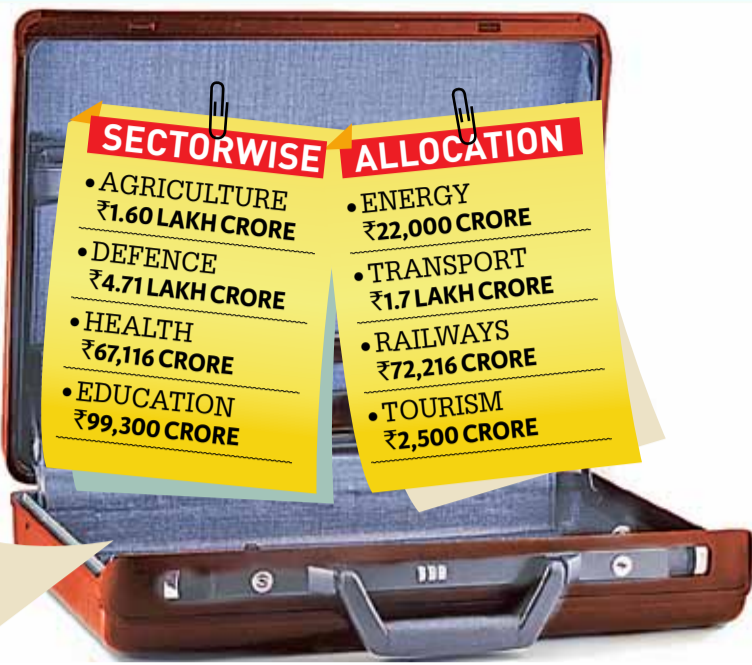


BUDGET 2020



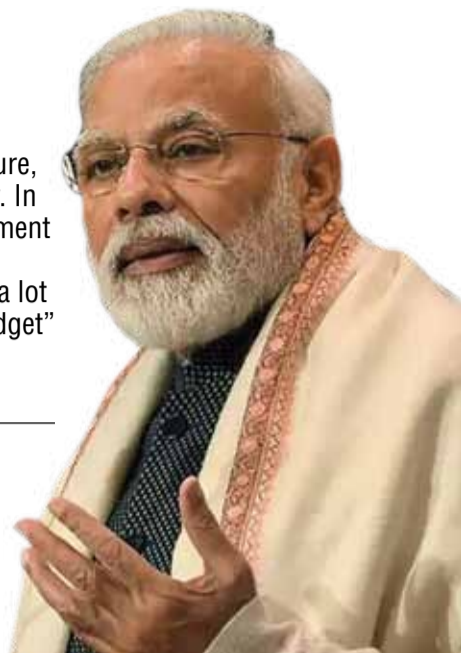
EDIT
Being optimistic is fine but FM shall be realistic **P6**

MARKETS
Dividend will be taxed only in the hands of investors **P8**

LIFESTYLE
₹291.42 crore earmarked for Khelo India programme **P10**

“The main areas of employment are agriculture, infrastructure, textiles and technology. In order to boost employment generation, these four areas have been given a lot of emphasis in this Budget”

NARENDRA MODI,
Prime Minister



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VANTAGE POINT

Budget boosts business confidence but not consumer sentiments
By Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw **P4**

An act of walking the tight rope
By MM Murugappan **P5**

An exercise bereft of macroeconomic vision
By CP Chandrasekhar **P6**

Should India have taken more risk?
By Ashok Hinduja **P6**

Taking the economic challenges head-on
By Kumar Mangalam Birla **P7**

A govt that is clueless on the economy
By P Balakrishnan **P8**

There's nothing to ease economic woes

PEOPLE FEEL BUDGET 2020 WON'T BOOST EMPLOYMENT, BUT HAIL SOCIAL SCHEMES

NEWDELHI: In her 2 hours and 41 minutes Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tried to come across as 'pro-farmer' while devising a new tax regime aimed at the middle class. However, beyond the couplets and promises, the specifics showed either no increase in allocation or marginal. With very little fiscal room to manoeuvre, Sitharaman walked a tightrope.

First the good thing that this government has done. It has considerably increased the allocation for pensions that is surely going to make a lot of retired people happy. From Rs 1,84,147 crore last year, it has jumped up to Rs 2,10,682 crore. Also 'interest' allocations have jumped up from last fiscal's 6,25,105 crore to Rs 7,08,203 crore. In fact, the estimate for rural development has only gone up by Rs 1,408 crore.



But beyond that, there has been no sizeable jump. For instance, a government that breathes national security and even the Finance Minister's mentioning that it comes top of its agenda, the defence expenditure saw a marginal rise. Last fiscal year, the defence estimate was Rs 3,16,296 crore. But this year it rose to just Rs 3,23,053 crore. A jump of Rs 6,757 crore. This thin jump is unusual given

'100 more airports to be developed by 2025'

NEWDELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said 100 more airports will be developed by 2025 to support the UDAN scheme. Presenting the Budget for 2020-21, Sitharaman said ₹1.7 lakh crore has been provided for transport infrastructure in 2020-21. She also said 150 trains will run under the public private partnership (PPP) mode, also four stations will be redeveloped with the help of the private sector. Besides, the Minister promised more Tejas type trains to connect tourist destinations. She said a proposal for setting up large solar power capacity alongside rail track is under consideration.

