resident in India and then his worldwide income



Ajay Bhushan Pandey

will be taxed," he added.

It's still not clear if this will apply to many Indian expats working in the UAE and other countries.

"We will have to wait and see if this will apply to those working in the UAE as technically, they tax people but the tax rate is zero," said Amarpal Chadha, tax partner & India mobility leader, EY.

Tight security



On alert : Police personnel inspecting a truck loaded with cargo in Jammu on Saturday, following Friday's encounter at Bann toll plaza. ■ PTI



in the Wokha district on January 28.

'Speech misinterpreted'

He said his speech in the Lotha tribal dialect had been misinterpreted to mean he facilitated backdoor appointment when "I only stressed NPSC could not be manipu-

lated in a different context". In a letter to the Governor on behalf of the civil service aspirants, former president of Sumi (tribe) Students' Union Vicca S. Aye said they have a verified audio of the speech in which he asked aspirants to approach him after clearing the written examinations for the NPSC.

"He said he will be able to manage the interview and help the aspirants get through," Mr. Aye wrote, requesting the Governor to issue a statement of condemnation and penalise Mr. Patton.

The Deputy Chief Minister also rubbed the Lotha community on the wrong by allegedly referring to the people of Ralan area in the district as 'Miya' for not hav-

ing voted for him in the Assembly election. Bordering Assam, Ralan had in 2014 seen violent clashes between the local Nagas and the Adivasis mostly employed as tea plantation workers.

"As a Lotha Naga, he [Mr. Patton] should have some self-respect and know who the Lothas are. The people of Ralan area demand an unconditional apology," said Hayithung Kikon, chairman of the Ralan Area Lotha Hoho.

Hoho is the traditional body specific to each Naga tribe.

Mr. Patton and the Wokha district unit of the BJP denied making any derogatory remark and said his words were twisted via social media.

+ Nagaland Dy. CM lands in a soup

Y. Patton denies claiming to have manipulated civil service interviews

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI
Nagaland's civil service aspirants and a students' union have written to Governor R.N. Ravi seeking action against Deputy Chief Minister Y. Patton for claiming to have manipulated interviews of the Nagaland Public Service Commission (NPSC).

They have also asked NPSC Chairman T.S. Angami to resign on moral grounds since "the unemployed youth of Nagaland have been studying hard to clear the competitive exam only to learn it is the Deputy CM who decides the result".

Mr. Patton, also the BJP Legislator Party leader, denied having made the claim at a conference of the Lotha Students' Union at Maratku

Y. Patton

Kunal Kamra slaps notice on IndiGo, demands apology

He also sought ₹25 lakh in compensation, revocation of ban

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra on Saturday served a legal notice on IndiGo seeking an unconditional apology from the airline, ₹25 lakh in compensation as well as revocation of the "arbitrary" six-month ban imposed on him from flying.

Later, he tweeted, "Lawmen & White have taken this fight to court for me as a special case. To all artistes out there don't fear. There are enough good people in society to always support the Constitution."

'Illegal, arbitrary'

The notice calls the ban by IndiGo "illegal, high-handed and arbitrary" and against "the principles of natural justice." The move comes after the commander of the flight on which Mr. Kamra



heckled journalist Arnab Goswami told the airline management that he didn't think that the incident qualified as unruly behaviour as defined under DGCA rules. Captain Rohit Mateti also said he had not reported the incident to the airline on the same premise. Mr. Kamra has now questioned how

then did the airline proceed to ban him without a complaint from the flight commander.

The notice also says that Mr. Kamra complied with the instructions of the cabin crew and pilots and did not pose any threat to the safety of the aircraft through his actions.

In the notice sent to the airline, Mr. Kamra's lawyer has stated that his client has suffered "mental pain and agony" due to the "illegal, arbitrary and high-handed decision" of the airline.

An IndiGo statement on Saturday said, "The company will duly respond to any legal notice that it receives in relation to this matter."

Mr. Kamra has given IndiGo one week to respond to the legal notice, accessed by PTI.

(With PTI inputs)

A Budget with vision, action: Modi

Opposition terms exercise insipid, says it is clueless about reversing slowdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday lauded the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as having both "vision and action".

"The new reforms announced in the Budget will work to accelerate the economy, financially empower every citizen of the country and strengthen the foundation of the economy in this decade," Mr. Modi said in an address on television after the Budget was presented.

However, Opposition parties and State Chief Ministers termed the Budget "insipid" and said it did not address the key issues of unemployment nor suggest ways to spur economic growth.

While the Congress alleged that the reduction in tax rates did not help the salaried class who have to pay more under the new slabs, the Left par-



PM Narendra Modi

ties said it was a "budget of privatisation" and accused the government of abdicating its responsibilities. At the Congress's press conference, former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said the government's claim of 6% to 6.5% growth next year is "astonishing and even irresponsible".

"The Budget has completely failed to address the current economic slowdown. It does not have a road map on how the economy can be

turned around," CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said.

'Attack on federalism'

"The proposal to lower funding for centrally-sponsored schemes will pass on the burden to the States," he said, adding that this was another attack on federalism.

Chief Ministers of non-BJP ruled States expressed concern over the falling ratio of State allocation in Central taxes.

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao said it was "atrocious" that the Centre had reduced the share of the State in Central taxes.

He added that there was a danger of fund scarcity for many welfare and development programmes. He said the Centre's allocations in the Budget may have an adverse impact on the development of Telangana, "which is a progressive state."

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, while welcoming the Krishi Rail and FDI in education proposals, said almost all allocations under the centrally-sponsored schemes were stagnant while the divisible pool of Central taxes had shrunk by almost ₹59,000 crore. This will reduce Odisha's share by ₹3,000 crore, Mr. Patnaik said.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee slammed the proposal to sell a part of LIC,

describing it as a plan to "ambush" the legacy of public institutions.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said economy was not a priority for the government, trashing the Budget as "high on pomposity and low on tangibles". He said the Central government was too busy pursuing its "negative and divisive agenda".

(With PTI inputs)

'Govt. ready to talk with Shaheen Bagh protesters'

First such offer from a Union Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Saturday said the government was ready to talk with the protesters at Shaheen Bagh to clear their doubts over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), but that the dialogue should be in a "structured form".

Residents of Shaheen Bagh have been staging a dharna for the last 40 days and Mr. Prasad's offer is the first such from a Union Minister.

Bagh was not the place to hold talks. "What if someone goes there and is mistreated?" he asked.

Mr. Prasad also shared a link of a TV debate in which he had participated and where a question was put to him on the lack of communication from the government with protesters at Shaheen Bagh. Shaheen Bagh has now become an issue in the Delhi Assembly polls, with the BJP opposing the protesters.



Ravi Shankar Prasad

'CAA is a clear violation of Constitution'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON

Amnesty International has told the U.S. lawmakers that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) stands in "clear violation" of the Constitution of India and international human rights law and "legitimises discrimination" on the basis of religion.

The Indian government has been emphasising that the new law will not deny any citizenship rights but has been brought to protect the oppressed minorities of neighbouring countries and give them citizenship.

'CAA-NRC-NPR are part of Hindutva project'

They are not a mere distraction from economic crisis, says N. Ram

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

N. Ram, Chairman of The Hindu Group Publishing Private Limited, said on Saturday that it would be a serious mistake to see the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Register of Citizens and the National Population Register as a mere distraction from the current economic crisis. He said it was part of the larger Hindutva project being pushed by the BJP government.

He made the remarks at the inaugural session of the two-day Mumbai Collective, during a panel discussion on the 'Rising Tide in Indian Politics' with Prof. Gopal Gu-



N. Ram

ru, Editor of the *Economic and Political Weekly*.

'Serious mistake'

"We would be making a serious mistake if we see this as merely a diversionary tactic because this is a project that they long had in mind. This

is a project of Hindutva," Mr. Ram said. He highlighted that the citizenship issue had never been part of the debates in the Constituent Assembly and had only featured in the debates post partition, when Hindus who had come from Pakistan were labelled refugees, but Muslims who went to Pakistan and came back were called migrants and were treated with suspicion by several members of the Constituent Assembly.

Prof. Guru said the protests were producing a new kind of politics and giving a new dimension to politics.

"They are actually bringing us back into the close rela-

tionship with the Constitution. That is the constitutional consciousness we are getting from these protests," he said. Hardly anyone used to discuss the Constitution a few months ago.

The panel was chaired by Irfan Engineer of the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism. He said the incidents of communal violence had come down, but that wasn't a good thing because structured communal violence was being perpetrated by the state.

Mr. Ram said it needed to be seen whether the current wave of protests against the CAA-NRC-NPR was truly a rising tide or a reaction.

22 arrested for smuggling turtles in West Bengal

Seized animals taken to a rescue centre

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

In one of the largest arrests for illegal smuggling of wildlife in recent times, 22 persons including eight women were arrested on Saturday for allegedly smuggling Indian softshell turtles. The arrests were made in a joint operation carried out by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau and the Wildlife Crime Control Wing of the State Forest department.

As per reports, the arrests were made outside the Naithali railway station in the North 24 Parganas district and two vehicles were also seized.

Between September 2009 and September 2019, the number of turtles smuggled was over 1.1 lakh. This is the largest num-

ber of arrests for smuggling wildlife in recent years. All the accused are carriers and haul from Uttar Pradesh," Agni Mitra, Deputy Director, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Eastern Region, told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Mitra said preliminary investigation revealed that the turtles were smuggled in the luggage of the accused who were travelling from Uttar Pradesh in a train.

The arrests were carried outside the Naithali railway station in the North 24 Parganas district and two vehicles were also seized.

For further details please visit our website www.niperkolkata.edu.in. Date 02/02/2020 Registrar (I/C)

NIA summons IIT Guwahati professor

Academician questioned for four hours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday summoned Arupjyoti Saikia, a faculty member of the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati.

An IIT spokesperson confirmed his summoning as a witness in an unspecified case. It is believed that the case is connected with protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

Professor Saikia, who

teaches history in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, was questioned for about four hours at the NIA's office at Sonapur on the outskirts of Guwahati.

Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said in December last that the government had electronic evidence that a leading academic played a major role in the fiery anti-CAA protests that led to the death of six people.

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY-EXTENSION NOTICE

APPOINTMENT OF ACCOUNTS MEMBER IN KERALA WATER AUTHORITY

Ref: Notification dated, 12.11.2019

Applications were invited for the post of Accounts Member in Kerala Water Authority vide reference cited. The last date for submitting applications is extended up to 29.02.2020 upto 5 p.m. All other conditions prescribed in the previous notification remains unchanged. Web:www.kwa.kerala.gov.in

Phone: 8547638030

Managing Director KWA-JB-GL-6-638-2019-20 Jalabhan, Thiruvananthapuram – 695 033

SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF A.P.LIMITED

Corporate Office : H.No.19-13-65/A, Srinivasapuram, Tiruchirappalli Road, Tirupati - 517503

NOTIFICATION DATED: 02-02-2020

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for filling up of the post of DIRECTOR/ Finance on the board of APSPLCIL, a Company wholly owned by the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

<p

China faces more border curbs

Lunar New Year holidays draw to an end; more flights cancelled as toll touches 259

REUTERS
SHANGHAI

China faced mounting isolation from international travel curbs and flight suspensions on Saturday as the death toll from a spreading coronavirus outbreak rose to 259.

The epidemic has led to mass evacuations of foreign citizens and risks exacerbating a slowdown in growth in the world's second-largest economy. Russia said its aerospace defence forces would begin flying its citizens out.

Inside China, Hubei province, the epicentre of the outbreak, was under a virtual quarantine, with roads sealed off and public transport shut down. Elsewhere, local authorities placed growing restrictions on travel and business.

China's National Health Commission said there were 2,102 new confirmed infections in China on Friday, bringing the total to 11,791. Around two dozen other countries have reported another 137 cases. The death toll rose by 46 to 259.

Data collection

The Chinese data would suggest it is less deadly than the 2002-03 outbreak of Severe



Heading home: A crew member using disinfectant on a flight with French evacuees from Wuhan on Saturday. • AFP

Vietnam stops flights to China

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HANOI

Vietnam has suspended all China flights as part of "strengthening measures" against the coronavirus outbreak.

The step applies to all airlines "which have routes between Vietnam and China" and also includes Hong Kong and Macau.

Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which killed nearly 800 people of the some 8,000 it infected, although such numbers can evolve rapidly.

In Beijing, counters were

U.K. pulls out staff, families

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Britain on Saturday said it was temporarily withdrawing some staff and their families from its diplomatic sites in China.

He added that U.K.'s Ambassador in Beijing and key staff will remain, and British nationals would still have consular access.

set up at the entrances of housing estates, where volunteers wearing red arm bands and masks noted down details of residents coming back from their hometowns after the Lunar

New Year holiday.

"As long as I am properly protected and don't go to crowded places, I don't feel scared at all about my hometown or Beijing," said a 58-year-old migrant worker surveyed.

Others were more worried.

"There will be a huge number of people returning to the city. I think it will put Beijing at risk of more infections," said Zhang Chunlei, 45, another returning migrant worker.

Singapore and the U.S. announced measures on Friday to ban foreign nationals who have recently been in China from entering their territories.

Australia followed suit, with Prime Minister Scott Morrison saying the country would deny entry to all foreign nationals travelling from mainland China from Saturday.

Many nations have put on charter flights to repatriate citizens from China and then place them in isolation for around two weeks, the incubation period of the virus. More than 300 South Koreans arrived home on Saturday and Indonesian officials said around 250 nationals were being evacuated.

33 students from Wuhan reach Sri Lanka

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

A group of 33 Sri Lankan students returned to the country from Wuhan Province in China, after a chartered Sri Lankan Airline flight flew them back on Saturday.

"Due to great diplomatic relations between #LKA & #China we were successful in evacuating our citizens in #Wuhan, under lock-down," President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said in a tweet on Saturday.

The students have been taken to a special quarantine facility at the Diyatalawa Army Base Hospital in the Uva Province, local media reports said.

Meanwhile, Daily Mirror reported that Chinese authorities in Colombo had "unofficially raised concern" with the Sri Lankan government over recent incidents of discrimination faced by Chinese nationals in the country, who were reportedly turned away by some restaurants, hospitals and supermarkets.

But legally, Britain is out. Thousands of people waving Union Jack flags packed London's Parliament Square and sang the national anthem to mark that reality as Brexit became law at 11 pm (2300 GMT) – midnight in Brussels.

Britain embarks on a future outside the European Union

There were celebrations and tears as U.K. bid goodbye to EU

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Britain began an uncertain future outside the European Union on Saturday after the country greeted the historic end to almost half a century of EU membership with a mixture of joy and sadness.

There were celebrations and tears on Friday as the EU's often reluctant member became the first to leave an organisation set up to forge unity among nations after the horrors of World War II.

Little has changed as of Saturday as the U.K. is now in an 11-month transition period negotiated as part of the divorce.

Britons will be able to work in the EU and trade freely – and vice versa – until December 31, although the U.K. will no longer be represented in the bloc's institutions.

But legally, Britain is out.

Thousands of people waving Union Jack flags packed London's Parliament Square and sang the national anthem to mark that reality as Brexit became law at 11 pm (2300 GMT) – midnight in Brussels.



New beginning: The Union flag being removed from the atrium of the Europa building in Brussels on Friday. • AP

Prime Minister Boris Johnson held a private party in his Downing Street office with a clock projected on the walls outside counting down the minutes to departure.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is preparing to impose full customs and border checks on all European Union goods entering Britain from next year, in an attempt to increase pressure on the bloc in trade talks, The Daily Telegraph newspaper reported.

"We are planning full checks on all EU imports – export declarations, security declarations, animal health checks and all supermarket goods to pass through Border Inspections Posts," Saturday's Telegraph quoted a senior government source as saying.

Deep divisions
However, Brexit has exposed deep divisions in British society and many fear the consequences of ending 47 years of ties with their nearest neighbours.

Some pro-Europeans, including many of the 3.6 million EU citizens who have made their lives in Britain, marked the occasion with candlelit gatherings.

Senate blocks witnesses in Donald Trump's trial

Final voting on his fate on Wednesday

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

The Senate narrowly rejected Democratic demands to summon witnesses for President Donald Trump's impeachment trial late on Friday, all but ensuring Mr. Trump's acquittal in just the third trial to threaten a President's removal in U.S. history. But Senators pushed off final voting on his fate to next Wednesday.

The delay showed the weight of a historic vote bearing down on Senators, despite prodding by the President eager to have it all behind him in an election year and ahead of his State of the Union speech on Tuesday night.

Mr. Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell spoke by phone to lock in the schedule during a tense night at the Capitol as rushed negotiations proceeded on and off the Senate floor.

The President wanted to arrive for his speech at the Capitol with acquittal secured, but that will not happen. Instead, the trial will resume on Monday for final arguments, with time on Monday and Tuesday for Senators to speak. The final voting is planned for 4 p.m. on Wednesday, the day after Mr. Trump's speech.

Mr. Trump's acquittal is all but certain in the Senate,



Donald Trump

where his GOP allies hold the majority and there's nowhere near the two-thirds needed for conviction and removal.

Nor will he face potentially damaging, open-Senate testimony from witnesses.

No new testimony
Despite the Democrats' singular focus on hearing new testimony, the Republican majority brushed past those demands and will make this the first impeachment trial without witnesses. Even new revelations on Friday from former National Security Adviser John Bolton did not sway GOP senators, who said they'd heard enough.

Mr. Trump was impeached by the House last month on charges that he abused power and obstructed Congress as he tried to pressure Ukraine to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden, using military aid as leverage.

In 2016, the Maldives pulled out of the Commonwealth terming "unjust" the

Racing to safety



Chased by blaze: A spot fire ran through a private property near Canberra on Saturday, forcing horses to move to safety. Authorities have declared the first state of emergency in almost two decades as a bushfire bore down on the Australian capital. • GETTY IMAGES

After over three years, Maldives rejoins Commonwealth

The island nation was reinstated after it followed a sustained reform process

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

The Maldives on Saturday rejoined the Commonwealth, more than three years after the Indian Ocean island nation quit the association amid mounting criticism of its human rights record then.

In 2016, the Maldives pulled out of the Commonwealth terming "unjust" the

grouping's decision to penalise the country over former President Mohamed Nasheed's controversial ouster in 2012. It followed the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)'s warning to Maldives of suspension from the bloc, voicing "deep disappointment" over the country's lack of progress in resolving the political crisis

during former President Abdulla Yameen's presidency, whose authoritarian slant sparked concern domestically and internationally.

However, months after President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih won the 2018 presidential elections, promising to restore democracy, he wrote to the Commonwealth, requesting to re-join the bloc.

Following the island nation's readmission Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland said: "The

reform process under way in Maldives aligns with the values and principles of the Commonwealth and we encourage the nation to continue on this path."

President Solih said in a tweet: "A short while ago, I had a conversation with the Commonwealth's Secretary General who informed me that the Maldives has been formally reinstated into the Commonwealth as its 54th member state. We shall long strive to uphold the Com-

monwealth's values of democracy and human rights."

India lauds inclusion

The Government of India congratulated the Government of Maldives on its readmission to the Commonwealth of Nations as its 54th member.

"India has always been a key supporter of Maldives' readmission and for it to play a larger role in international organisations and the comity of nations. We are committed to working close-

ly with Maldives on shared Commonwealth goals like development, democracy and peace," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.

New Delhi-Male ties witnessed a significant shift following the poll defeat of former President Yameen, perceived to be a friend of China. India said it would continue working with Maldives in achieving its "democratic and developmental aspirations."

U.S. backs Ukraine against Russian aggression: Pompeo

Secretary of State met President Zelenskiy to calm unease among officials there over Trump trial



Key visit: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, right, and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Kyiv. • AP

calming unease among Ukrainian officials about the relationship between Washington and Kyiv, which has been thrust into the spotlight because of the impeachment of President Donald Trump, based on charges of abuse of power and obstruction over the president's actions on Ukraine.

His visit, in which he met with President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, was aimed at

Zelenskiy met before noon in the President's office in central Kyiv, and the Ukrainian leader said they had talked about new steps to strengthen the partnership between the two nations.

"I don't think these friendly and warm relations have been influenced by the impeachment trial of the president," Mr. Zelenskiy said at a

news conference with Mr. Pompeo when asked whether Mr. Trump's impeachment had affected ties between Kyiv and Washington.

'Relations strong'

While the two officials offered reassurances that relations were strong, Mr. Pompeo did not give Mr. Zelenskiy one thing he has sought since his election in April: an invitation to meet Mr. Trump at the White House, which would be an important signal to Russia of U.S. support for Ukraine. Mr. Pompeo's message that Mr. Trump was not ready to receive Mr. Zelenskiy at the White House was a blow to the Ukrainian President's national security efforts.

Evidence that Mr. Trump had earlier demanded, in return for such a visit, that Ukraine announce the start of an investigation that could benefit him, became an im-

portant part of the impeachment inquiry. In response to a question on Friday, Mr. Pompeo said a White House visit by Mr. Zelenskiy was not dependent on the kind of investigation that Mr. Trump had sought.

Ukrainian officials are angry that the Americans have granted Russia's foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, two visits with Mr. Trump in the White House, most recently in December.

In renewing his request for a meeting on Friday, Mr. Zelenskiy said, "If we have an important subject for this conversation other than strategy and tactics, but important things we can negotiate over, something to sign and that I can bring back, then I am ready to go tomorrow!"

Mr. Pompeo was the first official from Mr. Trump's Cabinet to meet with Mr. Zelenskiy since the impeachment inquiry began. NY TIMES

ELSEWHERE



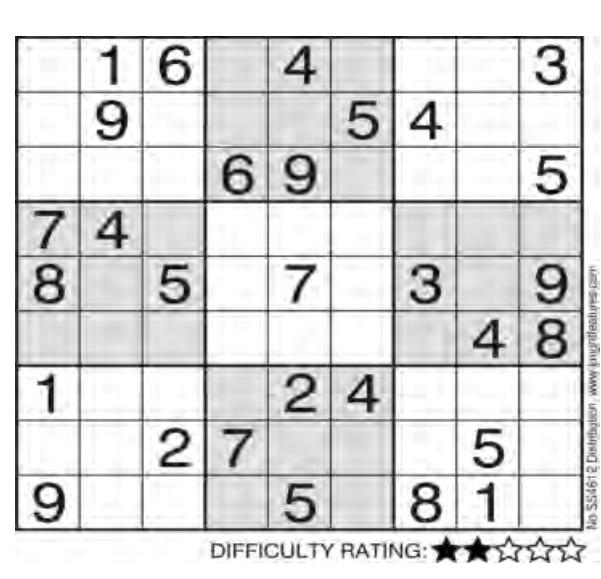
U.S. envoy for Taliban talks back in Kabul

KABUL
U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, who is leading negotiations with the Taliban, was set to meet with the Afghan President on Saturday, an official confirmed, in an apparent renewed push for talks on an agreement with the insurgents. AFP

Iraqi President names new Prime Minister

BAGHDAD
Iraq's President Barham Saleh named former Communications Minister Mohammad Allawi as the country's new Prime Minister on Saturday after an 11-hour consensus among political blocs. However, people seemed divided on his nomination. AFP

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

CM
YK

A clean sweep on New Zealand soil beckons India

Williamson expected to be back to lead the Kiwis; Indian aspirants likely to get another chance

INDIA IN KIWILAND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MT. MAUNGANUI

Invincible so far, India will eye a rare 5-0 whitewash against a bruised and battered New Zealand in the final T20 International here on Sunday.

New Zealand has only once lost all games in a bilateral T20I series at home, to England (2-0) in February 2008, and never all games in a full series (more than three matches).

More experiments

India, however, will be more concerned about the experimentation cycle ahead of the T20 World Cup. The fourth T20I was a step in that direction, but it mostly came to nought with the likes of Sanju Samson and Shivam Dube wasting their opportunities.

Samson has been sent up the order in his limited opportunities against Sri Lanka and New Zealand, and has been dismissed while attacking the bowling.

The team management would want him to show more patience, while backing him to come good once again.



Business & pleasure: Manish Pandey and Shreyas Iyer reflect the spirits Team India has been in on this tour. ■ AFP

With Manish Pandey firming up the number six spot, Shreyas Iyer could be promoted to number three. The bigger question is about the keeper-batsman spot.

Ever since the Australia se-

ries at home, K.L. Rahul has played with an increased workload in that role.

