

THE HINDU

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2019

 INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

Benefits for farmers, unorganised workers, and salaried taxpayers

Scheme to provide income support to vulnerable ryots

Those earning up to ₹5 lakh a year exempt from income tax

TDS threshold for deduction of tax on rent to be increased to ₹2.4 lakh

SOP OPERA



It is essential to ensure [that] the benefits of development reach all sections of society. This Budget will empower the poor, give a boost to the farmers and an impetus to economic growth

NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

I had the constraint of this being an Interim Budget. However, there were many things which could not have waited for the final Budget, particularly relief for small taxpayer which I have passed on

PIYUSH GOYAL, Interim Finance Minister

The government is giving ₹17 a day to farmers after destroying their lives in the last five years. This is an insult to everything the farmers stand and work for

RAHUL GANDHI, Congress president

The union budget is an account for votes and not a vote-on-account. Thank you Interim FM for copying the Congress' declaration that the poor have the first right to the resources of the country

P. CHIDAMBARAM, Congress leader

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

With a keen eye on the election, the interim Budget 2019-20 contained elements that are aimed at benefiting three major segments of the population – farmers, informal sector workers, and salaried taxpayers – with announcements of an income support scheme for farmers, a new pension scheme for informal sector workers, and tax exemptions for salaried workers.

Finance Minister Piyush Goyal, in his interim Budget speech on Friday, announced the creation of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme, which is aimed at providing income support to vulnerable landholding farmers. What was notable about the announcement, however, was that he allocated ₹20,000 crore for the scheme for the current financial year.

Opposition party members were quick to point out that this was designed to evade the Election Commission rules regarding announcements that are allowed to be made in an election year.

Silent on funds
 The Finance Minister was, however, silent on how these high-expenditure schemes would be financed. In fact, he even admitted that implementing the farmers' income transfer scheme was the reason why the government would be missing its fiscal deficit target not just for the current year but also for the next year. He said the fiscal deficit would be 3.4% of the GDP for both 2018-19 and 2019-20, compared with a target of 3.3% and 3.1% respectively.

"Under this programme, vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land up to 2 hectares, will be provided direct income support at the rate of ₹6,000 per year," Mr. Goyal said.

"This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal installments of ₹2,000 each. This programme will be funded by the Government."

ment of India and will entail an annual expenditure of ₹75,000 crore."

While keeping tax rates unchanged, the Finance Minister announced that those earning up to ₹5 lakh a year would be exempt from income tax. This, he said, effectively meant that those earning ₹6.5 lakh a year would not need to pay tax if they made full use of the ₹1.5 lakh exemption available under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act.

"This neo-middle class re-

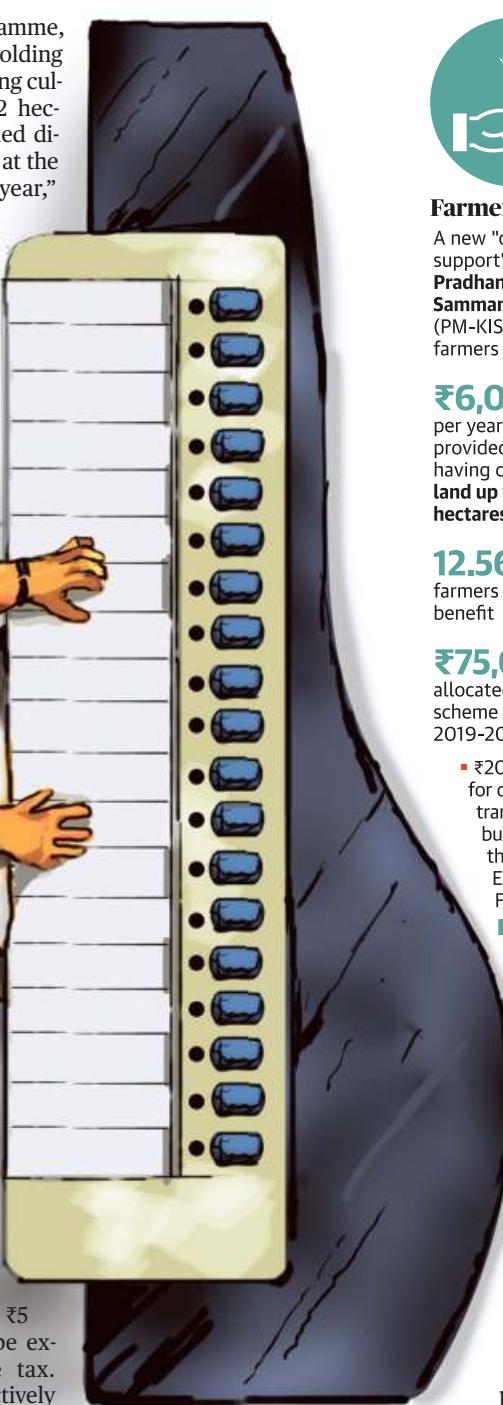


ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN



Farmers

A new "direct income support" scheme - **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)** - for farmers

₹6,000 per year will be provided to farmers having cultivable land up to two hectares

12.56 crore farmers likely to benefit

₹75,000 cr. allocated for the scheme for FY 2019-20

▪ ₹20,000 crore for direct benefit transfer will be budgeted within the Revised Estimates of FY 2018-19



Unorganized workers

A new pension scheme - **Pradhan Mantri Shram-yogi maandhan** - for young workers in the unorganized sector

₹3,000 will be provided as assured monthly pension from the age of 60 on an affordable monthly amount during their working age

₹15,000 will be the monthly income limit for the workers to join the scheme

₹500 cr. has been allocated for the scheme

▪ The monthly amount will vary from ₹55 to ₹100 depending upon the worker's age



Taxpayers

While the tax slabs have been left untouched, Section 87A of the IT Act has been amended to **increase the rebate ceiling** from ₹3.5 lakh to ₹5 lakh

₹0 Individuals with annual income of ₹5 lakh or less need not pay income tax

3 crore taxpayers may be beneficiaries

₹18,500 crore is the total tax benefit for taxpayers

▪ Those having gross income up to ₹6.50 lakhs may not pay tax if they make investments in provident funds, specified savings, insurance, etc.



Home-owners

▪ The tax on notional rent for a second home has now been removed

▪ For making more homes available under affordable housing, the benefits under Section 80-IBA of the Income Tax Act are being **extended for one more year**, i.e., to housing projects approved till 31 March, 2020

▪ The benefit of rollover of capital gains under Section 54 of the Income Tax Act will be increased from investment in one residential house to two residential houses for a tax payer having capital gains up to ₹2 crore. These measures are expected to boost the realty sector



India Inc.

▪ With the focus on farmers and individuals, there were very few proposals aimed at corporate India

▪ Real estate developers can hold unsold inventory for 2 years from the date of project completion without paying tax on notional rent

▪ Stamp duty to be levied on 1 instrument relating to 1 transaction and will be collected at the stock exchange

▪ Renewables to become a major source of energy supply in the next decade

▪ 2% interest rebate on incremental loan of ₹1 crore for GST-registered SME units

duction limit for salaried taxpayers would be raised to ₹50,000 from the ₹40,000 announced in last year's Budget. "This will provide additional tax benefit of ₹4,700 crore to more than three crore salary earners and pensioners," the Finance Minister said.

In another move designed to appeal to the masses, he said the Tax Deduction at Source (TDS) threshold on interest earned on bank/post office deposits has been proposed to be raised from ₹10,000 to

their future tax liabilities and to save them from the refund process, we have given benefit to this category," Mr. Goyal said.

He said the standard de-

ing provided considering the difficulty of the middle class having to maintain families at two locations on account of their jobs, children's education, or the care of parents.

Fixed pension

In a bid to win over informal sector workers, the Finance Minister announced the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Scheme designed to ensure a fixed monthly pension of ₹3,000 per

month for informal sector workers above the age of 60. The contribution would be ₹100 per month for those joining the scheme at the age of 29, while it would be just ₹55 a month for those joining at the age of 18. The government will match the monthly contributions with an equal contribution of its own.

Coming just a day after the government revised significantly upwards the GDP growth estimates for 2016-17 and 2017-18, the Finance Minister's Budget speech spent a considerable amount of time on the state of the economy and how it was a bright spot in the world.

"The country witnessed its best phase of macro-economic stability during this period," Mr. Goyal said.

NEARBY

Ram temple issue at decisive stage: RSS chief

PRAYAGRAJ (ALLAHABAD)
 Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday said the Ayodhya issue was at a decisive stage, suggesting that those campaigning for the construction of a Ram temple should wait it out for a few months.

NATION ▶ PAGE 8

Ban on SIMI extended for 5 more years

NEW DELHI
 The Ministry of Home Affairs extended by five more years the ban on the Students Islamic Movement of India. In a notification issued on Thursday, the Ministry said SIMI was declared an "unlawful association" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

NATION ▶ PAGE 9

Ground Zero

Life after citizenship

It has been more than three years since the exchange of enclaves between India and Bangladesh took place in July 2015. But in Cooch Behar's erstwhile Bangladeshi enclaves and the newly established settlement camps, life hasn't become any easier for the 15,000 newly minted citizens of India.

OP-ED PAGE

Populist schemes breach convention: Oppn.

Chidambaram questions 'unprecedented' announcements in interim Budget

TCA SHARAD RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI

Pay no income tax
▶ PAGE 12

Just a drizzle in drought?
▶ PAGE 13

Fiscal deficit goes off target
▶ PAGE 14

Railways gets ₹1.59 lakh crore
▶ PAGE 15

Trailer of path to prosperity: PM
▶ PAGE 16

Shopping for votes
▶ EDITORIAL

Friday's interim Budget is being questioned on grounds of propriety for the significant changes in the tax code it proposes and the re-

tropective effect of a welfare measure that would kick off from the current financial year.

Mr. Goyal announced an income transfer scheme of ₹6,000 a year for farmers with land holding of two hectares or less, effective from December 1, 2018. He also said he had allocated ₹20,000 crore for this in the current financial year itself. The payment is to be made in three tranches through the year of ₹2,000 each.

"The farmers' scheme has been made effective from December 1, 2018," Mr. Chidambaram told *The Hindu*. "How is that possible? I think it is a clumsy attempt to es-

cape the scrutiny of the Election Commission when they transfer ₹2,000 in March!"

'Only 5 full budgets'

"A government is entitled to present only five Budgets, one a year," Mr. Chidambaram said. He added that the sixth one is conventionally a vote on account to prevent a government shutdown during the period from the end of the financial year to when the next government presents its Budget.

"The present government has taken liberties with this," the former Finance Minister said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 16

Not really bullish on native cow breeds

Goyal bumps up revised budget for Rashtriya Gokul Mission, slashes it for 2019-20

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

Cow conundrum: At a shelter in Amritsar. ▶ PTI

Budget documents show that the Department only managed to spend ₹187.73 crore under the scheme in 2017-18, although Gopal Ratna and Kamdhenu awards were instituted for breeders since that year, and 43 winners have been chosen.

'Superior' stock

The RGM was launched in December 2014 with an outlay of ₹500 crore (2014-15 to 2016-2017) for developing and conserving indigenous breeds through selective breeding and genetically

upgrading 'nondescript' bovine population.

The RGM aims to develop 'Gokul Gram' care centres for indigenous breeds of high "genetic merit" as well as other lesser breeds. The objective is to get native breeds to produce more milk, be more fecund, and to raise the quality of Indian cows and bulls to eventually outdo Jerseys and Holsteins. Though Mr. Goyal talked of "cow welfare" and farmer distress, the RGM doesn't look at ageing and unproductive cattle, posing a problem for farmers.

PM to launch BJP campaign in Bengal today

Left Front to blow its poll bugle with a rally at the iconic Brigade Parade Ground on Sunday

SUVIJIT BAGCHI
KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on his Lok Sabha election campaign in West Bengal on Saturday, several weeks before the announcement of the poll schedule. He will address two rallies in the State, first at Thakurnagar in North 24 Parganas, and the second at Durgapur.

The reason, as declared by the BJP, is to capture half of the State's 42 Lok Sabha

seats, the third highest among the States.

Mr. Modi is expected to address close to "100 rallies" in Bengal and the Northeast in the run-up to the poll, as the region has 67 seats, with 84% located in Bengal and Assam. But it's not just the BJP embarking on a campaign trail; the United Left Front is also bringing in its star campaigners to kick-start its campaign from the city's mega rally venue – the Brigade Parade Ground – on Sunday.

The BJP's poll strategy, according to party insiders, is three-pronged. First, it is planning to routinely fly in big leaders to campaign in the State.

Second, the party is identifying and areas to engage its workers and leaders. One such area is Thakurnagar, the headquarters of the predominantly Dalit refugees from Bangladesh over decades, where Mr. Modi will address his first public rally amid the citizenship Bill controversy.

The Prime Minister will then fly to Durgapur, which falls under Asansol, a seat last bagged by the BJP.

Third, the BJP is planning to place its cadres booth-wise and also pressure the Election Commission to deploy more Central paramilitary forces in the State.

Social media campaign

The Left Front has launched a massive social media campaign to make its Brigade rally on Sunday a success. While

former CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharya has said the rally would "pave the way for a bigger resistance", the CPI (M)'s social media managers have specially designed and posted a series of videos, songs and interviews. The event has gained momentum and the Left leaders are hopeful that it will be able to give the united Opposition really "a run for money".

The PM, too, is expected to address a Brigade rally on February 8.

DELHI Timings

SATURDAY, FEB. 02		
● RISE 07:09	SET 18:01	
● RISE 05:14	SET 15:54	
SUNDAY, FEB. 03		
● RISE 07:09	SET 18:02	
● RISE 06:01	SET 16:45	
MONDAY, FEB. 04		
● RISE 07:08	SET 18:03	
● RISE 06:45	SET 17:38	

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	22	11
Safdarjung	22	11
Palam	22	12

Delhi Palam Today
20°C Dense fog may occur at many parts during the chilly morning. Road and air transport may be disrupted.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
21°C Moderate fog may occur during morning hours. Marginal improve in pollution level is expected.

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THE HINDU

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Naveen on project opening spree

Inaugurates bridge over Mahanadi, 19 development projects

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR
Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated a high-level bridge over the Mahanadi river near Sambalpur on Friday.

The 1.5 km bridge, built at a cost of ₹117.72 crore, will connect areas including Chaurpur, Gosala, and Chiplima with Sambalpur city near the Nelson Mandela Square by reducing the distance by 25 km.

The bridge will facilitate better transportation of agricultural produce to the daily markets of Sambalpur and give boost to tourism. With direct access to Sambalpur, people from rural areas will get access to better health care and education, said Mr. Patnaik.

During his visit to Sambal-



Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik with award-winning volunteers during the Youth Conclave in Sambalpur on Friday. ■PTI

pur, the Chief Minister also addressed a Biju Yuva Bahini meeting where he inaugurated several new projects for the development of the region.

The Chief Minister also inaugurated 19 other development projects worth ₹100 crore and laid foundation stones of 14 projects worth ₹338 crore.

In the run-up to the upcoming general elections, Mr. Patnaik has been touring different districts to inaugurate projects and addressing meetings. He is scheduled to visit Mayurbhanj district on Sunday, his second visit to the district in less than a week.

Meghalaya Govt. denied slot at Kolkata book fair

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI

The Assam government on Friday admitted that a scam has taken place in the distribution of scholarships to minority students from Class X and below, and the investigation has been handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department.

In a written reply to a query carried out taking into account all the districts of Assam. So far, two teachers in Morigaon and Barpeta, two staff of bank customer care centre and one middleman have been arrested (sic)," Mr. Dutta said.

Mr. Dutta said that a scam

has taken place in the scholarship distribution scheme for the students belonging to the minority communities.

The Minister, however, did not share details such as the size of the scam but said that the CID of Assam Police is conducting the probe at present.

"The investigation is being carried out taking into account all the districts of Assam. So far, two teachers in Morigaon and Barpeta, two staff of bank customer care centre and one middleman have been arrested (sic)," Mr. Dutta said.

He said that he would visit the publisher's stall on Monday and sign copies of his book.

When contacted, Publishers and Booksellers Guild general secretary Tridip Chatterjee declined to comment on the issue.

Reading session

Mr. Roy said the organisers had given him permission to hold a book reading session on February 4 but they backtracked citing "unavoidable circumstances".

The book titled *Bharatkeshari Yugpurush Shyamprasad*, a political critique and life sketch on Mookerjee, was released last month.

Mr. Roy, who was earlier BJP's West Bengal unit chief, has been a bitter critic of the Mamata Banerjee government. "A few days ago, I spoke to Tridip Chatterjee, and told him that I would like to have a reading session of my new book. He said he will arrange it and there won't be any problem. But recently he told me that the slot can't be given to me. I don't know why he backtracked," Mr. Roy said.

Two sisters killed in bomb explosion

IBOYAIMA LAITHANGBAM
IMPHAL

Two sisters belonging to the Zeliangrong tribe were killed when a powerful bomb exploded in Noney district of Manipur on Friday morning. The two were climbing a mountain near their Leisok village, 15 km from the Khoupum police station, when the incident took place.

Though Noney district has some extremist groups, no organisation has so far claimed responsibility for the bomb explosion, the police said.

Akhiuma Kamei (18), a Class X student of Don Bosco School at Khoupum, was killed on the spot. Her younger sister, Gaikhonlu Kamei (15), succumbed to injuries on the way to hospital. Their mother was also wounded and has been hospitalised.

It is not clear who buried the World War II-like bomb near the road used by Leisok villagers to go for cultivation work, the police said, adding that a case has been registered and investigations are on.

THE HINDU DELHI
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2019

IN BRIEF



Punjab govt. to give bicycles to girl students

AMRITSAR
The Amarinder Singh-led Punjab government will give 1,38,000 bicycles to girls studying in Classes XI and XII in govt. schools. Education Minister Om Parkash Soni said on Friday. PTI

7-year-old kidnapped near station, gang-raped

CHANDIGARH
A 7-year-old girl was allegedly kidnapped from near Rohtak Railway station in Haryana and then raped by three men, police said on Friday. The incident took place late on Thursday night, they added. PTI

Stray tiger captured in Uttarakhand

DEHRADUN
A rescue operation was launched on Friday to capture a tiger which strayed into a village near the Dhaela range of Corbett Tiger Reserve. CTR Director Rahul said the tiger was captured and released into the forest. PTI

Vande Mataram singing at M.P. Secretariat back in new avatar

Don't teach us patriotism, CM Kamal Nath retorts to BJP's criticism

ANUP DUTTA
BHOPAL

The newly elected Congress government in Madhya Pradesh reintroduced the 'Vande Mataram ritual' at the State Secretariat in a novel way with much fanfare on Friday.

The practice, which had been started by the previous BJP government for State government employees to be held at regular intervals, was stopped last month by Chief Minister Kamal Nath who had promised to hold the event in a "new form" on the first working day of every month.

Keeping his word, Mr. Nath opened the event to common people and other officials besides the State government employees and made it much grander by introducing a police band and a road procession from Shaurya Smarak to Vallabh Bhavan, the Secretariat.

Addressing the event, the



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath and his Cabinet colleagues singing Vande Mataram at the State Secretariat in Bhopal on Friday. ■ A.M. FARUQUI

Chief Minister launched a scathing attack on the BJP, which had criticised his order to discontinue the practice last month, by asking it to refrain from "teaching us patriotism".

"Patriotism runs in our blood and we don't need lessons in patriotism from those who never took part in

the country's Independence movement," said Mr. Nath while speaking to media persons after the conclusion of the programme.

Large gathering

A large number of officials, State government employees and general public assembled at the Shaurya Smarak

on Friday to take part in the event. From there they proceeded to Vallabh Bhavan to the beats of the police band which played several patriotic songs. The previous BJP government used to hold the national song singing programme at Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel Park in the vicinity of Vallabh Bhavan.

Honorarium of temple priests hiked in M.P.

Aid for temples with cow shelter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHOPAL

years' rule in Madhya Pradesh," the Minister alleged.

The Congress, in its manifesto for the November 2018 Assembly polls in the State, had promised to hike the honorarium of priests, Mr. Sharma noted.

The party had also promised to set up cow shelters across the State.

Mr. Sharma, who is also the Public Relations Minister, said the government is providing extra facilities for travelling to the ongoing Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj (Allahabad).

Special trains

Four special trains would be run from the State, one of them from Habibganj station in Bhopal, to take pilgrims to the Kumbh, he said. The first train would leave on February 12, he said.

"We are also going to provide financial help to the temples which have land attached to them for sheltering and rearing cows," he said.

"The BJP did not care for Gau Mata (cow) during its 15

Technical guidance for saving power

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) in Rajasthan are getting technical guidance for saving power in metal casting and undertaking energy audits to make suitable changes in the industrial processes on the basis of their results, Principal Secretary (MSME) Alok said.

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THE HINDU

U.P. govt. told to furnish ₹25-crore guarantee

For waste management compliance

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Uttar Pradesh government to furnish a performance guarantee of ₹25 crore to ensure compliance of solid waste management rules in Agra and especially at the Taj Trapezium Zone.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said, "In view of the grave situation affecting public health in a big way and the failure of authorities in discharging their duties, we direct the State of U.P. to furnish a performance guarantee of ₹25 crore to comply with timelines in the action plan to be submitted."

Coming down heavily on the State government for failure in curbing open dumping and garbage burning, the Bench said, "Mere passing of orders by the Tribunal is of no value unless the same are faithfully execut-

4 killed in cracker factory blast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BANDA (U.P.)

Four persons were killed and one injured in an explosion at a firecracker factory here, police said on Friday.

The incident took place on Thursday evening.

House collapse

The factory was being run out of the residence of one Nafis Khan in Bisanda area. The explosion caused his two-storey house to collapse, Additional Superintendent of Police Lal Bharat Kumar Pal said.

The deceased were identified as Shahrukh (19), Salman (16), Nafis (35) and Ramvadra (15). All four were killed on the spot, he said.

The injured man was rushed to a hospital, where his condition was stated to be critical, the ASP said.

He said a probe is under way to ascertain whether the factory had a licence.

J&K highway remains closed for second day

Due to fresh snowfall and landslides

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAMMU

The Jammu-Srinagar national highway, the only all-weather surface link between Kashmir and the rest of the country, has been closed for vehicular traffic for the second consecutive day on Friday due to fresh snowfall and landslides, officials said.

"There was fresh snowfall and also landslides on highway in Pantiyal-Battery Cheshma-Ramban sector. Restoration work at several places is going on despite shooting of stones at Battery Cheshma and Pantiyal," Deputy Superintendent of Police Suresh Sharma said.

Landslides at Battery

Cheshma and Anokhi fall in the morning led to the blockage of the road, he said.

Snowfall was continuing till afternoon in Banihal and Jawahar tunnel areas, Mr. Sharma said.

Mughal road closed

The Mughal road, an alternative road connecting Kashmir's Shopian district with Poonch district of the Jammu region, has been closed for over a fortnight due to snowfall, Mr. Sharma said. The Jammu-Srinagar highway had reopened on Sunday after remaining closed for over six days following landslides and heavy snowfall.

Occultist seeks permission for human sacrifice

Sends Bihar authorities into a tizzy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEGUSARAI

An occultist here has sent the Begusarai authorities into a tizzy with an "application" seeking permission for human sacrifice to propitiate his deity.

In a video that was shared widely, the occultist purportedly claimed that human sacrifice is not a crime and he is going to sacrifice his son, an engineer, first.

Surendra Prasad Singh, who resides in Mohanpur

Pahadpur village under Mo-fussil Police Station area, wrote the letter to Sub Divisional Officer (Sadar), Begusarai, on January 29.

Screenshots of the purported letter have gone viral on social media, but the SDO Sanjiv Chaudhary said he had not received it.

"This is a serious matter. Human sacrifice is illegal. We have launched a hunt for the letter as well as the tantrik. Appropriate action will be taken," he said.

IN BRIEF



Naidu sends a strong message to Centre

AMARAVATI
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and TDP national president N. Chandrababu Naidu wore a black shirt in the Assembly to highlight the injustice done to the State by the Central government even in its last Budget. Mr. Naidu said it was the first time in his political career that he wore a black shirt. Many TDP MLAs and MLCs too wore black shirts.

Kerala HC dismisses PIL plea on organ donation

KOCHI
The Kerala High Court on Friday dismissed a public interest litigation (PIL) petition seeking to prohibit donation of life-sustaining vital organs such as heart, liver and kidney. The petition was filed by V.N. Mohan Raj of Kochi. According to him, removal of organs under the guise of organ donation had been the practice in the medical field. According to him, such removal of one organ might shorten the life span of a donor as it would cause overburden on the remaining part of the organ.

KCR completes 50 days sans full Cabinet

HYDERABAD
The Telangana government, led by Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, has completed 50 days without a full Cabinet. Technically, he has one, consisting of himself and Home Minister Mahmood Ali and has held a Cabinet meeting to announce some decisions. The last Chief Minister to function without a Cabinet was NTR, who ran the government for 17 days after dismissing his 31-member team in 1989 over the leak of budget papers to the media.



Snag-hit: Firemen and Air Force personnel at the site where a Mirage 2000 crashed near the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited airport in Bengaluru on Friday; and, right, a pilot's helmet found in the area. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT, REUTERS



Two IAF pilots killed in Mirage crash

The upgraded Mirage 2000 was on a customer acceptance flight when incident occurred: HAL

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

CThe incident comes days ahead of the Aero India Show in Bengaluru

ing the take-off and did not gain height. It caught fire and the plane fell into a gorge next to the runway, leading to a blast," said senior police officials.

Squadron Leader Siddhartha Negi, 31, hailed from Dehradun, and Squadron Leader Samir Abrol, 33, was from Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Whitefield) Abdul

Ahad said Sqn. Ldr. Negi died on the spot while Sqn. Ldr. Abrol died en route to the HAL Hospital.