India has kept its forces stationed on both borders along Pakistan and China. Similarly, even after so much talk about 'Gaon, Gaareeb, Kisan' budget, apart from the promises of Kisan Udan or Kisan Rail, when it comes to numbers, it shows minor rise.

Last fiscal year, the government estimated to spend Rs 1,20,835 crore on agriculture and allied services. This year it has an estimate of Rs 1,54,775 crore. Given India's rural economy is in bad shape and agriculture and rural infrastructure are the only way to put money in the

villagers hand, the hike is not phenomenal, to say the least. What's more? There has been a decrease of subsidies. After breaking it down, one realises, while food subsidy and petroleum subsidies have gone up by wafer thin margin, fertiliser subsidy has gone down quite a bit. Against last years' Rs 79,998 crore, this years estimate is Rs 71,309 crore. Sectors like energy, external affairs or transport has witnessed very little change that it's not even worth mentioning. The social sectors spendings have also been extremely limited by Sitharaman. **AGENCIES**

Who Said What



AMIT SHAH, Union Home Minister

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



P. CHIDAMBARAM, Former Finance Minister

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



SITARAM YECHURY, CPI Chief Secretary

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

WHAT'S UP



- Butter ghee, butter oil, edible oils, peanut butter
- Whey, meslin, maize, sugar beet seeds, preserved potato
- Chewing gum, dietary soya fibre, isolated soya protein
- Walnuts (shelled)
- Footwear, shavers, hair clippers, hair-removing appliances
- Rubies, emeralds, sapphires, rough coloured gemstones
- Combs, hairpins, curling pins, curling grips, hair curlers
- Hair dryers, hand drying apparatus and electric irons
- Toys, stationery item, artificial flowers, bells, trophies
- Porcelain items, tableware, kitchenware, glassware
- Padlocks
- Hand sieves and hand riddles
- Table fans, ceiling fans and pedestal fans
- Portable blowers
- Water filters, water heaters and immersion heaters
- Food grinders, ovens, cookers, cooking plates, boiling rings, grinders and roasters
- Coffee and tea makers and toasters
- Devices for repelling insects
- Furniture, lamps and lighting fittings

WHAT'S DOWN



- Pure-bred breeding horses
- Sports goods
- Electric vehicles
- Newsprint
- Microphone

Also, excise duty has been on cigarettes, hookah, chewing tobacco, scented tobacco and tobacco extracts and essence.

THE HIGHLIGHTS

Tax: A new tax regime has been announced. Those who want to be in the old regime with exemptions, can continue to pay at the old rates.

INCOME	TAX
₹5 lakh to ₹7.5 lakh	Reduced to 10% from the current 20%
₹7.5 lakh to ₹10 lakh	Reduced to 15% from the current 20%
₹10 lakh to ₹12.5 lakh	Reduced to 20% from the current 30%
₹12.5 lakh to ₹15 lakh	Reduced to 25% from the current 30%
Above ₹15 lakh	Continue at 30%, but without exemptions

- Over 70 deductions have been removed.
- Companies will no longer be required to pay Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT).
- Aadhaar-based verification for GST compliance to be introduced.
- Aadhaar-based quick issuance of PAN announced.
- Economy and Finance:
- Bank deposit insurance cover had been increased from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh per depositor.
- Government plans to amend the Companies Act to decriminalise civil offences.
- Government to sell part of its stake in LIC via public offering.

AGRICULTURE

- A budget allocation of ₹2.83 lakh crore for the sector comprising agriculture and allied activities.
- Doubling farmers incomes by 2022.
- Agri-credit availability set at ₹15 lakh crore for 2020-21.
- Comprehensive measures for 100 water stressed districts.
- Village storage scheme proposed to be run by women SHGs.
- Indian Railways to have refrigerated coaches capability in 'kisan trains' to carry perishables and milk.
- Krishi UDAN on international and national routes.

HEALTH AND SANITATION

- An allocation of ₹69,000 crore for the health sector.
- 12,300 crore for Swachh Bharat this year.
- Proposal to set up hospitals in Tier-II and Tier-III cities with the private sector using PPP.

EDUCATION

- ₹99,300 crore for education sector in 2021 and about ₹3,000 crore for skill development.
- Urban local bodies to provide internship to young engineers for a year.
- Degree-level full fledged online education programmes by institutions ranked in top 100 in NIRF rankings, especially to benefit underprivileged students.
- A national police university and a national forensic science university is proposed to be setup.
- IND SAT exam for students of Asia and Africa to promote 'study in India' programme.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Budget proposes to provide ₹1.7 lakh crore for transport infrastructure in 2021
- National Logistics Policy to be released soon.
- Chennai-Bengaluru Expressway to be started.
- Aim to achieve electrification of 27,000 km of lines.
- Plan to have a large solar power capacity for Indian Railways.
- The government also proposes a Bengaluru suburban rail project at a cost of ₹18,600 crore.
- Govt to monetise 12 lots of national highways by 2024.