Pre-series, skipper Virat Kohli had more or less confirmed that Rahul would continue to keep in the ensuing

three-ODI series.

While he has been in great form, the team management could afford to rest him and bring in Rishabh Pant.

There is incentive to do so, for this will be the last T20I

India will play in the current 2019-2020 season.

In the shortest format, there is only the Indian Premier League to look forward to in two months' time, and the next T20I series – against

Sri Lanka later in the summer – is quite far away.

Meanwhile, Kane Williamson is expected to be fit for the clash, after he missed out in Wellington due to a left shoulder niggle. The Black Caps' team management were confident of his recovery even on Friday.

India fined

Team India has been docked 40% of its match fee for slow over-rate in the fourth T20I. India was ruled to be two overs short.

The teams (from):

India: Virat Kohli (Capt.), Rohit Sharma, K.L. Rahul (wk), Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Shreyas Iyer, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Shardul Thakur, Navdeep Saini and Washington Sundar.

New Zealand: Kane Williamson (Capt.), Martin Guptill, Ross Taylor, Scott Kuggeleijn, Colin Munro, Tom Bruce, Daryl Mitchell, Mitchell Santner, Tim Seifert (wk), Hamish Bennett, Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee and Blair Tickner.

Umpires: Chris Brown, Shaun Haig; **TV umpire:** Ashley Meharry; **Fourth umpire:** Damian Morrow; **Match referee:** Chris Broad.

Match starts at 12.30 p.m. IST



Maninder Singh. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Chauhan (99, 21), Amay Khurasiya (119 FCM).

According to a Board source, BCCI president Sourav Ganguly is in favour of abolishing the zonal representation in the National selection committee. "In the past, there was reason to have zonal representation since information on many matches was not easily available to all the members."

"Now the system is selectors don't watch matches involving teams within their zone. Even the Duleep Trophy is not played on the inter-zonal basis anymore. It is better to have deserving and best candidates as National selectors. It brings more strength to the committee," said the Board member.

The selectors would be picked by a three-member CAC comprising Madan Lal, R.P. Singh and Sulakshana Naik.

Pandya out of Test series

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW DELHI

India all-rounder Hardik Pandya has been ruled out of the upcoming Test series against New Zealand due to fitness concerns, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said on Saturday.

He underwent successful surgery for a lower-back injury in October but has remained off the field since then.

"Team India all-rounder Hardik Pandya has been ruled out of the upcoming Test series against New Zealand," BCCI said in a statement. "Following a review by a specialist in London, Pandya has been advised to remain under rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy until he regains full match fitness."



Clinical performance: Lee Yong Dae, right, and Kim Ha Na of Warriors shocked the World No. 13 pair of Chris Adcock and Gabrielle Adcock. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

NZ-A piles up a huge total

Warriors' impressive run continues

Superstarz assured of a place in the semifinals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHRISTCHURCH

India-A was left with an arduous task of saving the first 'Test' after New Zealand-A notched up a mammoth 562 in its first innings here on Saturday.

Replying to India-A's first innings total of 216, the host declared shortly after losing its seventh wicket on the third and penultimate day at the Hagley Oval.

In its second essay, the visitors were 127 for two when bad light ended play four overs early, having reduced the deficit to 219 runs.

The scores: India-A 216 & 127/2 in 37 overs (Priyank Panchal 67 batting, Shubman Gill 33 batting) vs New Zealand-A 562 for 7 in 160.3 overs (Dane Cleaver 196, Mark Chapman 114).

PBL

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM HYDERABAD

North-Eastern Warriors continued its impressive run in the Premier Badminton League (PBL) with a convincing 5-0 win over Pune 7 Aces at the Gachibowli Indoor Stadium here on Saturday.

Brilliant fightback

Even as the match was effectively sealed in Warriors' favour by the time Rituparna Das took on World No. 10 Michelle Li, the highlight was the former's brilliant fightback under pressure.

With this win, Warriors effectively booked a semifinal place after handing Pune its first defeat in this edition.

After winning the first

game with ease, Michelle was surprised by Rituparna's tenacity and grit in the second.

In the decider, Michelle took a comfortable 9-4 lead before Rituparna scored four points in a row with delectable net play to put pressure on her more reputed rival.

At 13-14, the Pune shuttler's erratic backhand return saw Michelle avoid a major embarrassment.

In the first match of the evening, World No. 45 Tanongsak Saensomboonsuk of Warriors came back strongly after a dismal start to defeat a fighting Kazumasa Sakai.

Major upset

In a major upset, Lee Yong Dae and Kim Ha Na of Warriors shocked the World No. 13 pair of Chris Adcock and

Gabrielle Adcock with a clinical performance in Pune's Trump match, giving the team a 2-0 lead.

World No. 18 Lee Cheuk Yiu made it 3-0 when he outclassed World No. 31 Lo Kean Yew.

Lee was vastly superior and had an amazing range of strokes. His jump smashes to the corners of the seemingly hapless opponent's court were just too good.

The only win for Pune came from the men's doubles combine of Chirag Shetty and Hendra Setiawan.

Superstarz on top

Chennai Superstarz assured itself of a semifinals slot with a 4-3 win over Awadhe Warriors on Saturday. Chennai now has 19 points and tops

the points table.

The results:

North-Eastern Warriors bt Pune 7 Aces 5-0 (Tanongsak Saensomboonsuk bt Kazumasa Sakai 15-13, 15-14; Lee Yong Dae & Kim Ha Na bt Chris Adcock &

Gabrielle Adcock (T) 15-6, 15-8; Lee Cheuk Yiu bt Loh Kean Yew 15-12, 15-8; Michelle Li (T) bt Rituparna Das 15-8, 13-15, 15-13; Bodin Isara & G. Krishna Prasad lost to Chirag Shetty & Hendra Setiawan 12-15, 8-15).

Chennai Superstarz bt Awadhe Warriors 4-3 (Lakshya Sen bt Subhankar Dey 15-7, 15-8; Dhruv Kapila & R. Satwik Sairaj lost to Iyon Sozonov & Ko Sung Hyun (T) 15-12, 11-15, 10-15; Tommy Sugiarto (T) bt Wong Wing Ki Vincent 15-10, 15-8; P. Gayatri Gopi Chand lost to Beiwen Zhang 10-15, 5-15; R. Satwik Sairaj & Jessica Pugh bt Ko Sung Hyun & Christina Pedersen 15-11, 13-15, 15-14).



Back again! Benoit Paire's progress will be watched with interest. ■ FILE PHOTO

Paire gets a relatively easy draw

Defending champions Rohan Bopanna and Divij Sharan will play with different partners

TATA OPEN

N. SUDARSHAN PUNE

Benoit Paire sits atop what seems the lighter of the halves after the draw ceremony of the Tata Open Maharashtra here on Saturday.

The World No. 21, who is making his eighth tournament appearance and is a two-time semifinalist (2017 & 2018), has the rising South Korean and tournament's fourth seed Soonwoo Kwon (No. 87) for company.

The presence of two qualifiers in Paire's quarter will

make it interesting, for the qualifying draw boasts of names such as Serbian Viktor Troicki and Czech Lukas Rosol.

Also in this set of eight is Indian wild card Sasi Kumar Mukund, who will open against Japan's Taro Daniel.

The highest-ranked Indian, Prajesh Gunneswaran (No. 123), is also in the top half, and will meet Kwon if he gets through, will face either Thomas Fabbiano or Sugita.

World No. 74 Stefano Travaglioli is seeded fourth and it is in the Italian's quarter that two other Indian wild cards, Ramkumar Ramanathan and Arjun Kadhe, find themselves in.

The home duo can meet each other in the second round, but have to first tackle seventh seeded Italian Salvatore Caruso and the seasoned

Czech Jiri Vesely respectively.

This being a field of 28, Paire, Kwon, Travaglioli and Berankis all received byes into the second round.

The 16-team doubles event will see two all-Indian pairs, but defending champions Rohan Bopanna and Divij Sharan will be playing with different partners.

While Rohan has teamed up with Kadhe, Divij is the tournament's second seed alongside Kiwi Artem Sitak and will take on the Leander Paes-Matthew Ebden combine which was handed a wild card on Saturday.

Meanwhile the lone Indian in qualifying, Saketh Myneni was beaten 6-3, 6-2 by Serb Nikola Milojevic.

Qualifying results (first round):

Matthew Ebden (Aus) bt Zhizhen Zhang (Chn) 6-3, 6-2; Blaz Rola (Slo) bt Malek Jaziri (Tun) 6-7 (5), 7-6 (6), 7-6 (2).

Roberto Marcora (Ita) bt Filippo Baldi (Ita) 6-3, 6-2; Robin Haase (Ned) bt Frederico Ferreira Silva (Por) 3-6, 7-6 (5), 6-4.

Evgeny Karlovskiy (Rus) bt Aslan Karatsev (Rus) 4-6, 6-4, 6-4; Lukas Rosol (Cze) bt Ernest Gulbis (Lat) 6-4, 6-4; Viktor Troicki (Srb) bt Nicola Kuhn (Esp) 6-1, 6-4; Nikola Milojevic (Srb) bt Saketh Myneni (Ind) 6-3, 6-2.

Only one top-50 player for Tata Open

Tournament has been hit hard by the scheduling of the inaugural ATP Cup

N. SUDARSHAN

PUNE

The last time India's only ATP 250 event didn't boast of a player from the World's top-10 was way back in 2003 at the erstwhile Chennai Open when the then World No. 15 Guillermo Canas was the top seed.

When the Tata Open Maharashtra gets underway on Monday, it will have only one top-50 player in its ranks, World No. 21 Benoit Paire.

The tournament has been hit hard by the scheduling of the inaugural ATP Cup.

Coveted slot

The coveted start-of-the-season slot ahead of the Australian Open, which was earlier Pune's (and Brisbane's and Doha's) is now the ATP Cup's.

Brisbane was compensated for the loss of its event by being as one of the venues for the ATP Cup. And such is Doha's monetary heft (a financial commitment of \$1,465,260 against Pune's \$610,010) that even when run alongside the ATP Cup it could attract two players in top-20 (Stan Wawrinka and Andrey Rublev).

But Pune has had to push its dates to a window that is sandwiched between the Aussie Open and the hard court swings in Europe and the Americas, and thus settle for a less spectacular field.

"Players have been in Australia for a month under tough circumstances and probably want to go back home," said Sunder Iyer, Hon. Secretary of the Mah-

ashtra State Lawn Tennis Association, the host organisation.

"The circuit now moves to Europe and it is much easier to start playing there. We were offered one slot later [September] but that would have been tough. Or we had to compete with Doha which has much higher prize money."

The competition that will run concurrently with Pune now, the ATP 250 in Montpellier, France, has also hurt.

Though comparable in terms of financial outlay (\$672,700 to Pune's \$610,010), its proximity to the ATP 500 in Rotterdam, the next big event in the calendar, has seen four of the World's top-20 flock to the event.

"So there's been no problem with sponsors. There are five Indians in the [sin-

gle] main draw. Hopefully we can get a champion too."

It was a view that India's top singles player Prajesh Gunneswaran concurred with. "It is a standalone tournament because it is not before Australia, but it is good for the Indians," he said.

"With me and Sumit [Nagal] getting in directly, there's opportunity for two other Indians. That's not something which happens regularly. Hopefully all of us will go up a few rounds and get some points that can give us a springboard."

TV PICKS

Women's T20I tri-series: Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 8.30 a.m.
NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 9 a.m.

New Zealand vs India: 5th T20I, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 12.30 p.m.

Australian Open: Sony Six (SD & HD), 2 p.m.

PBL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 7 p.m.

ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

Serie A: Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.; Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Monday)

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m. & 10 p.m.

Bundesliga: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 8 p.m. & 10 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Lillard powers

Blazers past Lakers

LOS ANGELES
Damian Lillard scored 29 of his 48 points in the second half, and the visiting Portland Trail Blazers spoiled the Los Angeles Lakers' celebration of the life of the late Kobe Bryant with a 127-119 victory on Friday night. Lillard, who just missed recording his second straight triple-double, also had 10 assists and nine rebounds. He connected on 7 of 12 3-point attempts and 17 of 30 shots from the floor.

The results: Toronto Raptors 105 bt Detroit Pistons 92; Brooklyn Nets 133 bt Chicago Bulls 118; Houston Rockets 128 bt Dallas Mavericks 121; New Orleans Pelicans 139 bt Memphis Grizzlies 111; Denver Nuggets 127 bt Milwaukee Bucks 115; Oklahoma City Thunder 111 bt Phoenix Suns 107; Portland Trail Blazers 127 bt Los Angeles Lakers 119. REUTERS

Indian Arrows stuns 10-man East Bengal

Y.B. SARANGI

KOLKATA
Indian Arrows rode on its captain Vikram Pratap Singh's 59th-minute stunner to upset a 10-man East Bengal 1-0 in an I-League encounter at the Kalyani Stadium on Saturday.

The superb performance in the development side's second win might not have changed its position on the table, but it will be a morale booster for the touring youngsters.

EB kept bottom-ranked Arrows under pressure by plotting several moves and earning three of its 12 corners inside the first five minutes.

However, the red-and-gold brigade's raids did not fetch the desired result due to its forwards' below-par finishing.

The hard-working Arrows defence, led by goalkeeper Lalbiakhlua Jognote, made it tougher for EB.

Arrows grew in confidence towards the end of the first half and improved its game to put the EB defence under pressure after the switch of ends.

Nikhil Raj passed to Givson Singh, who rolled it on to his right. Vikram shot a sharp one high into the net around the hour mark to put Arrows ahead.

EB showed desperation but could not find the equalizer. It fielded the effective striker, Ansumana Kromah, in 63rd minute. The Liberian netted one within minutes but was marked off-side. In the 85th minute he missed a sitter.

EB, which had 24 shots at the goal, had more embarrassment in store. A frustrated Marcos de la Espada had his second yellow, resulting in a red, in the dying moments before the host suffered its fourth loss. In a sporting gesture, the EB fans cheered the Arrows' boys for their brave show.

The scores: Indian Arrows 1 (Vikram Pratap Singh 59) bt East Bengal 0.

SSB wins B division title

SPSB comes a cropper in shoot-out

HOCKEY

M.R. PRAVEEN CHANDRAN
KOLKATA

Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) was crowned champion of the B division in the 10th senior National women's hockey championship at the National Games Hockey Stadium here on Saturday.

In the final, SSB prevailed over Steel Plant Sports Board (SPSB) 4-2 in the penalty shoot-out after the teams were locked 1-1 in regulation time. In the shoot-out, SPSB converted just one to SSB's three.

SPSB's initial strategy to blunt SSB's prolific strikers Preeti Simran and Manisha Rathi paid off. Both strikers found it difficult to find space inside the rival box and SSB's initial forays fizzled out.

SPSB had more of possession in the midfield and the side looked dangerous in counterattacks. SPSB went ahead in the 18th minute as Shailja Kumari Gautham weaved her way into the D and drilled in a low shot from an acute angle.

SPSB continued its offensive game and came close to increasing the lead at least twice in the second quarter.

SSB regrouped after the



Champion: Sashastra Seema Bal, the senior National women's hockey B division title winner.

• C. SURESH KUMAR

break and displayed cohesiveness – which was missing in the first half – in the midfield.

Threatening move

The threatening moves came from both flanks and SSB earned succession of penalty corners, the equaliser coming off one of them.

SPSB goalkeeper Nisha Yadav did well to repel the first shot from Babita but Ranjita Minj pounced on the rebound and tapped it in for the equaliser in the 38th minute.

SPSB showed more intent

in the fourth quarter but SSB defended well to push the match into the shoot-out.

Manisha, Preeti and Kanika Raj converted for SSB and Manisha Dhawal for SPSB.

Both teams have qualified for next year's A division championship.

Earlier, UCO Bank WHA hammered Bengaluru 10-0 to take the third place. Priya struck four goals, including a hat-trick, while Pooja and Chanchal struck a brace each.

The results: A division (league): Punjab 2 (Baljeet Kaur 10, Arshdeep Kaur 36) drew

with Chandigarh 2 (Devi Dhapa 28, Shalu Mann 41); Himachal 3 (Anita 3, Ritu 24, Nidhi 36) bt Kerala 1 (V.H. Sarig 25); SAI 1 (Dung Dung 39) bt Karnataka 0; CRPF 1 (Puja Yadav 46) drew with Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy 1 (Karishma Yadv 34); Jharkhand 7 (Beauty 3, 39, Sangita Kumari 12, 42, Reshma Soreng 41, 51, Rajni 56) bt Chhattisgarh 1 (Anjali Mahto 21).

B division: Final: SSB 4 (Ranjita 38, Manisha, Preeti, Kanika Raj) bt SPSB 2 (Shailja Kumari Gautam 18, Manisha Dhawal).

Third place: UCO Bank WHA 10 (Priya 16, 34, 37, 57, Pooja 3, 7, Chanchal 21, 43, Monisha 13, Kajal 54) bt Bengaluru 0.

Aman and Reshma win titles



One for the album: The winners and runners-up of the ITF grade-5 junior tennis tournament. Kneeling (from left): Denim Yadav, Sanjana Sirimalla, Reshma Maruri and Aman Dahiya. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ITF TENNIS

SPORTS BUREAU
INDORE

Reshma Maruri overcame a sluggish start to beat top seed Sanjana Sirimalla 3-6, 6-4 in the girls' final of the ITF grade-5 junior tennis tournament here on

Saturday.

National sub-junior champion and a trainee of Davis Cup coach Zeeshan Ali, the second-seeded Reshma had fought hard right through the tournament, winning three of her five matches after losing the first set.

In the boys' final, unseeded

ed Aman Dahiya, a trainee of coach Jignesh Rawal, stayed calm despite facing set points at 2-5 and 3-5 in the second set to outwit fourth seed Denim Yadav 6-3, 7-5.

The results (finals):

Boys: Aman Dahiya bt Denim 6-3, 7-5.

Girls: Reshma Maruri bt Sanjana Sirimalla 3-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Crivellaro is CFC's hero

ISL

STAN RAYAN
KOCHE

There was a flood of goals, nine in all, including a hat-trick by Kerala Blasters captain Bartholomew Ogbeche, at the Nehru Stadium here on Saturday, but it was former two-time champion Chennaiyin FC which walked away a 6-3 winner in the Hero ISL game.

It was Chennaiyin midfielder Rafael Crivellaro who was the star of the show with his brilliant play in the last few minutes of the first half, a period in which the side scored three goals. The Brazilian, whose twisty dancing moves had the Blasters in a tizzy, scored two of them and had a hand in another.

The result: Kerala Blasters 3 (Bartholomew Ogbeche 48, 65 & 76) lost to Chennaiyin FC 6 (Rafael Crivellaro 39 & 45+, Nerius Valskis 45 & 90, Lallianzuala Chhangte 59 & 80).

EB showed desperation but could not find the equalizer. It fielded the effective striker, Ansumana Kromah, in 63rd minute. The Liberian netted one within minutes but was marked off-side. In the 85th minute he missed a sitter.

EB, which had 24 shots at the goal, had more embarrassment in store. A frustrated Marcos de la Espada had his second yellow, resulting in a red, in the dying moments before the host suffered its fourth loss. In a sporting gesture, the EB fans cheered the Arrows' boys for their brave show.

The scores: Indian Arrows 1 (Vikram Pratap Singh 59) bt East Bengal 0.



Rafael's day out: Crivellaro proved unstoppable against Blasters. • H. VIBHU

Karmakar is the favourite

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Elite runners Anubhav Karmakar and Anjali Saraogi will hope to underline their supremacy at the IDBI Federal Life Insurance Kolkata Marathon here on Sunday.

The results (semifinals):

Men: Ibrahim Elkabbani (Egy) bt Abhishek Agarwal 11-9, 5-11, 4-11, 11-6, 11-9; Abhishek Pradhan bt Navid Maleksabat (Ir) 12-10, 11-7, 11-6.

Women: Jana Shihia (Egy) bt Aifa Azman (Mass) 11-8, 11-7, 10-12, 11-5; Salma Eltayeb (Egy) bt Ooi Kah Yan (Mas) 12-10, 11-7, 11-9.

Karmakar, who has won a few long distance races across the country, is confident of adding yet another title to his kitty.

Among women, local favourite and two-time defending champion Anjali will be eager to make it three-in-a-row.

In the half-marathon (21.1 km), it will be a two-way fight between Deepak Bande and Shiva Hang.

Sreebhumi hold BUFC

SPORTS REPORTER
BENGALURU

Bangalore United FC was held to a goalless draw by West Bengal club Sreebhumi FC in the Hero Indian Women's League football tournament on Saturday.

The results: Bangalore United FC 0 drew with Sreebhumi FC 0; Gokulam Kerala FC 7 (Sabrina Bhandari 7, 52, 53, 74, 84, Agbo Esperence 90, Grace Hauhnar 90) bt Odisha Police 0.

RUSI PATEL TROPHY (Gr.3) (1,600m), 4-y-o & over - 3.00: 1. La Rondine (I) Leigh Roche 56, 4. Pissarro (I) Leigh Roche 56, 5. Taimur (2) Colm O'Donoghue 56, 6. Wind Whistler (6) Nicky Mackay 56, 7. Melania (9) David Egan 54, 8. Melisandre (5) Trevor 54, 9. Trinket (3) Bhawani 54, 10. Who Dares Wins (8) David Allan 54.

1. SALVO, 2. PISSARO, 3. GIANT STAR.

2. FOREST FLAME, 2. MONARCHS, 3. BENGAZI.

3. PELICAN MILLION (1,000m), Cl. IV, rated 4 to 30; 1. KINGFISHER MAX MILLION (1,800m), Cl. V, rated 4 to 30; 2. TASMAN (Sandesh) 1, Sweeping Move (Bhawan) 2, Big Ben (Parmer) 3 and Walk The Talk (A. Imran Khan) 4. Not run: Stars For You. 6, 5/4-4, Sh. Im 51.44s, Q. 23 (w), 13, 34 and 77 (p). SHP: 107, EXP: 6, 5/48, FP: 364, Q: 364, Tanala: 4, 9/49 and 4,242. Favouite: UCO Bank WHA 10 (Priya 16, 34, 37, 57, Pooja 3, 7, Chanchal 21, 43, Monisha 13, Kajal 54) bt Bengaluru 0.

3. MAHALAKSHMI MILLION (2,400m), Cl. III, rated 40 to 66; 1. GOLDEN ERA (Sandesh) 1, EagleInthesky (C.D. Hayes) 2, Gdańsk (J. Chinoy) 3 and Moriseki (Trevor) 4, 2, 3/1-2, 6. 2m 32.40s, R. 47 (w), 23 and 11 (p). SHP: 34, EXP: 3,803, FP: 81, Q: 44, Tanala: 49 and 59. Favouite: EagleInthesky. Owners: Mr. Maloji Bhosale, Mrs. Rajalaxmi M. Bhosale, M/s. Jiyaji Bhosale, Rishikesh Bhosale, Kr. Digvijay Singh Shekhatwar rep. Jail Govind Stud & Agri Farm (PF) & Mrs. Mangansingh P. Jodha. Trainer: Sanjay Adhirajsingh Jodha.

4. KINGFISHER MAX MILLION (1,800m), Cl. IV, rated 40 to 66; 1. GOLDEN ERA (Sandesh) 1, EagleInthesky (C.D. Hayes) 2, Gdańsk (J. Chinoy) 3 and Moriseki (Trevor) 4, 2, 3/1-2, 6. 2m 32.40s, R. 47 (w), 23 and 11 (p). SHP: 34, EXP: 3,803, FP: 81, Q: 44, Tanala: 49 and 59. Favouite: EagleInthesky. Owners: Mr. Maloji Bhosale, Mrs. Rajalaxmi M. Bhosale, M/s. Jiyaji Bhosale, Rishikesh Bhosale, Kr. Digvijay Singh Shekhatwar rep. Jail Govind Stud & Agri Farm (PF) & Mrs. Mangansingh P. Jodha. Trainer: Sanjay Adhirajsingh Jodha.