Inquiry initiated

A statement from HAL said the company had initiated an enquiry into the accident in co-ordination with the IAF. The aircraft that crashed was part of the Mirage upgradation programme at HAL.

The pilots were on a test flight after the aircraft had been upgraded.

A source said the plane had completed six sorties by

HAL over a period of time. The IAF had just flown the first of acceptance trials and was flying the Mirage for the second test. It was not immediately clear how many more tests the IAF needed to do before taking charge of the upgraded fighter.

Fellow air soldiers took to social media to express their sorrow over the death of "Samir and Siddhartha," the pilots in their early 30s.

In a statement, HAL said, "The HAL family expresses deepest condolences to the grief-stricken families."



Samir Abrol

Dasara elephants help trap tiger on the prowl

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
H.D. KOTE

The tranquillised tiger
■ M.A. SRIRAM

along with Abhimanyu, Gopalswamy, Bheema, Krishna, Ganesh, and Sarala were in the forefront carry-

ing veterinary assistant Akram, who sighted the tiger on the jungle game road. Arjuna followed the tiger, which tried to hide behind some vegetation. But Arjuna took a detour, and the crouching tiger came into sight. Akram then fired the tranquillising dart which found its mark.

The tiger was immediately covered with a net and transferred to a cage. As soon as it revived, it was shifted to the Mysuru zoo for examination.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Jayaram, who led the operation, told *The Hindu* they knew where the tiger was based on camera trap images. It was found to have a slight deformity in one limb, and hunting for food must have been difficult. Besides, the pug marks indicated that it was unable to move swiftly.

Guard attacked

Meanwhile, a forest guard was attacked by a tiger on

the fringes of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve on Friday. Ramu escaped with minor injuries, but is in a state of shock and has been admitted to the K.R. Hospital in Mysuru.

Chief Conservator of Forests Ambadi Madhav, who is also the Bandipur park director, said the tiger may have been pushed out onto the fringes in a territorial fight. However, they have managed to drive the tiger back about 4 km into the jungle.

Who has the right to light 'makaravilakku'?

Kerala MLAs back Mala Araya tribals
HC closes plea

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Friday closed all the petitions that challenged the imposition of restrictions as well as prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code at Sabarimala and its base stations at Nilackal and Pampa.

Minister for Devaswom Kadakkampally Surendran said the Mala Arayas living on the 18 hills, including Sabarimala, had been lighting the 'makaravilakku' traditionally and the community priests had performed the honey "abhishekam" of the idol.

They had claimed that the community had been ignored now and sought restoration of their rights.

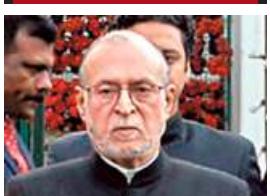
The Minister said this was stated in a representation given by the Aikya Mala Araya Mahasabha, Ayappa Dharma Sangham, and the Akhila Travancore Mala Araya Maha Sabha.

The High Court had also pointed out that there was proof to show that the community staying in the hills had carried out the puja and lighted the 'makaravilakku', he said.

The Devaswom Minister said the government would look into all aspects and take an appropriate decision on the demand.

6 CITY

IN BRIEF



L-G to inaugurate treatment plant

NEW DELHI Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal will inaugurate two compost plants and an effluent treatment plant at a nursery run by the SDMC in Punjabi Bagh on Friday, the corporation said. SDMC Mayor Narendra Chawla and Commissioner Puneet Goel will also be present among others. STAFF REPORTER

Red Line extension to be inspected on Feb. 5

NEW DELHI The CMRS will inspect the Dilshad Garden-New Bud Adda corridor of the Delhi Metro's Red Line on February 5, said metro officials. The 9.4-km corridor is an extension of the 25-km-long Rithala to Dilshad Garden corridor. "This corridor has eight stations — Shahid Nagar, Raj Bagh, Rajendra Nagar, Shyam Park, Mohan Nagar, Arthala and Hindon River and New Bus Adda stations," said DMRC spokesperson Anuj Dayal. STAFF REPORTER

Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	306	Gurugram	201
Ghaziabad	297	Faridabad	-
Noida	281	Greater Noida	286
Good 0-50	51-100	Satisfactory 101-200	Moderate 201-300
Poor 301-400	>401	Very poor 501-1000	Severe >1000
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]			

DDA not handing over sites for mohalla clinics'

AAP govt. tells HC; notices issued to DDA, DMRC and other local agencies

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI AAP government told the Delhi High Court on Friday that DDA was not handing over sites for setting up 'mohalla clinics'.

A Bench of Chief Justice Rajendra Menon and Justice V.K. Rao issued notices to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Delhi Metro Rail Corporation

(DMRC), Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and other local agencies seeking their responses to the Delhi government's application by March 29, the next date of hearing.

Creating hurdles The High Court direction came after the government said that apart from the DDA, various other local agencies, including DMRC

and DJB, were also creating hurdles in setting up the clinics on land owned by them.

Over 300 sites The government said that 333 sites for which no objection certificate (NOC) has been received have been handed over to the Public Works Department to construct the clinics within three months. But, in res-

pect of some proposed sites, DDA has refused to grant permission saying "no specific land can be earmarked in the layout plan for those areas as norms for the same are not given in the Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) 2021".

The Delhi government has sought directions to the DDA to reconsider its stand and make available the requisite land along with the NOCs.

Rescued 600 from child labour, govt. tells HC

Claims to have recovered ₹30 lakh from their employers

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party government told the Delhi High Court on Friday that it has rescued over 600 minors from child labour during 2018-19 and recovered over ₹30 lakh as rehabilitation amount and minimum wages from their employers.

The government's submission came in response to an application by NGO 'Bachpan Bachao Andolan'

(BBA) and associate organisation 'Save the Childhood Foundation' seeking implementation of the court's 2009 judgment to prevent and eliminate child labour.

The government has said that it rescued 611 kids from child labour in 2018-19 of whom 587 has been restored to their families. It also said it has recovered ₹10.6 lakh towards rehabilitation amount in respect of children below 14 years of age, and ₹20.69 lakh

as minimum wages from their employers. Apart from that 63 cases of child/bonded labour were registered and 43 employers were also arrested, the government has said.

Senior advocate H.S. Phoolka, appearing for the NGOs, said a lot more needs to be done by the government and the police to ensure proper implementation of the High Court's 2009 direction.

Green panel raps DPCC over report on 'polluting' factory

Terming it 'fixed match', NGT asks DPCC to recover damages from Wazirpur unit

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Terming a report on polluting industries, submitted by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee, a "fixed match", the National Green Tribunal has directed the DPCC to use its statutory powers and recover damages from the factory in Wazirpur.

A Bench headed by NGT

chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said: "In matters of violation of environmental norms, the regulatory authorities must act with responsibility and ascertain facts of ownership, occupation, use of electricity, etc. It is not impossible to assess the facts pertaining to illegal activities even if on a particular date, to avoid law, the law

sued into the effect that the basement was locked..." the Bench observed.

The NGT was hearing a plea by city resident Mohd Salim, who claimed that an illegal four-storey building was built in Wazirpur. It alleged that a plastic manufacturing unit had been installed in the building's basement.

"The inspection was meant to be sudden and surprise. It's a fixed match. In the current matter, the report submitted shows that... show cause notice was is-

violation locks the building or vacates it." The Bench added that the nature of inspection carried out by the pollution monitoring committee was "evasive."

"The inspection was meant to be sudden and surprise. It's a fixed match. In the current matter, the report submitted shows that... show cause notice was is-

violation locks the building or vacates it." The Bench added that the nature of inspection carried out by the pollution monitoring committee was "evasive."

"The inspection was meant to be sudden and surprise. It's a fixed match. In the current matter, the report submitted shows that... show cause notice was is-

Four held, one apprehended for stealing cattle from Timarpur farm

48 head of cattle recovered; accused had threatened municipal staff before committing the crime

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Five men have been arrested and one apprehended for allegedly trespassing and stealing 55 cows and three buffaloes from a cattle pond after threatening a municipal worker in north Delhi's Timarpur, the police said on Thursday.

Police officers of Timarpur, Wazirabad and Maurice Nagar were informed about the incident and after an overnight joint effort by the

police teams, 48 cattle were taken back to the farm.

The accused Naresh (45), Kallu (20), Ankit (20), Manjit (21) and Manjot (24), are all residents of Rampur in North West Delhi, they added.

Escaped with 58 animals On Thursday, about 11 p.m., a group led by Naresh and other residents of Rampur village illegally entered the premises of a farm and drove away with 58 animals after

allegedly threatening the municipal staff, Delhi Police Commissioner (North) Nupur Prasad said.

The MCD staff then approached the police, following which a team was rushed to the spot and recovered the animals from North and North West districts of Delhi, the officer said.

A case was registered at the Timarpur police station and all the five accused were produced before a court and sent to judicial custody, police

said

Officials attacked

Meanwhile, officials of the north Delhi municipal corporation were attacked while rounding up stray cattle in its Keshav Puram Zone on Thursday evening.

A spokesperson of the corporation said that stones were thrown at Deputy Director of the Veterinary Department, J.S. Dagar's car while in Tri Nagar on duty.

Following this, he left his

vehicle at the Keshav Puram police station and lodged a complaint.

The official was again attacked after leaving the police station in a cab and the road blocked with tractors and motorcycles at Dholakpur.

But, he managed to slip away.

A truck carrying cattle was stopped in Prembari Pul and three of the five animals were released by miscreants, a spokesperson said.

on social media. "Coming back to Delhi from Noida? Avoid roads. Take the metro. The traffic is insane. 2 hours for a 35 min route. And I have still not reached [sic]," one Twitter user said.

Tractors and trolleys

The rally, organised by Kisan Uday Abhiyan, was stopped at the DND flyover since they came with tractors and trolleys, which is not allowed inside the city, said a senior officer.

DND flyway shut briefly due to farmers' rally

Budget 2019: CM miffed with ₹1,112 cr. allocation

Says share in central taxes remains frozen, nothing earmarked for local bodies

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Centre allocated ₹1,112 crore for the Capital in the Interim Budget on Friday, while keeping its share in central taxes unchanged.

The Delhi government was given ₹472 crore as central assistance in the Interim Budget for 2019-20, presented by Finance Minister Piyush Goyal in Parliament.

In the previous Budget, the Centre had allotted a total of ₹790 crore. The central assistance to the Delhi government was ₹499.99 crore.

Terming the Budget the "final jumla" of the Narendra Modi government, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said it has disappointed the city. "Final jumla of Modi govt : it's interim budget too completely disappoints Delhi. Our share in central taxes remains frozen at ₹325 crore & nothing earmarked for local bodies. Delhi continues to be on its own financially [sic]"

ARVIND KEJRIWAL
Chief Minister

"stagnant since 2001-02."

"The Delhi government deserves its legitimate share in central taxes to finance various developmental projects. We had requested the Centre to enhance the allocation to ₹6,000 crore as share in central taxes as against ₹325 crore being released to Delhi," the statement said.

The Budget of Delhi has increased from ₹8,739 crore in 2001-02 to ₹53,000 crore in 2018-19, whereas the share in central taxes has remained frozen at ₹325 crore since 2001-02, said the statement.

Over ₹7,000 cr. for cops

The Interim Budget allocated ₹7,881.77 crore for Delhi Police, an increase of 6.4% from the 2018-19 Budget.

Apart from this, the grant for the Delhi Disaster Response Fund remained unchanged with an allocation of ₹5 crore.

Delhi Finance Minister Manish Sisodia said the share in central taxes of Delhi had not been increased from ₹325 crore and had remained

Traders' body disappointed with Budget

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said the Interim Budget had utterly neglected the trading community.

Feel unwanted

Union office-bearers said while every other section of the economy had been given relief, the trading community has been made to feel unwanted. It added that the CAIT would send fresh memorandums to the Prime Minister and Finance Minister urging them to take care of traders.

THE HINDU DELHI
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2019

CITY 7

IN BRIEF



Vatra moves Delhi court, seeks anticipatory bail

NEW DELHI Robert Vatra on Friday moved a Delhi court seeking anticipatory bail in a money laundering case lodged by the Enforcement Directorate. A lawyer from the prosecution team confirmed that Mr. Vatra has sought anticipatory bail in the case in which his close aide Manoj Arora was granted interim protection from arrest till February 6. PTI

Toddler dies after father throws her on floor

NODA (UP) A one-year-old girl died when her inebriated father threw her on the floor of their house in a fit of rage after an argument with his wife, the police said on Friday. Pankaj, who works as a carpenter, has been booked for murder but is absconding. PTI

Doctor held for raping minor in Outer Delhi

NEW DELHI A 17-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a doctor in Outer Delhi's Sultanpur on Wednesday, the police said on Friday. The accused, Joginder Singh, has been arrested. The minor alleged that she had gone to visit the doctor for examination when he asked her to remove her clothes after which he touched her inappropriately, they said, adding that a case has been registered on charges of rape and under sections of POCSO Act. STAFF REPORTER

End Narsingh case probe in a month, HC tells CBI

NEW DELHI The Delhi HC on Friday asked the CBI to complete probe into wrestler Narsingh Yadav's 2016 complaint alleging that his food was spiked leading to a 4-year ban on him. The court has given a month time. Justice Najmi Waziri said he cannot be left remediless noting that the shelf life of an athlete is very short. STAFF REPORTER

Bawana compensation goof-up: son hints at hospital negligence

Says his father got the money as mother's name was on list of Bawana fire victims

HEMAMI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Sitting outside his one-room accommodation in north-west Delhi's Pooth Khurd, the 14-year-old son of the man, accused of wrongly receiving compensation meant for the victims of the Bawana fire last year, hinted at negligence by hospital authorities at the time of the incident.

The minor, who works at a factory in Bawana and lives alone now, claimed that his father left without a word about four months ago and he has no idea where he is.

The father has been accused of receiving ₹5 lakh compensation, which was announced by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for the 17 families of the victims who were killed in the fire in January 2018.

Account 'seized'

The minor's father's account has been 'seized', which had about ₹2 lakh in it, said the police. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate's office has submitted a complaint to the police to register an FIR.

A senior police officer said that they are examining the



The minor, who works at a factory in Bawana, lives in a one-room accommodation in north-west Delhi.

* SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

complaint. The minor told *The Hindu* on Friday that his mother was an asthma patient and was admitted to Maharishi Valmiki Hospital on January 20. "She was admitted at night and about an hour later, the fire accident victims were rushed to the emergency ward. After seeing the victims, she started breathing heavily and suffered a heart attack," he said, adding that she died immediately and it was a natural death. He recalled that he and his father were told by the doctors that her post-mortem had to be done. "We did not understand why they wanted to conduct a post-

mortem. We asked them and they said it is required. Her body was then shifted to Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital," he said.

Two days later, the family went to the hospital and were given her body – on the same day the families of Bawana fire victims were given the bodies of their loved ones. "They had a list and they gave us the body according to that list. They also gave us the death certificate," he claimed.

Told to collect cheque
A few days later, the minor claimed that officials in civil dress came to their residence

in Pooth Khurd and said there was a cheque in their name that they needed to collect. They were told to bring their Aadhaar card and the death certificate. But the boy's father did not have an Aadhaar card at that time.

"They said that my mother's name is on the list of people who will receive the money. My father then went to our village in Bihar and brought the Aadhaar card. About 25 days after the incident, he went to some office and collected the cheque," the minor claimed.

"We are uneducated and illiterate people. We did as we were told. We do not understand paper work and documents. Also, we are poor. Why would we deny money if we were being given?" he asked.

The minor said that he has been facing trouble as his father is nowhere to be seen and he is being questioned by the police and "other officials". "Some people came a few weeks ago and took some documents, including bank papers and Aadhaar cards of my father and brother," he said.

Court allows Moin Qureshi to travel to UAE, Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Friday allowed controversial meat exporter Moin Akhtar Qureshi, accused in a money laundering case, to travel to the UAE and Pakistan noting there was no material to oppose his plea.

Special Judge Santosh Snehi Mann allowed Qureshi to travel to the UAE from February 15-23 for attending the Gulf Food Festival and from March 6-20 to Pakistan to attend his niece's wedding.

The Enforcement Directorate and CBI opposed his plea.

The court said it was not disputed that accused has travelled abroad in the past on many occasions with the permission of the court and except for the "apprehension" of the ED and the CBI that Qureshi may not return to face the trial or join investigation, there is "no serious contest" to his applications.

The court directed Qureshi to furnish an additional security of ₹2 crore in the form of bank guarantee.

Murdered senior couple cremated

Bodies handed over to elder son after legal formalities

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The elderly couple, who was found murdered in Mount Kailash apartment in south Delhi on January 26, were cremated by their elder son on Friday.

Amit Khanuja, who is settled in the United States was unable to reach Delhi at the earliest as he was stuck in a snow storm in Florida.

However, he reached Delhi on Thursday night.

The bodies were preserved in the AIIMS mortuary.

ary after the post-mortem.

After the legal formalities, the bodies were handed over to Mr. Khanuja.

Juvenile in shelter home

"The cremation was done at the Lodhi crematorium. The accused have been sent to jail and the juvenile is in shelter home. We have recovered the booty and it will be a watertight case. The chargesheet will be filed at the earliest," said a senior police officer.

The deceased were identi-

Labourer killed, one hurt after accidentally falling into pit

Accident happened in Outer Delhi's Vijay Vihar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A 22-year-old labourer was killed and another injured after they accidentally fell into a pit they had dug in outer Delhi's Vijay Vihar on Friday evening.

The deceased was identified as Ravi Kumar. The injured, Shiv Dutt (19), is from Amroha in Uttar Pradesh,

said the police.

Police received information about the incident around 5.30 p.m. It was learnt that the two were digging a pit, said the police, adding that the work was initially assigned to the Delhi Jal Board, which later passed it to a private company.

"The labourers were standing beside the 16-foot-

deep hole... the surface was not solid and they slipped and fell into the pit and got submerged in the sand," said Gaurav Sharma, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North).

The victims were rushed to Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital where Ravi was declared brought dead, while Shiv suffered minor injuries.

7 years after murder, cops solve case

Three held for killing woman who refused to vacate house

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Seven years after a woman was murdered, the police cracked the case with the arrest of three persons, including an advocate and a Delhi Jal Board sweeper.

The accused allegedly killed the woman, a resident of Model Town, for not vacating her rented accommodation, the police said on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Ram Gopal Naik said the accused have been identified as advo-

cate Virender Kumar (44), DJB worker Prithi Singh alias Prithvi (59), and Kamlesh, a rickshaw puller (28).

While Prithi and Kamlesh were arrested on Thursday, Virender was arrested on Friday.

Identified in 2012

Police said a woman's body was found in New Umsanpur on December 18, 2011, after which a murder case was registered and subsequently transferred the case to Crime Branch. The woman was identified as Kiran Ag-

garwal on January 2012 after her brother lodged a missing report which was converted into a kidnapping case, said the police.

"During investigation, several facts emerged that gave clues about the suspects," Mr. Naik said.

After seven years, on Thursday, police received information about the suspects Prithi and Kamlesh, who were then arrested and based on the information provided by them, Virender was arrested on Friday, the police said.

Cable operator shot by motorbike-borne men

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 38-year-old cable operator was shot dead in north-east Delhi's Dayalpur on Thursday night by motorbike-borne men, the police said on Friday. Their semi-decomposed bodies were recovered from their three-bedroom apartment on January 26. Their bodies were discovered after a distant relative called the police control room claiming that the senior citizens had gone "missing".

They were murdered on January 18, said the police.

which the caller said his associate has been shot at by two motorbike-borne men and he was taking him to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital," Mr. Thakur said.

When the police reached the hospital, the victim had already been declared dead.

Personal enmity
"Preliminary probe points to personal enmity. Local cable network rivalry can be the reason but the police are working on the case," said a senior officer.

Foreign national convicted of possessing drugs

Recovery made in absence of officials

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

Stating that recovery made in a Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS) case in the absence of a Gazetted Officer or an Executive Magistrate has no adverse impact on the probe, a Delhi Court on Friday convicted a Nigerian man for possessing 104 grams of drugs.

"The argument of the counsel for accused that the accused has to be compulsorily taken before a Magistrate or a Gazetted officer before conducting a personal search in pursuance of the secret information and failure to do so will vitiate the proceedings," Mr. Bansal had further said.

Current case
In the current case, Delhi Police Crime Branch had arrested the accused, Izchukwu Joseph, on a tip-off from Chhattarpur in 2015. He was also booked on charges of travelling on a forged visa. The court convicted him for this offence as well.

"The prosecution has proved that on December 18, 2015, the accused was apprehended and commercial quantity of drugs weighing 105.27 grams (104 grams according to the seizure memo) was recovered from his possession. He was in possession of drugs in contravention of Section 8 (c) of the NDPS Act 1985. He thereby committed the offence punishable under Section 21 (c) of NDPS Act," the Judge said.

DELHI TODAY

February 2
Talk: Commemorating 150 Years of Gandhi series organised by Sahmat. Lecture on "Nai Taleem - Gandhi's Challenge to Hegemony" by Prof. Amit Sadgopan, educationist at Gomti Hall, India Habitat Centre, 7 p.m.

February 3
Talk: Lecture on "What is an artist residency good for?" by Jean-Baptiste Joly at Siddhartha Hall, Goethe-institute, Max Mueller Bhavan, 6:30 p.m.

Music: Jazz concert presented by "Working Title" - David Soin Tappeser, drummer and composer; Gustav Mezo, pianist and Theo Malka-Wishart, double bassist at C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre, 6:30 p.m.

Exhibition: "Vadehra Art Gallery presents 'Scripted in Time II', a solo show of sculptures, wall-mounted paintings and photographs by Rameshwar Broota at Shridharani Art Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205,

FILM REVIEW

Lightweight approach to queer romance

ELKDHAL might be about a story that's 'new' to Bollywood but Sonam K Ahuja can't rise above teary-eyed tepidness

NAMRATA JOSHI

In a scene early on in *Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga* (*ELKDHAL*), Sweety (Sonam K Ahuja), a chance spectator of writer Sahil Mirza's (Rajkummar Rao) play, tells him why it doesn't work for her – the love story doesn't have enough *siyappa* (trouble, turbulence). "Feels kaise aayegi (how will you get the right feeling for the romance)??" she asks rhetorically. That's exactly what is amiss in *ELKDHAL*.

ELKDHAL, which is a



Sonam K Ahuja in the movie.

and lows, no stirring situations, hardly any rousing emotions and a perennially yelling brother for the sole adversary. No wonder the audience is left largely disengaged and unconcerned about Sweety and her lover Kuhu (Regina Cassandra). In

fact, the two hardly get any screen time together to make one get any sense of their relationship.

Cassandra lights up the screen in the 10-15 minutes we see her. But the focus is entirely on Sweety and Ahuja proves utterly inept in giving

depth or nuance to her character, especially in the "big reveal" moment that plays out stone cold. There is enough angst, conflict and introspection here but it never reaches out, instead it gets reduced to a teary-eyed tepidness and an all pervasive moroseness in the hands of Ahuja.

It's the seniors then – Chhatri (Juhi Chawla) and Gifty (Madhumalti Kapoor) – who appear more spunk and progressive than the younger lot. Rajkummar Rao

adds whatever little heft there is to the film and manages to convey the "feels" with just one look or two.

Perhaps the overtly righteous sense of cause – no doubt significant and much needed – becomes too much of a burden and gets the better of the filmmaking itself. *ELKDHAL* might be bringing a "new story" to Bollywood but plays out too flat, lightweight and facile to be of any consequence. Tell us another love story, please.

(For full review visit www.thehindu.com)

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD - 12983

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The solution will appear in Delhi Metro dated February 4, 2019, Solution No. 12982

Across

- 1 Small stone (6)
- 4 Tangled (6)
- 8 Implement for removing hair (5)
- 9 Sediment (7)
- 10 Acrobats' swing (7)
- 11 Wash – clean (5)
- 12 Moral decline (9)
- 1

IN BRIEF



Fernandes' ashes buried in Delhi cemetery

NEW DELHI, Amid prayers and sound of a bugle, George Fernandes' ashes were on Friday buried at a colonial-era cemetery in the heart of Delhi, and part of the remains will be taken to Bengaluru, his family said. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and George's friends and admirers were present. PTI

K.P. Singh takes charge as Haryana police chief

CHANDIGARH Senior Indian Police Service officer K.P. Singh on Friday took charge as officiating Director-General of Police, Haryana. This is in addition to his present duty as D-G Human Rights Commission, said an official statement.

University student killed as vehicle falls into gorge

ITANAGAR A student of North East Frontier Technical University was killed and eight were injured when their vehicle veered off the road and plunged into a gorge in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh early on Friday, the police said. PTI

Four killed, 7 injured in truck-van collision in U.P.

JALAN (U.P.) Four people were killed and seven injured in a head-on collision between a truck and a van here on Friday, the police said. The incident took place in the Orai area around 8.30 a.m., SP Arvind Chaturvedi said. PTI

Cop arrested for taking ₹24,000 bribe

JAIPUR A Rajasthan Police head constable was arrested on Friday for taking a bribe of ₹24,000 from a gang-rape victim's father, an Anti-Corruption Bureau official said. PTI

Joyride in snow



Tourists take a mule ride during snowfall at Kufri near Shimla on Friday. ■ PTI

Ram temple issue at decisive stage, tread carefully: RSS chief

It should not be built just to please voters, says Mohan Bhagwat at VHP conclave



Mohan Bhagwat in Prayagraj on Friday. ■ PTI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA PRAYAGRAJ (ALLAHABAD)
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday said the Ayodhya issue was at a decisive stage, suggesting that those campaigning for the construction of a Ram temple should wait it out for a few months.

"The Ram temple is on the verge of being built. So we must tread cautiously," he said on the final day of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's conclave at the Kumbh Mela here.

The RSS chief added that those campaigning for the temple must not get diverted

but after that we all should ensure" that the construction begins.

Mr. Bhagwat praised the BJP-led government for bringing a Bill in Parliament to help non-Muslim minorities from neighbouring countries to seek Indian citizenship.