No decision yet on pan-India NRC: Minister

NEW DELHI: The government informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that till now it "has not taken any decision to prepare National Register of Citizens (NRC) at the national level."

Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai was responding to a question by Lok Janshakti Party's (LJP) Chandan Singh and Telangana Rashtira Samithi's (TRS) Nama Nageswara Rao on whether the government had any plans to introduce the NRC all over the country.

While replying to another question, Mr. Rai said the "government is in discussion with the States having concerns in regard to the preparation of National Population Register (NPR)".

Mr. Rai said in a written reply that "during the exercise of updation of NPR, no verification is done to find individuals whose citizenship is doubtful".

Several Opposition-ruled



“There is no need to create a background for NRC. We are clear that NRC ought to be done in this country. Our manifesto is the background”

States have vociferously opposed the NPR, slated to begin from April 1 onwards along with the decennial Census. According to the Citizenship

Rules, 2003, the NPR is the first step towards the compilation of the NRC.

Form not finalised

The NPR form is yet to be finalised and notified but the trial form last year collected details from 30 lakh respondents on 21 parameters, including the place of birth of father and mother and the last place of residence.

On December 9 last year, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had told Parliament that "there is no need to create a background for NRC; we are clear that NRC ought to be done in this country, our manifesto is the background."

To a question on whether the government had finalised the questionnaire for the NPR, Mr. Rai said, "The demographic and other particulars of each family and individual are to be updated/collected during the exercise of updation of NPR. No document is to be collected during this exercise."

For every rupee in govt kitty, 64 paise come from taxes

NEWDELHI: For every rupee in the government coffers, 64 paise will come from direct and indirect taxes, while states' share of taxes and duties is the single-largest expense head accounting for 20% of the total spending, Budget documents showed.

According to the Union Budget 2020-21 presented in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, goods and services tax collections will contribute 18 paise in every rupee revenue. Corporation tax will contribute 18 paise to each rupee earned. The collection from borrowings and other liabilities will be 20 paise, while income tax will yield 17 paise to every rupee collection.

The government intends to earn 10 paise from non-tax revenue like disinvestment, 7 paise from Union excise duty, 4 paise from customs duty and 6 paise from non-debt capital receipts out of every rupee collection.

HEALTHCARE

nCoV outbreak declared a State calamity in Kerala

TIMELINE OF THE RETURN OF THIS MALE STUDENT MATCHED THOSE OF THE OTHER TWO STUDENTS FROM WUHAN WHO HAD EARLIER TESTED POSITIVE

THRIVUNANTHAPURAM:

A third case of 2019-nCoV has been confirmed in the State, this time in Kasaragod district, again from a student in Wuhan University who had returned to his home district after the global alert was sounded on the epidemic recently.

Health officials said on Monday that the timeline of the return of this male student matched those of the other two students from Wuhan who had earlier tested positive. "He reached his home district on January 24 and later approached the local health authorities when



Intensive surveillance

The Kerala Health Department has taken adequate preparatory measures and framed detailed guidelines as soon as the WHO issued a global health alert and this helped the State respond appropriately when nCoV struck, Health Minister K.K. Shylaja said in the State Assembly.

GoM set up

A high-level group of Ministers has been constituted on the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to review management of the outbreak. Confirming the third case of the nCoV infection in a student who returned recently to Kasaragod from Wuhan, the Union Health Ministry said, "The patient...is in isolation in the hospital. The patient is stable and is being closely monitored." Meanwhile, five people, who were shifted to the Army's Base hospital from a quarantine facility in Manesar after showing symptoms of cough and cold, have tested negative for nCoV. The five were among the 247 persons evacuated from the Hubei province in China.

THE CENTRE ALLOCATES ₹1,116 CRORE TO DELHI IN THE UNION BUDGET, KEEPING THE SHARE OF NATIONAL CAPITAL IN CENTRAL TAXES UNCHANGED

ALSO READ | CENTRE PLANS 1% TDS ON E-COMMERCE TRANSACTIONS * P4 | HEALTHCARE IN FOCUS WITH ₹69,000CR OUTLAY * P4

NEWSBRIEF

#MeToo: Instagram account holder seeks time from HC



NEWDELHI: Instagram account handle 'Herdsceneand', who posted sexual harassment allegations by a woman against artist Subodh Gupta, told the Delhi High Court on Tuesday that an amicable settlement of the dispute was being explored and sought a week's time for it.

Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw, taking note of the plea, has posted Mr. Gupta's defamation case against 'Herdsceneand' on February 11.

In the last hearing, the HC had asked 'Herdsceneand' whether she/he wants to represent the anonymous victim in the defamation case filed by Mr. Gupta. The identity of the person running the Instagram account, which published the allegations in the wake of #MeToo movement, has been kept secret on the court's directions.