5. KINGFISHER ULTRA SUN (1,200m), Cl. IV, rated 20 to 46; 1. GOLDEN ERA (Sandesh) 1, EagleInthesky (C.D. Hayes) 2, Gdańsk (J. Chinoy) 3 and Moriseki (Trevor) 4, 2, 3/1-2, 6. 2m 32.40s, R. 47 (w), 23 and 11 (p). SHP: 34, EXP: 3,803, FP: 81, Q: 44, Tanala: 49 and 59. Favouite: EagleInthesky. Owners: Mr. Maloji Bhosale, Mrs. Rajalaxmi M. Bhosale, M/s. Jiyaji Bhosale, Rishikesh Bhosale, Kr. Digvijay Singh Shekhatwar rep. Jail Govind Stud & Agri Farm (PF) & Mrs. Mangansingh P. Jodha. Trainer: Sanjay Adhirajsingh Jodha.

6. KINGFISHER ULTRA SUN (1,200m), Cl. IV, rated 20 to 46; 1. GOLDEN ERA (Sandesh) 1, EagleInthesky (C.D. Hayes) 2, Gdańsk (J. Chinoy) 3 and Moriseki (Trevor) 4, 2, 3/1-2, 6. 2m 32.40s, R. 47 (w), 23 and 11 (p). SHP: 34, EXP: 3,803, FP: 81, Q:

Kenin stuns Muguruza, takes title

Fights back from a set down to break down the error-prone Spaniard

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

REUTERS
MELBOURNE

American Sofia Kenin counter-punched her way back from a set down against Garbine Muguruza to win her first Grand Slam title at the Australian Open with a 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 win on Saturday.

The 21-year-old Kenin, seeded 14th, converted her second match-point against the twice Grand Slam champion, who double-faulted on the final point, to end an engrossing contest that lasted more than two hours.

It's official!

"I just want to say my dream has officially come true... I'm just so grateful standing here," Kenin said after lifting the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup. "I'm looking forward to coming back here next year... These past two weeks have been the best two weeks of my life."

Kenin and Muguruza produced a fitting and intense final under the closed roofs of a packed Rod Laver Arena.

Muguruza had arrived in Melbourne suffering from a virus that forced her to quit the Hobart International, but the Spaniard was soon back to playing to her strength which helped her reach the top of the women's rankings in 2017.

Some of the inconsistency that led to her slipping to 36th last year resurfaced against Kenin, however, as the Spaniard blew hot and cold with her serve, getting 57% of her first serves in while mixing her nine aces with eight double-faults.



In wonderland: Sofia Kenin's dream run ended with her holding up the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup on Saturday. ■ AFP

Kenin's game-plan was a mix of deft drop-shots and deep forehand groundstrokes. But, Muguruza soon found her range and converted her third breakpoint in the third game to nose ahead in the opening set.

Kenin, who beat Ashleigh Barty in the semifinal despite trailing the World No. 1 for most of the match, refused to throw in the towel and boosted her confidence by saving four breakpoints to hold the seventh game.

She was rewarded for her tenacity in the next game

with two consecutive double-faults from Muguruza that gave her a break back, and brought the set back on serve.

But the Spaniard came out firing on all cylinders to break the Moscow-born Kenin again and took the opening set when her opponent missed the sideline with her forehand.

Kenin took the court in the second set with renewed vigour and got the break in the fourth game and then a confident hold gave her a 4-1 lead. There was no come-

ace to hold serve for 3-2.

Breaking ground

A fifth double-fault from the Spaniard gave Kenin a 4-2 lead, and she was suddenly within striking distance of victory, which she sealed by breaking her opponent again.

"I think I'm gonna keep it short because I'm going to get very emotional," said Muguruza, before congratulating her opponent. "I have to thank my team... they were over there suffering with me today."

The intensity of the decider rose considerably with Muguruza slapping her thigh to egg herself on while Kenin was almost reduced to tears of frustration at some of her shots.

Down 0-40 in the fifth game and with her back to the wall, Kenin probably produced her best tennis. She painted the sidelines with three scorching winners while also producing an

Who is Sofia Kenin?



Daddy dearest: Sofia Kenin, left, is greeted by father Alex after the triumph. ■ AP

Age: 21

Country: United States

Birthplace: Moscow

Plays: Right-handed

Turned pro: 2017

SINGLES

Winner: 2020: Australian Open;

2019: Hobart, Mallorca, Guangzhou.

Finalist: 2019: Acapulco.

DOUBLES

Winner: 2019: Auckland (with Eugenie Bouchard),

Beijing (with Bethanie Mattek-Sands).

C It hasn't sunk in yet. Everything is still a blur for me. I just can't believe what happened... I feel like I'm doing some great things for American tennis. It's such an honour

Compiled by G. Prasad

Look Ma, I did it!

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Sofia Kenin had to call her superstitious mother, Lena, to break the news she had won on Saturday because she refuses to watch on TV, fearing it will bring bad luck.

The 21-year-old's father is her coach but the rest of the family was back in the United States as Kenin announced herself to the sporting world with her first Grand Slam title.

"I called her right after the match just to tell her that everything's fine, I won, she can just relax now," a beaming Kenin told reporters. "She's been really stressed at home, very superstitious. I told her I'm not going to be able to talk to you for hours, but at least you know that I won. I'm coming home, you can give me the biggest hug of your life."

At least Lena did not suffer alone and was accompanied by Kenin's grandmother, sister and the family dogs back in Florida.

Jimenez Kasintseva claims Grand Slam first for tiny Andorra

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Fourteen-year-old Victoria Jimenez Kasintseva became the first Andorran to capture a title at a Grand Slam when she won the Australian Open girls' tournament on Saturday.

Jimenez Kasintseva, who was the youngest player in the draw and was making her Grand Slam debut, beat 17-year-old Pole Weronika Baszak 5-7, 6-2, 6-2 in 2 hrs 4mins.

"It was a very tough tournament, I actually didn't think that we would win," said Jimenez Kasintseva, who divides her time between the tiny European state – sandwiched between Spain and France – and Barcelona, where her father has a tennis academy.

"I guess I fought a lot for it. I was about to lose in some matches, and I just kept fighting. I guess that's how I won."



Victoria Jimenez Kasintseva. ■ AFP

Coach Zidane inspires Real

Karim Benzema scores the winner against Atletico

AGENCIES
MADRID

Zinedine Zidane's double substitution at half-time transformed the Madrid derby on Saturday as Real Madrid edged past Atletico 1-0 to move six points clear at the top of La Liga.

Karim Benzema scored the winner after Zidane's decisive intervention turned a contest that Atletico had dominated into another comfortable Real Madrid victory. Vinicius Junior, one of the substitutes, was a key to the goal.

This was Atletico's fifth game without a win. The worry is that on this form, it should worry not about the title race but about missing out on Champions League qualification.

Big gap

In the Premier League, Liverpool surged 22 points clear at the top with a 4-0 win over Southampton as Leicester and Chelsea consolidated their place in the top four in a 2-2 draw.

Mohamed Salah scored twice as the champion-elect equalled a Premier League record with a 20th straight home win at Anfield.

Earlier, Frank Lampard's Chelsea earned a 2-2 draw against Leicester thanks to



On target: Karim Benzema was Real Madrid's hero. ■ REUTERS

Antonio Rudiger.

drew with Brighton 3 (Obgbona 47-og, Gross 75, Murray 79).

La Liga: Granada 2 (Machis 38, Fernandez Luna 46) bt Espanyol 1 (de Tomas 27-pen); Real Madrid 1 (Benzema 56) bt Atletico Madrid 0.

Serie A: Bologna 2 (Orsolini 43, Bani 89) bt Brescia 1 (Torregrosa 36-pen).

Bundesliga: Borussia Dortmund 5 (Sanchez 13, Haaland 18, 76, Reus 68-pen, Witsel 70) bt Union Berlin 0; Hoffenheim 2 (Kramaric 23, Skov 65) bt Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Diaby 11); Dusseldorf 1 (Ayhan 78) drew with Frankfurt 1 (Chandler 90+3); Mainz 1 (St. Juste 45) lost to Bayern Munich 3 (Lewandowski 8, Muller 14, Alcantara 26); Augsburg 2 (Vargas 82, Niederlechner 67) bt Werder Bremen 1 (Jedvaj 23-og).

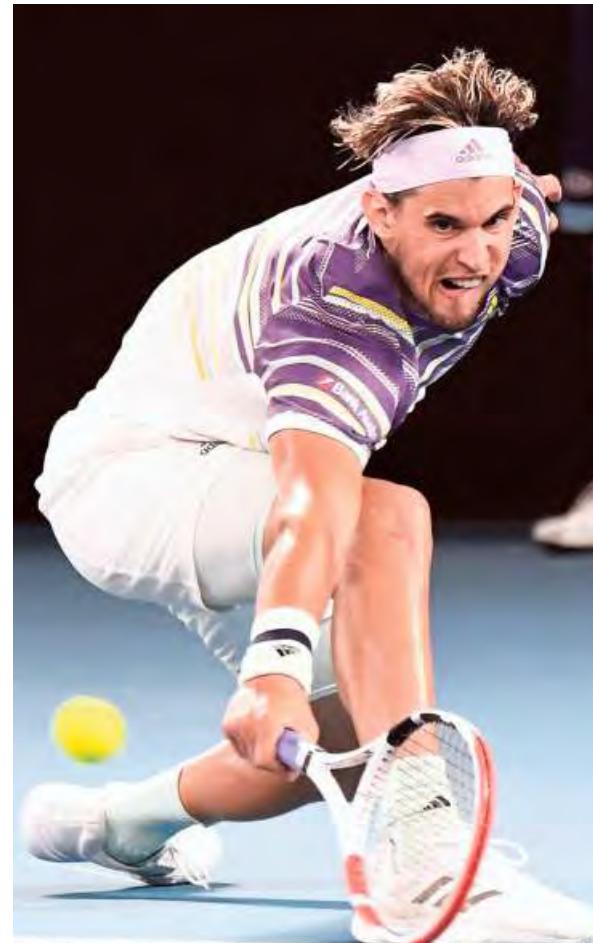
On Friday: Hertha Berlin 0 drew with Schalke 0.



AUSTRALIAN OPEN FINALS
DJOKOVIC VS THIEM
TODAY 2PM
EXCLUSIVELY ON SONY LIV

H2H

- Overall: Djokovic 6-Thiem 4
- Hard Court: Djokovic leads 3-1
- Last meeting: ATP Finals 2019, Thiem won 6-7(5), 6-3, 7-6(5)
- Since losing in the opening round of last year's US Open, Thiem holds a 2-6 (W/L) on hard courts
- Non-Big-3 players who beat the Big-3 players in Slam finals: Wawrinka (three times) Murray (twice) Del Potro
- Stan Wawrinka in 2014 was the last man to beat both of the top two seeds to the title at Melbourne Park, when he beat No.2 seed Djokovic in the quarterfinals and then No.1 seed Nadal in the final



DOMINIC THIEM

Road to the Final

1st round: bt Adrian Mannarino (Fra) 7-6(5), 6-2, 2-6, 6-1

2nd round: bt Alex Bolt (Aus) 5-7, 6-2, 6-4, 6-2

3rd round: bt Taylor Fritz (USA) 6-2, 6-4, 6-7(5), 6-4

4th round: bt Gael Monfils (Fra) 6-2, 6-4, 6-4

Quarterfinals: bt Rafael Nadal (Esp) 7-6(7), 7-6(7), 4-6, 7-6(8)

Semifinals: bt Alexander Zverev (Ger) 3-6, 6-4, 7-6(3), 7-6(4)

Road to the Final

1st round: bt Jan-Lennard Struff (Ger) 7-6(5), 6-2, 2-6, 6-1

2nd round: bt Tatsuma Ito (Jpn) 6-1, 6-4, 6-2

3rd round: bt Yoshihito Nishioka (Jpn) 6-3, 6-2, 6-2

4th round: bt Diego Schwartzman (Arg) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4

Quarterfinals: bt Milos Raonic (Can) 6-4, 6-3, 7-6(1)

Semifinals: bt Roger Federer (Sui) 7-6(1), 6-4, 6-3

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

Road to the Final

1st round: bt Jan-Lennard Struff (Ger) 7-6(5), 6-2, 2-6, 6-1

2nd round: bt Tatsuma Ito (Jpn) 6-1, 6-4, 6-2

3rd round: bt Yoshihito Nishioka (Jpn) 6-3, 6-2, 6-2

4th round: bt Diego Schwartzman (Arg) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4

Quarterfinals: bt Milos Raonic (Can) 6-4, 6-3, 7-6(1)

Semifinals: bt Roger Federer (Sui) 7-6(1), 6-4, 6-3

wealth Games, a grossly-overweight Ghosh chose to right stage to make a point.

His determined effort against the nine-time champion brought him the first three sets. Sharath, looking almost disinterested in the proceedings, did win some points at will and claimed the next two sets. But in the sixth set, when Sharath led 6-4, Ghosh pulled off six straight points and eventually halted Sharath's unbeaten run since 2017.

Incredible day

Incredibly, the day saw Ghosh playing seven sets against S.R.F. Snehit and six by Sudhanshu Grover. He also played six sets in doubles – and remained unbeaten!

"If I had not won the sixth

game, it would have been very difficult for me in the decider," admitted Ghosh, who last beat Sharath to qualify for the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Sharath, on his part, said, "I was not in the match today. Perhaps, he needed to win more badly than me. I'm happy for Ghosh."

Top seed G. Sathiyan, down one set to three and 1-3 in the fourth against Manush Shah in the pre-quarterfinals, trailed 1-2 against Ronit Banja before racing away with the last three sets. Sathiyan, will have to play much better on Sunday to emerge the winner.

Like Ghosh, fellow-resident from Siliguri, Ankita Das marked her comeback by storming into the semifinals. In the pre-quarterfinal,

she suffered a shoulder injury during the match. Ankita went on to upset seventh

seed Anusha Kutumbale in the quarterfinals.

Top seed Sutirtha Mukherjee, too, rallied from 0-3 to oust Kaushini Nath 4-3 to reach semifinals against Ahnika.

The results: Men: Quarterfinals: G. Sathiyan (Pet) bt Ronit Banja (Ben 'A') 11-6, 9-11, 11-9, 11-7, 11-11; Krittika Sinha Roy (Pet) bt Pooja Sahasrabudhe (Pet) 4-1, 11-6, 11-8, 11-7, 11-11; Ankita Das (Ben 'B') bt Anusha Kutumbale (Pet) 9-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-11, 11-11; Pre-quarterfinals: Sutirtha bt Madhurika Patkar (Pet) 4-0; Kaushini Nath (Rlys) 8-11, 9-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-4; Chakraborty (Rlys) 4-3; Ahnika Mukherjee (Rlys) 4-0; Krittika Sinha Roy (Pet) 4-1, 11-6, 11-8, 11-7, 11-11; Pre-quarterfinals: Sutirtha bt Manush Shah (Guj) 4-3; Bhanja bt Sourav Saha (Har) 4-3; Sutirtha bt Shumit Sriram (AAI) 4-3; Manush Shah (Guj) 4-3; Soumyajit Ghosh (Har) bt Sharath Kamal (Pet) 12-10, 11-8, 11-7, 9-11, 11-11; Pre-quarterfinals: Sutirtha bt Manush Shah (Guj) 4-3; Bhanja bt Sourav Saha (Har) 4-3; Sutirtha bt Sharath Kamal (Pet) 12-10, 11-8, 11-7, 9-11, 11-11; Pre-quarterfinals: Sutirtha bt Manush Shah (Guj) 4-3; Bhanja bt Sourav Saha (Har) 4-3; Sutirtha bt Sharath Kamal (Pet) 12-10, 11-8, 11-7, 9-11,



Going all out: Harmanpreet Kaur, seen receiving attention at the Manuka Oval on Friday, will be raring to take on the Aussies on Sunday. ■ GETTY IMAGES

China Masters postponed due to virus outbreak

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BEIJING
China's virus outbreak has forced the country's first badminton tournament of the 2020 world tour season to be postponed, organisers said on Saturday.

The six-day China Masters was due to start on Feb. 25 at Lingshui.

But organisers "considered all necessary health, safety and logistical risks and... believe it is sensible to postpone the tournament at this time," said a statement from the Badminton World Federation (BWF). Several players had already withdrawn from the competition, the BWF added. Wuhan is scheduled to host the Asia Championships, in April.

The BWF said it was too early to "make any final conclusions" about whether to proceed with the event, which is one of the last chances for badminton athletes to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics.

China Masters joins a growing list of sporting events to be delayed or called off in the wake of the epidemic.

The LPGA on Thursday cancelled its Blue Bay tournament slated for next month in Hainan, citing health concerns and growing travel restrictions implemented to slow the infection's spread.

World Snooker on Friday also postponed this year's edition of its China Open, which was due to start in Beijing on March 30.

Ankita in line for a double

To play Paquet in the singles final

TENNIS

SPORTS BUREAU Nonthaburi (Thailand)

Ankita Raina outplayed Leonie Kung of Switzerland 6-3, 6-1 to make the singles final of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament on Saturday. In the final, third seed Ankita will face fourth-seeded Chloe Paquet of France, who beat second-seeded Wang Xinyu of China.

In the doubles final, Ankita, seeded No. 1 with Bibiane Schoofs of the Netherlands, beat Thai wild-cards Supapitch Kuearum and Mananchaya Sawangkaew 6-4, 6-2.

The results: \$25,000 ITF women, Nonthaburi: Semifinals:

Ankita Raina bt Leonie Kung (Sui) 6-3, 6-1. Doubles (final): Bibiane Schoofs (Ned) & Ankita Raina bt Supapitch Kuarum & Mananchaya Sawangkaew (Tha) 6-4, 6-2.

€46,600 Challenger, Quimper (France): Doubles (semifinals):

Ivan Sabanov & Matej Sabanov (Cro) bt Adil Shamasdin (Can) &

Purav Raja 6-2, 6-3.



Winning smiles: Ankita Raina and Bibiane Schoofs with the doubles trophy in the ITF women's tennis tournament in Nonthaburi on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Ravi, Mansi to lead India's charge

The former will look to continue his sterling form

BADMINTON

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

up in the second selection tournament in Bangalore.

Besides him, the Bangalore Ranking Tournament champion Harsh Arora will be part of the men's singles squad along with Nagpur's Rohan Gurbani and Tamil Nadu's Rithvik Sanjeevi S.

Exceptional form

In girls' singles, Lucknow girl Mansi Singh will be leading the charge for India. Mansi, who finished at the top in both the selection tournaments, will be looking forward to continuing her exceptional form in the international circuit.

Besides Mansi, Dubai International Series gold medallist Tasnim Mir and rising stars Aditi Bhatt of Uttarak-

hand and Utsava Palit of West Bengal will make up the girls' singles squad.

The pair of Achutaditya Rao Doddavarappu and Edwin Joy will be keen to impress with their performance in boys' doubles.

In girls' doubles, the Uttar Pradesh duo of Shruti Mishra and Shailja Shukla will be spearheading the Indian challenge along with Aditi Bhatt and Tanya Hemant.

The squad: Boys: Ravi, S. Rithvik Sanjeevi, Rohan Gurbani, Harsh Arora, Achutaditya Rao Doddavarappu, Edwin Joy, B. Gireesh Nayudu and Snakarprasad Udaykumar.

Girls: Mansi Singh, Tasnim Mir, Aditi Bhatt, Utsava Palit, Shruti Mishra, Shailja Shukla, Treesa Jolly and Tanya Hemant.

Ashraf and Bilal recalled

CRICKET

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LAHORE

Pakistan on Saturday recalled all-rounder Faheem Ashraf and off-spinner Bilal Asif for the first Test against Bangladesh starting in Rawalpindi next week.

Ashraf, 26, showed a lot of promise in his debut Test against Ireland in 2018 when he scored 83 but then faced injury problems and was discarded after the South Africa tour in January last year.

Bilal, 34, played the last of his five Tests against New Zealand in December 2018 and was not selected last year.

Azhar Ali will lead the team.

Head coach and chief selector Misbah-ul-Haq said Ashraf did well in the domestic tournament final two months ago.

The first Test starts in Rawalpindi from February 7.

Bangladesh had agreed to tour Pakistan in three phases and after playing three Twenty20 Internationals returned home earlier this week.

It will play the first Test and then return again for the sole One-Day Interna-



Faheem Ashraf. ■ AFP

tional (April 3) and second Test (April 7-11) – both in Karachi.

Mustafizur dropped

Bangladesh dropped pace bowler Mustafizur Rahman and recalled Rubel Hossain for the first Test.

The squads: Pakistan: Azhar Ali (Capt.), Abid Ali, Asad Shafiq, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Bilal Asif, Fawad Alam, Harris Sohail, Imran-ul-Haq, Imran Khan, Mohammad Abbas, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shan Masood and Yasir Shah.

Bangladesh: Mominul Haque (Capt.), Tamim Iqbal, Saif Hassan, Najmul Hossain, Mahmudullah Riyad, Mohammad Mithun, Liton Das, Tajul Islam, Nayeem Hasan, Ebadat Hosain, Abu Jayed, Al-Amin Hossain, Rubel Hossain, Soumya Sarkar.

India women look to improve fielding

Take on Australia which is coming off a Super Over defeat to England

TRI-SERIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA CANBERRA

The Indian women's team will look for an improved show in the fielding department to complement its fine bowling when it takes on Australia in its second game of the Tri-series here on Sunday.

India beat England by five wickets in the tournament opener on Friday.

India put up a fine bowling

performance, led by the spinners, to restrict England to 147, which was followed by a match-winning unbeaten 42-run knock by skipper Harmanpreet.

Good form

The top four – Shafali Verma, Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues and Harmanpreet – were all among the runs, but the middle-order, comprising Veda Krishnamurthy and Taniya Bhatia, struggled.

However, India was far

from impressive when it came to fielding with Harmanpreet, Jemimah and Veda dropping catches, apart from misfields, and the side will look to quickly make amends.

Happy for youngsters

"I'm really happy that our young players could play with freedom. We have to work hard on our fielding. We need to improve," Harmanpreet had said after the match.

Defending T20 World

champion Australia, on the other hand, will be desperate to bounce back after going down to England in a thrilling game that was decided via Super Over on Saturday.

Neither the Australian bowlers nor the batters, except Beth Mooney, could make much of an impact on Saturday.

The Australians will also take confidence from the fact that India had lost both its matches against them in the tri-nation series in 2018.

The teams: Australia: Alyssa

Healy, Beth Mooney, Ashleigh Gardner, Meg Lanning (Capt.), Elyse Perry, Rachael Haynes, Jess Jonassen, Delissa Kimmince, Annabel Sutherland, Georgia Wareham, Megan Schutt, Nicola Carey, Sophie Molineux, Erin Burns and Tayla Vlaeminck

India: Shafali Verma, Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Veda Krishnamurthy, Taniya Bhatia, Deepthi Sharma, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Radha Yadav, Richa Ghosh, Arundhati Reddy, Harleen Deol, Nuzhat Parween and Poonam Yadav.