He said any agitation for the Ram temple will have an impact on the scene ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

People will say they should elect those who will construct the temple, he said, but added that it should not be built just to please voters.

from their goal. He said people should be made aware of the issue and, if needed, there should be an expression of anger.

He suggested that it may be all right to watch developments for about six months,

The Ram temple at the disputed Ayodhya site was on top of agenda of the two-day 'dharm sansad', the religious council which on Friday was presided over by Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas head Mahant Nitya Gopal Das.

The VHP meeting comes days after the Centre filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking permission to transfer the surplus land adjacent to the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site to its original owners. Referring to the petition, the RSS chief said the government has made its intentions clear.

Priyanka won't be a factor in U.P., says Deputy CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KOLKATA

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma on Friday said Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's appointment as Congress general secretary for eastern U.P. will not be a factor in the coming Lok Sabha elections as she had unsuccessfully campaigned for the party in the last two parliamentary polls.

The people of Uttar Pradesh will reject the "opportunistic" SP-BSP alliance and the BJP would increase its tally over that of the last Lok Sabha polls, he claimed.

In 2014 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP had swept the polls in Uttar Pradesh by winning 71 out of the 80 Lok Sabha seats. Its alliance partner Apna Dal had also won two seats.

"This time the BJP-led NDA will win at least 74 seats from U.P. Our tally will increase by at least one seat," he claimed.

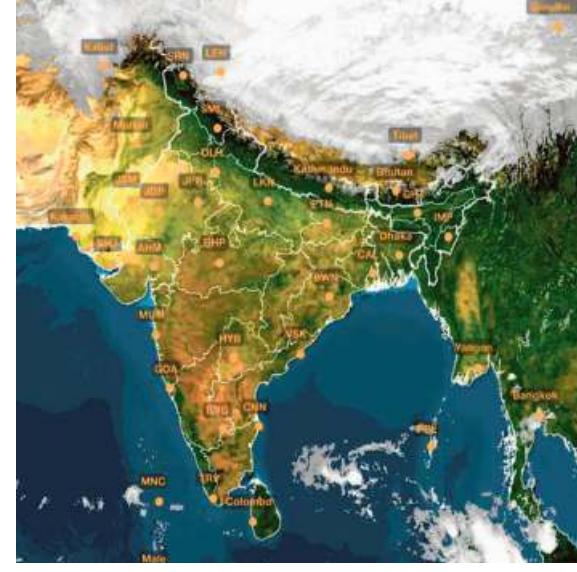
On the Ram temple issue, Mr. Sharma said it is not a political issue but a matter of faith for the BJP and asked the Congress and other opposition parties to clear their stands on the issue.

"The Ram temple issue is not a political issue for us but a matter of faith. And you don't change your faith everyday. We firmly believe that Ram Mandir will be built and we are waiting for the court's verdict," Mr. Sharma told reporters here.

"I urge the opposition and the Congress to clear their stand on the issue - whether they want a Ram Mandir or Babri Masjid. They should clear their stand before the masses," he said.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Saturday: Dense to very dense fog likely at isolated places over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, north Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh. Cold wave conditions likely in isolated pockets over Gujarat

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	30.2	10.6	Kozhikode	—	35.4	23.4
Ahmedabad	—	27.8	12.8	Kurnool	—	31.5	19.5
Aizawl	—	28.3	—	Lucknow	—	24.5	11.6
Allahabad	—	28.8	10.4	Madurai	—	33.1	21.2
Bengaluru	—	27.8	15.7	Mangaluru	—	34.5	21.4
Bhopal	—	25.8	10.5	Mumbai	—	29.4	16.4
Bhubaneswar	—	29.8	9.9	Mysuru	—	29.1	14.8
Chandigarh	—	19.8	9.4	New Delhi	—	22.5	11.0
Chennai	—	29.6	22.7	Patna	—	25.8	11.8
Coimbatore	—	30.7	21.5	Port Blair	—	30.4	25.7
Dehradun	—	0.1	21.1	Puducherry	—	30.3	20.0
Gangtok	—	16.2	7.7	Pune	—	30.8	11.7
Goa	—	33.3	20.0	Raipur	—	28.0	13.0
Guwahati	—	27.1	10.3	Ranchi	—	28.2	8.6
Hubbali	—	29.0	17.0	Shillong	—	19.2	8.2
Hyderabad	—	29.6	17.7	Shimla	—	6.2	1.7
Imphal	—	25.0	5.0	Srinagar	—	6.5	—0.5
Jaipur	—	20.7	12.4	Trivandrum	—	34.7	22.2
Kochi	—	31.8	24.0	Tiruchi	—	32.3	21.0
Kohima	—	20.4	5.5	Vijayawada	—	29.5	19.1
Kolkata	—	27.9	13.5	Visakhapatnam	—	28.2	20.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE	
Ahmedabad	100	108	27	174	—	■■■■■	
Bengaluru	—	4	61	70	97	■■■■■	
Chennai	—	.59	16	57	162	■■■■■	
Delhi	—	.38	.79	69	385	■■■■■	
Hyderabad	—	3	100	32	145	■■■■■	
Kolkata	—	.19	106	19	360	■■■■■	
Lucknow	—	.14	.72	89	363	■■■■■	
Mumbai	—	.22	—	96	78	128	■■■■■
Pune	—	.53	.32	44	180	146	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	—	—	32	—	—	—	

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Patna, Bihar recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 389 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Patiala, Punjab recorded a healthy AQI score of 65

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

IN BRIEF

**Negative markings in exams bad in law: HC**

CHENNAI
The Madras High Court on Friday ruled that negative marking is bad in law and should be done away with. Justice R. Mahadevan passed the ruling on a writ petition filed in 2013 by S. Nelson Prabakaran.

Meenakshi temple mandapam to be restored

MADURAI
A year after a fire inside Meenakshi Temple destroyed its Mandapam, restoration work is on at a steady pace. The work is expected to get over in two years at an estimated cost of ₹20 crore.

'ULFA dictating protests against Citizenship Bill'

GUWAHATI
Assam Minister Hiranta Biswa Sarma on Friday said the anti-talks faction of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam has been coordinating the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 in the State.

Varavara Rao, Gadling arrested in arson case

NAGPUR
Telugu poet Varavara Rao, accused of having Maoist links, and advocate Surendra Gadling were arrested in connection with the 2016 Surjagarh iron ore mine arson case, the Gadchiroli police said on Friday. PTI

Case filed against Rahul for 'offending' poster

PATNA
Ahead of the Jan Akansha rally of the Congress in Patna, a case was filed here on Friday against party president Rahul Gandhi and others for an "offending" party poster.

Indus Dolphin to be State aquatic animal of Punjab

CHANDIGARH
The Punjab government has declared Indus River Dolphin – found only in the Beas – as the State aquatic animal. Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said the rare aquatic animal would be the flagship species for the conservation of the Beas eco-system.

Express train derails, loco pilot injured

JAIPOUR
The Dayodaya Express – a superfast train between Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur and Rajasthan's Ajmer – derailed near the Sangamer railway station, 15 km from here, on Friday. Loco pilot Khemraj sustained injuries.

Ban on SIMI extended for 5 more years**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI
The Ministry of Home Affairs extended by five more years the ban on the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI).

In a notification issued on Thursday, the Ministry said the SIMI was declared an "unlawful association" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

It said that if the unlawful activities of the SIMI were not curbed and controlled immediately, it would take the opportunity to "continue its subversive activities and re-organise its activists who are still absconding; disrupt the secular fabric of the country by polluting the minds of the people by creating communal disharmony; propagate anti-national sentiments; escalate secessionism by supporting militancy; and undertake activities prejudicial to the integrity and security of the country."

The notification said it was necessary to declare the SIMI an unlawful association with immediate effect in exercise of the powers from sub-sections (1) and (3) of Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

SIMI was first banned in 2001.

Appointment of interim CBI chief had panel's nod: Centre

'Govt. appears to have misled court', tweets Bhushan

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday informed the Supreme Court that the high-power committee's consent had been obtained prior to the government's appointment of M. Nageswara Rao as interim CBI Director.

"The high power committee had indeed given permission for the appointment of the interim CBI Director," Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal submitted.

However, later in the day, advocate Prashant Bhushan, for petitioner NGO Common Cause and activist Anjali Bhardwaj, tweeted that he had personally got in touch



The CBI headquarters in New Delhi.

with Opposition Leader and high-power committee (HPC) member, Mallikarjun Kharge, who "confirmed" that the committee had taken no such decision to reappoint Mr. Rao as interim CBI Director.

"The government appears to have misled the court and perhaps submitted fabricated minutes of the HPC meeting," Mr. Bhushan wrote on Twitter, accusing the govern-

ment of having committed "contempt of court".

No decision on CBI chief

The meeting of the PM-led selection panel on Friday to choose the next CBI chief was inconclusive after Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge asked the Centre to

prepare a list of eligible officers with impeccable service record. The panel is likely to meet again.

SC seeks govt. response on transfers

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered the government to respond to a petition made by A.K. Bassi, a CBI officer who was the probe head in a corruption case against former CBI Director Rakesh Asthana, against his back-to-back transfer from New Delhi to Port Blair in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

A CJI-led Bench asked the government to respond within six weeks on the allegations of nepotism raised by Mr. Bassi.

Govt. gives up on triple talaq Bill

Citizenship Bill also meets same fate

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The government has effectively given up on at least two of its more controversial legislations – the Citizenship Amendment Bill and the triple talaq Bill – that were awaiting consideration by the Rajya Sabha, after opposition parties made it clear that they could not guarantee smooth functioning of the House if any contentious bills were tabled.

With the numbers stacked against the government on both the contentious issues in the Upper House, the two bills, which were cleared by the Lok Sabha in the last session, will now lapse once the 16th Lok Sabha's term ends.

The decision on the bills to be tabled in the Upper House was taken at a meeting chaired by Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu that included government representatives and opposition parties. The meeting saw Mr. Naidu appeal that since it was the last session before the elections, a sincere effort ought to be made by all to ensure proper functioning of the House, sources said.

Parliamentary Affairs Mi-



Opposition parties have threatened to disrupt the Rajya Sabha if contentious bills are taken up.

nister Narendra Singh Tomar and his deputy Vijay Goel held a 30-minute follow-up meeting with the Leader of the Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad and leaders of other parties.

The Rajya Sabha will now take up only six legislative proposals. The bills slated to be debated include The Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2019, the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018, the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018, the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill, 2019, the Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019, and the Aadhaar and other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019.



Battle ground: People outside a damaged house after two Jaish-e-Mohammad militants were killed in a gun battle with security forces at Pulwama in Jammu & Kashmir. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Woman shot point-blank in J&K, video posted on social media

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR

Suspected militants filmed a chilling video of the shooting of a 25-year-old woman, whose body was found in south Kashmir's Shopian on Friday. Separately, security forces killed two Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militants in a night-long operation in Pulwama.

The woman's killers had shot the video with the intention to circulate it on social media platforms, said a police spokesman, who

spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The video, which shows the victim pleading for her life with folded hands, had been downloaded by hundreds of social media accounts across the State. The 10-second video also shows two bullets being pumped into the woman from close range, after which she is shown lying dead on the ground.

The victim was identified as Ishrat Munir, daughter of Munir Ahmad Dar, a resident of Pulwama's Dangpora.

Ms. Munir is a cousin of slain Al-Badr commander Zeenat-ul-Islam, who was killed in an operation in Kulgam's Katpora area on January 12 along with his associates.

Meanwhile, the two JeM

militants were killed in an exchange of fire on Thursday night.

A house was also damaged in the encounter, and ammunition were also recovered, police said.

Underworld criminal Ravi Pujari detained in Senegal

Extradition process begins; he is wanted in several cases

GAUTAM S. MENGLE
MOHIT M. RAO

MUMBAI/BENGALURU

Underworld criminal Ravi Sulyia Pujari, who is accused of murder and extortion in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat, was arrested recently in Dakar, Senegal.

Senegalese policemen arrested Pujari from a barbershop and confirmed his detention to the Indian authorities on January 21.

Pujari, who is accused in at least 91 cases in Karnataka and a further 50 cases in Mumbai, had eluded the police for over three decades, since his association with Dawood Ibrahim.

In June last, Karnataka police launched "Operation Ravi Pujari" to arrest him. Police had information that the criminal was a partner in



Ravi Pujari

expedite four pending Red Notices to Interpol.

The break came when Pujari surfaced in the Senegalese capital, Dakar. India's Ambassador to Senegal Rajeev Kumar was informed, who in turn alerted Interior Minister Aly Ngouille Ndiaye.

On January 21, 2019, his detention was confirmed for extradition to India. Karnataka has started formalities to bring Pujari to India, Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy said.

The Mumbai police have also sought custody of the wanted fugitive. Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) Ashutosh Dumbare, Mumbai police said, "We will be starting the process of seeking Pujari's custody. He is wanted in 50 cases since 1988."

Opposition parties to approach EC on Monday

To submit proposals on use of EVMs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Opposition parties will be approaching the Election Commission of India on Monday with "distinct proposals" regarding the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in the next Lok Sabha poll.

Addressing the media on Friday after a joint meeting of the Opposition parties convened to discuss use of EVMs and other political issues, Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said that all parties had also agreed to focus on jobs and agriculture as central issues in the coming general election, and described the "systematic attack on institutions that the

government is carrying out" as a structural issue.

"The election will be about jobs, agriculture, attack on institutions, and corruption by the Prime Minister in the Rafale deal," the Congress chief said.

Talking about EVMs, he said, "The main issue with the EVMs is that there is a doubt in the minds of many people in this country about the fairness of the functioning of the EVMs."

Apart from Mr. Gandhi, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, National Conference leader Omar Abdullah, DMK's Karimozhi, Trinamool Congress's Derek O'Brien, CPI's D. Raja and Manoj Jha of the RJD were present.

Ban on SIMI extended for 5 more years

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
The Ministry of Home Affairs extended by five more years the ban on the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI).

In a notification issued on Thursday, the Ministry said the SIMI was declared an "unlawful association" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

It said that if the unlawful activities of the SIMI were not curbed and controlled immediately, it would take the opportunity to "continue its subversive activities and re-organise its activists who are still absconding; disrupt the secular fabric of the country by polluting the minds of the people by creating communal disharmony; propagate anti-national sentiments; escalate secessionism by supporting militancy; and undertake activities prejudicial to the integrity and security of the country."

The notification said it was necessary to declare the SIMI an unlawful association with immediate effect in exercise of the powers from sub-sections (1) and (3) of Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

SIMI was first banned in 2001.

10 EDITORIAL



Shopping for votes

The interim budget casts away established conventions and targets votes with sops

As election-eve budgets go, Interim Budget 2019-20 must rank as one of the most politically expedient ones this country has seen. The shadow of the general election falls squarely on the budget proposals, which are aimed at seeking votes in the name of various schemes that rain cash on beneficiaries. Whether the strategy will work at the hustings remains to be seen. But there is no denying that a lot of thought has gone into identifying and targeting the sections of population across social segments that are in distress and unhappy with the Centre for a variety of reasons. There is an income support scheme for farmers who are reeling under the impact of falling realisations for their crops, and a pension scheme for informal sector workers earning up to ₹15,000 a month. There are income tax concessions for the middle class that have been carefully framed to target the lower rung. The ₹6,000 a year income support to farmers will benefit 12 crore households, which is almost half of the total number of households. Similarly, the increase in standard deduction from ₹40,000 to ₹50,000 may be small but it will cover three crore taxpayers, which is again almost half of the 6.8 crore taxpayers. The income tax rebate on those with taxable annual income of up to ₹5 lakh a year will benefit three crore middle class voters that includes traders, small businesses, those who have just joined the formal workforce and pensioners.

While these sops will benefit sections of the population, the question is whether it is correct for a government that will be in power for less than two months in the next financial year to write into the statute books proposals that are permanent. Though some past governments have announced sops in their interim budgets with an eye on elections, this budget has gone much further by announcing very significant measures. In political terms, the strategy cannot be faulted as it appears to have put the Opposition in a difficult spot – protesting too much about the concessions given to those in distress may be counter-productive. That said, some of these ideas may actually work in economic terms as they put money in people's hands. The housing-related tax proposals can give a leg-up to the real estate sector, which is a job-creator and is now in trouble. The sops come with a cost, though. The Centre will miss the glide-path for reducing the fiscal deficit, yet again. The estimated slippage of 0.10 percentage point is not significant if we assume that the concessions will spur spending by the beneficiaries. This is, of course, assuming that the gross tax revenue projection of ₹25.52 lakh crore, which is a 13.5% growth over the revised estimates of 2018-19, is achieved. But this arithmetic will be the headache of the next government.

Back to crisis

The handling of the fresh unrest in Zimbabwe by Mugabe's successor belies hope of change

The bloody unrest in Zimbabwe suggests that President Emmerson Mnangagwa's political honeymoon is over. The veteran of the struggle for freedom was the beneficiary of the overthrow of strongman Robert Mugabe in November 2017. Mr. Mnangagwa raised hopes in the run-up to the July general election, promising free and fair polls and inspections by international observers. But his victory proved controversial as allegations of vote-rigging by the ruling ZANU-PF machinery in the rural areas began to bear echoes of the Mugabe era. In six months since his election, the ex-security chief's pledge to distance himself from his military legacy and open the economy for foreign investment has been put to severe test. A case in point is Mr. Mnangagwa's handling of the fallout of the recent steep fuel price hike in which over 10 protesters are said to have been killed. Zimbabwe's defence forces have come under severe condemnation for the general crackdown, involving arbitrary detentions, torture and a country-wide Internet blackout. Harare's main opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change, has faced attacks on its main office, while trade unions behind the nationwide strike appear resolute in their bid for redress. The crisis forced President Mnangagwa to call off his trip to the World Economic Forum in Davos. But his attempt to put the blame both on the security forces and the protesters may merely point to his own political vulnerability. The official response to the mass opposition against fuel price hikes were directed by his deputy, Constantino Chiwenga, when the President was away. Mr. Chiwenga was the mastermind behind the 2017 coup, and the man he installed must assert his authority to ensure accountability and respect for the rule of law.

The sudden doubling of fuel prices has amplified Zimbabwe's chronic shortage of U.S. dollars to sustain the import of basic goods. Following the hyper-inflation of the previous decade, the country abandoned its own currency. The electronic alternative, "bond notes" that were introduced without physical backing, unleashed a vicious cycle of hoarding and price inflation. The decline in the value of the surrogate currency against hard money has caused distress among public servants. Many businesses have folded up for want of adequate foreign currency. Mr. Mnangagwa's government has moved to reduce the issue of electronic debt, and to curtail the ballooning fiscal deficit. While these may be steps in the right direction, they are too small as incentives to entice a deeply sceptical investor community that was once turned away. Mr. Mnangagwa has his task cut out: to shore up his own base in the ZANU-PF establishment and to restore calm across the country. Equally, he cannot abandon the difficult path of reform, which is the only guarantee of stability in the long term.

Distributing the rewards of reform

The expansive Budget reflects the fruits of fiscal consolidation, tax reform and streamlined delivery of subsidies



ASHIMA GOYAL



Since Budget 2019 is the last before the general election this year, it was widely expected to be an assessment of the government's performance. There was a debate on whether the Budget should have announced any substantive measures since they would bind the next government, post-election.

It turns out the report card is good enough to create space for some substantial measures. Painstaking fiscal consolidation, tax reform, more efficient delivery of subsidies, and a rise in the share of capital expenditure, have created the space to reward tax-payers as well as announce a relief measure for farmers in distress without substantially compromising fiscal consolidation. It is fair that this government, which imposed the painful reforms and undertook difficult action, should also distribute some rewards of that reform.

Rewards of higher growth

It may be asked how payment of ₹20,000-₹75,000 crore can be made to farmers and the tax benefits given with only a marginal impact on the fiscal deficit. But a larger size economy can afford to spend larger absolute amounts with only a small rise in deficit ratios and borrowing requirements. The fact that India is the sixth largest and fastest growing economy in the world has some advantages as well as responsibilities to equitably share the rewards of growth.

Demonetisation, the goods and

services tax (GST) and other steps towards formalisation increased the tax base, and it follows that tax rates can themselves be cut. Again it is fair that the aam admi, who bore some of the costs of reform, should now benefit from the success of these. It makes good economic sense to move towards a system of wider base and lower rates. Tax receipts have grown from 10% of GDP – a level at which they had stagnated since the tax cuts after the global financial crisis – to 12%. Although the GST has not yet resulted in a rise in indirect tax ratios above 5.5%, it is likely to do so in the future as it stabilises. The transfers to farmers and tax cuts amount to only 0.4% of GDP this year and are partially funded by a 0.3% rise in tax ratios.

The JAM (or Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile) complex is the other major set of reforms that enable a smaller expenditure to have a larger impact on social welfare. Jan Dhan bank accounts opened through the country and the Aadhaar data base make a cost-effective Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) possible for farmers.

Rewards of lower inflation

A slight rise in fiscal deficits to fund transfers to farmers does not threaten macroeconomic stability when inflation is low and food

prices are crashing. In fact they are likely to help stabilise prices so that farmers do not cut production in the next crop cycle.

Moreover, this year, the revenue deficit has been maintained, the primary deficit been reduced, and expenditure on capital account been increased. Better quality of government expenditure as well as the GST tax cuts, reductions in obstacles to inter-State trade, and soft commodity prices will keep inflation low.

The Budget points out that highways are being built at the rate of 27 km per day, which makes India the fastest builder in the world. Railway safety has improved. Better implementation and reduction in waste brings down costs across the board. The shift in the Budget date to earlier in the year and the focus on spending in the first half have resulted in a better achievement of sectoral spending targets this year.

Government borrowing

The size of government borrowing is larger than what the market anticipated, and this has raised G-Sec rates. The rise in gross borrowing is because of higher redemptions but net borrowing is similar to that last year. There was a sharp rise in G-Sec yields that year. As a result, interest payments as a ratio to GDP

rose to 3.2 against the budgeted 3.

But 3.4% of GDP is not a large fiscal deficit, and market conditions are likely to be more supportive of government borrowing this year. First, the international rate rise has peaked, with the U.S. Fed turning dovish and indicating that there will be no more rise; it is likely to maintain its balance sheet. Emerging market inflows are set to rise, creating demand for G-Secs up to the current cap of 6% of the domestic market. Soft oil prices will encourage foreign investors to return to Indian markets. But since global growth is slowing, inflows are unlikely to be as large as they were in 2017. Therefore, there will be more room for open market operations (OMO) from the Reserve Bank of India that support the debt market. Softening interest rates will also make banks more willing to hold G-Secs.

When international demand is slowing, it is important to maintain domestic demand. Therefore, tax cuts, more income to farmers and various schemes to improve demand for housing, which has been under stress, are all appropriate.

While the budgetary contribution to capital expenditure remains at about 1.6% of GDP there is a rise in internal and extra-budgetary resources, which are now larger than gross budgetary support. But public enterprises must be able to raise and use internal resources. This is a healthy sign of efficiency, market viability and reduced dependency on the government. Even market borrowing by such enterprises used for investment when private investment remains low, is likely to crowd in (rather than crowd out) private investment. It will raise demand which will induce more private investment. The latter remains still

constrained by low demand at present, except for a few sectors where capacity constraints are appearing.

Improving efficiencies

Coming back to the issue of binding the next government, post the election, it is necessary that sharing of growth benefits is done in ways that sustain growth, reduce distortions, and improve capabilities to participate in growth.

Well-targeted transfers can be made without destroying fiscal consolidation and creating macroeconomic vulnerabilities. As competitive populism creates talk of unfunded universal income schemes, or farm loan waivers that hurt growth of farm credit, it is better to bind the next government to schemes that are less distorting.

The Budget continues the effort to reduce transaction costs and improve compliance incentives. Stamp duty amendments that seek to tax just one transaction, which will be shared across State governments, on the basis of the domicile of the buying client, will reduce a major market irritant, increase transactions and take the country further toward becoming one effective market.

As income tax returns rise, a less than 0.05% will be selected for scrutiny in non-discretionary, machine-based ways without any interface between the tax-payer and the examining officers, thus reducing potential tax-payer harassment.

India is a very difficult country to change. Problems remain, but the rewards are beginning to appear and should be greeted with cheers.

Ashima Goyal is a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council

The return of targeted cash transfers

Schemes promising cash to the poor absolve the state of its responsibility to provide basic services like health



HIMANSHU

With the announcement of a minimum income guarantee (MIG) scheme by the Congress president, the agenda of universal basic income (UBI) has moved from an academic discussion to the political arena. As of now the proposal of MIG is only an electoral promise with no further details available. On Friday, the general budget announced a scheme, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, under which vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land up to 2 hectares, will be provided direct income support of ₹6,000 a year. The appeal of some form of income transfer is now seriously being discussed by all political formations. The idea is not new and has been in discussion for some time among academics in India but attracted attention after it was proposed in the Economic Survey of 2017.

Who will benefit?

In simple terms the proposal of transferring some income to every citizen is built on the twin principles of universality and a notion of minimum basic income to those

living at the poverty line. The principle of universality is at the core of it given the problems of targeting. But some form of income support to those who are unable to participate in labour market has been there in most countries in some form or other including in India, like the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) pensions for widows, elderly and disabled.

Although the idea of UBI has been in discussion for decades, no country has implemented it. While a proposal for UBI was rejected by a three-fourth majority in Switzerland, Finland which started a pilot has now discontinued it. But even in Finland, the pilot was not a strict UBI but a social protection scheme aimed at only the unemployed. While there have been some pilots by NGOs in developing countries in Asia and Africa, they have varied in content of transfer and coverage with only few being fully universal and only Namibia pilot experiment provided income transfer to people in the poverty line.