The Instagram handle had earlier said that she/he was only a "whistle-blower", a neutral platform which intended to bring out the instances of sexual misconduct and harassment in the art fraternity, as part of the #MeToo movement.

The HC was hearing Mr. Gupta's defamation suit against Herdsceneand, following the publication of anonymous sexual harassment allegations against him last year. It had earlier restrained Herdsceneand from posting any content relating to Mr. Gupta on its account.

AGENCIES

TRONICA CITY FACTORY FIRE: KIN OF VICTIMS SEEK OWNER'S ARREST

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

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

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

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

AGENCIES

Delhi again given step-motherly treatment in Budget: Kejriwal

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

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

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

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

"There is no provision in the Budget for improving the law and order situation in the Capital, providing houses to

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

2 Budget for education has come down from 3.6% to 3.2%. This is a fraud. At many points in the Budget, it seems that they are cheating, says CM

the poor and creating jobs. The Budget is a 'jumla' to confuse and mislead people," Mr. Chopra said.

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



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

Budget, it seems that they are cheating."

He added: "In this Budget, Delhi's share in Central taxes

has not been increased. It has been 325 crore since 2001-02. Delhi deserves its legitimate share in Central taxes to finance various developmental projects. The government had requested the Centre multiple times to enhance the allocation to at least 7,000 crore."

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

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

Nirbhaya's parents urge Delhi HC to expeditiously decide Centre's plea against stay on convicts' execution



NEWDELHI: Nirbhaya's parents urged the Delhi High Court on February 4 to expeditiously decide the Centre's plea challenging stay on execution of the four convicts in the case of their daughter's gang rape and murder.

Advocate Jitendra Jha, representing the parents of Nirbhaya, given name of the victim, said he mentioned the matter before the court for early disposal of the government's plea. Justice Suresh Kumar Kait, who had on February 2 reserved order on the Centre's plea after holding special hearing on February 1 and 2, said the decision would be passed at the earliest.

The trial court on January 17 issued black warrants for the second time for the execution of all the four convicts in the case — Mukesh Kumar Singh (32), Pawan Gupta (25), Vinay Kumar Sharma (26) and Akshay Kumar (31) — in Tihar jail at 6 a.m. on February 1. Earlier, on January 7, the court had fixed January 22 as the hanging date.

On January 31 the court again stayed the execution as the counsel for three convicts — Pawan, Vinay and Akshay — urged it to adjourn the matter "sine die" saying their legal remedies were yet to be exhausted.

While the mercy pleas of Mukesh and Vinay have been rejected by the President, Pawan has not yet filed it. Akshay's mercy plea was filed

on February 1 and is pending. The Centre and Delhi government challenged the trial court's order staying the execution. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing them, had contended that it was a deliberate and calculated design of the convicts to "frustrate mandate of law" by getting their execution delayed and they were not entitled to any more time.

The counsel for the convicts opposed the plea saying it was not maintainable and that the Centre was never a party in the case proceedings before the trial court and while the government was accusing the convict of delay, it has woken up only now.

Nirbhaya, 23-year-old paramedic student, was raped and brutally assaulted on the intervening night of December 16-17, 2012 inside a moving bus in south Delhi by six persons, before being thrown out on the road. She died on December 29, 2012 in Singapore's Mount Elizabeth Hospital. One of the six accused in the case, Ram Singh, allegedly committed suicide in the Tihar Jail. A juvenile, who was among the accused, was convicted by a juvenile justice board and was released from a reformation home after serving a three-year term. The top court, in its 2017 verdict, had upheld the capital punishment awarded to the convicts by the Delhi High Court and the trial court. AGENCIES

Congress vows unemployment allowance in its manifesto

NEW DELHI: The Congress has released its manifesto for the Delhi polls, promising to implement unemployment allowance of ₹5,000-7,500 per month and cashback schemes for water and power consumers, if voted to power.

Presenting the manifesto, Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra said the party will provide free power up to 300 unit per month.

The manifesto also committed to spend 25% budget each year on fighting pollution and improving transport facilities.

An unemployment allowance of ₹5,000 for graduates



and ₹7,500 for post graduates per month will be provided under the Yuva Swabhiman Yojna, he said.

The Congress will launch flagship cashback schemes for power and water supply

to benefit consumers saving these resources. The party, if voted to power, will open 100 Indira Canteens to provide subsidised meals at ₹15, Mr. Chopra said.

CAA-NRC-NPR

The Congress will challenge the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in the Supreme Court and demand the Centre to withdraw the law. The party will also not implement the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the existing form of the National Population Register (NPR), if voted to power in Delhi. AGENCIES

WORKPLACE MISHAP

One killed, seven injured in ammonia gas leak at FMCG unit in Noida

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

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

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

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

Deputy Commandment (NDRF) Ravindra Singh Kushwaha said that a team



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

of around 40 personnel in protective suits were deployed after getting a call about the

incident at 12.30 p.m. "By the time the team reached the spot, the workers who had

inhaled the gas were taken to a hospital by Haldiram's team," he added.