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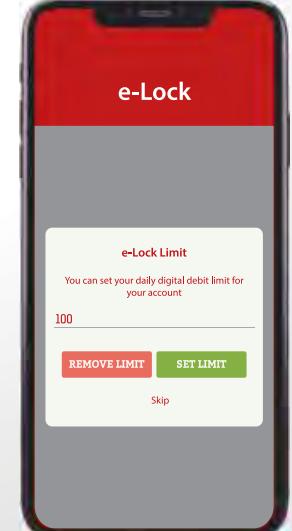
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Magazine

**WIDE ANGLE**

Samvidhan, the Hindi word for Constitution, is Oxford Hindi word of the year, as Indians adopt it anew p6

**60 MINUTES**

The country is seeing a political churning after 30 to 40 years, says Kannan Gopinathan, former IAS officer p12

**SPOTLIGHT**

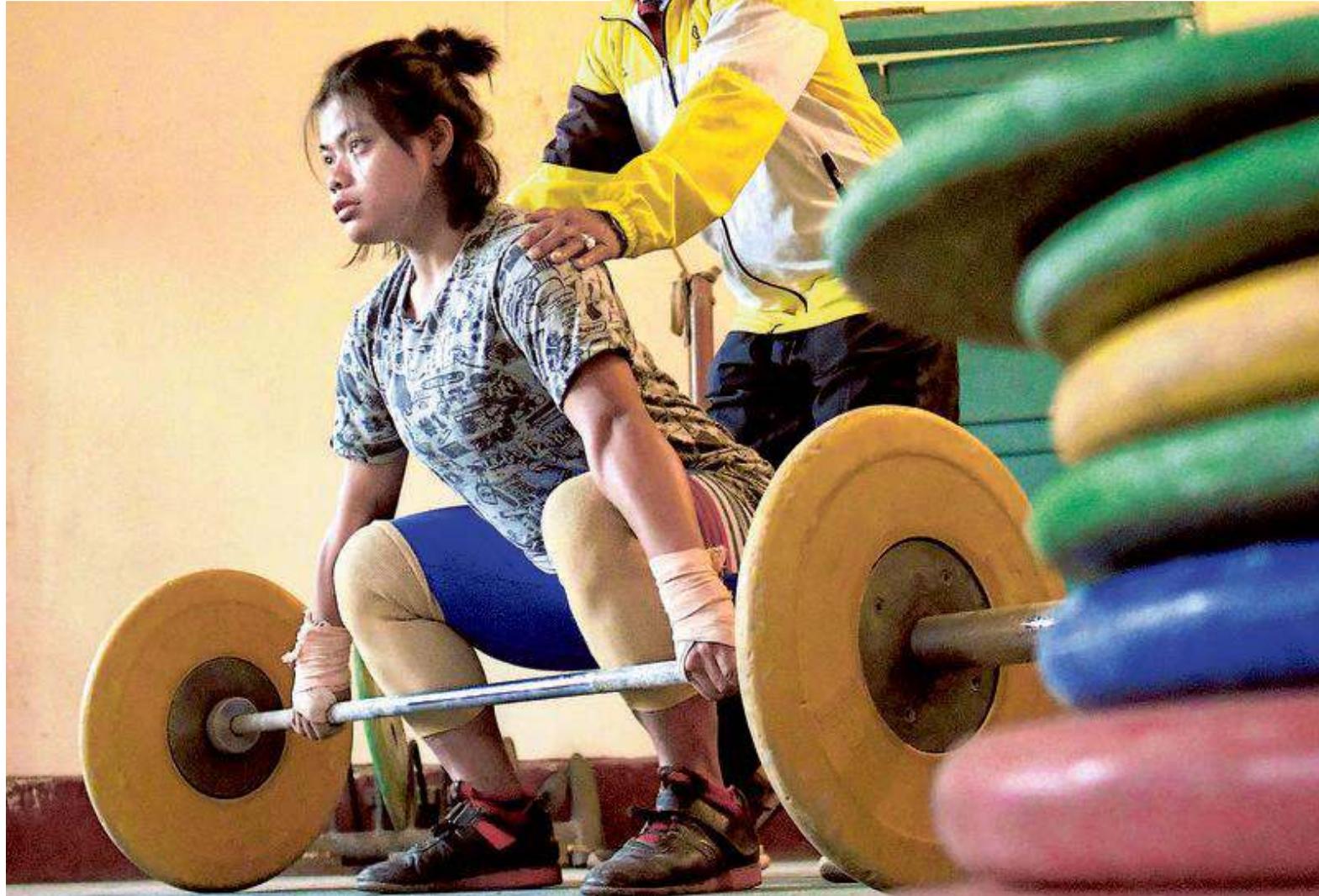
Web series *Sex Education* uses the structure of a high school romcom to talk about sexuality and the body p5



COVER

Olympic dreams in Imphal

Manipur's women weightlifters dream big—and stars like Mirabai Chanu both draw from, and fuel, the legacy of women's empowerment in the State p3



Next gen Former champion Anita Chanu corrects a trainee's posture at a coaching centre in Imphal. • RITU RAJ KONWAR

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Why Justice is DELAYED

Reforms are a must for providing quick redress without violating the rights of the accused

K. Shankar

The recent rape and murder of a young veterinary doctor in Hyderabad has yet again raised concern over women's safety in the country. As the four accused were shot dead a few days after the incident, the debate shifted to whether such instant justice without trial is acceptable or not in a civilised society.

Nearly 60 lakh criminal cases have been pending for more than five years in the country, and hence a fresh look at the laws is essential to render justice to victims without delay and protect the rights of the accused. Reforms are required for the police, the forensics wing, the prosecution, the courts and the laws.

Role of the police

It is the police who set the criminal justice system into motion by initiating an investigation. A police officer handling law-and-order duties may not be able to pay adequate attention to that specialised field.

Hence, law and order and investigation duties must be separated, which the Supreme Court has recommended in its order on police reforms. Though practical difficulties come in the way of its full implementation, a specialised unit can be started in every district to investigate crimes of a grave nature such as murder and rape.

Often, the police delay filing of

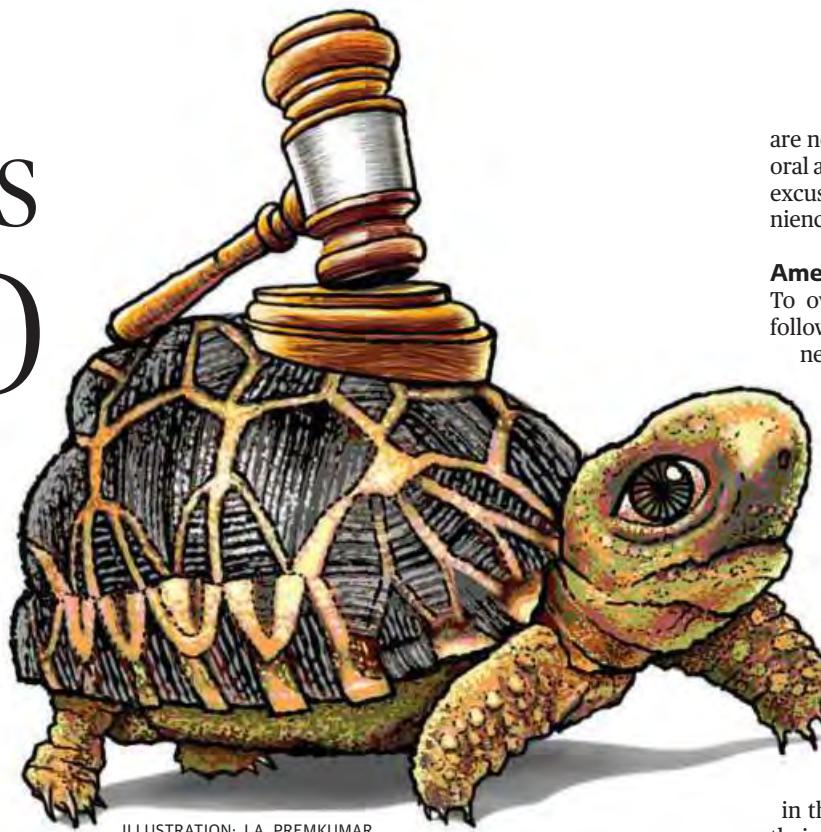


ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR

chargesheets. Sometimes, chargesheets are returned for rectification. Forensic reports too are delayed as just a few forensic labs exist. More labs should be opened with capabilities for cyberforensics, DNA testing, handwriting comparison and so on. Every district should have one.

Even after the chargesheet is submitted in the court, there is considerable delay in taking the cases on file and committing them to the court. Special courts exclusively for trial of heinous offences such as murder and dacoity must be set up with powers to take cognisance of offences directly and conduct trial on a day-to-day basis.

Many provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.PC) enable the accused to delay trial. Such provisions intended to provide every opportunity to the accused to defend themselves are often used to delay and scuttle trial. Once the court takes cognisance of a case, it should be the bounden duty of the accused to appear for the trial. The accused should be put to jeopardy if they try to abscond.

The accused adopt many delay-

tactics – absenting themselves one after the other without receiving copies of documents relied upon by the prosecution; failing to appear to give explanation for the charges; and filing discharge petitions one after the other and later going on appeal.

When the trial finally starts, the witnesses are first examined but the defence counsel defers cross-examination. They are later recalled one by one for cross-examination. The accused seek repeated adjournments by filing petitions under Section 317 of the Cr.PC.

Examination of witnesses, questioning of the accused and so on are deferred.

Another method is to abscond and remain untraceable for a long time. Warrants are then issued against the accused.

If one absconding accused is secured and produced before the court, the co-accused will abscond one by one.

After closure of prosecution, the defence counsel invariably represent that they propose to examine the defence witnesses. But after many adjournments, they will say there

are no such witnesses. Likewise, the oral arguments are delayed by giving excuses such as personal inconvenience of counsel.

Amendments to the law

To overcome these problems, the following amendments in the Cr.PC need to be carried out.

Section 207 may be amended to furnish copies to counsel when the accused is absent. Sections 228 and 240 may be amended to get explanation from counsel on the charges framed in case the accused is absent.

Under Sections 227 and 239, a time limit of 30 days from the date of receipt of copies may be set for filing discharge petition.

Section 317 may be amended to enable the court to examine witnesses in the absence of the accused and their counsel.

In the revisional powers under Section 397 and inherent powers under Section 482, necessary provisions may be inserted so that the other party is heard before passing interim orders on the investigation and prosecution.

The bail provisions under Sections 436 and 437 may be amended so that the accused who violate bail conditions can be detained till the completion of the trial.

Provisions may be included in the bail bond to obtain the consent of the accused to conduct the trial in his absence in case of breach of conditions.

Some of the frequently reported offences under Sections 294(b) 147, 148, 279, 324, 384 and 498A of the Indian Penal Code which are not very serious in nature can be brought under compoundable offences.

In addition, the number of appeals should be capped, and the court must extensively use video-conferencing to examine witnesses.

(The writer is the Inspector-General of Police, Crime Branch, Criminal Investigation Department, Chennai)

kshankarips@gmail.com

FEEDBACK

Letters to the Magazine can be e-mailed separately to mag.letters@thehindu.co.in

Magazine



Syncretic delight

It was a delight to read Namrata Joshi's piece on the movie *Delhi-6*. ('Pin code 110006'; Jan. 26). The film truly deserves a revisit in today's times of communal propaganda. I felt that the article expressed my own thoughts.

VAIBHAV SRIVASTAVA

Just a splash

The article by Vaishna Roy ('Eternal sunshine'; Jan. 26) was thought-provoking. We need to change the way we look at victims of acid attacks or domestic abuse, and try to understand what they go through, from loss of confidence and self-worth to social stigma and rejection. Hiring pretty Bollywood actors to play these roles doesn't change the way society still views them. The movie feels like a *chhapak*, a splash, that leaves you uncomfortable, wondering what happened.

SHRUTI BALAJI

■ Jallikattu has received a new lease of life after the SC ban was lifted. It is a gory sport that takes a toll on human lives and can therefore hardly qualify as a spectator's delight.

The sport is neither human- nor animal-friendly and one has only to look at the eyes of the bulls that participate to realize the extent of trauma that is caused to the poor animal as it is relentlessly pursued by dozens of men.

C.V. ARAVIND

■ Jallikattu is against two sayings of Tiruvalluvar: "It is compassion, the most gracious of virtues, which moves the world," and "How can one who eats the flesh of others to swell his flesh show compassion?"

K.M.K. MURTHY

■ The zeitgeist of jallikattu was captured in the photograph of the eye-bulging, tongue-protruding bull. To my mind, jallikattu is nothing short of schadenfreude.

AYASSERI RAVEENDRANATH

■ Ironically, we took to the roads to protest the jallikattu ban in the name of culture and tradition. As long as it's a sign of our identity and pride, we compromise with the lives of humans and animals.

RUBY KATNORIA

■ Similar to jallikattu, and despite legislations, the horrifying sport of cock-fighting is still prevalent in coastal Andhra Pradesh. And the government is turning a blind eye.

N.S.R. MURTHY

■ Heartfelt cooking

The article by Revathi Suresh ('Two States on my plate'; Jan. 26) makes us realise how much we disregard the amazing food made by our loved ones, especially mothers.

They make food from the heart.

SHIVANI PANDEY



More on the Web

thehindu.com/opinion/open-page



For an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum

It will keep students from developing rigid ideas about sexuality that escalates into bias.

ANUJA SARDA

Cooking without the bulb

I would cook without onions till the price came down completely! This was my way of rebelling.

JANAKI RAJARAM

Science, humanities on an even plane

Colleges globally infuse their STEM degrees with a general education in arts and social sciences.

This page consists of reader submissions. Contributions of up to a length of 700 words may be e-mailed to openpage@thehindu.co.in. Please provide a postal address and a brief background of the writer. The mail must certify that it is original writing, exclusive to this page. The Hindu views plagiarism as a serious offence. Given the large volume of submissions, we regret that we are unable to acknowledge receipt or entertain queries about submissions. If a piece is not published for eight weeks please consider that it is not being used. The publication of a piece on this page is not to be considered an endorsement by The Hindu of the views contained therein.

Salute to a beloved teacher

R.D. Singh

In June 1965, I was a seventh standard student of King George's School, Belgaum (now Military School, Belagavi). Straight from a village in Haryana, with little knowledge of English, here I was just about 13 years old among children from all walks of life. Initially, I was lost and cried often, feeling out of place. But, soon, I was on my feet and rubbing shoulders with children from privileged back-

grounds. All this, thanks to our visionary Principal, R.S. Mani.

Seeing my shyness and poor English, he called me to his office.

Handing me a copy of *Reader's Digest* with an essay on Gandhiji, he said, "Ripu, next week you will narrate that essay in the Assembly." "Nothing is impossible," he added.

I took it as a challenge and decided to memorise the whole essay. Shivering, I stood in front of the assembly, and rattled out the

essay like a parrot. Loud clapping ensued.

He began the story of how a teacher can mould and build a student. Principal Mani asked me to read newspapers daily and make note of important events. I took a dictionary and sat with an English daily. In one hour, I could finish no more than half a page, but I did not lose heart. The output kept increasing every day. My vocabulary kept on expanding, so did the general awareness.



Mr. Mani put me in the declamation team. By the time I was in the 10th standard, I was the best debater of the school. I still remember how we defeated a Pune school in an inter-school

debate which was presided over by none other than Nani Palkhivala. "Why don't you start writing when you can speak so well," Mr. Mani asked. And there I was in the school magazine editorial team.

He reposed faith in me as a moral guide, and put me in charge of the small children in Pratap House. It enriched me spiritually as I had to lead young minds on the righteous path.

No wonder, even today at 66, when I get on my bicycle, I remember him and pedal on to do my bit for the underprivileged.

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Preeti Zachariah

Ching Juan Neina, a bright-eyed 15-year-old, tapes her wrists and dips her hands into a bowl of chalk. She stands over a barbell stacked with a pair of green 10 kg plates, reaches down, and grips the bar, readying her body for a snatch, one of the two moves central to competitive weightlifting. After a brief pause, she gets into position – chest up, feet directly below hips, back flat, knees bent, core tight and arms straight – and slowly pulls the barbell past her knees. In a single, explosive movement, she drives it past her chest and head, and drops, as weightlifting parlance has it, ass-to-grass. She holds the position for a split second and then releases the barbell. It bounces on the platform, almost sliding off the scuffed wood.

Anita Chanu, wearing a bright yellow jacket with the word 'Coach' emblazoned across its back, rolls back the barbell. She walks briskly around the Regular Coaching Centre at the Khuman Lampak Stadium in Imphal, Manipur's capital, past rusty racks, stacks of bright plates, fraying rubber mats, past grimy, cobweb-tinselled windows, stopping intermittently to correct, reprimand or praise. "Your knees are in the wrong position." "Faster, faster..." "Try again." "That was very good," she says to a girl who has cleared around 65 kg, raising her voice to be heard over the constant thud of barbells, the scrape of wooden-soled weightlifting shoes on bare concrete, and the chatter of the dozen-odd girls and young women who have gathered to train this December morning.

A pioneer of women's weightlifting in India, Chanu hopes to train more women who will follow in her footsteps. "This is a small, simple training centre," says Chanu. "But with nothing but honesty and sincerity, we have produced so many international athletes." Drifting through the air, as palpable as the faint whiff of perspiration and the tired sighs, is a shared ambition for one thing, and one thing alone. "To become an Olympian," as Neina confesses.

A sporting legacy

The Olympic dream echoes through the lush oval valley surrounded by hills. Sporting activities are inextricably woven into the State's cultural fabric, and it has been that way for centuries. Polo, for instance, originated here as did other sports, including mukna, a form of wrestling; indigenous martial arts such as thang-t and sarit sarat; khong khangjei, a version of hockey that also included bouts of wrestling; and yubi lapki, a rugby-like game played with a coconut. By the medieval era, the kingdom was divided into six districts called 'pannas' for administrative and military purposes. The pannas competed against each other in sports contests and the winners were rewarded by the king. "Like all nations in the past, Manipur's people had to keep themselves fit to meet any eventualities, including war," explains R.K. Nimal Singh, former commissioner of Youth Affairs and Sports in Manipur. So, they engaged in many sports, he adds.

The obsession with sports stayed with Manipur through its tumultuous history. In 1891, when the British conquered Manipur and turned it into a princely State, the panna system died. A sports club culture developed, and an abundance of tiny clubs sprang up. These neighbourhood clubs, created and supported by the local people, remain the primary system for athletic development in Manipur.

"You won't find it anywhere else except West Bengal," says Singh.

After Independence, Manipur became a reluctant addition to the new India. It had framed its own constitution and even held its first Assembly election by the time the Maharajah of Manipur was forced into signing a merger agreement with India

They lifted makeshift barbells — discarded autorickshaw rods to which they attached weights — and used cut bamboo as squat racks

LEGACIES

The iron women of Manipur

As weightlifter Mirabai Chanu trains for Tokyo 2020, we visit Manipur, where young women live and breathe Olympian dreams in a culture that celebrates women and sports in daily life



Role model (Clockwise from above) Former weightlifting champion Anita Chanu with her trainees in Imphal; a flower seller from Ema Bazaar; and scenes from a training session. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

in 1949. Manipuris have since held their integration into India as illegal and unconstitutional, writes Thongkhola Hackip, assistant professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, in *India's Look East Policy and the Northeast*.

Through upheavals and all

Independence movements in the State began to gather force in the early 60s. In 1964, the Meitei-led United National Liberation Front became the first separatist faction in the State. Over the last 50 years, more than 30 such groups (some now inactive) mushroomed across Manipur. In response, the Centre came down hard on the secessionists, and in 1980 imposed the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in Manipur. The exercise of these powers, rationalised as necessary to control violence, has often led to human rights violations such as rape, extra-judicial killings, and harassment.

The insurgents retaliate with strikes, blockades, disorder and violence. The ongoing battle may have affected law and order, but there is one thing nobody in Manipur –

neither politicians nor rebels – interferes with: sports.

Like millions across the country, Nameirakpam Kunjarani Devi, then 14, and her family, gathered round the TV to watch the 1982 Asian Games over 16 drama-filled days, the first big event broadcast in colour in India. In the little town of Kairang, some 2,000 km from Delhi, where the games were held, Devi watched P.T. Usha, 'the queen of Indian track and field', sprinting her way to two silver medals. It triggered her own desire to mount a winner's podium at international competitions. She tried her hand at every sport she could think of: hockey, football, kho-kho. But at 4 feet, 11 inches, she knew she had little chance in these games.

Strength sports, however, were a different deal.

Anita Chanu and Kunjarani Devi met at the home of their powerlifting coach, Kunja Kishore Singh, in 1983. They trained on the porch of Singh's house through balmy summers, sodden monsoons, and foggy winters, mindful of nothing but the heft of metal and

the weight of their dreams. They lifted makeshift barbells – discarded autorickshaw rods to which they attached weights – and used cut bamboo as squat racks. In those early years, the government allocated no funds to sports development. "We even put in our own money to participate in competitions," says Devi. Or they turned to friends and families. "When I wanted to go for a championship, all of Manipur would chip in. If anyone had a spare rupee, they were ready to donate it to sports," she says.

Shorter is better

That year, Devi created a national record in powerlifting, with a 75 kg back squat, 42.5 kg bench press, and 95 kg deadlift. Two years later, Chanu represented India at the World Powerlifting Championship in Vienna. The international exposure whet her appetite. "I thought I should participate in the Olympics," she says. Except, powerlifting wasn't an Olympic sport. Then, in 1985, for the first time, India conducted its National Games modelled along the lines of the Summer

Olympics. And for the first time, women's weightlifting was added. Chanu and Devi switched to weightlifting, which tests strength limits using the snatch and clean-and-jerk instead of powerlifting's bench press, back squat and deadlift. They were soon excelling at it.

Research shows that shorter heights give athletes an advantage in weightlifting because they have a lower centre of gravity, which means greater stability and better leverage. The average Manipuri, says Chanu, has the right build for weightlifting – "short but with good muscle mass" – especially for the lower weight categories. "Our youth have good discipline, dedication and yes, killer instinct," she says.

Gold is gold

A photograph from the 1985 National Games shows Devi, dressed in a singlet and sporting the same pixie haircut she has today, lunging into the final position of a clean-and-jerk. Her white-gloved hands grip the 85 kg barbell, her biceps are straining. At that time, she weighed only 44 kg, the lowest of the 10 weight categories allowed for women. She went on to win gold in three categories – 44 kg, 46 kg and 48 kg.

"Gold is gold," says the soft-spoken, bespectacled Devi. "It changed everything for me." Devi went on to set two new national records at the National Games in Trivandrum two years later. She trained locally with her old coach until 1989; in her free time poring over the sports magazines that trickled into Manipur.

China had already emerged as a weightlifting powerhouse by then – it holds the most world records to this day – and Devi tracked it through 1985, 86 and 87. Even without focused training, she realised she could lift almost as much as the Chinese champions. "I knew this was my sport," says Devi.

The Sports Authority of India had by then begun organising national coaching camps. Chanu and Devi began travelling to attend these camps, rarely going home to Manipur for breaks. The trip home would have taken five days each way, if they were lucky not to get stranded at the border by the ongoing insurgency. But that wasn't the only reason they stayed behind. They feared deconditioning because of the lack of proper infrastructure back home. So, Devi and Chanu would stay back in the camps, tossing around barbells, deepening squats, stretching their limbs to better flexibility.

Giving back

Chanu took part in 11 international contests overall, winning a few medals at various Asian championships, but by 1990 she was battling multiple injuries. "I was very disappointed," she says. So her focus shifted to coaching. She had been exposed to the best coaches, physiotherapists, masseuses at the camps. "I learned a lot from them," she says, and decided to share it with the next generation. In 1999, Manipur hosted the National Games and built Khuman Lampak stadium in the heart of Imphal. Chanu opened her Regular Coaching Centre at the stadium the next year.

Devi went on to become the most decorated Indian sportswoman in weightlifting. She started competing internationally by 1989, gathering medals almost everywhere she went, including three silvers at the Women's World Weightlifting Championship in Manchester that year, bronzes at the Asian Games in 1990 and 1994, a gold at the 2006 Commonwealth Games – 68 international medals in all. In 2004, she made it to the Athens Olympics, finishing fifth with a combined lift of 190 kg. She was honoured with the Arjuna Award for Sports, the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna and, in 2011, a Padma Shri.

Devi's rockstar status both derives from and fuels the empowerment of the women of Manipur, unusual in a country known for its extreme gender inequality. From early

Continued on Page 4





The iron women...

Continued from Page 3

times, women's strength was encouraged and lauded in Manipur. "In ancient Manipuri history there was no sexism," says lawyer and human rights activist Leitanthem Umakantha Meitei in a paper titled, 'Voyages of Women in Manipur'.

The ancient Lallup-Kaba, a sort of forced labour system that required every adult male to spend a considerable amount of time away from home, serving the king, created economic independence for women. When the men were away, the women tended to the fields and engaged in trade, male domains in most other cultures.

Today, women run almost all the markets in Manipur, including the Ema Bazaar or Nupi Keithel, a 500-year-old, all-women's market in the heart of Imphal, by some accounts the largest such in Asia. They've fought wars – against both the British and against substance abuse in the State – and spent nights patrolling the streets to prevent human rights violations in Manipur. This strength naturally extends to sports.

A new champion

Tokyo 2020 is around the corner, and India's hope for it – Saikhom Mirabai Chanu – is training hard. The bobble on her hat bounces as she jogs with a group of young women across the lawns of the National Institute of Sports in Patiala; the shortest in the bunch, she leads the pack in a messy line. They stop and launch into stretches, conditioning exercises and plyometrics under the eagle eye of national weightlifting



coach Vijay Sharma. Twenty minutes later, warm-up completed, they shed jackets, change shoes and turn to the barbells that line the weightlifting hall.