The proposals in the Indian context have mostly been for a targeted income transfer scheme and not UBI. In developed countries, the UBI is supposed to supplement existing social security provisions and a top-up over and above universal provision of health, education and so on. In the Indian context, most arguments in favour of UBI are premised on the inefficiencies of existing social security interventions and seek to replace some of these with direct cash transfers.



cies of existing social security interventions and seek to replace some of these with direct cash transfers.

Not leakage proof

It is not just the fascination for targeting the poor which is at the core of these proposals but also a belief that all existing forms of social security transfers are inefficient. While there is certainly some exaggeration in such claims, it is not true that the system of cash transfers is efficient and therefore leakage proof. Several studies on cash transfers including one by J-PAL South Asia for NITI Aayog found that cash transfers are not greatly superior in terms of leakages compared to other schemes of in-kind transfer such as the public distribution system (PDS). On the other hand, numerous studies have documented that a move towards universalisation and use of technology enabled Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu to reduce leakages in the PDS. But the real message from these experiments is also that universalisation is the key to efficient delivery of services against targeting proposed by these cash transfer schemes.

The obsession with cash transfers also comes with an understanding that these will take care of all problems. The current sets of proposals claim these as silver bullets for agrarian crisis to malnutrition to educational deficit and also a solution for the job crisis. This is a tall order with different reasons for persistence for some of these. A good example is the public distribution system (PDS) where it is clearly established that in-kind transfers are twice as effective in increasing calorie intake compared to equivalent cash transfer.

The real issue with the approach of a targeted cash transfer scheme is that it envisions the role of the state to only providing cash income to the poor. This kind of 'Robin Hood' approach seeks to absolve the state of its responsibility in providing basic services such as health, education, nutrition and livelihood. But it is also iniquitous since it seeks to create demand for services without supplying the services, leaving the poor to depend on private service providers.

There is now sufficient evidence which shows that privatisation of basic services such as health and education leads to large scale exclusion of the poor and marginalised.

In any case, India is among the countries with lowest expenditure to GDP ratio as far as expenditure on health, education and so on are concerned.

Jobs, best antidote

The best antidote to poverty is enabling citizens to earn their living by providing jobs. For those who are willing to work, schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme should be strengthened to enable them to earn decent incomes. Similarly, the crisis in agriculture is unlikely to be resolved by income transfers. But even with free and universal access to public services and access to livelihood opportunities, there may be a role for cash transfers, particularly for those who are unable to access the labour market or are marginalised due to other reasons. The NSAP seeks to do exactly that by providing pensions to elderly, widows and disabled. But even for these vulnerable and marginalised groups, the Central contribution to pensions has been only ₹200 per month. If governments cannot ensure decent incomes to the poor, then the issue is not of details of minimum income transfers but that of intent of those who are promising to eradicate poverty through income transfers. On this, there is no ambiguity.

Himanshu is Associate Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Budget 2019

The Budget is to be seen more as an election manifesto than what it is – an interim budget. The government has chosen to kick the can down the road. How resources will be found and whether the schemes announced will be realised is anybody's guess. About the pension scheme? How much funding will be needed to ensure an assured pension? The inability to present the customary Economic Survey and the controversy around unemployment data reflect badly on the government.

MANOJ ALEMBAH,
Kannur, Kerala

■ Many within the Bharatiya Janata Party are well aware that even with a flood of promises, most people are not going to believe them as the ruling party has been unable to fulfil any of its

significant and earlier promises. The fact is that the BJP did not pay much attention to issues of public interest even after four and a half years of rule. The Opposition did take some of the wind out of the sails of the BJP. Sugar-coated interim budgets by the government at the fag end of its term are only to win the elections.

MOHAN ARIMBOOR,
Thrissur, Kerala

■ It is very clear that there has been a yawning gap between what was promised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and what the common man got on his plate (Page 1, "Unemployment data based on draft report," February 1). Demonetisation is sure to have had an impact on employment, with the informal sector badly hit. It was a move that did not help root out black money either, as trumpeted. With the

general election round the corner, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government has little time to resort to any course correction in an issue which is critical to nation development. It is unfortunate that industrial bodies too have not made an effort to make their own evaluation of the job market or even cautioned the government about its fallout on the economy. There would not have been any need for 10% reservation for the economically backward had the government, soon after assuming power, tackled in right earnest the issue of employment generation.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

■ It is unfortunate that the issue of unemployment is being raked up by the Opposition only at election time even as millions of

unemployed youth are still struggling to make a decent living. Whatever may be the facts in the NSSO report, on unemployment data, the ground reality is that the rate of unemployment is growing by leaps and bounds every successive year. Job creation is grossly disproportional to the exponentially growing numbers of employable youths in the country.

Agrarian distress caused by vicissitudes of the monsoon and low farm prices of produce as a result of middlemen and government policies have made farming less attractive for rural youth. There need to be aggressive transformational structural reforms to attract huge private investment which in turn facilitates massive job creation.

N. SADHASIVA REDDY,
Bengaluru

■ It is unfortunate that the all-time high unemployment rate can be

safely cited as a manifest failure of the government. It is no wonder that jibes such as 'Pakodanomics' and 'Namo jobs' stick and gain currency.

Modi-nomics has come to be equated with 'jobless growth'. The hope and expectation that the Prime

Minister would tackle the obstinate problem of unemployment has come to nought. The ranks of the unemployed are swelling by the day.

G. DAVID MILTON,
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:
www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
In the graphic, "The new Arctic normal" (World page, Feb. 1, 2019), in the fourth point under the heading "How it is linked to global warming", the reference to solar vortex should be corrected to read as polar vortex.

The headline, "BJP eyes to harness discontent in JD(U) and Congress" (Feb. 1, 2019, some editions) is wrong. It should have been JD(S) and Congress.

The last paragraph of the report headlined "Jaya panel calls doctors for re-examination on Feb. 5, 6" (Feb. 1, 2019, some editions) talked about an affidavit filed by the Apollo Hospitals which was subsequently withdrawn. Actually, it was returned.

An OpEd article titled "The case for minimum basic income" (

Life after citizenship

It's been more than three years since the exchange of enclaves between India and Bangladesh took place in July 2015. But in Cooch Behar's erstwhile Bangladeshi enclaves and the newly established settlement camps, life hasn't become any easier for the 15,000 newly minted citizens of India, reports **Shiv Sahay Singh**

It's a Saturday morning and Jihad Hussain Obama sits quietly in his one-room school, waiting for the flag-hoisting ceremony to begin. He is one of several children, from Masaldanga village in West Bengal's Cooch Behar district, whose parents had chosen to stay back in India rather than return to Bangladesh.

Ramzan Ali, 40, a local schoolteacher, keeps him company along with other children, who are crammed into a small area next to a Sishu Siksha Kendra that was started in 2011 by the erstwhile enclave dwellers. Most of the children study in bigger primary schools but have assembled at this one-room school to celebrate Republic Day. The tiny space outside the room is decorated with coloured ribbons and a national flag. The school, with tin sheets for walls, is bare except for a couple of plastic chairs.

Ali explains the significance of the occasion to the children. He makes them sing the national anthem and chant 'Vande Mataram'. Obama tells everyone that he is nine years old. But many in this erstwhile Bangladeshi enclave, now a part of India, know that he is a few months shy of nine.

The residents of Masaldanga, located about 26 km from Dinhata town, have no trouble in recalling the last few days of March 2010, the time when Obama's mother Asama Bibi, nearly lost her baby (Obama). Masaldanga was a Bangladeshi enclave in those days, and Asama Bibi, then in an advanced stage of pregnancy, was not only denied medical attention at the Dinhata Sub-divisional Hospital in Cooch Behar but also threatened with arrest for seeking services at a state-run health facility despite being a Bangladeshi. It was only after vociferous protests by the enclave dwellers that the hospital authorities yielded. Asama Bibi finally got the medical attention she needed and had a safe delivery.

The exchange

Much has changed in Masaldanga since August 2015, when the Land Boundary Agreement was implemented. Before this exchange of enclaves between India and Bangladesh, which came into effect from the midnight of July 31, 2015, there were 111 Indian enclaves in four districts of Bangladesh, and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in West Bengal's Cooch Behar district.

There was a population of about 34,000 people in the 111 enclaves, and when the option of moving to India was given, 922 people registered their names. These people are now living in three camps in Cooch Behar – at Dinhata, Haldibari and Mekhliganj.

The 51 Bangladeshi enclaves, which were also located in Cooch Behar, became a part of India. There were 14,854 people living in these enclaves, including those of Masaldanga and Potarkuthi. But not one citizen from these enclaves has exercised the option of moving to Bangladesh. Most of them are farmers.

Not too long ago, the road leading to Masaldanga was a kutchu one. It was also a site of prolonged protests by villagers demanding citizenship rights. Now it is paved, and half-a-dozen solar-powered irrigation pumps are visible in the paddy and mustard fields nearby. There are also new anganwadi centres, primary schools, and power lines that were installed recently, ensuring electric supply to most of the tin houses in the area. Along with the rest of the village's residents, Obama is now an Indian citizen.

Soon after the flag-hoisting, candies are distributed to the children. Obama takes the newly paved road to a paddy field nearby where his mother is busy making small bundles of paddy saplings. Asama Bibi has paid ₹55,000 for a three-year lease on 1.5 bigha of land. (A bigha is a measure of land area varying locally from $\frac{1}{3}$ to 1 acre.) She looks worried. She is concerned not just by the poor yield but also by the fact that her three children, including Obama, are yet to receive proper identity documents.

The need for fake parents

Before the exchange of enclaves, people living in the adjoining areas that were part of the Indian mainland were often presented as the parents of children from the enclaves. This helped them get admission in schools and colleges, and avail treatment in government hospitals. Sadly, even three years after getting citizenship, the people from the erstwhile enclaves are still finding it difficult to get their identity documents corrected. Says Asama Bibi, "My son Obama, who is in Class III, wants to become a doctor. But in the school they are asking for his birth certificate. His older sister, Sapla, is in Class VIII. In her case, a couple from the mainland had presented themselves as her parents so that she could continue with her studies."

Ali believes that the formal conferment of citizenship is yet to ease the economic and bureaucratic hardships faced by the people. "Their lives have essentially remained the same," he says.

Chhabir Sekh, 40, a resident of Masaldanga, had been working as a con-



Every day life now: "Since 2015, the only discernible change in the camp are the e-rickshaws parked outside every other house. Also known as totos, they are a primary source of income for the residents." The Mekhliganj enclave settlement camp in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR



struction worker in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, for almost a decade before the exchange of enclaves took place. He received a new voter identification card after August 2015. But his sense of insecurity is such that he still carries his fake photo identification card, for which he had paid ₹4,000. He says, "Life remains the same. There are no jobs here, so I still go to work in Noida. All that we've got are a few documents." His 17-year-old son, Ajhar, dropped out of school some years ago and now works with him in Noida.

About 80 km from Masaldanga is the Haldibari Enclave Settlement Camp, home to 96 families that moved here in November 2015 from Indian enclaves located in Bangladesh. These are the families that made a conscious choice to shift to India even though they had the option of staying back where they had lived all their lives.

Spread over several acres, the camp is a row of tin sheds with alpha-numeric lettering on every house. Sanjay Pandit, the Block Development Officer (BDO) of Haldibari, is the chief guest for the Republic Day ceremony here. Pandit explains the importance of Republic Day to the audience, dwelling in particular on freedom of speech. The children of the settlement, dressed in school uniforms of different colours, some in shoes and others in slippers, do a march-past in front of the BDO.

Since November 2015, the only discernible change in the camp are the e-rickshaws parked outside every other house. These e-rickshaws, or totos, as they are locally called, run on rechargeable batteries and are a primary source of income for the residents. More than 30 families have bought these e-rickshaws using the money they got by selling their land and property in Bangladesh. Annaprasad Ray, a class XII student, often misses his classes at the nearby Haldibari College as he has to supplement the family income by driving a toto.

Ray is not the only youngster who

faces such a situation. His friend, Kalyan, is a second year BA student, and neighbours, Gobind, Niranjan, Sadhan Chandra Roy and Phuleswar, are all graduates. But all of them depend on driving totos and doing odd jobs to provide for their families.

Says Sadhan Chandra Roy, who has enrolled for a Masters degree in political science, "We had our schooling in Bangladesh, but the certificates are not accepted when we apply for jobs. We came to India with a lot of dreams, but our lives remain in darkness." Occasionally, the youngsters speak to their friends on the other side of the border. The conversations leave them convinced that those in Bangladesh have better opportunities.

From camps to flats

The Cooch Behar district administration has a separate enclave cell (or department) for the erstwhile Bangladeshi enclaves that have become Indian territory as well as for the three settlement camps (at Haldibari, Mekhliganj and Dinhata). Every family in the camps gets 30 kg of rice, five kg of pulses, five litres of cooking oil, and one kg of salt a month. The administration is also building three residential complexes where an apartment will be given to each of these families.

Rabindranath Ghosh, Minister-in-charge, North Bengal Development Department, and an MLA from Cooch Behar, is convinced that the problems of the erstwhile enclave dwellers have been resolved. He points out that the Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal has passed an amendment in the

C For nearly 70 years, the people of these enclaves were denied the most basic facilities that the state must offer. How can the state now suddenly treat them on a par with other citizens?"

JOYNAL ABEDIN,
Activist,
Masaldanga

State Assembly to give land rights to the people of the 51 erstwhile Bangladeshi enclaves that are now a part of India. He adds that land documents have been provided to 12,560 beneficiaries.

Says Ghosh, "Only 30 km from Cooch Behar is Assam, where the National Register of Citizens (NRC) has left lakhs of people struggling for nationality. Here in West Bengal we have provided every assistance to the enclaves." According to him, India's newest citizens have got everything that they were promised, and soon those living in camps will be shifted to the apartments that the government is constructing.

It was on January 3, this year that Mansur Ali, 80, of Poatarkuthi, an erstwhile Bangladeshi enclave, got land documents in his name. Mansur says that for him, the day he got his land documents is as important as July 31, 2015, the day the exchange of enclaves made him an Indian citizen. He has carefully preserved a newspaper report in a local Bengali daily which has a photograph of him accepting the land papers from the Minister. Says Mansur, "We have received legal ownership of our land after 82 years. My grandfather, Kali Sheikh, had these land records in his name in 1936, and now, after so many years, we have managed to get them in our name." Mansur has been a witness to several chapters of India's recent history, from the British Raj to Indian independence, the creation of Bangladesh, and now the exchange of enclaves. Today he is a happy man willing to overlook the mistakes that are still present in his land document.

Often referred to as Monsur Dhani (Rich Monsur), Mansur has generously donated more than 2 bighas of his land for an anganwadi centre and a community hall. Painted in blue and white, the official colours of the ruling Trinamool Congress government, these buildings are ready but not yet functional, owing to a controversy over staff recruitment.

Mansur and other local residents have protested against the formal opening of these facilities, demanding that

the jobs in these government institutions be given to their family members and not 'outsiders'. He says, "We suffered so much for so many decades while the state turned a blind eye to our plight. Now finally when our struggle has yielded something positive, how can we let outsiders grab all the jobs in the first schools and anganwadi centres to come up in our villages?"

Joynal Abedin of Masaldanga is a well-known activist from the area. He asks: "For nearly 70 years, the people of these enclaves were denied the most basic facilities that the state must offer. How can the state now suddenly treat them on a par with other citizens? Don't these 15,000-odd people [14,854 plus the 922 who came from the Indian enclaves in Bangladesh] deserve some preference or reservation for these jobs on account of the historical injustice they've endured?" He adds that the struggle for these erstwhile enclave-dwellers is hardly over, while introducing Rahman Ali, 27, another resident of Poatarkuthi, who recently managed to get the name of his father corrected in school and college certificates.

Like thousands of other children in these former enclaves, Rahman had lied about his parents while getting admission in school. Instead of mentioning Naskar Ali of Poatarkuthi as his father, his records stated it to be Saha Ali of Khatmari village. It took hundreds of letters as official correspondence and several visits to various government offices to get the records corrected. These days Rahman regularly fields desperate queries from people who want to know how he managed to achieve something that remains a Herculean task for most citizens of this erstwhile enclave.

No official visits us

The Republic Day celebrations at the Dinhata settlement camp are a low-key affair. Osman Gani, 37, one of the few Muslims who chose to come to India, says that since no politician or official ever visits the camp, they decided to unfurl the national flag by themselves. The camp, located in Dinhata town, is greener than the other camps as residents have planted papaya trees and different kinds of vines and creepers.

Gani laughs when asked about moving to the apartment which the State government is constructing for the 58 families in this camp. "What will we do with the flats? Most of our lives were spent in Bangladesh. Then we came to live in the camps, and now we have to leave this also?"

Mrinal Barman, 39, another resident of the Dinhata camp, is more agitated by the question. He asks, "How can the government wash its hands of any responsibility by giving us apartments? Before coming to the camp, Barman was a resident of Dashiachara, a former Indian enclave in Bangladesh's Kurigram district, where he owned about 16 bighas of land. When he crossed over to India

after July 2015, Barman, along with his family members, brought with him an irrigation pump and two goats, in the expectation that the Indian government would give him a piece of land. Though one of the goats has died since then, Barman has not lost hope.

He says, "This goat that is still alive is the responsibility of the Indian government as all the formalities were completed before we crossed the border. Where will this animal go if we are asked to stay in an apartment? I will file a case if the government does not provide a place for the goat."

Barman's goat-based argument has many takers in the Dinhata camp. The settlement has nine cows and 20 goats, some distributed by Barman himself. The newest citizens of India will most definitely bring up the issue of shelter for their cattle as and when they are told to leave the camp.

At the Mekhliganj settlement camp, about 115 km from Dinhata and the smallest of the three camps, Bipul Chandra Barman has little time to speak. His father, Binay Chandra Barman, had died on January 16, this year and he is busy with religious rituals outside his house. He says that the families in this camp are from the Hathibandha and Patgram areas of Lalmonirhat district in Bangladesh.

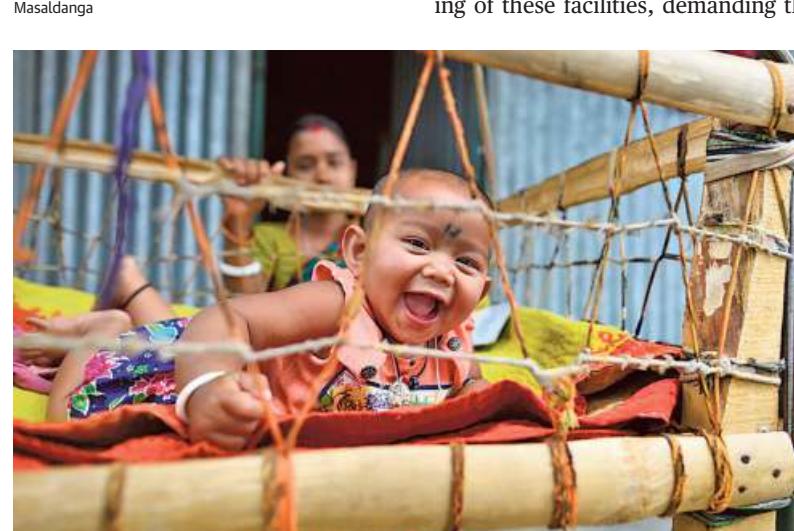
Ripon, 21, like his brother Bipul, is also wearing a dhoti and has his head tonsured. He says that he could not apply for West Bengal's Vivekananda Merit Cum Means scholarship (a scheme for meritorious and economically backward students) as his Class X certificates from Bangladesh are not being accepted in India. Here too, driving e-rickshaws seems to be the primary occupation.

Jugal Roy, 47, a taxi driver, is also against the idea of moving to one of the apartments being built by the State government, which is about 15 km from the camp. He says that the buildings are coming up in a remote area near a riverbed, an area prone to flooding during the monsoon, and that there is not even a bridge to ensure connectivity when the water rises.

Not surprisingly, the very mention of another 'displacement' – though only to an apartment – angers the residents of Mekhliganj. Says Swapna Rani Barman, one of the camp residents, "We want to stay here at this very camp. But despite several protests, the administration is insisting that we shift to its flats."

She also draws attention to something unusual. This January was the first time in the past three years that these 47 families, who had left their homes in the erstwhile Indian enclaves of Bangladesh to come and live here as Indian citizens, did not hoist the national flag and observe Republic Day.

"Earlier officials and politicians would visit us on Republic Day. This year we heard from no one," Roy says. "It appears that they do not care about us any more."



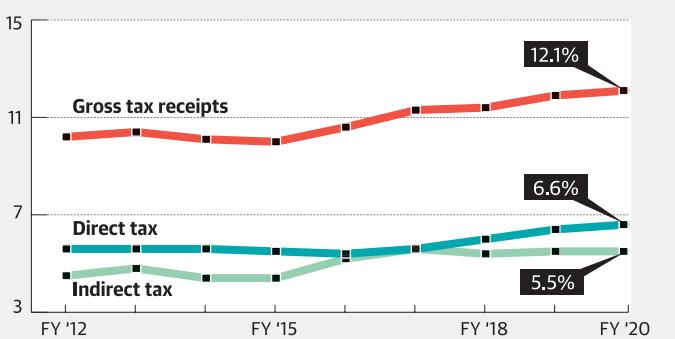
'Citizen' Premi: A Koch Rajbangsi tribal girl, all of seven months old, born at the Dinhata settlement camp ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR



Less taxing due to more revenues

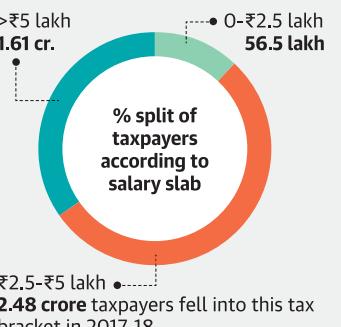
With the collection of personal income taxes soaring and recording a new high, the government in the interim budget has announced relief for a significant section of taxpayers by exempting those with an income of below ₹5 lakh from paying any income tax

Gross tax receipts as % of GDP have been inching upwards, accounting for 12.1% in the 2020 budget

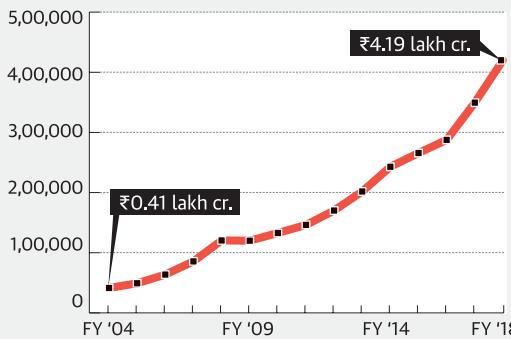


Direct tax receipts have grown at a faster rate, while indirect tax receipts have remained steady

The move to do away with income tax for those below an income of 5 lakh will benefit 53% of taxpayers



The move to exempt the lower income bracket (<₹5 lakh) has been done because of the soaring revenues from personal income tax over the last decade and a half



Source: Budget documents, CBDT

VIEWPOINT

SURABHI MARWAH
Tax Partner, EY India

Not just an interim Budget

This is the election year and there was a fair bit of debate on what the 2019 Budget would look like – the build-up to February 1 had some expectations of tweaks and relief for the salaried tax payers especially the middle class.

The impact of major changes on personal income tax are set out below:

Tax rates: The tax slab rates, surcharge and health and education cess remain the same.

However, resident taxpayers with income up to ₹5,00,000 will get a full tax rebate.

Standard deduction: The limit of standard deduction has been enhanced from ₹40,000 to ₹50,000.

The impact of these two changes are detailed below:

Total Taxable Income (after standard deduction and rebate where eligible)	Tax Relief
Up to ₹500,000*	Up to 13,000
₹5,00,001 up to ₹10,00,000	2,080
₹10,00,001 up to ₹50,00,000	3,120
₹50,00,001 up to ₹1,00,00,000	3,432
₹1,00,00,000	3,588

House property income: As per the current laws, if the taxpayer owns more than one house property for personal use the rest of the properties are considered as deemed let out and income tax levied on a notional rental value.

It has been proposed to extend the exemption limit to two house properties owing to issues faced by the middle class having to maintain a family at two locations on account of job movements.

House property Income

Properties owned by the taxpayer for self-use or not let out	Current	Proposed
1	No Tax	No tax
2	Property 1 - no tax Property 2 - tax on notional rent	No tax
3	Property 1 - no tax Property 2 and 3 - tax on notional rent	Property 1 and 2 - no tax Property 3 - tax on notional rent

Capital gains: The current laws provide the seller of a residential property with relief from capital gains tax, if the proceeds from the sale are used to acquire another residential property. The benefit of roll-over of capital gains has been proposed to be increased from investment in one residential house to two residential houses for a taxpayer having capital gains up to ₹2 crore. This benefit can be availed only once in a taxpayer's lifetime.

There were other proposals on TDS on rent and interest as also reiteration of the digitisation of the tax assessment process to ensure seamless and smooth communication with the taxpayers. In keeping with expectations, the *aam aadmi* had something to cheer about.

(Uday Bhartia, senior tax professional, EY also contributed to the article. Views expressed are personal)

The *aam aadmi* has something to cheer about

Money matters



What is in it for us: Youngsters watching the Budget speech in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Lower, middle income classes gain

Increased spending capacity with consumers will boost various sectors: analysts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Various proposals announced in the interim Budget to ease tax burden on salaried class and home owners are welcome and will go a long way towards helping the small taxpayers as well as passive income earners such as senior citizens, analysts.

They said the increased spending capacity with consumers would boost various sectors of the economy.

"This [the tax relief measures] is bound to aid consumption across all consumer categories, especially

'essentials' in home and personal care, food and refreshment, thereby providing an impetus to the FMCG and services sectors," said Harsha Razdan, Partner and Head, Consumer Markets, KPMG in India. "In summary, the interim Budget has been around the consumer, consumption and measures around rekindling the investment cycle."

"Raising the TDS threshold for interest and rental income is a welcome step for passive income earners such as senior citizens," said Ra-

hul Garg, Senior Partner - Tax & Regulatory, PwC India.