Effect lasted three hours

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

ECI appoints new DCP for South East district

NEWDELHI: After removing the Deputy Commissioner of Police of South East Delhi on Sunday, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Tuesday appointed 2010 batch IPS officer Rajendra Prasad Meena to the post.

Mr. Meena, who had been posted as additional DCP of North East district, was told to take charge of the new role immediately, according to an ECI letter to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

Ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls on Saturday, the ECI had reviewed the law and order situation in the city in the wake of two firing incidents at protest sites in south-east Delhi. Since December, when Parliament passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, anti-CAA protests have been staged outside Jamia Millia Islamia and Shaheen Bagh. AGENCIES

Pregnancy termination: Board set to examine minor rape victim

NEWDELHI: The Delhi High Court has directed the constitution of a medical board to examine a minor rape victim, who is seeking permission to terminate her 24-week pregnancy.

Justice Vibhu Bakhru asked the medical superintendent of Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital to constitute the board to examine the condition of the 16-year-old girl and expeditiously submit the report on whether continuing the pregnancy would pose any risk to her health.

The board shall also include a psychiatrist, the court said.

The court, which listed the matter for February 6, requested the concerned doctor to be present during the hearing. The court further said that it would also interact with the girl and her parents, who were present during the hearing, on



the next date and asked them to be there.

The petition, filed through the girl's mother, is aggrieved as Section 3 of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act

does not permit termination of pregnancy in case the period of gestation is over 20 weeks.

The plea, filed through advocates Anwesh Madhukar and Prachi Nirwan, said the

pregnancy poses a substantial risk to the girl as she herself is of a 'tender age'.

The plea said the rape victim was examined by doctors at a government hospital here on January 25 and she was found to be 24-weeks pregnant. Pursuant to this, a case of rape and criminal intimidation was lodged at Swaroop Nagar police station here.

The doctor has opined that since the period of gestation is over 20 weeks, it is beyond the permissible limit and the court's permission is required for pregnancy termination.

Last week, the Union Cabinet had approved extending the upper limit for permitting abortions from the present 20 weeks to 24 weeks for "special categories of women", which would include rape survivors, victims of incest, differently-abled and minors.

Muzaffarpur shelter home: court reserves order on quantum of sentence for Feb. 11

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on February 4 said it will announce the quantum of sentence for Brajesh Thakur and 18 others, convicted of sexually and physically assaulting several girls in a shelter home in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district, on February 11.

Additional Sessions Judge Saurabh Kulshreshtha, reserved the order for February 11, after the counsel appearing for CBI sought life imprisonment till remainder of life for Thakur.

The agency also sought maximum punishment for rest of the convicts. The convicts have sought minimum punishment from the court. The court had on Janu-



ary 20 convicted Thakur, who once unsuccessfully contested assembly polls on Bihar People's Party (BPP) ticket, of several offences including aggravated penetrative sexual assault under Section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, and

offences of rape and gang rape under the Indian Penal code (IPC).

In its bulky judgement, running to 1,546 pages, the court had also convicted Thakur of offences under IPC Sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 324 (causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) and those relating to abetment. He was also convicted under Section 21 (failure to report commission of an offence) of the POCSO Act and Section 75 (cruelty to child) of the Juvenile Justice Act.

The offences entail a maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

OPPOSITION:

THE BUDGET HAS NOTHING FOR FARMERS, UNEMPLOYED YOUTH, THE POOR AND WOMEN

GOVERNMENT:

BUDGET LAYS FOUNDATION TO MAKE INDIA \$5 TRILLION ECONOMY, SAYS SITHARAMAN

COMMON MAN:

ON ₹15 LAKH EARNING PER ANNUM AND NOT AVAILING ANY CUTS, ONE CAN NOW PAY ₹1.95 LAKH TAX

ALSO READ | INCOME TAX CUTS FOLLOW REDUCTION IN CORPORATE TAX RATES * P5 | DEPOSIT INSURANCE COVER RAISED TO ₹5 LAKH * P5

WHAT THEY SAY



I am at a loss to understand what was the message intended to be conveyed by Budget 2020-21. I am also not able to recall any memorable idea or statement in the speech"

P CHIDAMBARAM
Former Finance Minister



From what we have seen so far, there appears to be no substantial relief for the telecom sector. Of course, we are waiting to see the details. The FM has talked about smart meters and Artificial Intelligence, and we will see how that translates into benefit for our sector"

RAJAN MATHEWS
COAI Director General



Extension of time period till March 2021 is a welcome step taken by government in the affordable housing space benefiting both individuals and developers. While tax holiday on profits would encourage more builders to take up affordable housing projects, individual can firm up home buying decision to enjoy the additional tax benefit of Rs.1.50 lakhs"

SIDDHARTHA MOHANTY
MD & CEO, LIC Housing Finance



When Delhi doesn't figure in the BJP's priorities, why should people vote for it? Delhi had high expectations from the Budget, but step-motherly treatment has been meted out to it again"

ARVIND KEJRIWAL
Delhi Chief Minister

Attempts made to mislead people on Union Budget: PM

NEW DELHI: Despite critics admitting now that it is the best budget under the prevailing global economic scenario, attempts were made to mislead people on it, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday.