"Chal beta," (go child) says Sharma. Mirabai bends forward, touches her forehead to the barbell – almost as if in prayer – and stands up, her personal ritual before every lift. She bends again, this time drawing the barbell to her shoulder, then squats, stands up and drops it. "Shabash!" says Sharma.

She lifts like a natural, but Mirabai's entrance into this world was almost accidental. She had wanted to enrol in archery but the enclosure was closed, so she peeked into the weightlifting hall at Khuman Lam-pak Stadium and was smitten. "I wanted to do it," she says, nursing a cup of coffee as old Bollywood songs stream out of the tea shop where we meet after her training.

She turned out to be very good at her game. She attributes this to years spent trekking up and down hills carrying firewood on her head. Anita Chanu, Mirabai's first coach, says she saw great potential in her right from the start: "I told her parents that if they supported her, she would win many medals."

Mirabai trained at Chanu's centre for the next four years, daily traversing 20-odd km between her home in the village of Nongpok Kakching to Imphal. Sometimes, she took a shared tuk-tuk, often she cycled or hitched a ride on a truck, crossing straw-strewn fields and fish farms before reaching the city.

It was hard, at first, she remembers. Her father, Saikhom Kriti Singh, earned a paltry salary in the Public Works Department and had six children to raise. "I told my mother it would be difficult for her to spend so much extra on my diet," she says. But her mother asked her not to worry. Bananas every day, milk and eggs twice or thrice a week, and vegetables that grew around the house fuelled her. "Not really a proper full diet," she remembers, but enough to keep her going.

She won her first significant me-

Today, women run almost all the markets in Manipur. They have fought wars and spent nights patrolling the streets. This strength naturally extends to sports

dal just one year after training – a gold at the Youth Championships in Chhattisgarh in 2009. Within five years, she was lifting a combined weight of 170 kg, enough to win her a silver at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games in 2014. She started working with her current coach Vijay Sharma that year, and by 2016 was lifting a total of 192 kg, breaking Kunjarani Devi's 12-year-old record of 190 kg.

News of her success has drifted into the village of Nongpok Kakching, her hometown in Manipur, more than 2,000 km away. "I'm really happy about what she has achieved," says her mother Saikhom Tombi Devi, hauling a couple of wooden chairs into the courtyard of their home. She unearths a prized photograph of her daughter receiving the Khel Ratna in 2018, dusts it with her pink dupatta, and says, "Our village has become famous because of my daughter."

Olympic dreams

In August 2016, Mirabai travelled with six Manipuri athletes to Rio de Janeiro to compete in the Summer Olympics. Her 192 kg (423 lbs) lift was enough to garner a medal, any medal, she thought. On stage, she blinked at the blinding lights, the weight plates, the row of competitors beside her. She felt a sudden wave of panic. Then she went blank. To this day, she doesn't remember what happened next. But India did. The newspapers the next morning went to town: 'India's Meltdown at Rio,' said *The Hindu*; 'Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu disappoints, blows away medal chance,' said *The Indian Express*; 'Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu failed to complete her event,' said *The Times of India*. The words

seared deeply into her psyche as the three letters DNF (Did Not Finish) appeared beside her name on the Olympics scoreboard. Worse, the silver medallist that year, Sri Wahyuni Agustiani of Indonesia, lifted 192 kg, exactly what Mirabai Chanu had lifted at the trials.

She remembers being distraught, questioning her skill and strength, even toying with the idea of quitting. Family support, more training, and weekly sessions with a psychologist came to the rescue. She learned to manage her nervousness. "I read history books or watch videos now," she says. It helps distil her thoughts, boiling them down to just one idea: the barbell.

Golden aims

It seems to be working. Over the last five years, Mirabai has won multiple accolades. In 2017, she won a gold medal at the World Weightlifting Championship, the first Indian woman to do so after Karnam Malleswari in 1994, proving herself to a world that had written her off.

She chased it with other golds – at the 2018 Commonwealth Games at Gold Coast and the 2019 EGAT cup in Thailand. She bettered her own record at this year's World Weightlifting Championship, finishing fourth with a combined lift of 201 kg, and ended 2019 with a bang: a gold at the Qatar International Cup.

"Everything is going to plan," says coach Sharma, who believes the 25-year-old has a good shot at an Olympic medal. Currently, she holds the eighth spot in the Olympic qualifiers ranking list. Sharma is positive but cautious. "We are working hard, let's see what happens," he says.

Mirabai Chanu wears her dream in an unusual place, her ears. Her small gold earrings, shaped into five interconnected rings, are a gift from her mother, reminding her of her Olympic dream.

It drives her to do what she does: daily training, boiled food, a regimented sleep schedule that leaves little time for fun or entertainment, a constant battle against exhaustion and injury. "If I want something, I have to get it. Besides, everyone has placed so much hope in me. I can't let them down," she says.

Harder to deal with, however, are the bouts of homesickness: the longing for textured, green plains; the warmth of a mother's hug; the delicate flavour of eromba, a mildly-spiced stew of fish and vegetables. "Since I have started competing, I barely go home. I miss it so much," she says wistfully. There is no room for nostalgia, however, only razor-sharp focus and hard work. And Mirabai Chanu knows this. "I have to get that medal at the Olympics. And once I do, I will go home."

The author is a Chennai-based writer and storyteller.



Parenthood drama

Black Lightning is a high-octane modern-day action drama.

The hero is haunted by the death or disappearance of a loved one. (For Batwoman, this is her sister, for The Flash it's his mother.) The moral dilemmas tend to involve parental figures

school principal and the eponymous hero of the show, gives up the crime-fighting life for his family's sake, only to be forced back into the mantle. When his daughters Jennifer and Anissa start manifesting powers of their own, he has to find a way of integrating their superpowers into their family life.

Black Lightning is very much a high-octane modern-day action drama, with the requisite fireworks and the snappy shot combat sequences. But more importantly, it finds a way to talk about so many real-world issues in a seamless, non-preachy way – police brutality, 'busing', queerness,

the intersection of religion and politics and much else besides. The third season is about to end and the show has only grown stronger.

Batwoman, which saw a soft pilot in the 2019 Crisis crossover, has started off on a similarly confident note.

In Ruby Rose, it has a charismatic lead who's quickly become a fan favourite. What it needs to avoid is some of the defensiveness that marred some recent seasons of *The Flash* and *Arrow*, in particular. Our heroes have, of late, been making the same elementary mistakes over and over again, which makes the screenplay look lazy.

There is much to admire about the Arrowverse. At their best, the shows are smartly written bubblegum TV, with just the right balance of pathos and thrills. The challenge ahead would be to keep raising the game. Because while the Marvel shows have been outlasted, a Baby Yoda-led wave of bubblegum TV is on its way, courtesy Disney.



Aditya Mani Jha is a writer and journalist working on his first book of non-fiction.



SCANNER



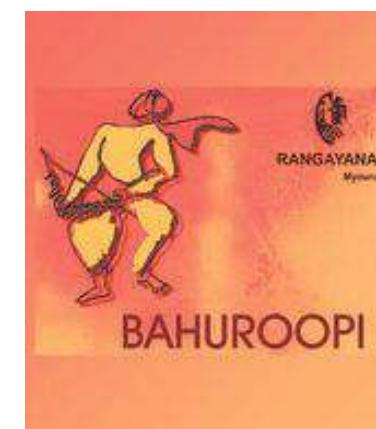
J. Krishnamurti show

The Krishnamurti Foundation of India is marking philosopher J. Krishnamurti's 125th birth anniversary with an experiential show around his life and teachings. It is on from February 1 to 8 at Vasanta Vihar, Chennai. The show also travels to Varanasi (February 17 to 19) and Bengaluru (February 28 to March 1).



Prodosh Dasgupta show

An exhibition of the works of renowned sculptor Prodosh Dasgupta (1912-1991) is on view at Delhi's Triveni Kala Sangam until February 6, and will later be shown at Akar Prakar Contemporary in the capital from February 28 to March 28. The show includes three of his large sculptures and 21 smaller ones, including the famous 'Suryamukhi'.



Mysuru theatre festival

This year's Bahuroopi National Theatre Festival will be held on the Rangayana premises in Mysuru from February 14 to 19. The festival will feature 24 plays in total, including 11 non-Kannada plays, and will have the theme 'Gandhi Patha', highlighting Mahatma Gandhi's life and works. Other attractions include Yakshagana and puppet shows.

BINGE WATCH

Super soap opera

The CW's 'Arrowverse' shows, with their focus on family drama, now rule the roost in superhero TV

Earlier this year, Marvel wrapped up its superhero streaming shows, of which it had five on Netflix – *Daredevil*, *The Punisher*, *Jessica Jones*, *Luke Cage* and *Iron Fist*. (They also converged in a crossover miniseries called *The Defenders*.) With all five shows showing diminishing returns with successive seasons, they were all cancelled. Their exit left The CW's 'Arrowverse' shows (*Arrow*, *The Flash*, *Supergirl* and so on) as the undisputed leaders of network television's superhero game. Every year, the Arrowverse shows have crossover 'events', standalone multi-episode arcs that see our heroes teaming up together to fight large-scale calamities and the crème de la crème of super-villains. The 2020 crossover, a multiverse story called 'Crisis on Infinite Earths', concluded earlier this month.

2020 also saw the Arrowverse expand to debut *Batwoman*, starring Ruby Rose. With a nifty bit of plotting, it also formally included *Black Lightning* (available on Netflix) into the fold. Both these shows, the latest entrants to what is now a club of six (apart from the five already mentioned, there's also *Legends of Tomorrow*, a *Doctor Who*-inspired time travel drama), are fairly representative examples, highlighting the CW superhero 'house style', if you will.

Hero's doppelgangers

The Arrowverse, to put it simply, is a series of shows that use the superhero/vigilante framework to deliver a parenthood soap opera. The hero is haunted by the death or disappearance of a loved one. (For *Batwoman*, this is her sister, for *The Flash* it's his mother.) The moral dilemmas in their journey tend to involve parental figures. While they face increasingly more sinister villains, the escalation buck always seems to stop with themselves – this is also why so many of the villains in Arrowverse shows have been hero's doppelgangers. Bizarros, really, metaphors for what might have been, had it not been for the hero's moral code and so on.

Consider *Black Lightning*, perhaps the best parenthood drama of the entire bunch. Jefferson Pierce, high

POP-A-RAZZI

Partition in the tiffin box

Why food multiculturalism cannot be an end in itself

*Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy poha-eaters came.*

— With apologies to Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Poha, it turns out, is the new anti-national. BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya made national news when he spotted the poha-ring among construction labourers working at his house. To mix food metaphors, he smelled something fishy when he noticed they ate "only poha". They might be Bangladeshi, he surmised.

Flattened rice fans from Maharashtra to Bengal erupted in outrage. Poha eaters came out of the woodwork. Someone found a picture of cricketer-turned BJP MP Gautam Gambhir eating poha. Indigo offers poha alongside upma as part of its in-flight offerings. Will Vijayvargiya come for upma next? Will Indigo be inculcated into the tukde tukde gang? I had a savory poha-muri snack outside the ancient temples of Pattadakal in Northern Karnataka. The poha hunters clearly have their work cut out for them if poha becomes a test of citizenship.

To paraphrase the old Martin Niemöller warning:

First they came for the beef eaters, and I did not speak out —

Because I was not a beef eater.

Then they came for the egg eaters in Madhya Pradesh, and I did not speak out —

Because I was not an egg eater in Madhya Pradesh.

Then they came from the Muslim food delivery boy during Shravan and I did not speak out —

Because I was not a food delivery guy.

Then they came for the poha eaters and I did speak out —

Because I ate poha/ cheerey/ chivda/ choora.

But all the poha jokes hide a more troubling truth. We are so used to using food as a way of designating the other. In Bengali TV soaps, the bad Westernised girl wants continental food and cake while the good Bengali bahu makes payesh and fish. There is no soap opera plot line where you can be a good girl and like cake and payesh.

I remember food writer and TV host Madhur Jaffrey talking about how she would share meals at school with classmates — Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs. "I remember all those specific tastes and each one being so marvellous. With Partition, all our Muslims friends were gone and we were bereft." Lunch tasted different. Partition had entered the tiffin box.

Food as a bridge

When I went to America, I would constantly meet people who told me they loved Indian food, almost as a badge of some multicultural honour. Food is the bridge between cultures, sharing food is the way we break down barriers. Or so we would like to believe.

Joanne Harris, the bestselling author of *Chocolat*, was recently at the Tata Steel Kolkata Literary Meet. In *Chocolat*, Vianne Rocher, who might or might not be a witch, arrives in a tiny and deeply Catholic French village and opens a chocolaterie. She is viewed with suspicion by the local priest and the town busybodies but the chocolate works its magic.

In a follow-up novel, *Peaches For Monsieur le Curé*, Vianne returns to the village which is crackling with tension because of the arrival of a group of Muslims of Moroccan origin who have built a mosque. It's Ramadan, and Vianne's chocolates have no effect but food still helps both ignite and defuse cultural tensions. Harris has talked often about why she uses food as a motif. "It's the first contact with a culture because it's something that everybody can understand. It's a simple way of offering or accepting hospitality."

Harris, on her first visit to India, was certainly game about trying out everything on offer, including the nolen gur sandesh on the dessert table. But she also said that food as a conduit for tolerance of the other has its limits. It's only a first step. Food multiculturalism cannot be an end in itself. Often, we are only too happy to keep the food and kick out the people the food belongs to. Islamophobes can be biriyani lovers. Donald Trump can boast about loving tacos even as he wants to erect a wall to keep out Mexicans. 'But I eat curry, don't call me a xenophobe,' can be the culinary equivalent of 'I can't be racist, I have a black friend.'

The 'I-love-tandoori' multiculturalism can be grating. But food policing is even more toxic. In the new India boiling with talk of papers to prove you belong, could the slogan of resistance du jour 'Hum Kaagaz Nahi Dikhayenge' be extended to our grocery lists?

Sandip Roy, the author of *Don't Let Him Know*, likes to let everyone know about his opinions whether asked or not.



Queer in Chechnya

David France's documentary *Welcome to Chechnya*, screened at the Sundance Film Festival last week, lays bare Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov's campaign to "cleanse the blood" of LGBTQ citizens — through detention, torture and execution — and highlights the work of the network of activists leading a resistance.



Chintan Girish Modi

As someone who grew up hungry for approval, it took me a long time to understand that it was alright — even essential — to have boundaries. Being disliked was a risk worth taking if I wanted to love myself, protect my integrity, and look at myself in the mirror without a hint of shame. I had to figure out what I needed to feel safe in relationships of all kinds. Learning to say no was a life skill I had to teach myself, even if my family only sought obedience and my school only rewarded conformity. These thoughts came rushing to my mind as I watched Season 2 of *Sex Education*, a British web series that began streaming on Netflix India last month.

There are multiple sub-plots connected to the main storyline, which is about a sex therapist who is also a single mother; with a son who is socially awkward but runs a clandestine sex clinic at school to counsel his peers. Created by Laurie Nunn, this show has become a major talking point in urban, English-speaking India, because of the feminist values it espouses, and for being queer affirmative as well as sex positive. It uses the structural elements of a high school romantic comedy, and subverts the genre to have mature conversations about what it means to establish and communicate boundaries, to feel safe, and to express oneself fully without the threat of violence.

Patriarchy is safe

Unfortunately, safety has come to be equated with surveillance in India. This takes various forms — restricting women's mobility, policing the sexuality of queer individuals, and enforcing moral standards that criminalise trans people's access to public spaces. These practices only ensure that patriarchy is safe while the marginalised live in fear that robs them of their will to exist, their freedom to move about, and their passion to create what they are meant to. *Sex Education* is not set in India but brings up concerns that are undeniably relevant to our context where body shaming is as commonplace as roadside tea stalls.

It is telling that in our society sexual violence is more easily talked about than sexual pleasure. Young people are deprived of opportunities to learn

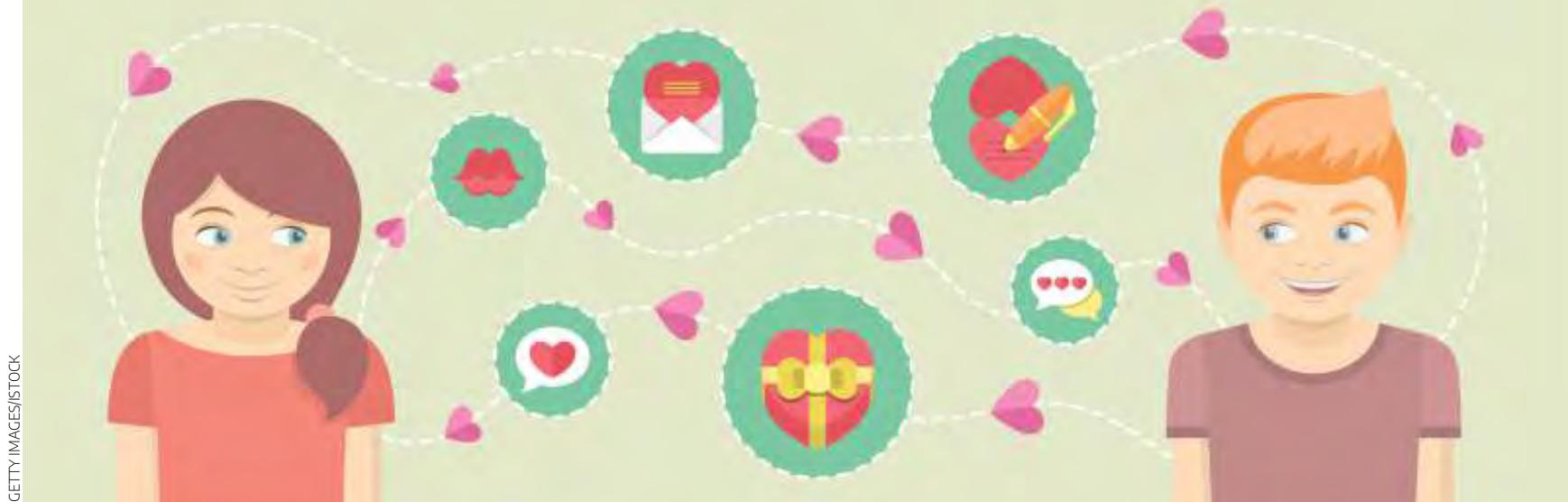
SPOTLIGHT

Daring to define

British web series *Sex Education* uses the high school romcom trope to have mature conversations around relationships and emotions



about bodily autonomy and sexual health. The apology of a sexuality education programme that a fraction of the population receives is couched in the language of good touch and bad touch or safe touch and unsafe touch, which puts the onus of safety on the victim of sexual assault. In this universe, safety gets reduced to saving oneself for marriage, upholding community honour, or punishing those who enjoy sexual exploration.



The Jews of Kolkata

Dwelling in Travelling, a documentary by Subha Das Mollick, traces the experiences of Kolkata's Jewish community from the first migrants at the close of the 18th century to interviews with a few members of the dwindling population. It's being screened at the Mumbai International Film Festival, which concludes tomorrow.



Digital danger

Olivia Wilde's short film *Wake Up*, playing at Sundance — but not as an official selection — stars Margaret Qualley as Jane Doe, an everywoman who has to "rediscover her humanity in an increasingly digital world" as she runs around New York and tries to connect with people, only for them to be more concerned with their phones.

Far from preachy *Sex Education* is not set in India but brings up concerns that are undeniably relevant to our context.

Season 2 opens up the meanings of consent beyond the mere formality of seeking permission before sexual intercourse. It invites viewers to think about how respect lies at the core of feeling safe and making others feel safe. It tries to take the stigma out of experiences that make people feel small, excluded or confused. It does not try to sell abstinence as an answer to questions about safety. It dares to talk about masturbation, vaginismus, sex toys, contraception, pregnancy and fetishes in ways that demystify rather than discourage curiosity. It challenges biphobia, slut-shaming, and misinformation about sexually transmitted infections. At the same time, it stays far away from being preachy.

Sex is not for all

The show affirms that sexuality education is not only about bodies, and the mechanics of what goes where, but also about relationships and emotions. Feeling safe could involve embracing the fact that sex is not exciting for everyone. There are people in the world who only seek emotional intimacy and romance from their partners. This does not imply that they are deficient. There is diversity in nature, and being asexual is an expression of that. Alternatively, feeling safe could involve recognising that you are attracted to people because of who they are, and that their sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or gender expression has nothing to do with how you feel about them.

The series also depicts how pervasive and normalised rape culture has become, and what that means for girls and women on an everyday basis. The counter it offers is feminist sisterhood, not any systemic response to misogyny that would address it at the very root and get men to be accountable. Law enforcement is approached for redress but it offers very little by way of healing. The show presents alternatives to toxic masculinity in the shape of boys — heterosexual and queer — who care about the safety and pleasure of their partners, take responsibility, and ask about what feels good and what does not.

It is telling that, in our society, sexual violence is more easily talked about than sexual pleasure. Young people are deprived of opportunities to learn about bodily autonomy and sexual health

One of the sub-plots is built around a relationship between a closeted white student and an out-and-proud gay black student, which takes a dramatic turn when the latter confronts the former about the bullying he experienced from him for several years before they got physically intimate. While the show addresses the need for apology or repair, it does not acknowledge the racism inherent in the bullying.

Intimate partner violence in LGBTQIA+ communities is rarely discussed in popular culture but it is a reality. Those who grow up in the shadows fearing abandonment from their families often end up in abusive relationships because they have been made to believe that they are unworthy of love. Articulating exactly what one needs to feel safe can be a journey of a lifetime.

The author is a writer, educator and researcher.

CONSCIENCE KEEPER

In the political vacuum that is the Opposition today, people have turned to the Constitution to articulate their vision of India

Sovereign, secular, democratic

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj

Last week, Oxford University Press announced that *samvidhaan*, meaning 'constitution', was the Oxford Hindi Word of 2019 – a distinction given to a word that has received much attention over the year and that has captured the mood and ethos. Over the last few weeks, the Indian Constitution has blossomed into a true "people's document" and a rallying symbol for protesters who invoke its values.

Dalit activist Chandrashekhar Azad had a copy of the Constitution in his hand as he recently walked out of Tihar Jail, where he was incarcerated for over a month for leading a protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) at the Jama Masjid in Delhi. "The police accused me of delivering a provocative speech at the protest. But all I did that day was read out the Preamble to the Constitution," he said.

The day after he was released, he returned to the steps of the Jama Masjid and again read the Preamble aloud, as a crowd several thousands strong waved the tricolour. "We are from the depressed communities and the Constitution is all we have. We will fight to save it at any cost," he said.

Loud and clear
Reading the Preamble aloud as a pledge has become a distinct ritual at several anti-CAA protests across the country, be it at Shaheen Bagh in Delhi or at the Gateway of India in Mumbai or at universities and mosques and Eidgah Maidans everywhere. The Constitution has become both a



mode and a symbol of protest. As Azad said, "It is a telling comment that reading the Constitution has become an act of protest today, even as the republic completes seven decades."

An interesting turnaround and reclamation, it is the protests today that have embraced the nationalist symbols of the tricolour, the national anthem and the Constitution in what is clearly a response to the hyper-nationalistic pitch of the ruling government with its proclivity to brand anyone opposing it as 'anti-national'.

And in this moment lies also an attempt to rediscover the inclusive nationalism of the freedom movement.

"The Preamble is the most succinct articulation of that vision, what we as a country resolved to stand for as we became independent. It is simple, accessible yet very profound," says Vinita Singh, one of the founders of the We, The People Abhiyan, which runs a two-hour Preamble workshop (over 1,000 held so far) and a short course on citizenship and the Constitution. The Abhiyan has also created videos for social media.

"The Preamble was there in all our textbooks, but it was never discussed in class. Today I have seen it come to life and articulate what I felt

so well, overwhelming me with pride for the vision it embodies and with a resolve to fight for it," says Sumana R., an undergraduate student.

Vision statement

Many thinkers attribute the resurgence of interest in the Constitution to some actions of the government.

"The government has brought about far-reaching changes to the structure of the Constitution, which question the vision and character of the country as imagined in the Constitution. So, the people are now engaging with the Constitution, finding that vision attractive," says Gautam Bhatia, a

constitutional law expert and author of the recent book, *The Transformative Constitution: A Radical Biography in Nine Acts*. A series of changes, including the dilution of Article 370, curbs on freedom of expression through an Internet ban in Kashmir, and the use of force against dissenters have triggered this, besides the discriminatory CAA.