"Those having taxable income not exceeding ₹5 lakh will no longer need to pay any tax," said Kuldip Kumar, Partner and Leader Personal Tax, PwC. "Those having income more than ₹5 lakh but their taxable income after deductions falls to ₹5 lakh will also not pay any tax."

The government also announced the electronic assessment of Income Tax returns, which, experts said, was a step towards improv-

ing governance and reducing the complexity in the tax system.

"Anonymous electronic assessment is novel and augurs well for the road to minimum government and maximum governance," Mr. Garg added. "Sustained efforts to enhance the tax base by reducing complexity and moderating rates seem to yield result as the Finance Minister points out in the number of return filers increasing from 3.79 crore to 6.85 crore. The interim Budget has kept to the theme of being good to the lower and middle income strata."

Further, the Minister proposed to increase the roll-over of capital gains under Section 54 of the Income Tax Act from investment in one residential house to two for a taxpayer with capital gains up to ₹2 crore. This benefit can be availed only once in a lifetime.

"Eliminating tax on the notional income of the second self-occupied house and allowing capital gain exemption on investment in a second house were much-needed rationalisations and should rejuvenate interest in real estate," Rahul Garg, senior partner, tax & regulatory, PwC India, said.

In another move that should provide an impetus to the real estate sector, the Finance Minister proposed

DELM THE HINDU
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2019

CAPITAL MARKETS

Stamp duty tweak may lower cost, ease compliance

It will now be levied only at the first point of stock exchange transaction

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR
MUMBAI

From a capital markets perspective, the Union Budget 2019-20 did not have much to offer except the announcement related to the manner in which stamp duty would be levied on securities transactions.

While presenting the Budget, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said stamp duty would be levied at a single point through the stock exchange mechanism and thereafter it would be shared with the particular State based on the buyer's domicile. "Our government had promised last year that we will carry out reforms in



Key demand met: Brokers at the Bombay Stock Exchange reacting to the Budget speech on Friday. ■ PTI

stamp duty levied and collected on financial securities transactions," said Mr. Goyal.

Incidentally, capital market participants have, for long, been demanding a review of the levy of stamp

duty on stock exchange transactions, though the demand was always for abolition of the duty, especially since securities transaction tax (STT) is levied on all such transactions.

Crucial step
Sanjat Prasad, chief executive officer, Indian Commodity Exchange (ICEX), said: "The single charge at the point of first transaction is a very important step in the right direction. It will not only help in simplicity of compliance but also in bringing down the overall transaction cost."

<https://t.me/Banking4Exams>

In a similar context, Kunal Sanghavi, Chief Financial Officer, Metropolitan Stock Exchange of India (MSEI), said the announcement had brought a lot of comfort, not only in terms of bringing down the cascading effect of the duty but also in terms of ease of compliance.

"While we await details in the fine print, this will probably end the ambiguity among the broking community wherein inconsistent practices were followed in terms of which State rates were to be applied and where the duty needs to be deposited," said Mr. Sanghavi.

"The Income Tax department now functions online," Mr. Goyal said. "Last year, 99.54% of the returns were accepted as they were filed."

He said the government had approved a "path-breaking, technology-intensive" project to transform the Income Tax department into a more assessee-friendly one. "All returns will be pro-

cessed in 24 hours and refunds issued simultaneously," he said. "Within the next two years, almost all verification and assessment of returns will be done electronically through anonymised back office, manned by tax experts and officials, without any personal interface between taxpayers and tax officers."

The Minister said that due to the steps already taken to widen the tax base and ease the compliance process, direct tax collections increased to almost ₹12 lakh crore in the current fi-

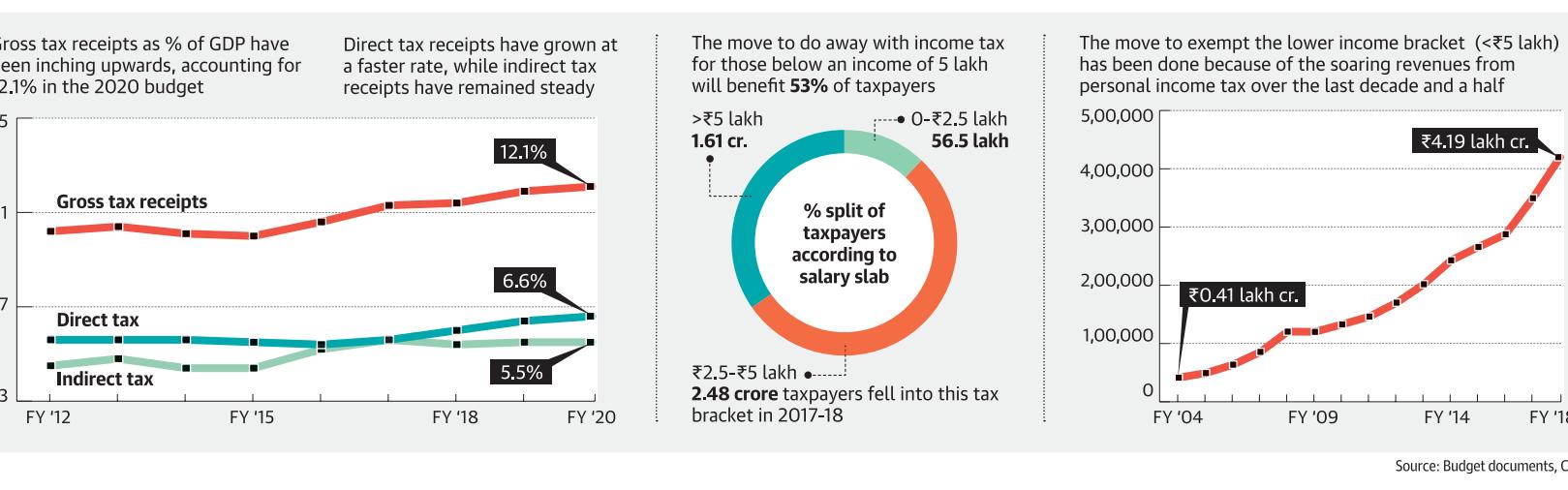
nancial year, from ₹6.38 lakh crore in 2013-14.

The number of returns filed, a measure of compliance, increased from 3.79 crore to 6.85 crore over this period, exhibiting an 80% growth in the tax base.

On indirect taxes, the Minister said despite many rate reductions under the Goods and Services Tax regime, the revenue trends were encouraging. The average monthly tax collections this year stood at ₹97,100 crore so far, compared to ₹89,700 crore last year.

<https://t.me/UPSC4Exams>

THE BUDGET & YOU



Earning less than ₹5 lakh? Save a neat ₹12,500

No tax for incomes up to ₹5 lakh; benefit extends to ₹6.5 lakh if Section 80C investments are made full use of

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The interim Budget contains several proposals aimed at reducing the tax burden on the salaried class and home owners, increasing the tax rebate limit and amount for small taxpayers and exempting certain forms of rental income from tax.

Finance Minister Piyush Goyal proposed amending Section 87A of the Income Tax Act to increase the rebate for taxpayers at the lower end of the spectrum.

Currently, the Section pro-

vides for a rebate of ₹2,500 for all taxpayers with an income of less than ₹3.5 lakh a year. So, a taxpayer earning ₹5 lakh a year effectively paid tax (at 5%) on only ₹2 lakh of that amount.

High compliance

"Because of major tax reforms undertaken by us during the last four-and-a-half years, both tax collections as well as the tax base have shown significant increase, achieving a moderate taxation-high compliance regime," Mr. Goyal said. "It is,

therefore, just and fair that some benefits from the tax reforms must also be passed on to the middle class taxpayers."

In this Budget, Mr. Goyal proposed raising the rebate amount to ₹12,500 and increasing the limit to ₹5 lakh a year.

This means that those earning up to ₹5 lakh a year will be exempt from tax. However, those earning more than ₹5 lakh will not be eligible for this and will have to pay tax according to the normal rates. For example, so-

mebody earning ₹8 lakh a year will have to pay ₹72,500 of tax (₹2.5 lakh taxed at 5% plus ₹3 lakh taxed at 20%).

This does not take into account the exemption of ₹1.5 lakh available to taxpayers under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act.

Tapping exemptions
Since the 80C exemptions effectively reduce the taxable income, those earning up to ₹6.5 lakh a year will not have to pay tax if they make full

use of the deductible investments such as Provident Fund.

"This will provide tax benefit of ₹18,500 crore to an estimated three crore middle class taxpayers comprising self-employed, small business, small traders, salary earners, pensioners and senior citizens," Mr. Goyal said.

The Budget also proposed increasing the standard deduction limit from the ₹40,000 announced last

year to ₹50,000.

In a move designed to provide tax relief to those who prefer to save rather than invest, the Budget also contained a provision to increase the Tax Deduction at Source (TDS) threshold on interest earned on bank or post office deposits to ₹40,000 from the current ₹10,000.

In addition, the TDS threshold for deduction of tax on rental income has also been proposed to be increased to ₹2.4 lakh from the current ₹1.8 lakh.

Relax! Your second home is now tax-free

Series of steps to boost realty sector

TCA SH



Budget boost for farmers

A look at who will benefit from the new scheme - Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi - announced in the interim Budget for "small and marginal" farmers

Farmers who own <1 hectare of land are "marginal" and those who own between 1 and 2 hectares of land are "small"

Nearly 12,56,35,000 farmers in India as of 2015-16 can be identified as marginal and small. This accounts for 86% of all farmers in India.

Each of these farmers will be given ₹6,000 per year.

This will cost ₹75,381 cr. per year.

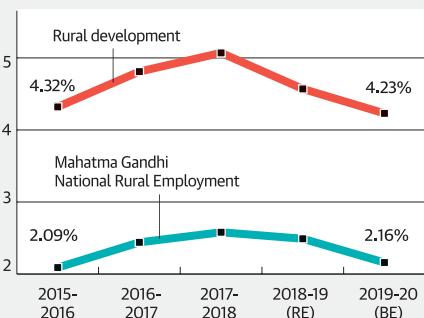
₹75,000 cr. has been allocated for the scheme for the financial year 2020. A sum of 20,000 crore has been allocated for the scheme in FY year 2019.

which is 11% of the total Budget.

Kerala has most such farmers, Punjab the least. Table shows % of marginal & small farmers

State	% share
Punjab	33.11
Arunachal Pradesh	45.22
Rajasthan	62.03
Gujarat	68.3
Jammu & Kashmir	95.08
West Bengal	96.22
Tripura	96.32
Bihar	96.96
Kerala	99.09

The % share allocated for rural development and MGNREGA of the total Budget has come down. Graph shows % of Budget allocated for these schemes over the years



Source: Budget documents, Agricultural census

Telangana and Odisha pay more

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI While the farm sector welcomed the government's direct income support scheme - PM-KISAN - experts said the amount offered to small and marginal farmers is lower than what is being provided by the governments of Telangana and Odisha. In the interim Budget 2019-20, the government announced a transfer of ₹6,000 per year to 12 crore farmers holding cultivable land up to two hectares directly into their bank accounts from the current year.

Welcoming the move, Indian Council of Food and Agriculture Chairman M.J. Khan, however, said: "The support amount is small and lower than the Rythu Bandhu scheme of Telangana or the KALIA of Odisha, and hence not much impact is likely." He further said it was the only option available with the government to reach out to farmers in a short time before the election code of conduct comes into force. Money transferred to farmers' accounts will be good for the party in power and also will be a boost to the rural economy, Mr. Khan said in a statement.

The Rythu Bandhu scheme of Telangana offers ₹10,000 per acre a year to all farmers, excluding tenant farmers, while the Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme of Odisha offers direct benefit cash transfer of ₹25,000 for a farm family over five seasons to small and marginal farmers.

Noting that proper execution of PM-KISAN scheme is very important to ensure benefits are passed on to farmers, Insecticides India Managing Director Rajesh Agarwal said the government should focus on strategising and the implementation of the policy.

Ajay Kakra of PwC India said PM-KISAN is in the right direction as the income can be helpful to protect the small and marginal farmers from market and price fluctuation and absorb the inflationary cost increments. Around 72% of farmers are in this category and are likely to increase to 90% by 2025, he added.

'Good move' Cargill India president Simon George said: "We are particularly optimistic about the Central government sponsored PM-KISAN Yojana, Direct Benefit Transfers to small holder farmers. Though a lot more can be done, a good move that will help farmers align better with market."

Many more initiatives including market reforms like implementing model APMC Act, Essential Commodity Act, etc., are required to achieve the objective of doubling farmers' income by 2022, he added.

The interest subvention scheme to farmers engaged in animal husbandry and fisheries is also a positive development helping farmers through lower interest rates, he added.

KisanKraft Managing Director Ravindra Agrawal said: "It is a good Budget focussed on implementing positive changes to the agri sector. We believe this will pave the way for the sector to see increased participation from businesses."

Farm pension: just a drizzle in the drought?

Agricultural economists say ₹6,000 a year for smallholders, announced with an eye on polls, will not help alleviate distress

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI

In a bid to woo the farming community before the Lok Sabha election, the Centre has announced an annual income support of ₹6,000 to small landowning farmers, with an initial sum of ₹2,000 to be paid by the end of March.

The new scheme, called the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), will benefit more than 12 crore farming families which own cultivable land up to 2 hectares. The annual support of ₹6,000 will be paid directly into beneficiary bank accounts over the course of the year in three instalments of ₹2,000 each.

The scheme is applicable with retrospective effect from December 2018 and

will be fully funded by the Union government. It has been allocated ₹20,000 crore in the revised estimates for the current financial year 2018-19, as well as ₹75,000 crore for the next financial year 2019-20.

Announcing the scheme, Finance Minister Piyush Goyal acknowledged that farmers' incomes are falling due to a decline in international prices and domestic food inflation, and fragmented landholdings.

"There is a need for providing structured income support to the poor landholder farmer families in the country for procuring inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, equipment, labour, etc., and to meet other needs," Mr. Goyal said. "Such support will help them in avoiding in-

debt as well as falling into the clutches of money lenders."

Other measures announced in the Budget include a 2.5% interest subvention for loans taken by farmers hit by natural disasters or for livestock farming and fisheries.

Agricultural distress and anger over debts leading to

farmer suicides were widely perceived to be the reason for the BJP's defeat in three major State elections in November, and the ruling party has been considering sops for the farming community ever since.

However, several agricultural economists and farm activists said the scheme had been announced with an eye

on the polls and will not be enough to alleviate distress.

"This is too little, too late," said Ashok Gulati, agricultural economist at ICRER. "At ₹500 per month, it will amount to less than one-fifth of an average household's income. Per annum, it's peanuts."

He suggested that if the government really wanted to make a difference through an income support scheme, it should double the amount given by reducing some food and fertilizer subsidies.

"It has been done half-heartedly," said agriculture and food policy expert Devinder Sharma. "I don't know how you can pull farmers out of distress and prevent farmer suicides with just ₹500 per month."

The Central scheme's

payout is lower than what is being given in similar schemes by two States - Telangana and Odisha. Telangana's Rythu Bandhu scheme and Odisha's KALIA scheme offer more than the Central scheme.

"Every amount of money has value. The assurance of something certain coming to you gives a sense of confidence that there is something to fall back on," said Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Agarwal, defending the support amount.

He pointed out that each family unit - of a married couple and their minor children - was eligible for the scheme. A household of five adult brothers jointly owning a 10-hectare piece of land would receive ₹30,000 for the year, he said.



Little help: The Centre has allocated ₹20,000 crore for the PM-KISAN scheme for the current financial year. ■ FILE PHOTO

Jai kisan



Some relief: Farmers working on a paddy field on the outskirts of Hyderabad in this file photo. Under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi announced in the interim Budget, farmers with up to two hectares will get ₹6,000 a year. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

Direct income support a good step'

Move is welcome in the wake of the agrarian crisis, says M.S. Swaminathan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Eminent agriculture scientist, touted to be the 'father of the Green Revolution', M.S. Swaminathan welcomed the interim Budget proposal of direct income support to farmers through

the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme and termed it as a good step, particularly in wake of the agrarian crisis.

The provision of direct income support to farmers will enable

them to purchase the inputs needed for a technological upgrading of farm operation, he said in the statement.

Several reforms were also announced with reference to agriculture

credit and kisan credit cards. Additional support was promised for women farmers," Prof. M.S. Swaminathan said in a release.

He also lauded the emphasis laid on the effective implementation of the ongoing schemes.

Historic decision, says Agriculture Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

Terming the Budget as historic, Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh on Friday said it was for the first time since Independence that over 12 crore marginal farmers will get annual assistance of ₹6,000.

He added that it was taking a little longer to resolve farmers' problems due to the wrong policies of the previous Congress governments.

"Since the past 48 years only slogans were raised for farmers and poor... only one family gained strength during this period," he said.

"It is because of the wrong policies of the Congress governments in the past that it is taking long to

resolve the problems of farmers but the Central government is committed to double the income of farmers by 2022," he said.

To a question on decrease in farmers' income, he said the Centre has brought many revolutionary schemes but global slowdown and dip in inflation at the domestic level has led to this.

Finance Minister Piyush Goyal said, "Additional amount would be provided if required."

The last Budget had announced an original allocation of ₹55,000 crore for the scheme for 2018-19. However, by the end of the 2018, the scheme had already exhausted 99% of its funding and had a negative net balance of ₹4,413 crore

under NITI Aayog to complete the task of identifying de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic

communities, especially as they move from place to place in search of a livelihood. The committee will follow up on the work of the Renke Commission and the Iitate Commission.

A Welfare Development Board will also be set up under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to design and implement programmes for these hard-to-reach communities, Mr. Goyal said. He said a substantial increase is proposed in the allocation for welfare of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

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This budget has empowered and increased buying capacity of every segment. Tax exemption up to ₹5 lakh per annum income for individual tax payers is a historic step

— VENU SRINIVASAN,
Chairman, TVS Motor
Company



Tax benefits to builders on affordable housing is a positive development for the real estate sector

— SRIVINAS ACHARYA,
Managing Director, Sundaram
Home Finance



Small traders and farmers are lifelines. #Budget2019 infuses hopes for millions of dreams

— GAUTAM ADANI,
Chairman and Founder, Adani
Group



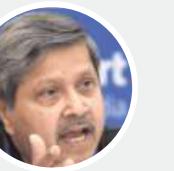
Relief to the key middle class and farmers were delivered without risking bankruptcy

— ANAND MAHINDRA,
Chairman, Mahindra
Group



Budget touched the right notes for stimulating demand and growth in the economy

— CHANDRAKANT BANERJEE,
CII Director
General



Budget rightly focusses on the middle class, rural sector and on enhancing farmers' income

— KRISH IYER,
President and CEO,
Walmart India



A series of sops for the middle class, farmers and millions of employees in the unorganised sector

— SUNIL DUGGAL,
CEO, Dabur
India



The Budget proposals should augur well for the economy by providing growth impetus

— SANJIV PURI,
Managing Director,
ITC



Divestments will need to be front-loaded to achieve the ambitious target of ₹90,000 crore

— DHARMAKIRTI JOSHI,
Chief Economist, CRISIL Ltd.



Changing equation: As inflation fell, the RBI was expected to lower rates and change stance to 'neutral'. •REUTERS

Change in fiscal deficit glide path may put Reserve Bank in a fix

Yield on 10-year benchmark hardens

MANOJIT SAHA
MUMBAI

The government's decision to push the glide path for achieving 3% fiscal deficit target would weigh on the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) when it meets next week to discuss the last monetary policy of the financial year, which will also be the first under the new Governor Shaktikanta Das.

In the Budget speech, Finance Minister Piyush Goyal revised the fiscal deficit target for 2018-19 to 3.4% from 3.3%.

He said it would be 3.4% in FY20, too.

"We have maintained the glide path towards our target of 3% of fiscal deficit to be achieved by 2020-21," Mr. Goyal said.

Originally, the target was to reach a fiscal deficit of 3.1% of GDP by March 2020, and 3% by March 2021.

At a time when retail inflation – the main yardstick of RBI for policymaking purpose – has fallen to an 18-month low of 2.2%, there is a case for the central bank to lower the interest rate and change stance to 'neutral'.

In the wake of the development on the fiscal deficit front, the RBI may now opt for status quo.

Expansionary budget "The government presented an expansionary budget and prioritised populism over fiscal prudence," research analysts at Nomura said in a note to its clients.

"The deviation from the FY19 fiscal deficit target and the 'pause' on FY20 fiscal consolidation is a negative surprise, relative to our ex-

pectations," it said.

"The expansionary fiscal impulse, at the margin, negates the need for the RBI to consider monetary easing at this stage," Nomura said in the note adding that the MPC could keep the rate unchanged though the stance could change to neutral from calibrated tightening.

The gross borrowing programme of ₹7.1 lakh crore has also dampened the sentiments in the bond market as yields had hardened.

Fiscal math

"The key focus among other things for bond markets is the fiscal math.

"While the fiscal deficit as percentage of GDP has been pegged at 3.4%, the gross borrowing programme of ₹7.10 lakh crore has spooked market sentiments," said Lakshmi Iyer, chief investment officer (debt) and head of products, Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company.

The yield on the 10-year benchmark government bond rose to 7.61%, rising 13 basis points from its previous close. "For now, we expect bond yields to remain at current elevated levels with sideways movement till MPC meeting slated for next week offers some clarity," she added.

"Before any discussion on the numbers around the budget, it's clear that if anyone were to ask 'How high was Piyush Goyal's

FUTURE PERFECT

Goyal unveils Vision 2030, highlighting 10 dimensions

Govt. will create an India where poverty, malnutrition, littering and illiteracy would be a thing of the past

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Presenting the Interim Budget, Finance Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday laid out the government's vision for India in 2030, highlighting "10 most important dimensions."

"Our India of 2030 will have a proactive and responsible bureaucracy which will be viewed as friendly to people. With ten-dimensional vision, we will create an India where poverty, malnutrition, littering and illiteracy would be a matter of the past. India would be a modern, technology-driven, high growth, equitable and

transparent society," Mr. Goyal asserted.

Stating that India aspires to become a \$10-trillion economy in the next eight years, he said the first dimension or point of this vision is to build physical as well as social infrastructure for a \$10-trillion economy and facilitate ease of living.

"On the social infrastructure side, every family will have a roof on its head and will live in a healthy, clean and wholesome environment."

Digital India While the second dimension of "our vision" is to create a Digital India, making India a



pollution-free nation is the third point which will be driven by electric vehicles and renewables.

"Expanding rural industrialisation using modern digital technologies to generate massive employment is the fourth dimension of our vision," he said. This will be built upon

this government's flagship 'Make in India' programme.

Under the fifth dimension, Mr. Goyal talked about clean rivers and safe drinking water for all Indians.

"India's long coastline has the potential of becoming the strength of the economy, particularly through exploitation of the Blue Economy...coastline and our ocean waters powering India's development and growth is the sixth dimension of our vision," the Minister said.

"The seventh dimension of our vision aims at the outer skies...making India self-sufficient in food, a

exporting to the world to meet their food needs and producing food in the most organic way is the eighth dimension of our vision.

Next comes the vision of a healthy India. "By 2030, we will work towards a distress-free healthcare and a functional and comprehensive wellness system for all."

"Our vision can be delivered by Team India – our employees working together with the elected government, transforming India into a minimum government, maximum governance nation. This is the tenth dimension," the Minister said.

for the financial year 2019-20 without putting the exchequer's finances under too much pressure.

This is one budget that has not only focused on giving immediate relief to a large section of the Indian society, but has also clearly outlined the vision for the next decade and building a new India that aims to provide quality life to every Indian."

Fiscally prudent

Commenting on the budget, Anil Agarwal, executive chairman, Vedanta Resources, said, "The Narendra Modi government must be applauded for a pro-growth and fiscally prudent budget

document made public Friday has allotted ₹5 crore for the year ahead for the mission.

Training for new jobs

Cyber physical systems deal with training youth for new kinds of jobs that would be created due to the destruction of conventional jobs and the mechanisation of jobs. The mission aims to establish 15 Technology Innovation Hubs (TIH), six Application Innovation Hubs (AIH), four Technology Translation Research Parks (TTRP). The hubs and TTRPs would connect to academics, industry, Central Ministries and State government in de-

veloping solutions at reputed academic, R&D and other organisations across the country in a hub and spoke model, according to a note from the Union Science Ministry. About 40,000 jobs would be created in the short term and about 2,00,000 in long term, the note adds.

CPS and its associated technologies, include Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), Machine Learning (ML), Deep Learning (DP), Big Data Analytics, robotics, quantum computing, quantum communication, quantum encryption (quantum key distribution), Data Science and Predictive Analytics.

https://t.me/UPSC4Exams

Increased govt. sourcing, 2% subvention for loans a boost for MSMEs

Rural entrepreneurs to benefit most

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector, the cornerstone of Indian economy, has got a boost in the Interim Budget, with the government offering 2% subvention for loans up to ₹1 crore and extending the Government eMarketplace (GeM) platform to support domestic services and

to savings of 25%-28%. It is expected that GeM would be scaled up to add more and more participants while easing the flow of funds to MSMEs. Mr. Sunil Gupta, founder and director, ExportersIndia.com, said, "In government projects, the decision to source 25% material from SMEs is a case of leading by example.

With the Budget largely focused on the rural segments of the country, this will benefit the MSME sector greatly as 51% of all 634 lakh MSMEs are based in rural areas, consequently being a vital source of rural employment.

'Step in right direction' Rajiv Talreja, an entrepreneur and a business coach, said, "Keeping the politico de facto aside, I believe this is a good budget for the MSMEs. A 2% interest subvention for loans up to ₹1 crore is certainly a step in the right direction. Most importantly, the government has opened a new market for the home-grown entrepreneurs by allowing sourcing from MSMEs through government up to 25%, including 3% from women-owned SMEs, is a case of leading by example. Interest subvention for SME for loans up to ₹1 crore is yet another positive. The path set to tackling unemployment by becoming the manufacturing hub of the world is another promising note. These measures, along with digitisation and automation, will help the SMEs and online businesses become a bigger force to reckon with."