Speaking at the BJP Parliamentary party meeting here, Mr. Modi hailed the Bodo accord and the agreement to settle the members of Bru-Reang tribe in Tripura, terming them "historic" successes of his government in this decade. It will usher in an era of peace in the North East which has suffered decades of bloodshed and violence, he said.

Referring to the Union Budget, which was presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday, Mr. Modi said attempts were made to mislead people on it.

However, people have now realised that it is a very good budget and even critics have acknowledged that this is the best budget under the prevailing global economic scenario, he said.



BJP president J.P. Nadda, who attended the first parliamentary party meet after becoming the party chief, was felicitated by Mr. Modi and others. Mr. Nadda expressed confidence about the BJP's win in the February 8 Delhi Assembly polls and added that over 240 party MPs are spending several days in the poor colonies of the national capital to reach out to voters.

Modi on Tuesday lauded the Union Budget presented on Saturday as "the best in the current environment", and said that even critics were coming around to this view despite initial attempts by "many to mislead" people on it.

Mr. Modi was addressing a BJP Parliamentary Party meeting, the first in this session and also after

NADDA'S DIRECTIVE

At the meeting, Mr. Nadda kept the focus on the Delhi Assembly election, urging MPs to spend the next four days campaigning in the slum clusters of the capital. He spoke after a grand felicitation by the group and by Mr. Modi.

An elaborate list of 240 party MPs from both Houses has been drawn up by Mr. Nadda for deployment in the slum clusters, considered the support base of Aam Admi Party chief and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

The MP present at the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting said Mr. Nadda emphasised that the deci-

sions taken by the Modi government, especially that of legalising nearly 40 lakh unauthorised dwellings in the city be communicated to people.

"Also, the Kejriwal government's moves to overhaul what it has done for health and education and the free water and electricity that has only been provided just before polls, needs to be exposed," Mr Nadda is reported to have said according to the MP. The polls in Delhi are scheduled for February 8, with February 6 being the last day of campaign. The results will be out on February 11.

the election of J.P. Nadda as new party president. An MP present at the meeting said Mr. Modi told the meeting that "this is the best Budget possible in the current environment and while there were attempts to mislead people on it over the weekend, even crit-

ics have come around to the view that it's a good Budget."

The Prime Minister also said that the Bodo agreement in Assam and the settlement of the Bru issue in Tripura would be considered important contributions to peace in this decade. AGENCIES

NDFB factional leaders may contest

GUWAHATI: Leaders of the factions of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) may contest in the coming elections in Assam, along with the other signatories to the Bodo Peace Accord.

The signatories are expected to hold a convention in Kokrajhar, the headquarters of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit on February 7 for celebrating the signing of the accord. Some 2,850 members of the four

NDFB factions are likely to lay down arms before Mr. Modi. This would follow the ceremonial surrender of 1,615 members of these factions on January 30.

"People want us to take the responsibility of the BTC administration and ensure that the clauses of the accord are implemented. We are thus thinking in terms of joining politics," said Promod Boro, president of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), one of the signatories to the accord. Mr. Boro, however, did

not spell out whether the NDFB, the ABSU and other organisations would form a party to take on the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), which has been ruling the BTC since 2003 and is an ally of the Bharatiya Janata Party. The elections to the BTC are expected by April.

Most of the BPF leaders were members of the disbanded Bodo Liberation Tigers that rivalled the NDFB for space during its extremist phase. If the ABSU takes the lead in forming a party, it will steal a march over the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) that has been toying with the idea of a "political alternative" to the BJP, its regional ally Asom Gana Parishad and the Congress. AGENCIES

	2018-19 Actuals	2019-20 Budget Estimates	2019-20 Revised Estimates	2020-21 Budget Estimates
Revenue Receipts	1552916	1962761	1850101	2020926
Capital Receipts	762197	823588	848451	1021304
Total Receipts	2315113	2786349	2698552	3042230
Revenue Account	2007399	2447780	2349645	2630145
Capital Account	307714	338569	348907	412085
Total Expenditure	2315113	2786349	2698552	3042230
Revenue Deficit	454483	485019	499544	609219
Fiscal Deficit	649418	703760	766846	796337
Primary Deficit	66770	43289	141741	88134

In reply to BJP leadership, Hegde says he never mentioned Gandhi

NEW DELHI: BJP MP Anant Kumar Hegde has written to the party leadership that he made no mention of Mahatma Gandhi in his speech, which has faced flak for its swipe at the Father of the Nation, and controversial remarks attributed to him are "incorrect".

BJP sources said Mr. Hegde sent a detailed reply to party president J.P. Nadda, and the party's disciplinary committee, which issued him a show-cause notice on Monday, is studying its content before deciding its next course of action.

Mr. Hegde has claimed he did not name Mahatma Gandhi nor did he insult him in his speech and news reports about his speech are "incorrect". He added he also did not use words like "nautanki" or "drama" to describe the freedom struggle led by Gandhi.