This is not the first time that the ruling party has been accused of motives to reorient the Constitution according to its vision of the nation.

Similar fears were expressed when the NDA regime led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee set up the National

Commission for Review of Working of the Indian Constitution, led by former Chief Justice of India M.N. Venkatachaliah, in 2000, when the Republic completed half a century. The Committee, however, steered clear of controversies.

In 2017, Anantkumar Hegde, MP from Karnataka and a Union Minister then, said they had indeed come to power to change the Constitution. He later had to apologise for the remark in Lok Sabha after it caused a furore.

Alternative view

The suspicions concerning the BJP's motives stem from the well-known stance of its ideological mentor, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), its vision of Hindu Rashtra and its early criticism of the Constitution.

In an attempt to allay these fears, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat recently said: "We do not want any power centre other than the Constitution because we believe in it."

Ironically, it was this same government that, in 2015, declared November 26 – the day the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution – to be Constitution Day. It has been observing the day nationally ever since.

There's another reason the Constitution has become so integral to

Protest totem
Chandrashekhar Azad holds up a copy of the Constitution at a protest at Delhi's Jama Masjid; and (below) students at a Mumbai primary school recite the Preamble during the morning assembly.

■ AFP & PTI

the protests. "As against the Hindutva right, the liberal political parties have not been able to articulate what they stand for. It is in this vacuum that young people have taken to the Preamble, as it succinctly articulates a vision that they now find attractive," says Akash Singh Rathore, author of the upcoming book *Ambedkar's Preamble: The Secret History of the Constitution of India*.

Dissenting voices

"While social media opened up conversations, the troll armies created a sense of free speech being under attack. This was accentuated by how the government dealt with dissent. It has pushed many to articulate their voice in the idiom of constitutional rights," says Singh.

Justice Nagamohan Das, former Karnataka High Court judge, has launched a campaign called 'Samvidhana Odu' (Read the Constitution), interacting with students across Karnataka for over a year now.

He says, "This is a moment of disillusionment. People have lost faith in all political parties. They had already lost faith in the legislature and executive.

I feel sad to say this, but of late, they have lost faith in the judiciary as well. They have realised it is only the Constitution that can save the country today. Through this movement, I think they are telling politicians that whoever comes to power must govern as per the Constitution."

What it also shows is that the movement has gone beyond the question of legality, says Bhatia. "The Preamble is not a legally binding document, but a vision statement we committed ourselves to when the country became a republic. Even if the Supreme Court tomorrow upholds these moves as legally valid, the people are arguing that they are not in line with the vision of the Preamble. This nuance is important."

For Singh, it's an invaluable moment. "I hope people, especially the youth, from now on evaluate every legislation and every government through the lens of the Preamble," she says.

It is a telling comment that reading the Constitution has become an act of protest today, even as the republic completes seven decades, said Chandrashekhar Azad

GREEN HUMOUR BY ROHAN CHAKRAVARTY



ALLEGEDLY

The DIY citizenship test

How can you be sure, as in really sure, that you are indeed an authentic Indian — and not a Mughlai, Chinese, Lebanese or Tandoori — citizen? Take this test

Suppose a bunch of Indians who went to bed in 1920 were to wake up 100 years later, say this morning, they would go right back to sleep. The first thing they hear would be cries of 'Azaadi!' and 'Inquilab zindabad!'. They would conclude, naturally, that the people of India were still fighting for freedom. If that's the case, then why not stay put in bed, and wake up only on that bright sunny morning when every Indian would be truly free — free from poverty, hunger, disease, Aadhaar, CAA-NRC?

Sorry folks, that sunny morning ain't coming any time soon. Get used to it. We have to deal with what we've got. And what we've got is a citizenship problem. This may be an unpopular opinion, but trust me, the government is right. Be honest. Think about it for a second. How can you be sure, as in really sure, that you are indeed an authentic Indian — and not Mughlai, Chinese, Lebanese or Tandoori — citizen? I can't.

In my case — and I am being totally frank here — there has always been a part of me that has wanted to be a citizen of a country whose nationality can't be derived from its name, like 'Indian' from India. Or 'Pakistani' from Pakistan. So I've often dreamed of being Monégasque. A part of my soul is permanently Laotian, while

another is obsessed with everything Tuvaluan. Hope you enjoy searching for Monégasquoia, Laotia and Tuvalu on GoogleMaps.

My point is that citizenship is not such a simple thing that we can automatically assume all Indians to be your brothers and sisters. That is why we need the CAA-NRC — to sift out the true Indians from the pretenders. I do believe, however, that there ought to be a cheaper way to conduct the citizenship test. I read somewhere that the government has allocated thousands of crores for a pre-NRC exercise in which you have to provide your father's birth certificate, grandfather's address proof, and great-grandfather's horoscope. All that is unnecessary.

A two-minute quiz

I have a simple solution: a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Citizenship Test that the government can make available online. It's a two-minute quiz. You respond with 'Agree' or 'Disagree' to every statement. The answers will reveal whether or not you are an Indian. Lying is not an option because 360-degree surveillance and real time data capture of every aspect of your miserable animal farm existence would ensure that any falsehood would be exposed sooner or later. So here, take the test:

1 On at least 10 of your last 50 trips by air, you were the first passenger in the entire plane to open the overhead cabin, grab your oversized, misshapen baggage and poke a co-passenger in the eye as you dashed to the aisle — all while the seatbelt sign was still on.

2 The first thing you ask when you meet someone is, "What do you do?"

3 You have littered through the window of a moving vehicle on your way to, and return from, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

4 What India really needs is a dictatorship.

5 Women should enjoy all equality with men, but within the limits prescribed by Indian culture.

6 You are a custodian of Indian culture.

7 You were born with the knowledge of what ODF stands for.

8 You have gleaned the true meaning of life from the golden words of your favourite billionaire godman.

9 You don't believe anything you read in the papers unless it comes to you as a WhatsApp forward.

10 There is no difference between India and the government of India.

11 When the people and the government disagree, the government is always right and the people who disagree are anti-nationals.

12 Protests are fine so long as daily life is not affected, all permissions are taken in advance, and the protesters stage their protest in the privacy of their homes.

13 The police who beat up some people are the victims of the people the police beat up.

14 You will joyfully pay ₹295 for a coffee at Barista but will badger the *sabziwala* for half a kilo of free dhanis patta every time you buy 25 grams of onion.

15 A man in uniform can do no wrong.

16 You have paid a bribe, taken a bribe, and joined an anti-corruption march, all on the same day.

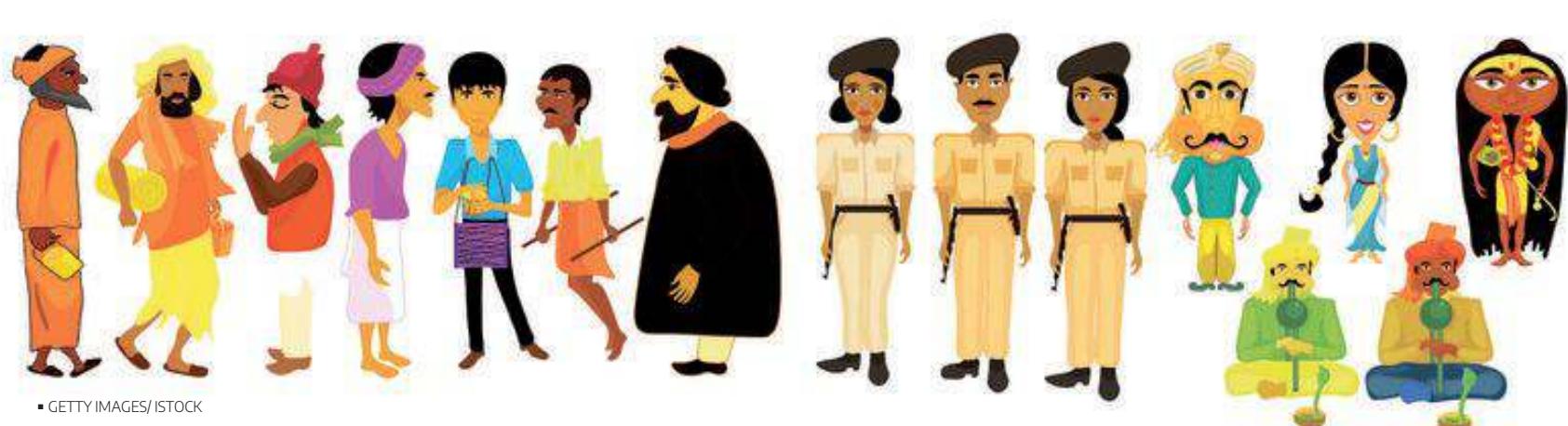
17 No matter how much you love India, if you had a choice, you would any day exchange Indian citizenship for the citizenship of the U.S./U.K./Australia/ Canada/ New Zealand/ Bahamas/ Bournvita/ Malta.

18 Regardless of your age and sex, you are, at heart, an uncle.

If you answered 'Agree' to all the 18 statements, congratulations, you have won an early bird membership in the soon-to-be-implemented NRC. If you answered 'Disagree' to even one, don't panic. An executive will soon contact you with everything you need to know about life in a de-radicalisation camp.



G. Sampath is Social Affairs Editor, *The Hindu*.



Literary Review



Romain Rolland Book Prize

The first three albums of the Asterix series — *Asterix and the Golden Sickle*, *Asterix and the Goths* and *Asterix the Gladiator* — translated into Hindi by Dipa Chaudhuri and Puneet Gupta and published by Om Books, have won the Romain Rolland Book Prize.



Nandita Haksar for LEGA

Nandita Haksar's book, *The Flavours of Nationalism: Recipes of Love, Hate and Friendship*, will be awarded Book of the Year at the LF Epicurean Guild Awards 2020, to be held in February in Mumbai. Here Haksar writes about how food shaped her awareness.



Ghosh with HarperCollins

HaperCollins has acquired the rights of Amitav Ghosh's next three books. Out in 2020, 2021 and 2022, the first is a verse adaptation of the legend of Bon bibi, the second a collection of essays, and the third a non-fiction based on Ghosh's research for the *Ibis Trilogy*.

THE LEAD

In a tower without a staircase

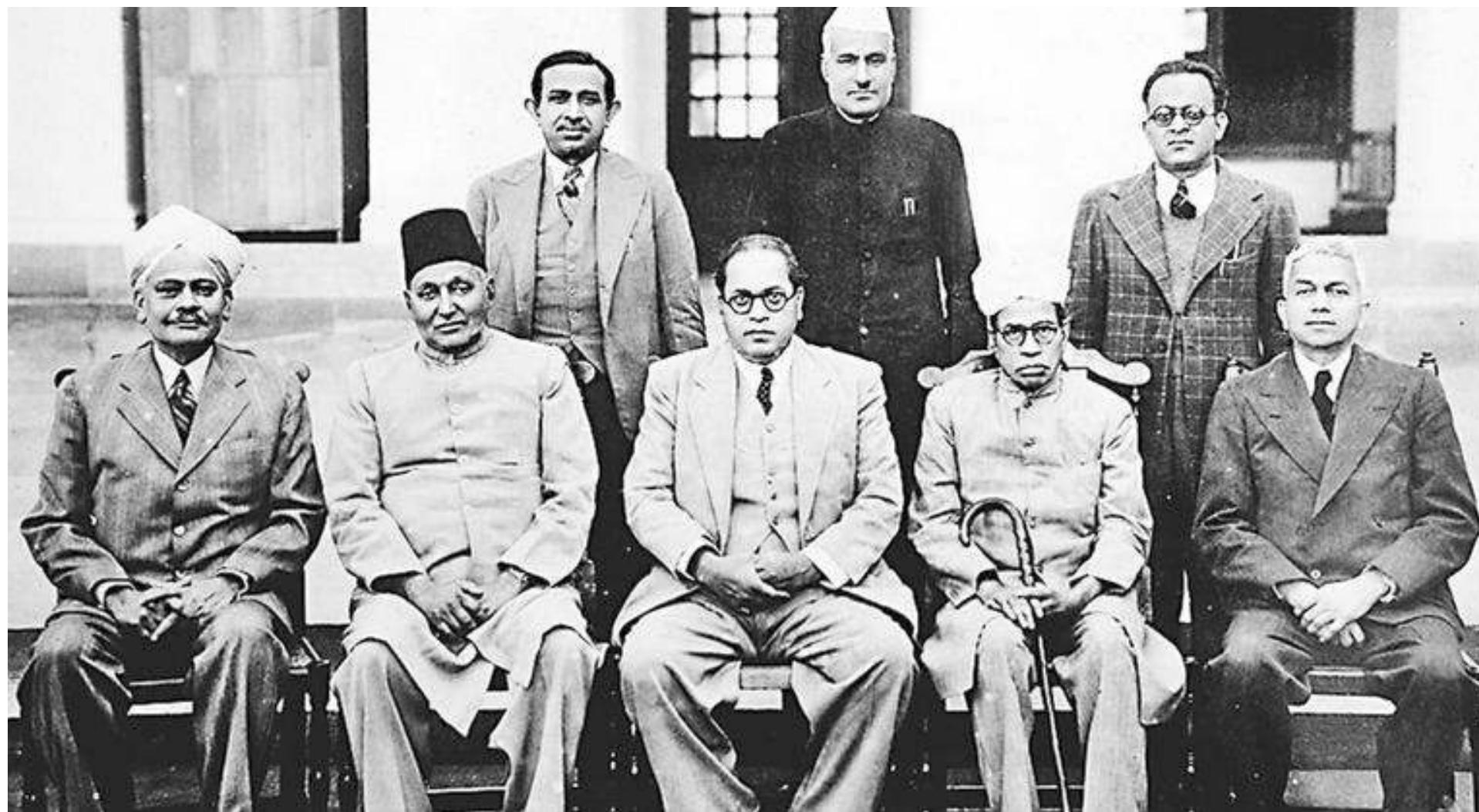
In the centenary year of *Mooknayak*, the Marathi journal published by B.R Ambedkar, here is an extract from the inaugural issue where Babasaheb lashes out against caste discrimination

Mooknayak (The Leader of the Mute), the first journalistic venture of Babasaheb Ambedkar, was a fortnightly newspaper he started in 1920 with the patronage of his mentor, Shahaji Maharaj. Ambedkar's aim in launching this journal was to put forward his own point of view on matters such as Swaraj, the education of the 'untouchables', and the evils of untouchability, which had hitherto not found due representation in mainstream Hindi journals.

Mooknayak remained in circulation for three years. This is an excerpt from the editorial of the inaugural issue, which appeared on January 31, 1920.

If anyone were to take stock of the sum-total of all the elements, of human as well as non-human origin, which constitute the fabric of our nation, it would doubtless be revealed that India is most distinguished by the many disparities which characterise its composition. Among these disparities the most shameful is that which manifests itself in acute inequalities in material standards of living.

Although Indians stand divided by many kinds of differences, the differences in religious affiliation are potentially more dangerous than those stemming from physical or intellectual factors. Often the differences on the basis of religion find expression in such extremities of conduct that they are the cause of bloodshed. The distinctions between the Hindus, the Parsees, the



For equality B.R. Ambedkar (third from left) with the drafting committee of the Constituent Assembly, February 1948, New Delhi; and (below) a page from the Hindi translation of *Mooknayak* by Sheoraj Singh Bechain ■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES & SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Jews, the Muslims and the Christians, and various other denominations, take diverse forms, but close scrutiny bears out that the stark hiatus between Hindus of different orders is both as reprehensible as it is incredible.

If a European is asked who he is, the answer provided by him, indicating his nationality — English or German or French or Italian — as it may be, will be enough to resolve the matter. The same cannot, however, be said about Hindus. The statement, "I am a Hindu", satisfies nobody. It is necessary for a Hindu to declare his caste in order to spell out his specific identity.

The castes which constitute the so-called Hindu community are arranged in hierarchical order. Hindu society is like a tower, each floor of which is allotted to one caste. The point worth remembering is that this tower has no staircase and therefore there is no way of climbing up or down from one floor to another. The floor on which one is born is also the floor on which one dies. No

matter how meritorious a person from a lower floor might be, there is no avenue for him to climb up to the upper floor. Likewise, there is no means by which a person entirely devoid of merit can be relegated to a floor beneath the one to which he has been assigned.

The inter-relationship between castes is not founded upon the logic of worth. However unworthy an upper-caste person might be, his status will ever remain high. Similarly, a worthy lower-caste person will never be allowed to transcend his lowliness. Because of the strict taboos against inter-dining and inter-marriage between members of lower and upper castes, the respective caste bodies are destined to remain always already segregated from each other. Even if bonds of intimacy are kept outside of consideration within the realm of caste relations, there is close surveillance of possibilities of contact which might transgress caste laws. While some castes are permitted limited mobility within the caste structure, some other

castes, branded 'impure', are denied such movement altogether. The latter are the 'untouchable' castes whose 'impure' nature poses a threat of contamination to all caste Hindus.

At the pinnacle of the caste hierarchy are the Brahmins who regard themselves as the Gods of the earth. All other men and women have been born to serve them, or so they seem to believe. Hence they feel absolutely entitled to claiming the devotion of these subordinates. The Brahmins are convinced that they have earned their dues by their authorship of the sacred scriptures of the Hindus, notwithstanding the illiberal lessons which are preached through these texts.

The non-Brahmins, on the other hand, have remained backward due to lack of possession of adequate property and education. But their backwardness does not necessarily entail the misery caused by total deprivation because they have never lacked the means of subsistence ob-



tainable from agricultural and industrial occupations, trade and commerce and other employment opportunities. The worst victims of social discrimination have been the outcastes who find themselves impoverished, weak and lacking in self-esteem, and thus it is their sorry

plight which needs to be consciously highlighted. Their only redemption lies in their self-emancipation from their chains of bondage, a process which has now happily begun.

Unfortunately, there is yet hardly any institutional forum of communication, any media resource, which is yet prepared to foreground, frankly and fearlessly, the numerous problems which beset the outcastes. There are, no doubt, a few newspapers and journals which raise issues connected with the due need for resolution of the problems facing the so-called lower castes, but none of these really give exclusive attention to the question of the rights of the 'untouchables'. It is for the purpose of filling up this void that the periodical called *Mooknayak* has been planned and put into circulation.

Translated from Marathi to Hindi by Prof. Sheoraj Singh Bechain, Department of Hindi, University of Delhi; and from Hindi to English by Dr. Tapan Basu, Department of English, University of Delhi.

The inter-relationship between castes is not founded upon the logic of worth. However unworthy an upper-caste person might be, his status will ever remain high

PUBLISHING

A window for the weird languages

I understood early on that unless one negotiates with English publishing in India, a regional language publisher can never hope to step into the international publishing sphere'

Kannan Sundaram

For Indian language publishers, the times are changing — in some ways, for the better. This is not about the technological shifts, bridging the digital divide etc., which have been endlessly discussed.

I am a regular visitor to international book fairs that focus on the business of publishing. A key aspect of such fairs is selling and buying of translation rights. Buying rights can be quite easy if you have the money. But to find a buyer for your list is tough. When it comes to Indian languages (often slotted under 'weird languages' in the West) it is more challenging than finding Mackenna's gold.

One has to ping, persist, stalk and employ militant non-violence to even get an appointment with a

representative of a major publisher. Over the last decade I have done all of the above — and more — with limited success. But now the bamboo curtain across translated writings appears to have lifted. We got a few walk-ins to our stall in last year's Frankfurt Book Fair offering to consider our titles for translation. Many 'selling-to-us-meetings' also turned into 'buying-from-us' meetings. Publishers are more conscious now of presenting a diverse list, and this has opened a window for Indian language publishers to pitch their works.

Door to the world

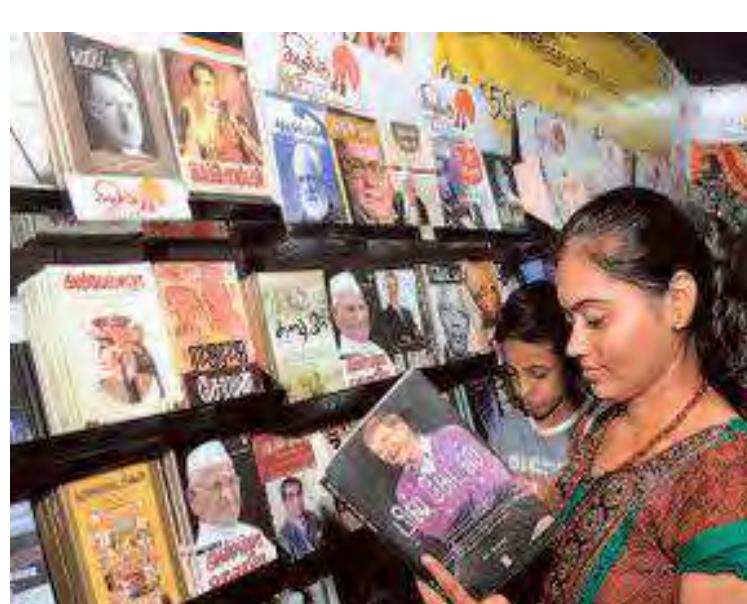
Some Indian language writers and writings have received international exposure. Vivek Shanbhag, Ambai, Sangeeta Bandopadhyay, Rajathi Salma, Geetanjali Shree and Perumal Murugan are among the contemporary writers published (or signed to be published) outside India by noted imprints. Some modern classics like *The Aunt Who Wouldn't Die* (Bangla, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay), *The Tale of the Missing Man* (Hindi, Manzoor Ahthesham), *The Walls of Delhi* (Hindi, Uday Prakash) and *Tamarind History* (Tamil, Sundara Ramaswamy) are either published or to be published, internationally. A door to the world has clearly opened. But how long will it last? Are there enough Indian language publishers taking rights trade seriously?

In India, my publishing house Kalachuvadu, based in Nagercoil, is located as far away as possible from New Delhi, the publishing capital of our country (as Nagercoil is at the southern tip, I once put up a cheeky poster in Frankfurt that read "Kalachuvadu, the last outpost of Indian publishing"). I stepped into the world of Indian publishing in 2002, so to speak, at the New Delhi World Book Fair. The fair used to be held on alternate years those days. I continued to go to the fair over the next 10 years without harbouring any illusions of making a profit from book sales there. One does not do costing for a window to the world.

When I could get some time away from my stall, I went to meetings and seminars that often happened in the fairgrounds but sometimes outside of it too. Standing in the shadows of the walls, I would observe and absorb everything. In the book fair ground, I was excited to see books sold in about 26 Indian languages, and I would compare the content, printing, production and pricing with Tamil books.

Hallowed halls

But in those hallowed halls where mostly English publishers, editors and intellectuals gathered to discuss Indian publishing, Indian publishing was tantamount to Indian English publishing. Hindi, that spoilt brat of the Indian state, was



Changing vistas A visitor to the Chennai Book Fair browses the Tamil translation of a book on Bill Gates ■ M. VEDHAN

mentioned now and then. All the other languages were as good as non-existent. Especially when it came to representing Indian publishing to delegations of Western publishers, English publishing became omnipotent and omnipresent. Even today in lit fests, publisher's forums and conferences, Indian publishing is often merely an euphemism for Indian English publishing.

Topic: Women in Indian publishing. Read: Women in Indian

English publishing. Topic: The challenges before Indian indie publishers. Read: As before. Fact? An overwhelming number of publishers of Indian languages are indie publishers and dominate their markets. Here, one should rather discuss the challenges confronting corporate publishers as they enter Indian language markets.

Adversary & ally

English can be an adversary and an ally. Sweeping as it does the entire battalions of Indian language publishing under the carpet, it is a formidable opponent. But when you wish to navigate beyond the ecosystem of your own language, it can be a useful tool. I understood early on that unless one negotiates with English publishing in India, a Tamil publisher can never

hope to step into the international publishing sphere.

For many language publishers of the world, rights sales begin when they publish a book. Not so in Indian languages. Without a well translated and edited English text, there is no point in pitching regional books to other languages, including other Indian languages. The translation might happen directly from the source languages, but the acquisition editors can decide to buy only by reading the English translation.

So, the first step would be to sell rights to an English publisher. This can happen in two ways. If you are lucky, there might be an editor in an English publishing house who can read the Indian language text in the original and decide, or one may have to present sample translations. Few years down the road, after the publication of the English version, if the book has the potential to travel outside India, one can include it in the rights catalogue and present it at international fairs.