Talking about Trade Receivables Discounting System (TreDS) that has enabled working capital finance to MSMEs, Kalyan Basu, MD & CEO, A.TreDS Ltd., said, "In the 2018 Budget, Arun Jaitley proposed to bring public sector banks and corporates to the platform and link it with the GSTN. This has helped bring in more credit and ease out the cash flow for MSMEs. In fact, TreDS is going to be a major source of fund flow for MSMEs in the future."

AI centre on the anvil

An important component of cyber physical systems'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Piyush Goyal's announcement of a 'National Programme on Artificial Intelligence' ties into an existing programme led by the Union Science Ministry called the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS). The latter was cleared by the Union Cabinet last December at a total outlay of ₹3,660 crore for five years.

"Artificial Intelligence is an important component of cyber physical systems," Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Department of Science of Technology, told *The Hindu*, "However we are yet to identify a centre where this will be hosted." The budget

document made public Friday has allotted ₹5 crore for the year ahead for the mission.

https://t.me/Banking4Exams

**Chugging along**

Finance Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday announced a capital expenditure allocation of ₹ 1.59 lakh crore for the Railways, the highest ever for the national transporter. Key highlights:



6 The number of Train 18s the Railways plans to produce, at a cost of ₹ 97 crore each



884 Deendayal general category, well-equipped coaches to be produced in the next 3 years



600 Number of MEMUs, which will replace passenger trains in major cities



64% increase proposed in rolling stock, which includes coaches, wagons and train sets

BUDGET ALLOCATED FOR EACH PROJECT

(In ₹ cr.)

New Lines (Construction)	7,255
Gauge Conversion	2,200
Computerisation	510
Doubling	700
Road Safety Works	4,800
Track Renewals	10,120
Signalling and Telecom	1,750
Staff Quarters	385
Passenger Amenities	3,422.5

THE BUDGET & ECONOMY**VIEWPOINT**SUNEETA REDDY
MD, Apollo hospitals**Quality infra key for Ayushman Bharat**

This was perhaps one of the most inclusive budgets we have seen yet. The big takeaway from this budget was the announcement of income support for farmers. It is an important step taken by the government to support vulnerable, small landholders. While this addresses the social impact and will provide them with relief, my hope is that the government continues to do very detailed work on addressing the root causes of agrarian distress, including crop patterns, demand-supply imbalances and distribution weaknesses. Only then will we see the real socio-economic impact of the government's initiatives and expenditure, and visible improvement in the agrarian economy, in ways that will go beyond doles and subsidies.

My views are similar in healthcare too - we applaud the government for its stated intent of health for all, and through Ayushman Bharat, taking healthcare to crores of vulnerable families.

However, the scheme will be sustainable in the long run only if it is backed by the creation of quality infrastructure and by sufficient funds allocated to its administration, which will make the scheme sustainable and viable for insurers and providers. A priority for healthcare

would be to fully operationalise the 1,50,000 wellness centres focused on early screening and preventive health - we would urge the government to expedite their plans to do this, as it is critical in our long and uphill battle against non-communicable diseases. We also are hopeful of further guidance and focus on integrated health, where our traditional forms of healing such as Ayurveda can work in a seamless way with modern medicine for the benefit of the patient.

The announcement of a pension system for unorganised workers is certainly a welcome and long-awaited step. India's citizens deserve a strong social security net, and this announcement will go a long way in easing the concerns of old age of these workers, who, in fact, truly drive the engines of our economy. The government has also stayed true to its promise of rewarding honest tax payers by announcing tax reliefs in direct taxation.

The Interim Budget of 2019 signals India's strong macro-economic fundamentals, and prospects for future growth - a bright spot in the context of the world economy.

We have an opportunity to fully leverage this potential, and position India as a world leader in both manufacturing and services. We look forward to the government capitalising on this opportunity.

We also believe that strong emphasis on priority sectors such as education and healthcare will be critical for our nation to achieve its rightful place in the world order.

**CLEAN & GREEN****Vision 2030 to push-start EVs, mass transportation**

Automobile associations, makers hail Centre's focus on electric mobility, emission-based tax regime

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

The government's commitment for a 'Clean & Green' India through proposals in the interim budget such as measures to reduce the use of fossil fuel in a phased manner by 2030 is expected to ensure faster adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) and environment friendly mass transportation in the country.

The emphasis laid on electric mobility in the '2030 Vision' is aimed at increasing energy security, reducing oil import dependence and reducing vehicular pollution. The government's focus

on the use of clean energy in the transportation sector will help India tackle the issue of climate change, the Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV) said. "The mission of bringing an EV revolution to India by 2030 is truly path-breaking," said Sohinder Gill, director general, SMEV.

Dr. Pawan Goenka, managing director, Mahindra & Mahindra said other than the 5% import duty on lithium ion cells, everything else was in the right direction.

"There is lot of interest from state governments for setting up electric mobility, last mile connectivity. We

have signed an MoU with the Thane Municipal Corporation and are in talks with 3-4 cities for setting up of a fleet of EVs and will soon be announcing a project with Uber," Dr. Goenka said.

He said that the FAME II scheme, to be announced before March 31, would lay

the roadmap for EVs. Shekar Viswanathan, vice-chairman and whole-time director, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, said, "We applaud the government's focus on EV drive towards reducing fuel import. Toyota has been a pioneer in electrified space offering alternate mobility solutions globally."

"The vehicle emission based tax regime would boost the EV vision towards achieving a cleaner and greener environment," he said.

Charles Frump, MD, Volvo Cars India said, "Volvo Cars' future roadmap is completely in sync with the

government's vision as globally we plan to go fully electric in the next few years. The fully electric car will make its entry into the Indian market soon after its global launch."

"Cut lithium cell duty" The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said it would work with the government in creating an ecosystem that would enable India to achieve the target of becoming the world leader in electric mobility.

However, it requested the government to reduce the customs duty on lithium batteries from 5% to nil.


<https://t.me/Banking4Exams>

for MSP operations (cotton procurement) has gone up. But that depends on how cotton prices move. There are arrears pending for payment to industries from ATUFS

M. SOUNDARIYA PREETHA
COIMBATORE

Allocation for the textiles sector in the Interim Budget has been reduced by over ₹ 1,000 crore.

According to the revised estimates for 2018-19, the textile and clothing sector gets ₹ 6,943 crore. For 2019-20, the Budget proposes an allocation of ₹ 5,831 crore.

Two major schemes implemented by the Ministry of Textiles - the Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme and the Remission of State Levies - have seen lower allocation for 2019-20. For Amended Technology Upgradation Scheme (ATUFS), it is ₹ 700 crore for the next financial year and for the current

year, the revised estimate is ₹ 622 crore. Earlier, for 2018-19, the allocation for ATUFS was ₹ 2,300 crore. In the case of Remission of State Levies (ROSL), the allocation for next fiscal is ₹ 1,000 crore.

The lower allocations are disappointing and worrisome," said Sanjay Jain, chairman of the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry. The amount allocated to Cotton Corporation of India

for MSP operations (cotton procurement) has gone up. But that depends on how cotton prices move. There are arrears pending for payment to industries from ATUFS

for the next year too, "we will be grossly under-provided," he said. The industry had been asking for higher ROSL, he added.

A. Sakthivel, vice-chairman, Apparel Export Promotion Council, said the industry expected an announcement on reimbursement of embedded taxes with duty drawback and ROSL. "This is an Interim Budget. So, we expect our demand will be addressed in three or four months," he added.

<https://t.me/UPSC4Exams>
Railways gets ₹1.59 lakh cr., the highest-ever allocation

Passengers can expect better amenities, newer trains and coaches in the coming year

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday proposed a capital expenditure of ₹ 1,58,658 crore for the Railways Ministry for the year 2019-20 in the Interim Budget. This is the highest-ever allocation for the national transporter, surpassing last year's allocation of ₹ 1,48,528 crore.

Mr. Goyal, who is also the Railways Minister, added that the operating ratio of Indian Railways is expected to improve to 95% in 2019-20 from 96.2% in 2018-19, and 98.4% in 2017-18.

"Capital support from the budget for railways is proposed at ₹ 64,587 crore in 2019-20 (BE). The Railways' overall capital expenditure programme is of ₹ 1,58,658 crore.

Operating ratio

The operating ratio is expected to improve from 98.4% in 2017-18 to 96.2% in 2018-19 (RE) and further to 95% in 2019-20 (BE)," the Minister said while presenting the Interim Budget.

An operating ratio of 95% means that railways is spending 95 paise to earn 100 paise.

All unmanned level crossings on the broad gauge network have been eliminated

Under the proposed outlay, ₹ 7,255 crore had been allocated for construction of new lines, ₹ 4,100 crore for road safety works (building road over/under bridges), ₹ 10,120 crore for track renewal, ₹ 3,422.57 for passenger amenities, ₹ 700 crore for doubling, ₹ 6,114.82 crore for rolling stock, ₹ 1,750 crore for signalling and telecom and ₹ 2,200 crore for gauge conversion. This means that pass-

sengers can expect better amenities, newer trains and coaches in the coming year.

The total outlay for 2019-20 comprises ₹ 64,587 crore from budgetary support, ₹ 10,500 crore from internal resources and ₹ 83,571 crore from extra-budgetary resources.

In revised estimates 2018-19, the capital expenditure was ₹ 1,38,857.52 crore, comprising ₹ 53,060 crore from budgetary support, ₹ 6,500 crore from internal resources and ₹ 79,297.52 crore from extra-budgetary resources.

The budget estimates under revenue for the year 2019-20 (gross) is ₹ 2,72,705.68 crore, recording an increase of ₹ 22,854.67 crore over the revised estimates of ₹ 2,49,851.01 crore for 2018-19.

As per the Budget documents, the government expects railway earnings from passengers to grow to ₹ 56,000 crore from ₹ 52,000 crore in 2018-19, and from goods to grow by more than ₹ 10,000 crore to ₹ 31,565 crore.

In his speech, Mr. Goyal

added that 2018-19 was the safest year in the history of Indian Railways.

Additionally, all unmanned level crossings on broad gauge network had been eliminated. Railway officials said that consequently, train accidents had reduced from 118 in 2013-14 to 47 in 2018-19 (up to December).

Talking about first indigenously developed and manufactured semi high-speed 'Vande Bharat Express,' Mr. Goyal said this was a major leap in technology wholly-developed by Indian engineers.

Single-window clearance for film-makers to get cameras rolling

Anti-camcorder rules to curb piracy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI / MUMBAI

C The Centre will have to be more stringent against online piracy as well

SREEDHAR PILLAI
Trade Analyst

films which require a single clearance but for local industries I don't see much benefit," said Mr. Pillai.

The clampdown on piracy by introducing anti-camcorder norms has been unanimously welcomed by the film industry. "All measures towards anti-piracy safeguard the hard work and investments made by filmmakers," said director Milan Luthria.

The single-window clearance mechanism, which provides a one-stop shop to seek permission to shoot at locations within India, was limited to foreign filmmakers so far.

"It is a significant step and has the potential to play a huge role in boosting tourism in the country," said Siddharth Roy Kapur, President, Producers Guild of India. Single-window clearance is expected to save pre-production time for filmmakers and producers.

"It will also eradicate hidden costs involved in the procedure," said Sunir Khetrapal, CEO, Azure Entertainment. However, trade analyst Sreedhar Pillai said that most properties open to filming fall under the State governments, which will lead to a conflict of interest with the voter base," said B. Gopkumar, CEO, Reliance Securities.

The BSE Realty index also gained 1.67% as the government announced various sops for the real estate sector. "Overall, the budget is hitting the right notes with both the investor community and the voter base," said B. Gopkumar, CEO, Reliance Securities. "Single window clearance maybe good for Hollywood

Allocation for textiles reduced

Sector concerned over quantum being lower by ₹ 1,000 cr.

M. SOUNDARIYA PREETHA
COIMBATORE

Allocation for the textiles sector in the Interim Budget has been reduced by over ₹ 1,000 crore.

According to the revised estimates for 2018-19, the textile and clothing sector gets ₹ 6,943 crore. For 2019-20, the Budget proposes an allocation of ₹ 5,831 crore.

Two major schemes implemented by the Ministry of Textiles - the Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme and the Remission of State Levies (ROSL), the allocation for next fiscal is ₹ 1,000 crore.

For the current year, it is ₹ 3,663 crore as against the initial allocation of ₹ 2,163 crore.

"The lower allocations are disappointing and worrisome," said Sanjay Jain, chairman of the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry. The amount allocated to Cotton Corporation of India

for MSP operations (cotton procurement) has gone up. But that depends on how cotton prices move. There are arrears pending for payment to industries from ATUFS

for the next year too, "we will be grossly under-provided," he said. The industry had been asking for higher ROSL, he added.

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<https://t.me/UPSC4Exams>



Our government wants to get stronger and that was aim of the Budget. I would call it a historic Budget. It would benefit all sections of society.

RAJNATH SINGH, Union Home Minister



The Budget was like a surgical strike on the Opposition, which has been rendered speechless by the Modi government.

SUSHIL KUMAR MODI, BJP leader & Bihar Deputy CM



It benefits the poor. Such a Budget has been presented after many years and it will help in empowering people of this country.

MAHESH SHARMA, Minister of State for Culture



Was the Budget prepared by the Finance Ministry or the RSS headquarters? We need not take this seriously, thinking that it will bring about a drastic change.

H.D. KUMARASWAMY, Karnataka CM



This is an anti-farmer and anti-youth Budget. There is nothing mentioned in this Budget to give solace to them. Narendra Modi has betrayed both.

SIDDARAMAIAH, Congress leader



Presenting a full Budget while calling it 'interim' is unconstitutional. This is against parliamentary conventions and ethics.

TEJASHWI YADAV, RJD leader



The BJP government has addressed the issues of their interest and the interests of the States run by them, and not that of others.

MAMATA BANERJEE, West Bengal CM



Final jumla of Modi govt... its interim Budget completely disappoints Delhi. Our share in Central taxes remains frozen at ₹325 cr. and nothing has been earmarked for local bodies.

ARVIND KEJRIWAL, Delhi CM

FROM PAGE ONE

Populist schemes breach convention: Opposition



An allocation of ₹20,000 crore has been made for the farmer income scheme in the current fiscal. ■ PTI

"According to me, they have breached convention. They have presented a full-fledged Budget, which I think is wrong. Secondly, they have made major amendments to the Income Tax Act, which is again unprecedented. If all this was necessary, why was it not done last year or the year before?"

Tax analysts said there were changes made to the Income Tax Act in previous interim budgets also, but that they were small in nature. In contrast, the change in the Income Tax Act resulting from the announcements in Friday's interim Budget is one of the main decisions being touted by the government.

Apart from the announcement itself, the manner in which Parliament handles it could be another breach of convention, according to a former Finance Ministry official.

"One matter that is to be looked out for is whether the changes to the income tax will be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance before,"

"Govt. intent exposed" "The government's real intention is clear from the decision to begin this scheme retrospectively and to pass on the first instalment within this financial year," said Swaraj India president Yogendra Yadav.

"It's a clear attempt to dodge the model code of conduct ... It is a double insult that the government expects to get farmers' votes so cheap. Farmers will surely reject this dishonourable bargain."

He added that the exclusion of tenant farmers, landless cultivators and Adivasi farmers was troubling.

"The surgical strike is going to happen on Mr. Modi in

"I think it's an insult to the

Indian farmer to turn around and tell him that you are going to give him ₹17 a day; there couldn't have been bigger insult than this," Mr. Gandhi told press persons. "And as far as jobs are concerned, everybody knows that we are on a 45-year high of unemployment. So, there is complete failure on these two fronts," he said.

"The surgical strike is going to happen on Mr. Modi in

the next two months," the Congress leader said, when asked if the budget proposals were a "surgical strike" by the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of the election. "There is going to be one surgical strike after the other: on Rafale, on demonetisation, on jobs and agriculture," Mr. Gandhi said.

Mr. Chidambaram promised a "better designed tax architecture".

"My one-line comment on the Budget is that it was not a

vote-on-account but an account-for-votes," the former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said.

"Please do not compare this 'half a cup of tea scheme', for what we have in mind is relief to every poor household so that every poor household comes up to a level of minimum income," he said, referring to the Congress's promise of a minimum income guarantee.

Mr. Chidambaram pro-

mised a "better designed tax architecture".

Finance Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday described the Union Budget as one that would benefit all sections of society, adding that it was just a "trailer" of India's path to prosperity after the Lok Sabha election this year.

"The Budget will empower the poor, give a boost to the farmer and an impetus to the economic growth," he said. "Our neo-middle class is rising and so are their dreams ... Interim Budget a trailer for what will take India towards prosperity after the Lok Sabha polls," he said

in a televised statement. Listing the details of the Budget, Mr. Modi said more than 12 crore farmers, three crore middle class families and 30-40 crore workers employed in the unorganised sector would benefit from the Budget, adding that poverty had been falling at a record rate with the efforts of the government.

Big boost

"This Budget will boost the efforts of 130 crore citizens in realising the goal of a new India," Mr. Modi said.

He said the development initiatives of the NDA govern-

ment had touched several lives, which had been reflected in the Budget proposals for the welfare of the farmers and the middle class, apart from those for income tax relief, infrastructure development, impetus to manufac-

turing, MSME, housing and healthcare and the increased pace of development for a New India.

He congratulated the middle class for the relief in taxes, and said he saluted it for its contribution towards the development of the nation.

He said PM Kisan Nidhi

was a historic step for farmer welfare, which would help farmers with less than five acres of land. He added that the animal husbandry and fisheries sectors had been taken care of in the Budget.

Underlining the importance of safeguarding the interests of the unorganised sector, he said the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Man Dhan Yojana would be of great help. This sector needed more safeguarding of their interests and the Budget had done so, he said.

Finance Minister Piyush Goyal's maiden Budget speech ran to over an hour and 40 minutes.

Rajnath cheers on

As he began his speech, it was Home Minister Rajnath Singh who urged the Treasury benches to thump the desks in support for the acting Finance Minister, who was thrust into an unfamiliar role. Mr. Modi, too, was seen thumping his desk in encouragement at some of the early rhetorical flourishes of the speech, with other BJP MPs saying wah, wah.

These were just early hic-

cups, with Mr. Goyal gaining confidence with each an-

nouncement, as he unveiled one sop after another for farmers, unorganised sector workers, and finally the tax proposals. The tax exemption announcements prompted the Treasury benches to burst out into a chant of "Modi! Modi!" for nearly two minutes before order could be restored. The only light interjection on Mr. Goyal's behalf was the mention that he had watched the film Uri on the 2016 surgical strike across the border, just before he announced some sops for the film industry.

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THE HINDU DELHI
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2019

WORLD 17

ELSEWHERE

**Mnangagwa accuses West of backing violence**

HARARE
Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa on Friday accused Western countries of supporting violent protests last month that were sparked by a huge rise in fuel prices. At least 12 civilians died and hundreds more were injured following a crackdown. **REUTERS**

Ami Bera to head key Congressional panel

WASHINGTON
Indian-American Congressman Ami Bera has been named the head of a key Congressional subcommittee that will have broad jurisdiction to conduct oversight into America's foreign policy. He would chair the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. **PTI**

Colombo-Kandy highway to be funded by China

BEIJING
Sri Lanka, which last year handed over a strategic port to a Chinese firm for a 99-year lease, will soon sign a \$1 billion loan agreement with Beijing to fund a project for a highway linking Colombo to Kandy. Construction has been delayed for more than two years over funding. **PTI**

Trump hints he could declare emergency

WASHINGTON
President Donald Trump said talks with lawmakers on building his proposed Mexico border wall are pointless and suggested that he will declare a national emergency to get it done. "I think Nancy Pelosi is hurting our country very badly by doing what she's doing and, ultimately, I think I've set the table very nicely," Mr. Trump said on Thursday in an interview with *The New York Times*. **AFP**

'Sharif should be shifted to hospital from prison'

Medical board makes recommendation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LAHORE
Former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif should be shifted to a hospital from prison after he developed cardiac complications, a media report quoted a special medical board constituted to monitor his health as recommending.

Mr. Sharif, 69, has been serving a seven-year jail term in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail. The suggestion to shift him to a hospital was made to the provincial Home Ministry in a report. According to *Express News*, Mr. Sharif has developed cardiac complications.

Detailed examination
On January 25, the Punjab provincial government formed the medical board, which conducted a detailed

U.S. to pull out of nuclear Treaty

Pompeo accuses Russia of 'shamelessly violating' the Cold War-era agreement

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

The U.S. is suspending its obligations under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty effective February 2 and will withdraw from the treaty in six months, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said at a press briefing that lasted less for about eight minutes.

The treaty, signed during the Cold War in 1987, bans ground-launched missiles with a range of 500 km-5,500 km. It was key to ending the arms race between the (then) two superpowers and helped protect the U.S.'s NATO allies in Europe from Soviet missile attacks. The U.S. will formally give Russia and the other treaty parties a formal notice that it is withdrawing under Article XV of the Treaty, Mr. Pompeo said. Article XV mandates a six-month notice period before withdrawal.

"Russia has jeopardised the United States' security interests and we can no longer



We are out: U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo holding a news briefing in Washington on Friday. **• AFP**

be restricted by the treaty while Russia shamelessly violates it," Mr. Pompeo said.

"We cannot be the only country in the world unilaterally bound by this treaty, or any other," President Donald Trump said in a statement issued by the White House on Friday.

However, the Secretary left open the possibility that the treaty could be rescued in the six-month withdrawal

period. "If Russia does not return to full and verifiable compliance with the treaty within this six-month period by verifiably destroying its INF-violating missiles, missile launchers and associated equipment, the treaty will terminate," he added.

The Trump and Obama administrations have repeatedly alleged that Russia was violating the treaty by fielding a ground-based cruise missile, the Novator 9M729 ("SSC-8" in NATO terminology) that could strike Europe at a short notice, an allegation that Russia has repeatedly denied. The Russians have raised counterallegations against the U.S., with regard to launchers for anti-ballistic missile systems in Europe.

Full support
Mr. Pompeo thanked the U.S.'s NATO allies during his remarks. The alliance has said in a statement that it "fully supports" the U.S. decision.

Yet, the decision has raised concerns, especially in Europe, of an arms race.

The U.S. has also been concerned that China has been gaining a strategic advantage over it as it is not party to the treaty and bound by its terms. Withdrawal from the treaty will increase the weapons options for the U.S. in the Pacific, where China has increased its influence.

129 of 130 arrested in U.S. visa fraud scheme are Indians

They have been placed in removal proceedings: ICE

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

In the evolving case of the University of Farmington sting operation that *The Hindu* has been closely monitoring, 129 of the 130 arrested "students" are Indian nationals, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) said in an email. One of them is Palestinian, Voice of America quoted official sources as saying.

"As of yesterday morning, ICE had administratively arrested 130 foreign nationals enrolled at the University of Farmington for civil immigration violations. Of the 130, 129 were Indian nationals. These individuals have been placed in removal proceedings, and ICE will seek to maintain them in its custody pending the outcome of those proceedings," the email from ICE said.

Three indictments, unsealed on Wednesday in the U.S. District Court of the Eastern District of Michigan in Detroit, charged eight individuals of Indian origin with recruiting students (the *Detroit Free Press* had reported that number to be around 600) to keep their immigration status in the U.S. valid and provide them

with work permits by abusing the F-1 student visa scheme and associated curricular practical training (CPT) opportunities. The eight accused at the centre of the alleged scheme were arrested earlier this week.

The authorities alleged that each of the foreign citizens who enrolled and made "tuition" payments to the university knew that they would not attend any actual classes, earn credits, or make academic progress towards an actual degree in a particular field of study – it was a "pay-to-stay" scheme."

Guaidó tries to win support of Maduro allies Russia and China

The current government cannot protect their investments'

REUTERS
CARACAS

Global jostling intensified on Thursday between countries that want Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in power and those trying to force him to resign, as Opposition leader Juan Guaidó made overtures to his rival's allies Russia and China.

Mr. Guaidó said that he had sent communications to both powers, which are Venezuela's top foreign creditors and support Mr. Maduro in the UN Security Council despite worries about the cash-strapped country's ability to pay.

'Switch sides'
The 35-year-old leader argued that the interests of Russia and China would be best served by switching the side they back in Venezuela.

"What most suits Russia and China is the country's stability and a change of government," Mr. Guaidó said.

"Maduro does not protect Venezuela, he doesn't protect anyone's investments, and he is not a good deal for

those countries."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang, asked if China had been in touch with Mr. Guaidó, said they were "maintaining close communication with all parties through various means regarding the situation in Venezuela".

The intense pressure is led by the U.S., which along with most other countries in the Western Hemisphere recognises Mr. Guaidó as the country's legitimate interim President, arguing that Mr. Maduro stole his second-term election.

Some three million Venezuelans have left the country. A UN expert on Thursday warned that the U.S. oil sanctions could worsen the humanitarian crisis.

Senator Cory Booker announces presidential run

I believe we can build a country where no one is left behind, says ex-Newark Mayor

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. Senator Cory Booker, who gained national prominence in the fight over Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, announced on Friday that he would seek the Democratic Party's nomination for the 2020 presidential election, injecting more youthful energy to the expanding Democratic field.

Mr. Booker, 49, became the latest Democrat and the fourth U.S. Senator to announce a presidential bid in what is expected to be a crowded and diverse race to



Senator and former Newark Mayor Cory Booker. **• Reuters**

be the candidate to try to unseat President Donald Trump. His announcement came as little surprise. The second-term Senator from New Jersey has appeared at political events in Iowa and New Hampshire.

Focus on jobs

"I believe that we can build a country where no one is forgotten, no one is left behind," he said in a video on his website. He added that he would focus on creating good jobs and reforming the criminal justice system.