There is a view in the party that what the former Union Minister said might be in bad taste but its content was distorted in some media reports, a senior BJP leader said.

Speaking in Kannada at an event in Bengaluru on Saturday to commemorate Veer Savarkar, an iconic Hindutva figure, Mr. Hegde said freedom fighters who did not sacrifice anything made the country believe that it attained independence through 'Upavas Satyagrah', Gandhi's preferred mode of agitation by undertaking fast.

"Such people became 'Mahapurush (great person)', said Mr. Hegde, who is no stranger to controversies.

The Gandhi-led freedom struggle was an "adjustment" with the British, he said, suggesting that contribution of revolutionaries and other free-



dom fighters who were not associated with the Congress were undermined.

Hegde should be booked for sedition for denigrating the non-violent freedom struggle of Mahatma Gandhi, Dakshina Kannada Pradesh Congress Committee president and MLC K. Harish Kumar said here on Tuesday.

Talking to reporters, he said Mr. Hegde has hurt the sentiments of people by calling the non-violent freedom struggle by Mahatma Gandhi a farce. "Making such observations about Gandhiji is an act against the State. The Bharatiya Janata Party, which talks a lot about sedition, should take steps for booking a criminal case against Mr. Hegde," he said.

Mr. Kumar said in the past too, the BJP MP has made controversial statements. "He should be sent behind the bars and the BJP should ask him to step down," he said.

Criticising BJP State president Nalin Kumar Kateel for his statement accusing the Congress for the delay in completing Pumpwell flyover, Mr. Kumar said Mr. Kateel has the habit of taking credit for completed development works and pointing at the Opposition for works that get delayed. AGENCIES

Cong attacks BJP, AAP over unemployment

NEW DELHI: Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi has accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of trying to divide the country by spreading hatred and violence instead of trying to solve the problem of unemployment.

"The world is looking towards India to set up manufacturing hubs that will create jobs. Major countries want an alternative to China so that there is healthy competition, but Mr. Modi and Mr. Kejriwal are only interested in divisive politics and not concerned about the future of the youth," he said. Mr. Gandhi said the edu-



cated youth are told that there are no jobs for them. Mr. Gandhi on Tuesday addressed rallies in Jangpura and Sangam Vihar. In Sangam Vihar, he was accom-

panied by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Mr. Gandhi accused the BJP of indulging in violence in the name of religion. The people who are trying to divide the country on

'Spending crores on ads'

Ms. Vadra in her address slammed AAP and BJP governments for spending money on publicity. "Mr. Modi invests 5,200 crore in publicity, Mr. Kejriwal has spent 611 crore on the same for the Delhi polls. What is the need for publicity if work is doing the talking for them," she said, adding that Mr. Kejriwal was taking credit for the work that former Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit had done. Ms. Vadra also attacked the BJP government for failing to address unemployment.

religious lines are the ones whose patriotism needed to be questioned, he added.

The Congress leader also hit out at the Modi government for favouring 15 large business houses instead of addressing the economic slowdown.

"The BJP and AAP are spreading lies...Congress is the only party that has fulfilled its promises," he said while asking people "to cleanse hatred and violence from their heart" before going to vote. AGENCIES

'Love jihad' not defined under law, says Centre

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Tuesday said the term 'Love Jihad' is not defined under the law, and no such case has been reported by any of the Central agencies.

Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy said Article 25 of the Constitution provides for the freedom to profess, practice and propagate religion subject to public order, morality and health. "Various courts, including the Kerala High Court, have upheld this view," he said in a written reply.

"The term 'Love Jihad' is not defined under the extant laws. No such case of 'Love Jihad' has been reported by any of the Central agencies," Mr. Reddy said to a question by Congress MP Benny Behanan on "whether Central agencies have reported any case of 'Love Jihad' from Kerala during the past two years and if so, the details thereof?"

Mr. Reddy, however, said two cases from Kerala involving inter-faith marriage had been probed by the National Investigation Agency.

Syro-Malabar Church firm on its stance on 'love jihad' he synod of the bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church says it has not approached the issue of 'love jihad' in a way that



would affect the longstanding friendship with the Muslim community.

In a statement here on Tuesday, the Syro-Malabar Media Commission said the synod had only expressed its opinion that inter-religious love affairs caused family troubles and that such cases should be inquired into. And, the circumstances in which the bishops raised the demand continued to exist.

The statement comes in the wake of protests against the stance of the synod on 'love jihad' in the second week of January. The synod had then called for inquiries into instances of 'love jihad' in which Christian girls fell victims to inter-religious love affairs. In some cases, such girls also

joined terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State, the bishops had said.

However, Tuesday's statement from the Church said the Union Home Ministry had made clarifications on the issue in the Lok Sabha. It had said that there were no instances of 'love jihad' or 'love affairs with malicious intentions' reported in Kerala. There was no mention of 'love jihad' in the existing set of laws, the government said.