So it is an uphill task. But it does have the potential to bring in some additional income. In times like these when the economy is in the doldrums and books sales are low, rights trade can lend some support to the publisher and the author. Rights sales can bring some distinction to the profile of the publishing house. Selling rights is a steep but exciting learning curve, one that needs to be negotiated with some business acumen and a lot of passion.

The writer is the editor of *Kalachuvadu* magazine and publisher of Kalachuvadu Publications.

• GETTY IMAGES/
ISTOCK

MYTHIC REALISM

A palimpsest of pasts

This English translation of Intizar Husain's 1987 novel establishes his status as one of the best fiction writers of Pakistan, alongside Manto and Qurratulain Hyder

Harish Trivedi

Intizar Husain (1925-2016) has slowly and steadily emerged as probably the best fiction writer of Pakistan, a tortoise who has inched ahead of the hares named Manto and Qurratulain Hyder. His grand theme is the idea and formation of Pakistan, the Partition through which the new country was born, and the predicament of the many Muslims who migrated hopefully to the promised land. These *mujahirs*, of whom he himself was one, form the staple of his fiction. They went across often empty-handed but with a whole load of cultural and historical baggage, which the new nation struggled to make its terms with.

Through indirection

Husain thus narrates the nation, except that he flows over and narrates more than one nation. When does the history of Pakistan begin – in 1947, in 1857, in 1192 when the first Muslim dynasty in India was established, or in the hoary Hindu-Buddhist past when the history of undivided Indian began? The Muslim conquerors found here a country with a long history and rich culture, which some of the more enlightened of them attempted to grasp through translations they commissioned of the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Upanishads*. It is these multiple pre-Muslim pasts that Husain seeks to endow the new nation of Pakistan with, for without them it would not begin to make sense.

This novel, *The Chronicle*, published in Urdu in 1987 as *Tazkirah*, that is, a biographical memoir, is the middle novel in a loose-limbed trilogy. The first of these, *Basti* (1979), meaning a settlement or township, was translated into English under the same title by Frances Pritchett in

1995; it begins with peacocks calling as if from Brindaban, home of the peacock-feather-wearing Krishna, and proceeds to encompass the Partition of 1947 as well as the war of 1971 when Pakistan imploded into two disparate Islamic nations, thus giving the lie to the very rationale of the creation of Pakistan.

The third novel, *Aagey Samundar Hai* (1995), was translated by Rakhsanda Jalil as *The Sea Lies Ahead* (2015), the title being a reference to President Ayub Khan's veiled threat to the turbulent *mujahirs* to quieten down or else be driven into the deep blue sea.

The blurb of *The Chronicle* says that it is "set in the terrifying times of Zia-ul Haq's rule". But this is to do violence to Husain's subtle art, for Zia is mentioned not even once in the novel. We gather indirectly some way into the novel that Islamic fundamentalism now holds sway over the country. When the hero Ikhlaq goes looking to earn some extra money to repay the loan on the house he has built, an editor asks him to write a book on Islamic banking, for "economists don't know anything about Islam."

Dread and censorship

When he says he doesn't either, the editor next suggests a book on the "Islamic revolution" stretching from Iran to Pakistan; "it would be of service to Urdu and to Islam." But these are cynical business propositions in the comic vein, for the editor himself believes that the Islamic revolutionaries have "ruined our country. They've made the entire younger generation irreligious."

Husain's finest stroke of artistic representation comes when one morning Ikhlaq's wife goes to the gate to buy from a screaming newspaper vendor a special edition and says, "Look at this. Can it be true?"

In Ikhlaq's office, someone from another desk says, "Good riddance!" and invites angry glances. A peon says, "Sir, it's very bad what has happened." It is through such subdued whispers in an atmosphere of silent terror that we are left to infer that – the still unnamed – Zia has suddenly died in a plane crash. The dictator is gone but the dread and censorship linger.

What the novel eloquently recounts in several deftly intercalated episodes are half-nostalgic, half-fantastic accounts of the grand past of Ikhlaq's ancestors who lived in a succession of palaces and *havelis*, all now deserted and left behind in India. Going even further back are passages of mythology as narrated in a parallel journal by Pandit Ganga Dutt, a Hindu neighbour and "a spiritual brother" of Ikhlaq's grandfather. These are stories of the righteous Yudhishtir, and of "Hazrat Markandey rishi", and a just and generous king named Indradymuna, whom even well-read Hindu readers of the novel may have difficulty recalling. Incidentally, the translator Matt Reek provides no glossary, no introduction, calls *balushahi* 'donuts', chickpeas 'garbanzos', and reduces martial law to 'marshal law'.

What helps Husain weave all these different strands together is his light poetic touch and his compulsive *qissa-go* style of seemingly provisional artless narration. His is not magic realism but deeply embedded mythic realism, which floats a foot or two above the ground and transcends mere facts. He once told interviewer Alok Bhalla: "I am a Muslim, but always feel that there is a Hindu sitting inside me." Similarly, we can sense a Purana sitting inside this novel.

The writer taught English at Delhi University.



The Chronicle
Intizar Husain,
trs Matt Reek
Penguin Random
House
₹499

It is these multiple pre-Muslim pasts that Husain seeks to endow the new nation of Pakistan with, for without them it would not begin to make sense

set, never mind the inevitable deaths. Unlike Pessoa's heteronyms, all four voices are unmistakably Aciman's. For all their pretensions to high culture, they spout nothing but words that signify nothing. Sample: "Above all I liked her forehead... which hinted at thoughts I couldn't put into words but wanted to know better..." For those who have not caught on yet, this is the sequel to Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name*, on which the 2017 eponymous film was based. The characters are prone to philosophising about life and death, but it is much too anodyne to be affecting. To borrow an expression from Aciman, it's all written in "pale sepia ink". Like dewdrops, it could evaporate in sunshine.

The author is a heritage and culture writer from Kolkata.



Find me
André Aciman
Faber
₹599

BROMANCE

Foreheads with a view

All the characters walk into the sunset, philosophising, in this sequel

Soumitra Das

The Portuguese poet, Fernando Pessoa, is known for his "heteronyms" – his term for the 75 distinctive authors of different genders, thoughts, feelings and languages he created and under whose names he published his poetry, criticism and philosophical writing. *Find Me* has four chapters – 'Tempo', 'Cadenza', 'Capriccio' and 'Da Capo' – each referring to four different musical movements. And in each, the four main characters of different ages, whose lives and loves get entangled in a not-so-complex plot, narrate in first person singular how they gravitated towards each other in inexplicable ways.

Perhaps, as one of them explains, it was all in the stars. The first voice is that of an ageing academic who falls for a woman half his age whom he meets in a train. His son, Elio, is a pianist, whom the couple

meet before the chapter terminates. The second voice is that of another ageing academic, who inevitably falls for Elio, and his passion is reciprocated by the young pianist. Together, they unearth the truth about a mysterious musical composition that connects them with dark familial secrets.

Elio, meanwhile, feels the stirrings of desire for his first love, Oliver, a college professor, now married and with children of his own, whom he had met in his teens. Oliver is the third voice, who probably through telepathy, reaches out across the continents to Elio. The fourth and final voice is Elio's, and quite predictably, Oliver has flown all the way from America to join him in old Europe and its picturesque cities, where all the main characters kind of walk into the sun-

set, never mind the inevitable deaths. Unlike Pessoa's heteronyms, all four voices are unmistakably Aciman's. For all their pretensions to high culture, they spout nothing but words that signify nothing. Sample: "Above all I liked her forehead... which hinted at thoughts I couldn't put into words but wanted to know better..." For those who have not caught on yet, this is the sequel to Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name*, on which the 2017 eponymous film was based. The characters are prone to philosophising about life and death, but it is much too anodyne to be affecting. To borrow an expression from Aciman, it's all written in "pale sepia ink". Like dewdrops, it could evaporate in sunshine.

The author is a heritage and culture writer from Kolkata.

BROWSER

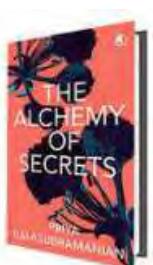
The Alchemy of Secrets

Priya Balasubramanian

Tranquebar

₹399

24-year-old Mira returns to India to be beside her dying grandmother. Gandhi's death, Partition, Emergency, the rise of religious fundamentalism and violence against women, are all described through the experiences of Mira and her family.



CM YK

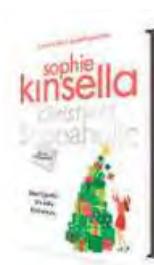
Christmas Shopaholic

Sophie Kinsella

Penguin Random House

₹599

In this happy Christmas story, the greatest obstacles in Becky's way to the perfect Christmas party are things like her sister demanding a vegan turkey and husband asking for the same aftershave again. But Becky can manage all this, surely?



Long Bright River

Liz Moore

Random House Large Print

₹1,909

Set during the days of the opioid crisis in Philadelphia, this is the story of two estranged sisters, one an addict and the other a police officer. When the latter suddenly disappears, the policewoman, Mickey, has to find her and also go to the source of a series of mysterious murders.



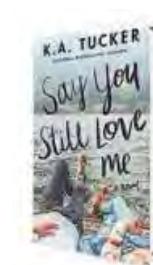
Say You Still Love Me

K.A. Tucker

Simon and Schuster India

₹399

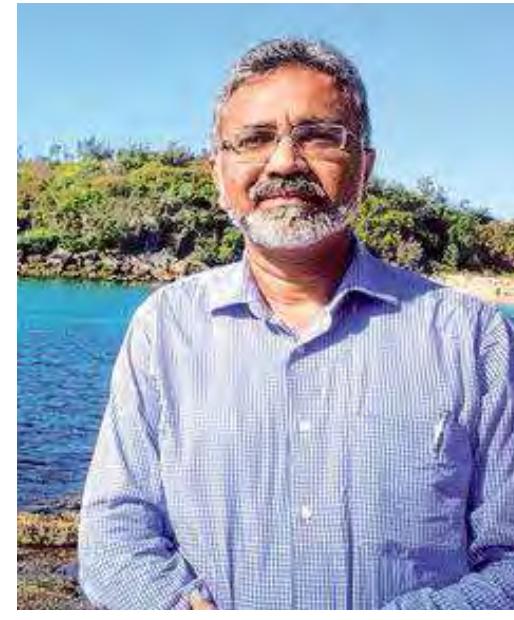
A high-powered executive, Piper, reconnects with her first love: the boy across the class divide, the one who broke her heart, Kyle Miller. But he apparently doesn't even remember her name even as Piper realises that her schoolgirl crush on him is still alive.



THE HINDU PRIZE 2019 SHORTLIST

'The Indian population is a result of four migrations'

Tony Joseph talks about his book, *Early Indians*, the many ancient migrations into this land, and why genetic purity is a myth



Sudipta Datta

The new understanding of global migrations has upended much received wisdom, says Tony Joseph, author of *Early Indians*, which is shortlisted for The Hindu Prize for Non-Fiction. An excerpt from a short interview:

Why has it been possible to write a book like *Early Indians* now and not earlier?

■ Over the last five years or so, we have gained far greater clarity into how different population groups formed across the world as a result of ancient migrations. This applies to Europe, the Americas, East Asia or Central Asia as much as to South Asia or India. This has happened mainly because in recent years, population geneticists have acquired the ability to extract and analyse DNA from the bones of people who lived thousands or tens of thousands years ago. Now we know which ancient population groups moved where and when. These new findings fit each other like pieces of a global jigsaw puzzle, and they are also in harmony with the latest discoveries from other disciplines such as archaeology and linguistics. It is because the book is based on findings that have resulted from the latest advances in technology across disciplines, including population genetics, that it could not have been written earlier.

Where do population groups in India draw their genes from?

■ Most population groups in the world used to assume that they have always been where they are today, and that they are 'pure' in some sense. The new understanding of global migrations has upended

this received wisdom. All populations that exist today are the result of mixing between prehistoric/historic migrant groups. Therefore, there is no such thing as race or genetic purity.

The Indian population, for example, is the result of four major migrations. First, Out-of-Africa migrants who reached here around 65,000 years ago, whom my book calls the First Indians. Second, a population related to the farmers of Iran who were in the northwestern region from around 12,000 years ago and who mixed with the First Indians and together created the agricultural revolution that resulted in the Harappan Civilisation.

Third, a migration from East Asia around 4,000 years ago that brought Austro-Asiatic languages such as Khasi and Mundari to India. And last, central Asian Steppe pastoralists from regions now known as Kazakhstan who brought Indo-European languages to India 4,000 to 3,500 years ago and called themselves Arya. Almost all population groups in India today are a mixture of these four components, in differing proportions.

What are some of the 'facts' that have been proved wrong?

■ The understanding that our present demography is the product of four migrations leads to many surprising conclusions. For example, we now know that the Harappans are the ancestors of both north Indians and south Indians because when their civilisation declined around 3,900 years ago, they spread across the country, carrying their genetic and cultural heritage.

You could, therefore, say that the Harappan Civilisation is what holds us together, and is the fountainhead of our culture. Second, the language of the Harappans, most likely proto-Dravidian, continued to thrive in south India but was overlain by Indo-European languages when the Steppe pastoralists arrived in the north later.

Third, between around 4,000 years ago and 2,000 years ago, there was a great mixing between groups with different migration histories that left no Indian population group untouched (except perhaps the Andamanese). Fourth, endogamy, or the practice of people marrying within their own groups, began only around 2,000 years ago, which suggests that the caste system did not begin with the arrival of the Arya but was the result of political developments around the beginning of the Common Era.

Fifth, almost all population groups of India carry 50-65% of their ancestry from the First Indians, no matter where in the caste hierarchy they stand, what language they speak, which region they inhabit or what religion they belong to.

All populations that exist today are the result of mixing between prehistoric/historic migrant groups

from office. Going beyond appearances, he starts weaving stories to match the fleeting images.

Irfan Aslam

Mirza Athar Baig has emerged as one of the most significant Urdu fiction writers from Pakistan in the last one decade. His debut novel, *Ghulam Bagh*, came out in 2006 and he hasn't looked back since. His third novel, *Hassan ki Soorat-i-Haal*, published in 2014, has now been translated into English as *Hassan's State of Affairs* by Haider Shahbaz, a university teacher in Lahore.

Hassan is the protagonist here who travels from youth to old age in the course of the novel. But his story doesn't have a definitive ending – it remains open-ended and subject to various interpretations. Hassan has a habit of looking out of his vehicle at life along the roadsides as he travels to and

from office. Going beyond ap-

pearances, he starts weaving stories to

match the fleeting images.

The other main char-

acters are a group of

amateur filmmakers try-

ing to make a film titled

This Film Cannot Be

Made; a junkyard owner

and a collector, both of

whom have a penchant

for collecting useless ob-

jects; and a professor

whose family has sold

his manuscript as junk

by mistake.

An air of surrealism sur-

rounds the plot and char-

acters and Baig pulls off

this feat with aplomb.

Baig had once told me in

an interview that he has

stretched this narrative

approach to the breaking

point in this novel, which

also contains elements borrowed from film and theatre.

Many situations can easily be seen as metaphors for what is happening in societies of Pakistan and India. But what keeps the reader hooked is the humour. Baig is lucky to have found an able translator who has expanded the scope of meanings and added rather apt titles to chapters.

Braig, in his own words, has "thrown a challenge to the reader" with a novel that can have many dimensions but not necessarily a typical storyline.

The reviewer is a journalist and poet based in Lahore.

CONVERSATION

The Raman effect

Leadership inputs gleaned from a host of achievers like Kapil Dev and Sania Mirza

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

WV. Raman is a throwback to a gentler past when there was time for a silken cover drive and enough hours for long conversations while glasses emptied late into the night. The former India player with an ODI hundred against South Africa under his belt besides a triple ton in first-class cricket is Mr. Congeniality, with friendships cutting across sport, industry and media. Prone to self-deprecating humour, Raman transitioned well into coaching, mentoring Tamil Nadu and Bengal, to name a few, before stepping up to guide the current Indian women's team.

It is no surprise that he has penned *The Winning Sixer*, a primer on leadership, thanks to the lessons he gleaned from a vast sporting galaxy that ranges from Kapil Dev to Sania Mirza and a whole host of other celebrities. The book, an easy read spread over 178 pages, is structured as a conversation between Raman and a journalist on the cusp of a major career upswing. The latter fires questions, at times gentle, and on some occasions, a bit pointed, but the former is equal to the task, offering a straight bat, an incisive mind and some hearty laughter. The locale is Bengaluru and there is a hat-tip to the city's easy vibe.

Treasure of anecdotes

Raman hardly touches upon his career but rather draws from his treasure trove of anecdotes and for validation also seeks out athletes as diverse as Jeev Milkha Singh and P. Gopichand. The book is devoid of jargon but what Raman does to drive home his point is to lean on alliteration, like a fabulous leader having the five Cs – credibility, clarity, connect, control and conviction. The repetitive writing ploy could breed boredom and yet laced with his examples, they do work in offering insights about how the best captains function.

The conversational style also means that words like "my friend" or "touche" get echoed but the easy-paced narrative chugs along smoothly. Raman quotes M.A.K. Pataudi's famous line: "I only lost my sight, not my vision." It reiterates the fact about leaders finding ways to cope with any inadequacy. The author also stresses on the innate pragmatism of achievers, a trait that helps Sania pick doubles over singles as her career gathers pace.

From the heart

Be it Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Anil Kumble, Rahul Dravid or M.S. Dhoni, Raman delves into what makes them tick and through that he gifts the reader a few relatable lessons. Much later in the book, he writes: "The simplest thing anyone can do is to be honest with themselves. If you care to think about it in depth, greatness is made of persistent repetition of the simplest of practices."

This isn't a speech from the pulpit, it is straight from the heart and this honesty lends the book a warmth which is also an intrinsic Raman attribute. Former cricketers can at times lapse into bitterness but Raman avoids this trap, his gaze firm and forward, just like when he countered South African spearhead Allan Donald all those decades ago.

HISTORY

Tales of derring-do from the great survey of India

A thrilling story of espionage and cartography against the backdrop of imperial ambitions of two powers, Britain and Russia

K.R.A. Narasiah

In the 19th century, when the rivalry between Imperial Russia and Great Britain was at its peak, both powers tried to survey, explore and expand regions under their rule, particularly the Indian subcontinent and its neighbours. Several writers including Peter Hopkirk (*The Great Game*) and John Keay (*The Great Arc: The Dramatic Tale of How India was Mapped and Everest was Named*) recounted this rivalry as also the story of the two men who undertook the measurement of the Himalayas and the mapping of the Indian subcontinent. Riaz Dean's *Mapping the Great Game* is a thrilling story of espionage

and cartography played out against the backdrop of imperial ambitions of powerful players.

Ground report

Dean travelled much of the area described in the book, including the two halves of Turkestan (western or Russian Turkestan and eastern or Chinese Turkestan), and to the roof of the world. Set in four parts and arranged chronologically, with five informative maps, the first part deals with political intrigues and the roles played by some adventurous young people like William Moorcroft, a veterinary surgeon, in securing details of regions considered strategically important. Appointed Superintendent of the Stud for the East India

Company's large horse-breeding farm in Patna in 1808, Moorcroft soon realised he would need to travel beyond the subcontinent's borders in the north and west to get better breeding stock, and that is how his exploration began.

With more twists and turns in the political system of Europe, and Napoleon's defeat, Britain was worried about the Tsar's intentions. The author introduces important players in this game like Arthur Conolly, the British intelligence officer sent to get more information. Among the others sent to explore and spy was Lieutenant Alexander Burnes, an enthusiastic young officer and a brilliant linguist. The ultimate prize of this Great Game was India; the target

was the northern neighbours as they offered the gateway.

A name for Everest

In the second part, Dean describes the survey work in detail, undertaken by William Lambton and his cartographers. Lambton laid the baseline, which stretched across 12 km between St. Thomas Mount in Madras and another hillock and measured the length of a degree of latitude along a longitude in peninsular India. This alone took 42 days to measure, indicating the hard task ahead. By 1810, Lambton could produce a map of the southern peninsula. The entire team looked upon him as a father figure of the survey and when he died near Nagpur on Janu-

ary 20, 1823, George Everest took over the job of measuring the length of the subcontinent, from peninsular India to the Himalayas. For his hard work, Everest was known as 'Neverest' but he was recalled before he could finish the task due to failing health. In 1844, he recorded all his findings in two volumes.

'Pundits' at work

When the highest peak was measured and found to be 29,030 feet (8,848 metres) above sea level, the surveyors knew it by its various local names, prompting the surveyor-general Andrew Waugh to call it Mount Everest, after his predecessor George Everest.

Part three is dedicated to the

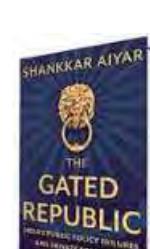
pundits, "an obscure group of natives," who were the pillars of the Great Trigonometrical Survey and its exploration and mapping programme. They travelled entirely on foot and with meagre resources. Captain Thomas George Montgomerie, who followed Waugh, used the pundits to the best of their abilities. He produced the first accurate map of the Jammu and Kashmir region. The fourth part deals with Tibet, and Russia and Britain's tussle over this important location and its consequences. The book is remarkable for packing in so many details between its covers.

The writer is an author and historian.



Mapping the Great Game:
Explorers, Spies & Maps in
Nineteenth Century Asia
Riaz Dean
Viking/Penguin
₹599

The Gated Republic India's Public Policy Failures and Private Solutions
Shankkar Aiyar
HarperCollins India
₹699



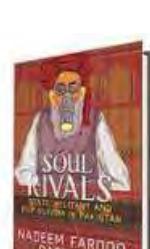
India has come a long way since it became a republic. However, it is still failing on key counts. Citizens are opting for private service providers despite the costs. Can the government reinvent itself?

My Son's Inheritance: A Secret History of Lynching and Blood Justice in India
Aparna Vaidik
Aleph
₹499



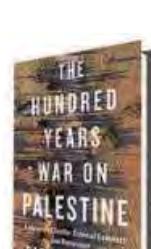
Vaidik demonstrates how violence is embedded in our myths, folklore, poetry, literature and language. She delves deep into family history to further illuminate how widespread violence is in Indian society.

Soul Rivals: State, Militant and Pop Sufism in Pakistan
Nadeem Farooq Paracha
Tranquebar/Westland
₹499



Successive governments, political parties and religious organisations in Pakistan have attempted to co-opt Sufism or reject it to suit their own agendas. A cultural critic and historian discusses the many strands of Sufism in the religio-political space.

The Hundred Years' War on Palestine
Rashid Khalidi
Hachette India
₹599



The 20th century for Palestine and the Palestinians has been a century of denial — of statehood, nationhood and history. Drawing on his family archives, Khalidi reclaims the fundamental right of any people: to narrate their history on their own terms.

PEACE IN A POD

Young, sharp and on air

There's much to learn from the podcasts *When I was 13* and *World Wise Web*, both hosted by teenagers

Usha Raman

Last week a 12-year-old came up to me after a panel discussion on podcasting to tell me he wanted to start a podcast, and asked for some tips on how to go about it. A couple of things to note about this exchange. One, that young people (some most decidedly in the category of children) see themselves as having a voice and needing to use it to say what they want. And two, the availability of the means to express themselves.

One of these means is of course the podcast. It seems fairly simple, right? All you do is record some audio using a decent instrument (a recorder and a microphone), edit it on your laptop using open-source software, mix in some music, add an introduction and conclusion, upload to a podcast platform and share the link in any number of ways.

But more than the technology, which most young people look at without awe, it is the desire to create, to add their voice to the beautiful cacophony that is the Internet, in the hope that it will speak to someone, somewhere.

While there are a fair number of



The conversation between 17-year-old Adam from Poland and the 97-year-old Goodenough, for instance, is a delightful account of how the scientist practically stumbled into chemistry

podcasts aimed at teens, there are only a handful made by teens. Two very different shows in this category caught my attention recently: *When I was 13* and *World Wise Web*.

Time capsule

The first of these is a little over a year old, and is hosted by Delhi teenager Arushi Gupta, who asks guests to "climb into a time capsule" and relive their teens. Her guests have ranged from entrepreneurs to writers to lawyers, with the conversations meandering for about 30 minutes through the formative years of their adolescence, education, career

and other milestones. Gupta confidently steers her sometimes garrulous interviewees to her central concerns: how did they choose their life paths and what advice can they give young people like her? She also gets them to talk about the popular culture of their times, and comment on what has changed.