He announced his bid on

the first day of Black History Month, mentioning on his website the impact of racial discrimination on his family and a video posted on it emphasised racial justice issues. Mr. Booker is the second African-American to decide to run, after U.S. Senator Kamala Harris of California. A former Mayor of Newark, New Jersey, Mr. Booker has styled himself a progressive who favours a Medicare-for-all health-care plan and has a liberal voting record in the Senate.

In running as a relative newcomer to Washington, Mr. Booker follows in the footsteps of another Black American politician, Barack Obama, who left his Senate seat and ultimately won the presidency in 2008.

'Sharif should be shifted to hospital from prison'

Medical board makes recommendation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LAHORE
Former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif should be shifted to a hospital from prison after he developed cardiac complications, a media report quoted a special medical board constituted to monitor his health as recommending.

Mr. Sharif, 69, has been serving a seven-year jail term in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail. The suggestion to shift him to a hospital was made to the provincial Home Ministry in a report. According to *Express News*, Mr. Sharif has developed cardiac complications.

Detailed examination
On January 25, the Punjab provincial government formed the medical board, which conducted a detailed

Trump serious about Afghan pullout: Taliban

Next round of talks from February 25

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

President Donald Trump is serious about getting out of Afghanistan, the Taliban said on Friday, outlining the "Islamic system" comprising "all Afghans" that the group says it hopes to establish under any peace deal.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid spoke to AFP via WhatsApp, a day after the U.S. said talks with the militants are "on the right path", fuelling speculation of a breakthrough in the 17-year conflict.

An agreement was reached on a principle framework... which, if implemented, and if the Americans take honest steps and stick to it truthfully, then God willing we are hopeful that the Americans will end the occupation of Afghanistan on January 30 for two hours in the prison.

Mr. Sharif has been behind the bars since December 24 last year, after an accountability court convicted him in one of the three corruption cases filed under the direction of the Supreme Court.

tan," Mr. Mujahid said. "It appears that Trump is serious," he continued.

Mr. Mujahid said a foreign withdrawal was the first goal. "Secondly, we want the establishment of an Islamic system," he continued, a goal they will seek through "negotiations with different political sides".

Such a system would be based on the principle of *shura*, or council, with Islamic experts making decisions and "representatives of people and scholars" contributing. Mr. Mujahid said the group was "100% hopeful" of establishing such a system.

He said the next round of talks with the U.S. will again take place in Doha starting February 25. The U.S. has said talks will continue, but not confirmed any date.

Afghan youth are wary of Taliban's return

They fear they'll lose the freedoms that were restored after the militants' ouster

REUTERS

KABUL
Afghanistan's Generation Z has grown up in a 17-year window shadowed by warfare and a heavy international presence, but now faces an uncertain future and the possibility of stark change.

For the young of Kabul and other cities, there is much to lose, in particular the freedoms restored after the Taliban was ousted – from playing music, to modelling and adopting trendy haircuts. "The thing I'm most worried about is that if they return, I'll not be able to continue playing music," said Maram Atayee, a 16-year-old pianist who attends music school in Kabul.

Sense of hope
However, the peace talks have also given young people a sense of hope. "I am optimistic about the Taliban joining the peace process,"



Driven by style: Afghan model Sultan Qasim Sayeedi, 18, who sports an unusual hairstyle, in Kabul. **• Reuters**

said Hussain, 19, who like many young Afghans grew up in neighbouring Iran where millions have taken refuge from war. He now works as a hairdresser in Kabul. "It will be an end to the war and conflicts in our country. I want the Taliban to change their policy and not behave like before."

Afghanistan has a strikingly young population,

and draws inspiration from his favourite models, including Saudi Arabia's Omar Borkan, and Canadian popstar Justin Bieber.

'We're afraid'
"We're afraid that if the Taliban come then we will not be able to hold our shows," he said. Despite that wariness, he says it's time the fighting ended. "If American troops will go peace will come, we want peace."

Maryam Ghulami, a 20-year-old living in Herat, says that her generation will bring change that her parents never could. She is learning graphic design and computer coding at an online academy. While she believes Afghanistan faces many problems, she has faith that her generation can bring change. "The new generation can change Afghanistan with knowledge, with technology," she said.

IN BRIEF

**Sundram Fasteners Q3 net rises by 21.3%**

CHENNAI Sundram Fasteners Limited, a TVS Group company, has posted a 21.3% increase in its standalone net profit for the third quarter ended December 2018 to ₹111.18 crore against ₹91.66 crore during the same period in the previous year on account of increase in total revenue. Profit before tax increased by 25.5% to ₹158.85 crore (₹126.62 crore). Revenue from operations increased to ₹1,021.46 crore over ₹853.25 crore, an increase of 19.7%.

CUMI profit drops 6.75% as input costs increase

CHENNAI Carborundum Universal Ltd. (CUMI), a Murugappa Group firm, has reported a drop of 6.75% in its standalone net profit for the third quarter ended December 2018 to ₹35.04 crore against ₹37.58 crore in the year-earlier period due to increase in raw material, power and fuel costs. Total income increased 10.58% to ₹463.85 crore (₹419.47 crore). The board declared an interim dividend of ₹1.50 per share.

Mondal quits as retail head of Yes Bank

MUMBAI Pralay Mondal, head of the retail business of Yes Bank, has resigned, the lender has informed the stock exchanges. "He will serve notice till close of business hours of March 31, 2019," the private lender said. There is a speculation that Mr. Mondal could join Axis Bank as its retail head. Axis Bank has moved its retail head Rajiv Anand to corporate banking. Mr. Mondal had joined Yes Bank in 2012.

SBI returns to black in Q3

Clocks ₹3,955 crore net as asset quality improves; slippages under check: Kumar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

State Bank of India (SBI) – the country's largest lender – reported a ₹3,955 crore net profit for the October-December period compared with a ₹2,416 crore loss recorded during the year-earlier period.

Slippages were contained, resulting in lower provisioning. This, coupled with a healthy growth in net interest income, helped the lender to post profit.

Net interest income grew 21.4% to ₹22,691 crore on the back of 15% growth in loans. Domestic net interest margin improved 17 bps (basis points) sequentially to 2.97% in the third quarter on increase in yield on advances while cost of funds remained flat.



Positive vibes: The state-owned bank's gross and net non-performing asset ratios showed improvement. ■ REUTERS

Provision dropped 39% to ₹8,670 crore mainly aided by write-back on investment depreciation of ₹7,994 crore. Loan loss provision was ₹13,971 crore, a decline of 21.3%.

Fresh slippages were contained at ₹4,523 crore com-

pared with a whopping ₹25,836 crore during the year-earlier period.

Gross NPA ratio improved to 8.71% from 10.35% a year ago and 9.95% sequentially. Net NPA ratio improved to 3.95% compared with 5.61% a year ago.

"The performance shows excellent improvement in all parameters, whether it is the profit, business growth or asset quality. Slippages are under control," said Rajnish Kumar, chairman, SBI.

Loan recovery improves

The provision coverage ratio has also improved sharply to 56.89%, excluding written-off accounts, from 53.95% in the previous quarter. Recovery from written-off accounts registered a robust growth of 55.98% to ₹2,107 crore.

Going ahead, the bank expects to improve its performance, Mr. Kumar said. The burden of provisioning will come down by at least ₹900 crore as the bank has made all the provisions required for gratuity.

Amazon removes many products from its India website

New e-commerce rules for companies come into effect

REUTERS
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

E-commerce rules that went into effect in India on Friday caused widespread disruption for Amazon.com, forcing it to take down an array of items from its India website, including Echo speakers.



Two sources, with direct knowledge of the matter, said the products began to disappear from the Amazon India website late on Thursday as it began complying with the revised norms before a midnight deadline.

"The company has no choice, they are fulfilling a compliance requirement ... customers will suffer," said one of the sources.

In December, India modi-

retailers from selling products via vendors in which they have an equity interest, and also from making deals with sellers to sell exclusively on their platforms. By Thursday, numerous items sold by vendors such as Cloutail, in which Amazon holds an indirect equity stake, were no longer available on Amazon India site.

Clothing from Indian department store chain Shopper's Stop was also no longer available, as Amazon owns 5% percent of the company. Amazon's own range of Echo speakers, its Presto-branded home cleaning goods and other Amazon Basics products such as chargers and batteries had also vanished from the website.

Manufacturing PMI rises to 53.9 in January

Factory orders rise fastest since Dec. 2017

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The country's manufacturing sector activity edged higher in January as companies continued to scale up production and employment, driven by the fastest rise in factory orders since December 2017, a monthly survey said on Friday.

The Nikkei India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) increased from 53.2 in December to 53.9 in January, indicating stronger improvement in the health of the goods producing sector.

This is the 18th consecutive month that the manufacturing PMI remained above the 50-point mark. In PMI parlance, a print above



50 means expansion, while a score below that denotes contraction.

According to the survey, the increase in factory orders was the strongest seen in 13 months. Besides, favourable economic conditions, strengthening demand and sales growth also picked up in January.

Jan. car sales show mixed trend

Maruti sees marginal increase; Hyundai registers 0.6% dip

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India on Friday reported a marginal increase in its sales at 1.52 lakh units in January 2019 against 1.51 lakh sold in the corresponding year-earlier period. In the domestic market, the company witnessed a flat growth of 1.1% at 1.42 lakh units, said a company statement.

Sales of utility vehicles such as S-Cross, Vitara Brezza, Ertiga and Gypsy grew by 8.4%. However, the compact segment comprising Swift, Celerio, Ignis, Baleno and Dzire witnessed a decline of 3.5%. Mid-sized Sedan Ciaz declined by 42%. Exports fell by 11% to 9,571.

Hyundai Motor India registered a 0.6% dip in its



domestic sales at 45,803 units. Honda Cars India Ltd. (HCIL) reported a 23% increase in domestic sales to 18,261 units (14,838 units).

'Tepid market'

"Responding to the tepid market situation with extensive marketing efforts, including on-ground activations focusing on tier 2 and 3 markets, drove sales of all Honda models in the month," HCIL Senior VP and

Director-Sales and Marketing Rajesh Goel said. Mahindra & Mahindra reported 7% increase in total sales at 55,722 units (52,063 units). Domestic sales were up 6% at 52,500 units (49,432 units), passenger vehicle posted marginal growth at 23,872 units against 23,686 units. Commercial vehicle grew 8% at 22,625.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor reported a 9% decline in total sales to 12,067 units against 13,239 units.

In the CV segment, Ashok Leyland posted a 12% growth in its total sales at 18,533 units (16,484 units), sales of VE Commercial Vehicles declined by 13.2% to 5,906 units. Eicher Motor has reported a 7% drop in its motorcycle sales at 72,701 units against 77,878 units.

Reliance Comm goes to NCLT for insolvency

₹20,000-crore deal with Jio called off

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Anil Ambani-led Reliance Communications (RCom), with a debt of ₹46,000 crore, has decided to file for insolvency proceedings at National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) Mumbai to seek fast-track resolution.

RCom had been unable to sell its spectrum and tower assets to Reliance Jio for ₹20,000 crore. "The board of directors of RCom today [Friday] reviewed the progress of the company's debt resolution plans since the invocation of SDR on June 2, 2017. The board noted that, despite the passage of over 18 months, lenders have received zero proceeds from the proposed asset monetization process.

"The NCLT will appoint an IRP, who will call fresh bids for RCom assets. Jio is likely to bid for spectrum and tower assets as its network runs on them. However, it is to be seen if a new bidder will join the race," a source told *The Hindu*.

20 SPORT

TV PICKS

Australia vs Sri Lanka: 2nd Test, Sony Six (SD & HD), 5 a.m.
NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m.
Davis Cup Qualifier: India vs Italy, DD Sports, 10.30 a.m.
Pro Volleyball League: Sony Six (SD & HD), 7 p.m.
ISL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.
West Indies vs England: 2nd Test, Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Nadal all set to wed sweetheart
 LONDON
 Former World No. 1 Rafael Nadal is all set to get married to his long-time girlfriend Mery Perello. The 32-year-old has proposed to Perello for marriage and soon the two will tie the knot. This was confirmed by Perello for ATP in a recent tweet. ANI



Bucks topple Rockets in Eastern showdown
 LOS ANGELES
 Giannis Antetokounmpo finished with a team high 19 points and nine rebounds as Milwaukee Bucks beat Toronto Raptors 105-92.
Other results: Detroit Pistons 93 bt Dallas Mavericks 89; Orlando Magic 107 bt Indiana Pacers 100; San Antonio Spurs 117 bt Brooklyn Nets 114; Philadelphia 76ers 113 bt Golden State Warriors 104; Los Angeles Lakers 123 bt Los Angeles Clippers 120 (OT). AFP

Volleyball's game-changing moment is here

Six teams with two foreigners each will be in action

PRO VOLLEY

STAN RAYAN
 KOCHI

"This is a life-changing moment for us," said Shelton Moses, the Chennai Spartans' captain, shortly after landing in Kochi for the inaugural RuPay Pro Volleyball League which begins at the Rajiv Gandhi indoor stadium here on Saturday evening.

After virtually being out of the spotlight for the last few years because of the infighting in the Volleyball Federation of India, the players now finally have a pro league and are keen to make the most of it.

"We should not let this opportunity go, we are keen to give our everything to make this a huge success," said Moses, a centre blocker.

The last time Indian volleyball had a league, the IVL in 2011, it just lasted one edition. This time, however, things are a lot different. There are two foreign players in each of the six teams and some of them, like Kochi Blue Spikers' American David Lee – the 2008 Olympic gold medallist and 2016 Rio bronze medallist – and Black Hawks Hyderabad's Carson Clark, were among the world's best a year or two ago.

"Our two foreigners came five or six days ago and we learned a lot from them," said international Jerome Vinith, the Calicut Heroes captain. Was it tough raising the bar and trying to reach their standard during training?

"We didn't have the time to get near their level since



Joy ride: The Pro Volleyball League is all set to take the game on a fruitful journey into the future. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

they came only a few days ago, but they are trying to come down to our level so that they can adapt to our team better," explained Vinith. "But for setters, it was very tough initially to settle down to the foreigners."

Experienced setter

Under the circumstances, Kochi Blue Spikers, which has a very experienced setter in India captain M. Ukkapandian in its ranks, will have an edge.

The problems in the na-

Today's match

Kochi Blue Spikers v U Mumba Vol, 7 p.m.

tional federation meant that Indian volleyball was without much major international exposure in the last few years. That saw the team slip from 39 to 131 in the FIVB World rankings.

But Vinith and his India teammate G. Akhin, the Spartans' star blocker, are confident that the country will be back to its best within

three years if the PVL grows stronger by the year.

Southern flavour

The PVL, an initiative of Baseline Ventures and VFI, has

a strong southern flavour with four of its six teams from this region. The others are U Mumba Vol and Ahmedabad Defenders.

The Kochi phase will run till February 12 after which the caravan will move to Chennai for the second phase which begins on February 16.

Come-back win for Neroca FC

Katusmi brace earns it full points against Indian Arrows

I-LEAGUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
 BHUBANESWAR

Katusmi struck a brace as Neroca FC rallied to beat Indian Arrows 3-2 in an exciting I-League match here on Friday.

Yusa struck in the 68th and 87th (penalty) minutes while Felix Chidi (38th) was the other goal scorer for Neroca.

Boris converted a cross from the right in the 34th minute. This was also the 200th goal of the I-League this season.

Neroca found the equaliser four minutes later through Chidi.

The game thereafter opened up a bit and both sides attacked in short bursts but neither could convert the chances that came their way. The first half ended 1-1.

In the second half, a defensive error cost Neroca dear in the 62nd minute. Danu dispossessed a Neroca centre-back and comforta-

bly found the back of the net to regain the lead for Indian Arrows.

However, the Imphal side, which finished runner-up last season, yet again found an equaliser through a brilliant header from Katusmi in the 68th minute.

The Japanese was given time and space in the Arrows penalty area and he headed past the opposition goalkeeper off a cross from the right flank.

Neroca found the lead until the 87th minute when Katusmi scored off a penalty kick.

The results: Indian Arrows 2 (Boris Thangjam 34, Rohit Danu 62) lost to Neroca FC 3 (Felix Chidi 38, Katusmi Yusa 68, 87-pen).

Minerva Punjab FC 0 lost to Aizawl FC 1 (Lalrinchhana 69).

Goa puts it past Mumbai

ISL

NANDAKUMAR MARAR
 MUMBAI

FC Goa earned valuable points following a hard-earned 2-0 win over Mumbai City FC in Indian Super League.

The victory points lifted the orange-shirted visitors to third place (24 points), three points behind the home team in blue, for whom the third defeat is a wake-up call as the competition heads towards the closing stage.

Goals from Edu Bedia and Ferran Corominas proved critical at the Mumbai Football Arena. The latter retained second spot (27 points) at this stage.

Two direct free-kicks

earned by Goa outside the box in the second half showcased the constant pressure on the Mumbai backline. The set-pieces were off target, Bedia found the net in the 28th minute. Brandon Fernandes slipped a pass down the left for Corominas. Amrinder closed down the marauding striker racing in from the left, blocked the shot and then found himself stranded away from goal.

The ball rolled in the direction of in-form Bedia who sized up the situation quickly to stretch out his right foot and guide the ball in, off a defender's leg. The second goal came via a penalty kick conversion by Corominas. Mumbai was punished when Subash Bose' tackle tripped the striker tumbling

near the penalty spot. The second goal sealed Goa's seventh win.

Earlier after kick-off, the Mumbai custodian responded with a reflex block, diving to his left, to fist away a crisp left-footed try by Mandar Dessa. Brandon set up his skipper for the shot with a dummy over the ball relayed from the right. Goa probed for space from different angles, but was kept at bay by the defence.

Mumbai came out firing in the second half, came close to equalising twice. Goa goalkeeper Mohammed Nawaz denied them the first time, the crossbar denied them the second time.

The result: FC Goa 2 (Edu Bedia 28, Ferran Corominas 79 pen) bt Mumbai City FC 0.

Corfe Castle primed for an encore

HYDERABAD: Corfe Castle, who maintains form, may repeat in the Kakatiya Million (1,200m), the chief event of the races to be held here on Saturday (Feb. 2).

1 STARSKY PLATE (Div. I), 1 (1,000m), 5-y-o & over, rated 26 to 46 (Cat. III), 1.10 p.m.: 1. Big Flash (7) Rohit Kumar 60, 2. Supurinto (3) Koushik 60, 3. Isparhan (4) Gaddam 59, 4. Perfection (5) A.A. Vikrant 58.5, 5. Cash For Rank (7) Deepak Singh 57, 6. Space Ship (1) Jyandra Singh 55, 7. Top Sprint (2) Sai Kumar 55 and 8. Razor Wind (6) Afroz Khan 55.

1. ISPAHAN, 2. BIG FLASH, 3. CASH FOR RANK

2 CLASSIC STYLE PLATE (Div. II), 1 (2,000m), 3-y-o only (Terms), 1.40: 1. Midnigh Dream (6) Kuldip Singh 55. 2. Spice (5) Nakhat Singh 54, 3. Bob Campbell (1) Dhebe 51.5, 4. Gusty Look (3) Koushik 51.5, 5. Augenstein (2) Md. Ismail 50, 6. Big League (4) Ashhad Asbar 50, 7. Excelsior (8) Tanwar 50, 8. Kushi Kushi (9) Abhay Singh 50, 9. Urvasi (10) G. Naresh 50 and 10. Zip Zip (7) Kunal Bunde 50.

1. MIDNIGHT DREAM, 2. AUGENSTEIN, 3. SPICE UP

3 STARSKY PLATE (Div. II), 3 (1,000m), 5-y-o & over, rated 26 to 46 (Cat. III), 2.10: 1. Shake-sphere (6) Rohit Kumar 60, 2. Khan Sahib (5) Md. Ismail 59.5, 3. Marina Del Rey (4) Koushik 59, 4. Indian Aristocrat (2) B.R. Kumar 57.5, 5. Moon Walker (1) Nakhat Singh 57, 6. Time To Climb (7) Gaddam 56, 7. Limousine (3)

1. ISABELLA, 2. LEADING LEGEND, 3. CHAMPION BULL

6 SPARKS CUP (Div. I), 6 (1,200m), 4-y-o & over, rated 42 to 62 (Cat. II), 2.45: 1. King Of Pop (3) C.P. Bopanna 60, 2. The Fire (9) Gaurav Singh 60, 3. Batur (5) R.S. Jodha 58.5, 4. Evon Von Brando (6) Dhebe 54.5, 5. Meeka's (1) B.R. Kumar 54, 6. One One (7) Neeraj 53.5, 7. Kanyak (8) Tanwar 52.5, 8. Snow Castle (4) Md. Ismail 52.5 and 9. Ta Ta (2) Surya Prakash 52.5.

1. ONE ONE, 2. KING OF POP, 3. KAMAYA

5 SRI S. RAMAKRISHNAM RAJU MEMORIAL CUP (1,400m), 4-y-o & over (Terms), 1.35: 1. Destined Dynamite (8) B.R. Kumar 63, 2. Leading Legend (1) Kiran Naidu 63, 3. Doroteo (10) Koushik 61.5, 4. Vijay's Dynamite (7) Deep Shanker 61.5, 5. Western Wind (6) Deepak Singh 59.5, 6. Champion Bull (2) Dhebe 59, 7. Treasure Striker (3) A.A. Vikrant 59, 8. Barnabas (1) Sai Kumar 57.5, 9. Magical Skill (2) Nakhat Singh 59, 10. Platinium Claasz (5) Deepak Singh 57, 4. Citi Colors (8) A.A. Vikrant 55.5, 5. Composition (6) C.P. Bopanna 55, 6. Corube (3) Gaddam 55, 7. Withrosemakeup (11) Gaurav Singh 54.5, 8. Handsome Duo (2) Ashhad Asbar 53, 9. Gangadhar (1) G. Naresh 52.5, 10. Hurricane (9) B.R. Kumar 52.5 and 11. Ajmal Birju (7) Gopal Singh 52.5.

1. HURRICANE, 2. WITHROSEMAKEUP, 3. COLUMBUS

6 SPARKS CUP (Div. I), 6 (1,200m), 4-y-o & over, rated 42 to 62 (Cat. II), 3.45: 1. Georgette Lady (6) A.A. Vikrant 60, 2. Lazer Beam (7) Gopal Singh 60, 3. Symbol Of Gold (4) B.R. Kumar

Enid Blyton should make amends

MUMBAI The 3-year-old filly Enid Blyton who ran second in her last outing, should make amends in the Dr. M.A.M. Arasamay Juvenile Sprint, the chief event of Saturday's (Feb. 2) evening races at Mumbai.

Rails will be placed 5 metres wide from 1400m to 1200m and 11 metres wide from 800m upto the winning post.

1 KINGFISHER MAX MILE (1,600m), Cl. V, rated 4 to 30, 4.30 p.m.: 1. Rogue One (8) Dashrath 61.5, 2. Reds Revenge (9) Chouthan 60.5, 3. Dream Racer (5) Nahkhat Singh 54, 4. Titus (3) Kiran Naidu 54, 5. La Magnifique (1) Neeraj 52.5 and 6. Rahuls Pet (4) Tanwar 52.5.

1. CORFE CASTLE, 2. ACCOLADE

8 HIMALAYA PLATE (1,400m), 4-y-o & over (which have not won a race since July 1, 2018), 26 to 46 (Cat. III), 4.45: 1. Vjay's Empress (4) Salim Kumar 60, 2. Columbus (10) Nakhat Singh 59.5, 3. Platinum Claasz (5) Deepak Singh 57, 4. Citi Colors (8) A.A. Vikrant 55.5, 5. Composition (6) C.P. Bopanna 55, 6. Corube (3) Gaddam 55, 7. Withrosemakeup (11) Gaurav Singh 54.5, 8. Handsome Duo (2) Ashhad Asbar 53, 9. Gangadhar (1) G. Naresh 52.5, 10. Hurricane (9) B.R. Kumar 52.5 and 11. Ajmal Birju (7) Gopal Singh 52.5.

1. HURRICANE, 2. WITHROSEMAKEUP, 3. COLUMBUS

6 SPARKS CUP (Div. I), 6 (1,200m), 4-y-o & over, rated 42 to 62 (Cat. II), 3.45: 1. Georgette Lady (6) A.A. Vikrant 60, 2. Lazer Beam (7) Gopal Singh 60, 3. Symbol Of Gold (4) B.R. Kumar

1. MOMENTUM, 2. BRAINSTORM, 3. JAGER BOMB.

3 ESSENZA DI WILLIS CUP (1,600m), Cl. III, rated 40 to 46, 7.00: 1. Eden Rock (11) Trevor

66, 5.30: 1. Truly Epic (3) Sandesh 60.5, 2. Snowdon (2) David Allan 59.5, 3. Arc Shine (1) Nazil 55.5, 4. Kingsman (4) Trevor 55, 5. Zanzibar (6) Chouhan 55, 6. Flying Visit (7) Zervan 52.5 and 7. Abeyour (5) S.Amit 49.

1. TRULY EPIC, 2. SNOWDON

4 DR. M.A.M. ARASAMAY JUVENILE SPRINT (1,000m), Maiden, 3-y-o only, 6.00:

1. Across The Sea (12) Trevor 56, 2. Blazing Bay (9) A.Imran Khan 56, 3. Oui Sauvage (13) Sandesh 56, 4. Storm Breaker (5) Suraj Narredu 56, 5. Supreme Being (10) Chouhan 56, 6. Athulya (11) Zervan 54.5, 7. Celesta (7) J. Chinoy 54.5, 8. Ciphert (6) Imran Chisty 54.5, 9. Grand Chieftain (10) Bhawani 59.5, 8. Power Of Thor (Late Eiger's Tiger) (4) C.Umesh 58.5, 10. Hawk Smash (Late Doubledown) (6) S. Kamble 52 and 11. Master Of Studies (2) Nazil 50.

1. GANDALF, 2. CUPIDO, 3. GOLD MEDALIST.

5 EBCO LIVSMART MILLION (1,400m), Cl. II, rated 40 to 46, 5.30: 1. Excellent Gold (4) C.Umesh 59, 2. Brainstorm (7) Srinath 58, 3. Turning Point (8) Trevor 56.5, 4. Zenon (2) Sandesh 56.5, 5. Momentum (4) Akshay 54.5, 6. Benevolence (8) Chouhan 52.5, 7. Retained Asset (3) Dashrath 51 and Rospomare (2) Merchant 49.5.



IN BRIEF

PCB

LONDON

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Ehsan Mani believes the International Cricket Council's decision to hand a four-match ban to Sarfraz Ahmed following a racial remarks controversy, involving South African Andile Phelukwayo, is utter nonsense. Mani said they made public apologies and dealt with the matter openly but since the ICC could not get the two players involved in a room together, they charged Sarfraz and banned him. ANI



Barcelona advances

Todibo transfer

BARCELONA

Barcelona has brought forward its summer move for Jean-Clair Todibo and will sign the defender from Toulouse immediately, the Spanish club announced on Thursday. Todibo had been due to join Barca on a free transfer in July, when his contract with Toulouse was set to expire. The 19-year-old, however, has since been sidelined by the French club, prompting Barcelona to seek an earlier transfer. AFP



Lowry, Westbrook are

NBA all-star reserves

LOS ANGELES

Oklahoma City Thunder's former Most Valuable Player Russell Westbrook and Toronto Raptors star Kyle Lowry head the list of reserves announced on Thursday for the NBA all-star game. Other reserves include four first-time all-stars Philadelphia 76ers guard Ben Simmons, Orlando Magic centre Nikola Vucevic, Denver Nuggets centre Nikola Jokic and Milwaukee Bucks forward Khris Middleton. AFP

Sriram Balaji loses

doubles quarterfinals

CLEVELAND

Sriram Balaji and Hans Hack Verdugo of Mexico lost 6-3, 6-4 to Americans Evan King and Hunter Reese in the doubles quarterfinals of the \$81,240 Challenger tennis tournament here.

A seismic shift in the land of giants

For long, the NBA's biggest men — the centres — dominated the area around the post. But the evolution of the game, with its emphasis on three-pointers, has forced them to catch and shoot from distance

SRINIVASAN RAMANI

Basketball is a game of giants. In the NBA, the average height of a player, as measured during the 2017-18 season, was 6'7". That's big, but not quite as big as the average hoopster who plays the centre position.

The centre — a behemoth who is at least 6'10" tall and weighs more than 110 kg — is usually the last line of defence, tasked with protecting the rim and occupying the low post, an area close to the basket.

The centre also happens to be the most productive position historically; the most powerful centres have been some of the best players ever — Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Hakeem Olajuwon, Shaquille O'Neal.

Their main strength was their two-way game, which allied a strong post and rim defence to the ability to score in the paint. Centres typically played with their backs to the basket, received passes from the guards and then got to work.

Post skills

Chamberlain and O'Neal were unstoppable offensive forces who overwhelmed opponents with their brawn and muscle near the rim. Abdul-Jabbar and Olajuwon could do that too, but they had the advantage of finesse as well. The former would drag his opponents to the edge of the paint and then

employ his un-guardable sky hook to score dexterously, while Olajuwon was a master of footwork and used a series of spins and fakes in the post area to befuddle opponents.

The other 'bigs' in the game were the power forwards, marginally shorter than centres but adept in the front-court. Tim Duncan, Karl Malone, Dirk Nowitzki and Kevin Garnett were some of the best in the role. These power forwards didn't play as close to the rim as centres; they typically faced the basket when starting their moves, which included jump-shooting.

Post-play and strength near the rim were common to centres and power forwards in the past as NBA offences were largely methodical. Centres and power forwards were fed the ball by perimeter players whose job it was to handle the ball and play off these 'bigs'. There were exceptions — Michael Jordan revolutionised the athletic guard position and played in championship-winning teams in which 'bigs' were role players. But, invariably, winning teams had great centres or power forwards.

Lately though, ever since the explosion in three-point shooting and the ban on hand-checking rules, guards have become more prominent in the NBA. The roles have reversed. Guards now dominate ball-handling and shooting; 'bigs' are asked to provide screens for the facilitation of this guard-driven

offence while retaining their paint-protection role. This evolution in the game has resulted in 'bigs' adapting and developing hitherto unused skills such as jump-shooting.

Case in point

In his first 500 NBA games played over seven years, seven-footer Brook Lopez attempted exactly 32 three-point shots and scored only four! In the 198 games played in the last three years alone, including this season, Lopez has attempted 1,032 three-pointers and converted 371 of them at a decent clip of 35.9%.

This season alone, 70% of all of Lopez's field-goal attempts were three-pointers. What's more, he has converted them at a 39.1% rate, good enough for 33rd position in the league and the best among centres.

Lopez, who calls himself 'Splash Mountain', is both the archetype of the modern NBA centre and an extreme example of the evolution of the position. He and twin brother Robin (who plays for the Chicago Bulls) are large-boned bruisers who can defend in the paint and in the low block; they use their height to block shots at the rim and their bulk to make it difficult for opposing centres to score near the basket. Brook, unlike Robin, has refashioned himself as a gunner from long range, and this has made him a vital part of the league-leading Milwaukee Bucks team.

Lopez provides what is today the pivot on which modern NBA offences operate — 'space'. His propensity to catch and shoot from distance results in opposing centres being dragged away from the basket to contest him, and that leaves the lane open for All-Star teammate Giannis Antetokounmpo (the Greek Freak) to showcase his wares — interior scoring and bullying at the rim.

Coach Mike Budenholzer's four-out offence, which features the Greek Freak handling the ball and moving towards the rim with four shooters surrounding him at the perimeter, has yielded rich dividends.

There are some draw-

backs that Lopez brings to the table as well. His girth and bulk help him deter players close to the rim, but Lopez's Achilles heel is defending players like... Lopez himself. Other behemoth centres who can shoot the three, such as Minnesota Timberwolves' Karl-Anthony Towns, Memphis Grizzlies' Marc Gasol, Philadelphia 76ers' Joel Embiid and Denver Nuggets' Nikola Jokic, drag Lopez away from the paint.

Embiid and Towns embody the best of the centre crop today — they can be 'stretch-fives' if they want to and can also dominate in the paint. Embiid is a much better defender than Towns. Jokic and Gasol are finesse centres. Jokic, in particular, is one of a kind. He is a remarkable passer who facilitates the Nuggets offence as a 'point-centre', using his height and positional sense to direct his teammates on the offensive end. Gasol has similar skills but is older and less effective. In his prime, though, he was a much better defender than Jokic.

A compromise

Having a versatile shooting 'big' therefore does come with a compromise, especially when the centre is not mobile enough to defend at the perimeter too. Is this evolution of the centre necessarily a good one? That's a discussion for another day.

What can be said, however, is that as more centres take to shooting the three and springing jump-shots, the art of post-play has become rare in the NBA. And there are risks with the dependence on jump-shooting 'bigs'. In playoff situations, jump-shooting is not always a successful route to scoring — increased fatigue and the slower pace of the game makes it difficult to get open shots. Shooting percentages tend to be lower in the playoffs than in the regular season.

During such scoring droughts, it is always better to use 'bigs' who can operate at the post as insurance options. But the decline in post-play means very few teams have this choice.



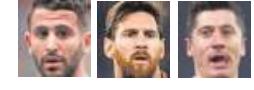
Lopez



Embiid

WORD PLAY

Waterfall

ON THE BOX**STACKING UP**

Premier League: SAT: Tottenham v Newcastle, 6 P.M.; Chelsea v Huddersfield, 8.30 A.M.; Cardiff v Bournemouth, 11 P.M.; STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 & HD, SUN: Leicester v Manchester United, 7.30 P.M.; Manchester City v Arsenal, 10 P.M.; STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 & HD.

La Liga: SAT: Barcelona v Valencia, 11 P.M.; SONY TEN 2 & HD, SUN: Celta v Sevilla, 1.15 A.M.; SONY ESPN & HD; Real Betis v Atletico Madrid, 8.45 P.M.; SONY TEN 2 & HD.

Serie A: SAT: Empoli v Chievo, 7.30 P.M.; SONY TEN 2 & HD; Napoli v Sampdoria, 10.30 P.M.; SONY ESPN & HD, SUN: Juventus v Parma, 1 A.M.; SPAL v Torino, 5 P.M.; SONY TEN 2 & HD; Inter v Bologna, 10.30 P.M.; SONY ESPN & HD.

Bundesliga: SAT: Frankfurt v Dortmund, 7.45 P.M.; Schalke v M'gladbach, 10.45 P.M.; STAR SPORTS SELECT 2 & HD, SUN: Augsburg v Mainz, 7.45 P.M.; Stuttgart v Freiburg, 10.45 P.M.; STAR SPORTS SELECT 2 & HD.

NBA: SAT: Denver Nuggets v Houston Rockets, 8.30 A.M.; SONY TEN 1, 3 & HD, SUN: Golden State Warriors v Los Angeles Lakers, 7 A.M.; SONY TEN 1, 3 & HD.

<https://t.me/SSC4Exams>

YK

ICC Test Rankings

#	TEAM	M	PTS	RATE
1	India	43	5,007	116
2	South Africa	39	4,280	110
3	England	49	5,310	108
4	New Zealand	30	3,213	107
5	Australia	41	4,143	101
6	Sri Lanka	45	4,103	91
7	Pakistan	32	2,803	88
8	West Indies	35	2,463	70
9	Bangladesh	25	1,727	69
10	Zimbabwe	11	138	13

# TEAM	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1 Liverpool	24	19	4	1	55	14	41	61
2 Manchester City	24	18	2	4	63	19	44	56
3 Tottenham Hotspur	24	18	0	6	50	24	26	54
4 Arsenal	24	14	5	5	50	33	17	47
5 Chelsea	24	14	5	5	40	23	17	47
6 Manchester United	24	13	6	5	48	35	13	45
7 Wolverhampton Wanderers	24	10	5	9	30	31	-1	35
8 Everton	24	9	6	9	35	33	2	33
9 Watford	24	9	6	9	33	34	-1	33
10 Bournemouth	24	10	3	11	37	42	-5	33
11 Leicester City	24	9	5	10	30	30	0	32
12 West Ham United	24	9	4	11	30	37	-7	31
13 Brighton and Hove Albion	24	7	5	12	27	36	-9	26
14 Newcastle United	24	6	6	12	21	32	-11	24
15 Crystal Palace	24	6	5	13	24	33	-9	23
16 Southampton	24	5	8	11	26	41	-5	23
17 Burnley	24	6	5	13	25	45	-20	23
18 Cardiff City	24	5	4	15	20	46	-26	19
19 Fulham	24	4	5	15	25	53	-28	17
20 Huddersfield Town	24	2	5	17	13	41	-28	11

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6 Manchester United	24	13	6	5	48	35	13	45
7 Wolverhampton Wanderers	24	10	5	9	30	31	-1	35
8 Everton	24	9	6	9	35	33	2	33
9 Watford	24	9	6	9	33	34	-1	33
10 Bournemouth	24	10	3	11	37	42	-5	33
11 Leicester City	24	9	5	10	30	30	0	32
12 West Ham United	24	9	4	11	30	37	-7	31
13 Brighton and Hove Albion	24	7	5	12	27	36	-9	26
14 Newcastle United	24	6	6	12	21	32	-11	24
15 Crystal Palace	24	6	5	13	24	33	-9	23
16 Southampton	24	5	8	11	26	41	-5	23
17 Burnley	24	6	5	13	25	45	-20	23
18 Cardiff City	24	5	4	15	20	46	-26	19
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8 Everton	24	9	6	9	35	33	2	33
9 Watford	24	9	6	9	33	34	-1	33
10 Bournemouth	24	10	3	11	37	42	-5	33
11 Leicester City	2							



Ageless Brady one step from sporting immortality

The 41-year-old quarterback has an opportunity on Super Bowl Sunday to become the first player to win six rings. His New England Patriots teammates weigh in on what makes him so good

Seventeen years ago, Tom Brady was 24 and in his second NFL season when he led the Patriots to a last-second victory over the St. Louis Rams for New England's first Super Bowl title.

Four rings later, Brady arrives in Atlanta for the Patriots' match-up against the Los Angeles Rams having already established himself as the most decorated Super Bowl quarterback in league history.

But as Brady prepares for his ninth Super Bowl, this Sunday, he will have a chance to do something no other NFL player has done.

If New England beats Los Angeles, the 41-year-old quarterback will break a tie with Hall of Fame defensive end Charles Haley and become the first player to win six rings.

One of a kind

But to his coaches, teammates and admirers across the sporting world, he already stands alone.

Receiver Julian Edelman called it an honour to be a part of the quarterback's career. "He's the best," Edelman said. "And he goes out and consistently proves it."

Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski has caught more passes from Brady than any other player and will play alongside him in a Super Bowl for the fourth time.

He said Brady's approach has been the same since their first practice session together back in 2010.

"The guy is just so precise with everything. Just the way he is out

on the field, the way he prepares," Gronkowski said. "You know every single time you're going to get the best out of him no matter what the situations are."

No time for haters

After New England's divisional-round win over the Los Angeles Chargers, Brady was openly miffed about what he perceived as pessimism about the Patriots' chances of reaching a third straight Super Bowl following a regular season which they started 1-2 and lost five games.

"I know everybody thinks we suck and, you know, we can't win any games," Brady said. "We'll see. It'll be fun."

A week later, Brady led the Patriots on a winning drive in overtime to beat the Kansas City Chiefs in the American Football Conference championship game (which also serves as a semifinal playoff for the Super Bowl) – his 12th such drive in the postseason in the fourth-quarter or overtime.

The next day he posted a video on Instagram of himself and Gronkowski walking to the team bus after the game. Both are smiling and Gronkowski flashes his AFC cham-

pionship T-shirt. It was the kind of humble brag that Brady has steered away from in the past.

But this postseason he has been more open with his emotions.

"When you have 70,000 people cheering against you, it is pretty sweet when you win on the road," Brady said.

On Twitter, congratulations came from all corners of sport.

Among them was one from Paul Pierce, who helped lead the Boston Celtics to the NBA championship in 2008. "There's aliens, there's Pe-gasus, and there's Tom Brady," Pierce wrote.

Left tackle Trent Brown, in his first season in New England, said sharing the huddle with Brady has lived up to his expectations.

"There's one word, G.O.A.T. That's it," Brown said. "He's one of those great leaders and it trickles down to the rest."

Inspirational

Brady's continued ability to lead and inspire teammates more than a decade his junior is a unique skill, offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels

said. "He communicates well with every player," McDaniels said. "One of the things that's always impressed me is how he's one of the first guys in the building to know a new person's name, and also get to know that person, whether it be a practice squad player, a rookie, whatever it is."

Brady's introductions to new players are always the same. At some point after they arrive, Brady seeks them out, walks up, and says plainly, "Hi, I'm Tom Brady."

Linebacker Kyle Van Noy said he still remembers his reaction to hearing those words.

The little things

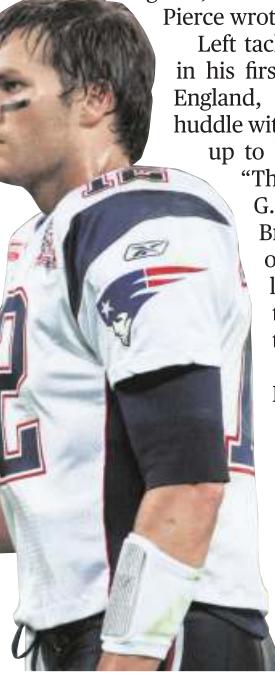
It was October 2016 and Van Noy, following a trade from Detroit, arrived at the Patriots' training facility about 5.30 a.m.

Hours later, at some stage during a restroom break from a meeting, he turned and saw an outstretched hand. "Tom comes up and kind of shakes my hand like, 'Hi, I'm Tom Brady.' And I'm like, 'You're an idiot!'"

But Van Noy said the moment was emblematic of a player he has no doubt will be at his best on Super Bowl Sunday.

"Those little things are why he's where he's at," Van Noy said.

"Those little things that people don't pay attention to, those detailed things, that just separates him. He's really good at what he does. That's what makes him Tom."



Josh McDaniels

THE BRADY REGIMEN
A look at what the history-making quarterback does to defy Father Time



DIET
Vegan, with lean meat added during the run-up to the Super Bowl. Drinks 25 glasses of water a day to stay hydrated



TRAINING – PHYSICAL
High-repetition resistance-band work, focusing more on flexibility than strength. Brady calls it 'muscle pliability'



TRAINING – MENTAL
Meditation, brain games that train attention, memory, reaction, navigation



SLEEP
Eight to nine hours in special 'athlete recovery sleepwear', which claims to promote cell re-growth, resulting in quicker healing and reduced soreness



MASSAGE
Brady gets his right arm and shoulder manually manipulated before and after practice to ensure it stays in elite throwing shape

WEEKEND SPORT 23



City begins crucial week with Arsenal test

Five points behind Liverpool and faced with three key games in seven days, Guardiola's men can't afford a slip-up

Handed a lifeline by Liverpool's failure to beat Leicester City on Wednesday, Manchester City begins a crucial week in the Premier League title race when it hosts Arsenal at the Etihad on Sunday.

City's shock 2-1 defeat at struggling Newcastle on Tuesday offered Liverpool the chance to open up a seven-point lead but Jurgen Klopp's side could only manage a point with a 1-1 draw at home to Leicester.

That leaves the Merseysiders five points clear but that advantage would be cut to just two points before they play West Ham on Monday, provided City can take care of business against Unai Emery's Gunners.

Stiff task

That is the first of three key matches in seven days for the defending champion which travels to Everton on Wednesday for a rearranged fixture and then hosts Chelsea on Sunday.

"The next week or so will be tough with Arsenal, Everton and Chelsea. I know the challenge is big. If we want to go up as a club we have to accept that challenge," said manager Pep Guardiola.

While Liverpool has the upper hand in the race, 14 games remain and as the midweek round of fixtures showed, the unpredictability of the league means there could be many twists and turns to come.

Plenty to play for

"We are in January and we are behind the leaders but there are a lot of titles and points to play for. We have many games left – we are not in April or May and a lot can happen. We need to be there in every game and not give

up," said Guardiola. West Ham, which Liverpool faces at the London Stadium on Monday, is in a poor run of form after losing 3-0 to Wolves on Tuesday following its FA Cup exit to third-tier (League One) AFC Wimbledon.

Liverpool laboured at times against Leicester, with its high-speed attack unable to get into top gear but skipper Jordan Henderson, who filled in at right-back, knows there is no time to dwell on that result.

Intense stage

"We know we can play much better and we need to improve in the next game," he said. "We need to bounce back quickly. We've got another few days to recover and then prepare for the West Ham game so we need to be ready because it's another tough game in the Premier League."

It is an intense stage of the campaign for both the front-runners who are back in European action this month with round-of-16 matches in the Champions League adding to their workload.

Tottenham is only two points behind City and will still believe it can yet pull off a surprise with a late-season tilt towards the title.

Spurs could move ahead of City into second, for 24 hours at least, if they can beat Newcastle at home on Saturday.

It is no less tight at the bottom where 16th-placed Southampton visits Burnley, a place below it on Saturday.

Crystal Palace, level on points with both those teams, hosts next-to-bottom Fulham, whose fight against the drop has been given a boost by Tuesday's 4-2 win over Brighton. REUTERS

GAME THEORY

Top travellers

One of the biggest challenges Test batsmen face is adapting to unfamiliar conditions overseas. Which of them has excelled at this? A look at the best-performing Asian batsmen outside Asia and the best-performing non-Asian batsmen in Asia

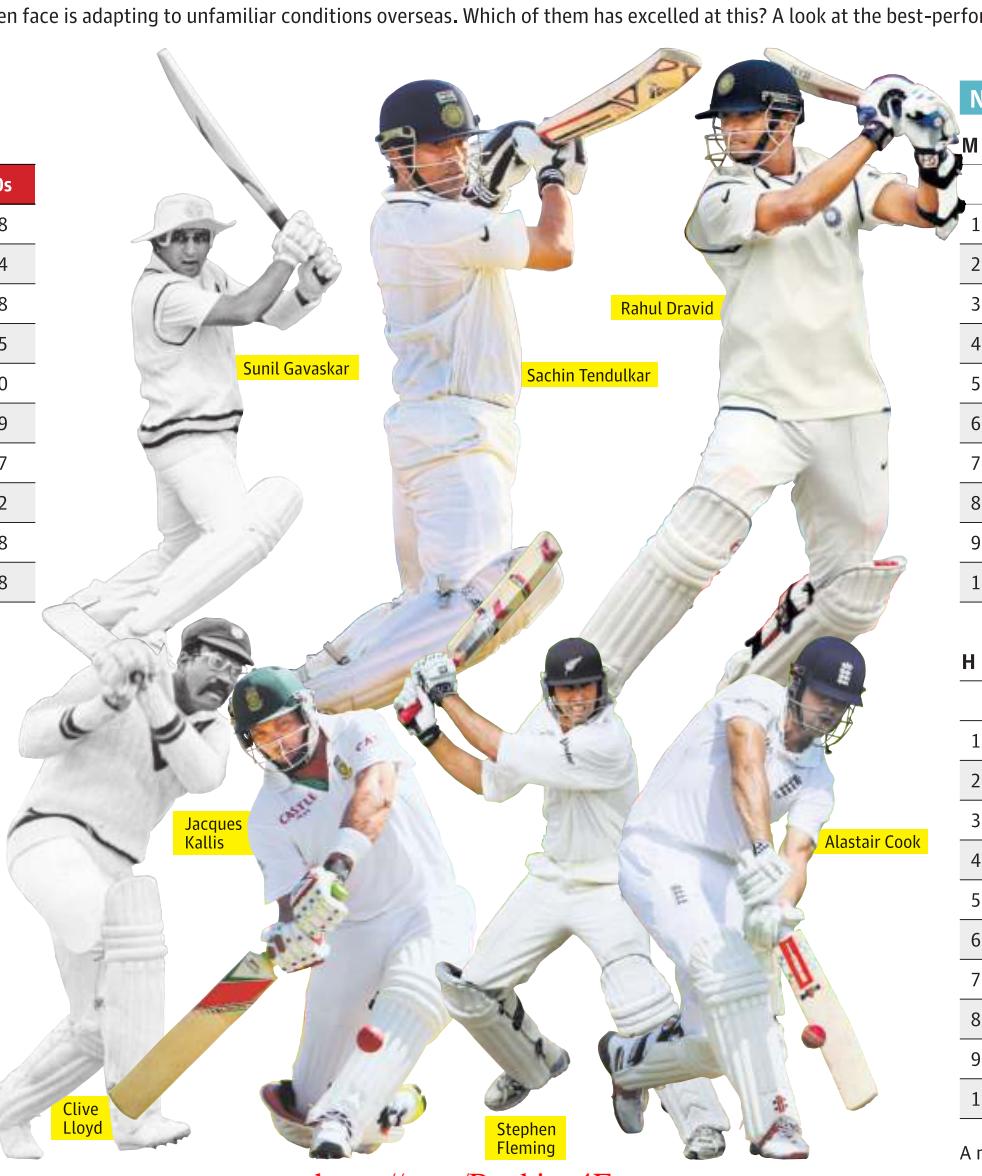
ASIANS OUTSIDE ASIA

MOST RUNS

Player	Span	Mat	Runs	Ave	100s
Sachin Tendulkar (IND)	1990-2012	77	6,247	50.37	18
Rahul Dravid (IND)	1996-2012	68	5,895	54.58	14
V.V.S. Laxman (IND)	1997-2012	61	4,105	42.31	8
Sunil Gavaskar (IND)	1971-1986	46	3,868	51.57	15
Inzamam-ul-Haq (PAK)	1992-2007	51	3,725	44.87	10
Javed Miandad (PAK)	1976-1993	48	3,340	46.38	9
Younis Khan (PAK)	2000-2017	43	3,173	42.30	7
Virat Kohli (IND)	2011-2019	36	3,100	47.69	12
Mohammad Yousuf (PAK)	1998-2010	37	3,054	45.58	8
Kumar Sangakkara (SL)	2000-2015	36	3,045	47.57	8

HIGHEST AVERAGES

Player	Span	Inns	NO	Runs	Ave
Rahul Dravid (IND)	1996-2012	124	16	5,895	54.58
Sunil Gavaskar (IND)	1971-1986	81	6	3,868	51.57
Sachin Tendulkar (IND)	1990-2012	135	11	6,247	50.37
Mohinder Amarnath (IND)	1976-1986	41	1	1,936	48.40
Virat Kohli (IND)	2011-2019	66	1	3,100	47.69
Kumar Sangakkara (SL)	2000-2015	68	4	3,045	47.57
Javed Miandad (PAK)	1976-1993	78	6	3,340	46.38
Marvan Atapattu (SL)	1997-2007	49	5	2,040	46.36
Asanka Gurusinha (SL)	1989-1996	25	0	1,146	45.84
Mohammad Yousuf (PAK)	1998-2010	69	2	3,054	45.58



NON-ASIANS IN ASIA

MOST RUNS

Player	Span	Mat	Runs	Ave	100s
Alastair Cook (ENG)	2006-2016	28	2,710	53.13	9
Jacques Kallis (SA)	1997-2013	25	2,058	55.62	8
Ricky Ponting (AUS)	1996-2011	28	1,889	41.97	5
Hashim Amla (SA)	2004-2018	25	1,859	47.66	7
Shivnarine Chanderpaul (WI)	1994-2013	27	1,850	48.68	4
Allan Border (AUS)	1979-1992	22	1,799	54.51	6
A.B. de Villiers (SA)	2006-2015	21	1,746	54.56	3
Graeme Smith (SA)	2003-2013	21	1,728	49.37	4
Matthew Hayden (AUS)	2001-2008				