The podcast is now in its second season, and while the host has crossed her 13th year, her focus remains on this bridge year into the teens. It would be nice to see Gupta widen her net a little to draw in more diverse guests who might introduce teens like her to new experiences.

World Wise Web is a new BBC show hosted by teenagers from around the world, who speak with innovators in the digital space, from a California-based developer of social robots to Nobel Prize winner John Goodenough (inventor of the lithium-ion battery).

The series is introduced by 17-year-old Anna Zanelli from London, with interviews conducted by teens around the world.

Launched in January this year, the episodes are time capsules of a different kind, balancing the story of a life with the story of science.

The conversation between 17-year-old Adam from Poland and the 97-year-old Goodenough, for instance, is a delightful account of how the scientist practically stumbled into chemistry.

Whether you're 13 or 17 or any age in between or beyond, there's much to learn from these shows, driven as they are by curiosity, engagement, and an artless desire to know. What they lack in technical sophistication, they more than make up for in the sharpness of the questions.

The Hyderabad-based writer, academic and neatnik blogs at www.mayanotes.blogspot.com.

GOREN BRIDGE

Which finesse?

NORTH	♦ J 8 2	EAST	♦ 6 4
WEST	♦ Q K J 8 5	SOUTH	♦ A Q J 6
♦ K 5		♦ K 4 3 2	
♦ 10 7		♦ 6 3 2	
♦ Q 6 3 2		♦ 10 4 2	
♦ 10 9 7		♦ K 8 7 5	
♦ J 10 9 7		♦ 8 6 4 3 2	

North-South vulnerable, South deals

Bob Jones

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♦	Pass	20	Pass
3♦	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	50	Pass
6♦	All pass		

Opening lead: Jack of ♦



South's slightly aggressive jump rebid caused North to use Key Card Blackwood – standard among today's tournament players. The fiveclub response showed zero or three key cards, among the four aces and the king of the agreed trump suit. On some

auctions, as here, the trump suit is implied rather than specifically agreed. North, presuming three key cards due to South's jump rebid, continued with five diamonds, asking for the queen of trumps. The sixspade bid promised that queen and denied any side king.

whether to play on diamonds or hearts. The decision is clear cut, but many players would err by taking the diamond finesse. A successful diamond finesse will lead to one heart discard, but South will still have to guess whether West has the ace of hearts or the queen of hearts.

A successful finesse for the queen of hearts, however, will eventually allow a discard of a diamond from the South hand. The diamond finesse will not be needed. Only having to take one finesse is much better than needing two finesses. Running the 10 of hearts after drawing trumps is the correct play, and it would "bring home the bacon" on today's deal.

QUIZ

Easy like Sunday morning

What has February 2 ever given us?

Berty Ashley

On February 2, 1653, the settlement of New Amsterdam received its municipal rights and became a city. The city was based around Fort Amsterdam, which was meant to defend the fur trade operation of the Dutch West India Company. In 1664, the English took over the city and renamed it after the Duke of York. Since then the city has grown exponentially to become the most populous city in its country and a global hub for cultural and financial matters. Which city is this?

On February 2, 1709, Alexander Selkirk, a Royal Navy officer, was rescued after being left behind on a desert island in the South Pacific. He survived by eating feral goats and wild turnips, and built his house out of pepper trees, and was rescued after four years. His life was immortalised by an English writer and became one of the biggest selling novels of all time. Who was the writer and what was the novel?

On February 2, 1915, this journalist was well known for his wit, sarcasm and sharp writing. He was an MP and was awarded the Padma Bhushan, which he returned in protest of Operation Blue Star. He was also known for his 'sardarji jokes', which usually involved two friends called Santa and Banta. Who was this author who passed away in 2014 at the age of 99?

Born on February 2, 1905 in Russia, this philosopher found fame



Time loop Bill Murray and Andie MacDowell in the hit 1993 film named after and featuring an American tradition celebrated on February 2.

as a novelist in the United States. She developed a philosophical system called Objectivism centred around "the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute". This was emphasised in her two best-known novels – *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. Who was this author?

On February 2, 1935, Leonardo Keeler debuted his invention, the polygraph. The machine records several physiological indicators that can be used as an interrogation technique. This led to two criminals being convicted of assault. By what other name do we know Keeler's invention?

Born on February 2, 1949, American actor Brent Spiner is best known for playing the role of a self-

aware android who served as an operations officer on a starship. His endeavour to understand human emotional experiences became hallmark moments of the TV show in which he appears. What character does he play and in which galaxy-traversing TV show does he appear?

Born on February 2, 1977 in Colombia, this singer-songwriter released her first album at the age of 11. 11 years later, she released her first English album, which became a global success, selling more than 13 million copies. She went on to perform the official song of the 2010 FIFA Football World Cup, during which she met her future husband, Gerard Piqué (born exactly ten years later on Feb 2, 1987). Who is this best-selling artist?

Born on February 2, 1990, F. W. de Klerk took over as president of a country that had been in turmoil for

decades. During his speech, he announced that he was bringing an end to a system of institutionalised racial segregation and that he would release a particular prisoner in a few days. That prisoner would become president of the country four years later. What was the system de Klerk ended and who was the prisoner?

On February 2, 2004, this athlete became World No.1 in his sport and proceeded to hold that spot for a record 237 weeks. He also has the record for the longest span between No.1 spots, having regained the top spot 14 years later in June 2018. Who is this record-breaking sportsperson?

This tradition celebrated on February 2 in North America comes from a superstition that if a certain animal were to leave its burrow, see its shadow and return inside, then winter would persist. If the animal does not see its shadow, spring will arrive. There is a hit film about a TV weatherman reporting on one such event who gets caught in a time loop. What is the name of this event?

A molecular biologist from Madurai, our quizmaster enjoys trivia and music, and is working on a rock ballad called 'Coffee is a Drink, Kaapi is an Emotion'. @bertyashley

Answers

1. New York City
2. Daniel DeLee, Robinson Crusoe
3. Rushmore
4. Amy Rand
5. Lee de Forest
6. Shakira
7. Darao on Star Trek
8. Apricot
9. Nelson Mandela
10. Groundhog Day

LETTER FROM A CONCERNED READER

Life is like stock market

Respected Madam/Sir,

Compared to Mr. and Mrs. Mathrubootham life, up and down motion of stock market is jujube. One day up and, next day collapse.

Three-four days back suddenly my son entered the dining room as if police entering college library. Mrs. M and self were sitting and eating tiffin items calmly and doing small talks. "How are you?" "I am fine." "Have you seen electricity bill?" "This idli is little bit dry no?" "No." "Yes, little bit dryness is there Kamalam, just I am giving feedback." "If you like feedback so much, eat feedback for tiffin." "OK Kamalam, kindly please put *darava* down."

Just like that domestic talks. Suddenly son is coming. Whether you remember? He is working from home every day. Software or insider trading or something. So far police raid not there in house.



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

He came and said, "Appamma, one very sad news is there." Immediately, Mrs. M started shouting like anything. "IS IT POLICE CASE KANNA? IS IT HEART PROBLEM? IS IT LOVE MARRIAGE? HOW MANY YEARS I AM SAYING IF BOY IS SPENDING FULL DAY IN FRONT OF INTERNET MEANS CRIMINAL ACTIVITY ONLY. KADAVULAI, DID YOU SAY SOMETHING ABOUT MODI?"

"Amma, what is all this? No, it is different sad news. I have received job offer from company in Bengaluru. Today one meeting is there near Alwarpet signal. If salary is OK means I will find flat in Bengaluru and go there March itself. I have to leave you both alone. I am sorry for this sad development."

Madam/Sir, Mrs. M and I looked at each other for two-three minutes quietly. It was a very delicate situation. Inside feelings are coming and coming like 'Aaluma Doluma' song. But outside we have to put face like VIP people at Gandhi Samadhi. How many

years we have been waiting for this *manda shiromani* to get job in office like normal youths.

Mrs. M put one award-winning sentiment voice and said, "It is OK, *kanna!* Sometimes career thousand times more important than other issues. Why you're joining in March? Notice period and all is not there for work from home no? You join immediately?"

"Appa," my son said, "Say something. Are you in shock?" I said, "Words are not coming for two reasons: one, shock and two, dryness of idli in throat." Mrs. M put one kick under the table. Then I got up and hugged my son. This is good move for avoiding talks.

In the evening he went for interview. I said, "Kamalam, after son is gone, shall we use his room for one library? Or maybe home theatre?" She said, "No, it has to be bedroom only, when guests are coming whether they will sleep in balcony?" I said, "OK, maybe bedroom-cum-library? Many good designs are there in Internet." So we spent two-three hours looking at photos. Kamalam said, "I will call carpenter to take measurements."

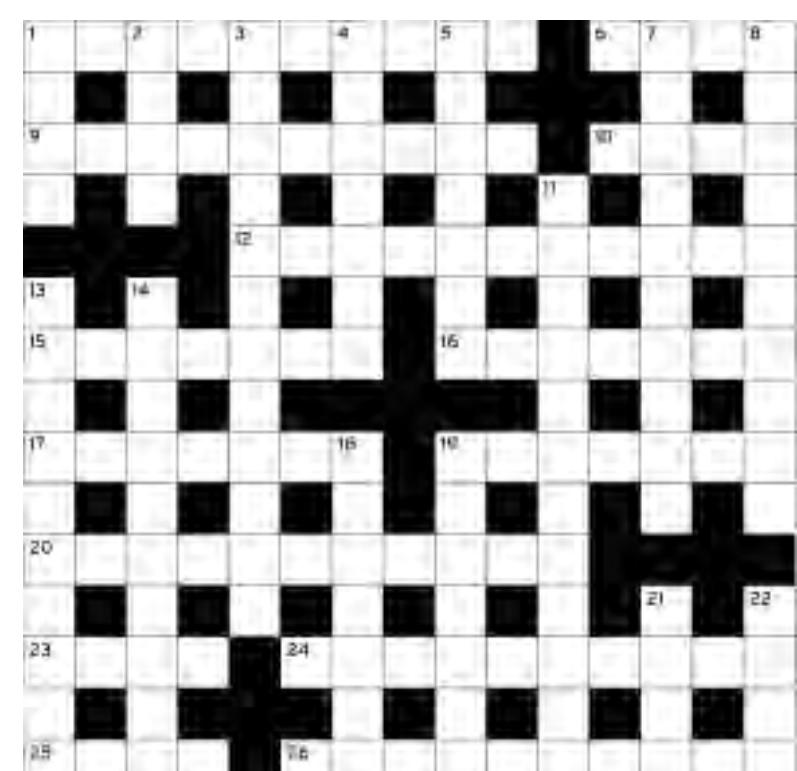
Madam/sir, at 5 p.m. carpenter Aravindan is coming. We are discussing and he is giving ideas. At 5.15 p.m. son is coming from interview. "Appa! I have good news! When I saw your dumbstruck face and shock I thought I can never leave family. So during interview I told company, what is need to work in Bengaluru, full office is there at home itself, I will sit and do all the works. Company said, why not, maybe once a month come to Bengaluru for meetings."

Mrs. M and myself celebrated like anything but fully duplicate sentiment. Meanwhile Aravindan is urgently eating vazhaka baiji then leaving.

Carpenter is gone, library is gone, baiji also gone.

Yours in exasperation
J. Mathrubootham

THE SUNDAY CROSSWORD NO. 3085



Across

- 1 Top courier lost somewhere in the Antilles (6,4)
- 4 Touch up a painting of deranged headless forester (7)
- 5 Eastwood close to becoming president (7)
- 7 Tax excessively delivers by coach (10)
- 8 Make call to your lady, answering initially with expression of disgust and roar (5,5)
- 11 Catcall girl at first; that is, make a play for girl at first, skipping (oddly) wine and music (6-6)
- 13 Fats Waller treated for cataracts (10)
- 14 Novel describing Cameron becoming Tory leader? (7,3)
- 18 Having drunk a litre – about a litre – finally appreciate beer (4,3)
- 19 Samiest, re-hashed figure in collage (7)
- 21 Clue: sidearm's concealed (4)
- 22 Fairy-tale figure masticating gore (4)

Down

- 1 Bolts, being cut up (4)
- 2 Neurotic hides cash (4)
- 3 One of a crew to cause online offence on

Solution No. 3084





Mining memories Every year, on All Souls Day, November 2, Kolar Gold Fields springs to life. Families visit the graveyards to pay homage to their ancestors who spent their lives working in this once-prosperous mines that produced an estimated 800 tonnes of gold for more than a century.

LOST LUSTRE

Graveyard of gold

The once-prosperous Kolar Gold Fields, a mining town of many firsts, now lives in the past

Bhagya Prakash K.

All Souls Day on November 2, hundreds of believers across faiths arrive at the many graveyards that dot the Kolar Gold Fields (KGF), some 100 kilometres from Bengaluru. "The man resting in this small space, six feet under, was once responsible for bringing up gold from nearly 8,000 feet underground," says Murugan with a wry smile. "He didn't wear even a scrap of gold in his life." The day brings back not just the memories of his grandfather but also of the bitter end to the work at the mines.

Decrepit iron shafts of former mines stand tall over the town. The gathering rust and the pervasive silence are a reminder of the fall of India's gold rush town. Gold was perhaps first mined in the area in 200 AD, and later, during the Chola period (900-1000 AD), it became a recognisable gold mine. With the arrival of the British Raj, and the introduction of machines, the town turned into a large-scale gold mine by the 1850s, the world's second deepest.

Profits were huge, and KGF became the site for many of India's firsts: India's first hydroelectric power generation unit was created on the Cauvery to support the mining; the town was India's first to be electrified (second in Asia). Trains, electric trams, electric clocks, telephones, a golf course, and even filtered water were introduced here much before the rest of India.

By the 1920s, 24,000 people were working here, drawn from socio-economically backward communities in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. KGF was contributing all of India's gold output, accounting for 2% of the world's gold generation. After 1947, KGF became Bharat Gold Mines Ltd., but gold production slowly became untenable and the town soon lost its lustre. By 2001, it had wound down. Despite some assurances, former workers were not resettled nor mining restarted.

Today, these labourers and their children continue to stay in shanties and in the former workers' colony, but their jobs are in Bengaluru, two hours away. KGF is a ghost town, peppered with crumbling godowns, buildings, clubs and grocery stores – vestiges of a golden past.



The rust Machines sit idle in the once-throbbing factories.



Grinding halt The wheels stopped turning on February 28, 2001 when the mining ceased.



Coal and wood Timber was one of the principal commodities, used along with coal, in the machinery during the mining days.



Toxic legacy The mining has left millions of tonnes of tailings, or waste, amassed in 'cyanide dumps' in KGF.



Roots A colonial building overrun with weeds and trees.

60 MINUTES WITH KANNAN GOPINATHAN

The real threat is the perceived victimhood of the majority'

For the first time, the Muslim community is asserting its religious identity as well as its Indian identity, says the IAS officer who quit office to protest the J&K lockdown



- Born in Kottayam, Kerala
- Studied engineering at the Birla Institute of Technology in Mesra, Jharkhand
- Worked for Freescale Semiconductors for four years, volunteered to teach in a slum and later joined Aid India
- Entered the IAS in 2012 and was posted in Delhi and Mizoram

ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

NOSTALGIA

How strange that the ubiquitous poha, eaten in practically every Indian home, has suddenly become 'alien' food

A dash of lime, a touch of road

Vaishna Roy

It was the early 90s. We were driving from Rajasthan to Tamil Nadu, via Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, in a rickety Fiat that we ran alternately on petrol and LPG to save money. The ancient Padmini, bought second-hand from a sweet old lady in Belgaum, was not an LPG car – there were none those days – but my extraordinarily resourceful husband had modified the carburettor or whatever thingamajig so it would run on gas. We would lug two cylinders in the boot, searching frantically for refills in tiny towns that had all of one LPG distributor.

We were driving through central India in a tiny car, our three-year-old in the back seat, with little money, no mobile phone and one map. The car wasn't exactly fast and we needed to get to at least a mid-size town before nightfall each day and leave really early come daybreak. To save time, we would try and eat breakfast on the run, and halt only for lunch, usually at ramshackle roadside dhabas. And as we drove, across Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, our breakfast was invariably poha. Yes, the very same flattened rice that so unnerved a BJP leader that he had to alert his compatriots that poha-eat-



ing eccentrics could well be illegal immigrants.

By six in the morning, most roadside stalls would be up and running and the only stuff on the menu was poha and chai. We would buy two servings, fill the flask with chai, hop back into the car and drive off. The sunshine-yellow, feather-soft poha, liberally garnished with peanuts, freshly grated coconut, green chillies and a dash of lime, would be served on large squares of newspaper. My job was to eat a few spoonfuls and then shove some into my husband's mouth as he drove.

It was the most delicious poha I've ever eaten. Even today, try as I will, I never seem to get that exact taste. But then, I am never able to add a touch of road, that dash of newspaper, the nip in the morning air, the lightness of being.

In Calcutta, in my very first newspaper job, my dearest friend and colleague would bring poha in his dabba sometimes. I used to love it and I had imagined his mother made

it for him. I later found that his mother was very unwell, and it was my friend who was chief cook and bottle washer. It was his recipe that I followed for a long time – it used to have diced potato in it but also tiny florets of cauliflower. Of course, in Calcutta, come winter and we put phoolkopi in shingaras too, a delicate intervention that I find hard to describe to philistines brought up on that crude monster called samosa.

Teatime tradition

In Bengal, poha is chire, and it comes emphatically into its own at teatime as chire bhaja, where it is fried crisp with peanuts and red chillies, tempered with kalo jeere for that hint of spicy sweetness, and seasoned with salt and pepper. Heading west, chire bhaja becomes chivda in Maharashtra and pauva no chevdo in Gujarat, but now has fragrant strips of ghee-fried coconut, plump raisins and cashews thrown in.

It was one of my father's favourite snacks, and we would wake up many a Sunday afternoon to find

Revathi Siva Kumar

Kannan Gopinathan, the former IAS officer, first caught the nation's eye when he stepped down from the service to protest the lockdown in Jammu and Kashmir. He resigned as secretary, power department of the Union Territories of Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli. Now the intrepid 34-year-old is in the thick of the nation-wide movement against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

On a cold January evening, he said at a Bengaluru meet organised by Align India: "Democracy is a difficult project, and it becomes dictatorship when citizens become lazy."

In an interview, Gopinathan says the country is seeing "a political churning."

Edited excerpts:

What about your work in the IAS makes you feel most proud?

There are many instances. If you are able to go beyond government-prescribed work, you can achieve a lot. In Hnahthial [Mizoram], a senior told me that apart from the government's work, I need to take an interest in people's work. Hnahthial had no Internet or even an ATM in the sub-division, but one letter from me triggered these off in just three months. Although that was a small thing, I felt that the priorities of a district are different from those of the government.

But your resignation was sudden...

I have never been a big rebel, nor was I in student politics. When Article 370 was abrogated [in Jammu and Kashmir], I felt the deafening silence around me – that was when I felt the need to speak out, to take a stand. I did not want to resign due to the decision to revoke Article 370, because an elected government has the right to take a decision. I felt compelled to speak due to the removal of the right of the people to react to it. And the rest of the country just kept quiet.

Currently you are part of the protests against CAA, NRC and NPR. The government seems jittery, but it is also stubborn and does not seem to be backing off.

The government is putting up a brave face, but is also aware that CAA is blatantly communal and arbitrary. Either way, it is not a sustainable law. The country is going through a very tough time economically. So it is not in the interest of the country if the government thinks of its own ego rather than the country's welfare.

The government really need not worry about losing face if it takes back the law, as it can say that it is in response to the people's protests. A number of Acts and Bills in the country have been passed and taken back in the interests of the people, after all.

The Hindu Rashtra ideology is an emotional one. But the counter to that is intellectual. Don't we need to find an emotional counter-argument?

I don't bother about ideology. I am more worried about the way people react when they are confronted with an alternative point of view, or with others who think differently. There is an enmity towards people who disagree, who are immediately called anti-national. What I'm saying is that people are not bothered about accepting resistance. We haven't taught our children how to disagree and how to debate. We don't teach our children the logical fallacies, the hierarchy of arguments. We need to teach the culture of arguments.

You mentioned the decline of democracy. But when were we really a democracy? Haven't we elected people on the basis of image-building, branding and dynasty?

Well, we were not an ideal democracy in any sense, but in the last five to six years we have deteriorated. There was a substantive democracy and a formal democracy. In terms of party politics and internal restructuring we needed to improve. But we were a formal democracy. The post-2014 scenario is that the supporters of the government honestly believe that they are there to silence dissenters. Not to answer them, but to silence them.

Was there respect for democratic institutions earlier?

There was. Currently, the model is very patriarchal and supports a family structure, with a strong, key father figure, who is perceived as doing everything for the betterment of the family. Questioning the father figure is not allowed. These are all simple, patriarchal family constructs, which also help build the old, authoritarian

The post-2014 scenario is that the supporters of the government honestly believe that they are there to silence dissenters. Not to answer them, but to silence them

government structure. Earlier, there was no one authority but a loose coalition of parties and no one could control it the way it is being controlled now. But then, one should not judge a 'good' party by what another party is not. It should aspire to rise above the norm.

The one overriding issue today seems to be hatred of the 'other'. It is this perceived victimhood of the majority, shared by all fascist countries, which has caused the real threat. They are defining the Hindu today as who he is not. This forging of a negative identity creation has helped. Hindutva is sustainable only as long as they define who you are not. But what will you define as a sustainable pan-Hindu identity creation? There are so many contradictions. Does a Hindu mean an upper-caste Hindu? Or is it about a way of life that defines the lives of Dalits?

The fear of the other is a perception created by a continuing narrative that has been going on for years, but we never confronted it. For the first time, it is out in the open now.

Don't all movements need a strong leader?

Well, this movement is not like the Delhi-centric India Against Corruption movement. It is a pan-India movement. Local leadership is coming out, which is a political churning after 30 to 40 years. Leaders are emerging in every city, every village. It's everywhere. We should not look up to a leader but should look up to ourselves.

So what next? Aren't these protests actually about a hope for change in the character of polity and transformation in hearts and minds?

Well, beyond even that, I find in my tours from September onwards, that for the first time, the Muslim community, which has generally always kept quiet on issues that it had strong feelings about, is now, for the first time, coming out and asserting its Muslim identity as well as its Indian identity. It is something unique that is happening. The other remarkable thing is that the youth are breathing the air of democracy. Some questions that are uncomfortable and were never asked are now being asked. So even if there are 30 crore people who are able to stand together, that itself is a huge, huge transformation in the country.

The interviewer is a freelance journalist who studies developmental issues.

SUNDAY RECIPE

My friend's poha

Ingredients

- 1 cup poha or flattened rice
- A handful (or more) peanuts
- 1 cup chopped potato, cauliflower and green peas
- Salt to taste
- A squeeze of lemon juice
- For tempering:
 - A tsp each of mustard seed, cumin and aniseed
 - 1-2 sprigs curly leaf
 - 2-3 green chillies
 - 1 tsp turmeric powder
- To garnish:
 - 2 tbsp grated coconut
 - A handful chopped coriander leaves
 - 1-2 slit green chillies

Light as a feather

A vendor in Lucknow shows off the quality of his poha.

■ RAJEEV BHATT

Method

1. Wash thick poha for several minutes, drain and keep.
2. Heat oil in pan and do a tadka of mustard, cumin, aniseed, curry leaves and chopped green chillies. Add turmeric.
3. Fry a handful of peeled, roasted peanuts in the oil.
4. Add diced potato, cauliflower florets and green peas. Stir and cover till cooked but firm.
5. Add drained poha. Add salt. Stir well and cook for a few minutes.
6. Sprinkle grated coconut and chopped coriander. Add a dash of lemon juice.
7. Arrange a couple of whole, slit green chillies on top.
8. Serve. (On newspaper squares.)



be re-examined. Was Sudama Bangladeshi? Who wrote the *Bhagavata Purana*? Are we all Bangladeshi? Was Krishna an anti-national because he ate poha with such love? And if we show poha recipes instead of identification papers to the NRC enumerators, will we all be sent to detention camps?

Heading west, it becomes chivda in Maharashtra and pauva no chevdo in Gujarat, but now has fragrant strips of ghee-fried coconut, plump raisins and cashews thrown in