The Church statement, however, said the synod's opinion on the issue was based on information received from its various dioceses. The synod had expressed its anxiety on the issue based on the information it had received. AGENCIES

Opposition targets Thakur's poll speech

NEW DELHI: Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Monday said the government could not silence people's voice (boli) with bullet (goli) as members of the Congress and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) targeted Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur in the House for his controversial speech at an election rally in Delhi.

Protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR), the members of the two parties raised slogans every time Mr. Thakur rose to answer a question during Zero Hour.



Speaker Om Birla and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi asked the members, who had come into the well of the Lok Sabha as soon as the Question Hour started at 11 a.m., to raise their concerns during the discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President for his

address to the joint session of Parliament. As the Opposition members did not relent, Mr. Birla announced an early lunch break soon after Zero Hour had started.

As soon as Monday's proceedings started, Opposition MPs, mainly from the Congress, started raising slogans, prompting the Speaker to say the amended citizenship law had been discussed in detail.

"You can raise and discuss all issues that you want during the debate on the President's address. You will get enough opportunity. You were elected by people through democratic process, and it is my responsibility to give you opportunities to raise issues concerning people," Mr. Birla said.

But the moment the Question Hour got underway and Mr. Thakur started answering questions relating to the Finance Ministry, the Opposition members were heard shouting Goli Maarna Band Karo (Stop shooting) in an obvious reference to the Minister's objectionable comments for which the Election Commission had banned him and Parvesh Verma (also of BJP) from campaigning in Delhi.

The MPs, shouting "Go back" and "Shame shame", displayed placards saying "Save India", "Save democracy" and "Save Constitution".

"After the citizenship law was passed, common people are protesting against this. It is not something that is unjust. They are protesting with the Constitution in their hands, holding the national flag and singing the national anthem. But they are being fired upon and beaten mercilessly. The government cannot silence people's voice with bullets," Mr. Chowdhury said.

During the Question Hour, AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi too raised the issue of firing on Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) students and expressed solidarity with them.

AGENCIES

₹27,300 CRORE HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FOR DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE IN THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2020-21

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1% TDS set for e-commerce deals

AMAZON, FLIPKART MAY APPROACH GOVERNMENT FOR CLARIFICATION ON PROPOSAL

NEW DELHI: The government on Saturday proposed a new levy of one per cent TDS (tax deducted at source) on e-commerce transactions, a move that could increase burden on sellers on such platforms. "In order to widen and deepen the tax net by bringing participants of e-commerce (sellers) within tax net, it is proposed to insert a new section 194-O in the Act so as to provide for a new levy of TDS at the rate of 1%," as per 2020-21 Budget documents.

Also, consequential amendments are being proposed in section 197 (for lower TDS), in section 204 (to define person responsible for paying any sum) and in section 206AA (to provide for tax deduction at 5% in non-PAN/Aadhaar cases). The amendment will take effect from April 1, 2020.

The document explained that e-commerce operator — an entity owning, operating or

INSIGHT

- **The move aims** to widen and deepen the tax net by bringing participants of e-commerce (sellers) within tax net
- **Online players** are studying the details, and will reach out to the govt for clarifications
- **The TDS** will be in addition to TCS under GST



Amazon India and Flipkart are studying the Budget proposal on TDS, and will reach out to the government for clarifications. "We are studying the details, and will reach out to the government for clarifications. We hope the tax regime is simple and uniform so that millions of small and medium businesses can go online, digitise their operations and continue to contribute to growing the economy," an Amazon

India spokesperson said in response to an e-mailed query. Flipkart also said it was going through the proposal. "We are studying the details, particularly how it impacts the MSMEs and Sellers on our marketplace platform. We will discuss further with our seller partners, and engage with government and other stakeholders in due course," Flipkart said in its response. An industry expert said the

move will reduce cash flow for sellers as cash will be stuck with government in refund system. Given that many sellers are micro, small and medium enterprises, it would add pressure on them. BookMyShow Head (Finance) Mitesh Shah said compliance on e-commerce has been increased by mandating them to deduct a TDS of 1% on all goods and services sold on e-commerce platforms. "This would be in addition to TCS (tax collected at source) under GST (goods and services tax) and this amendment might further increase the cost of compliance for e-commerce companies," he added. A senior industry executive, who did not wish to be named, said levying the one per cent TDS on 'sales proceeds net of commission, shipping fees, listing fees etc' would have been more beneficial than the current proposal of the levy being imposed on gross sale. **AGENCIES**

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw
CMD, Biocon



Budget boosts business confidence but not consumer sentiments

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented a Budget that was directionally sound but may not expeditiously revive the Indian economy.

The Budget has boosted business confidence for India Inc. through various measures, including the proposal for a tax payers' charter to prevent harassment by officials, increasing the investment limit of foreign portfolio investors (FPI) in corporate bonds, allowing sovereign wealth funds to invest in infrastructure and making the Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT) applicable to individuals instead of companies.

However, the Budget may not move the needle in terms of boosting consumption spending as the reduction in tax rates will not increase disposable income in the hands of the salaried middle class when exemptions are being withdrawn. Transferring DDT to recipients will also take money out of the hands of the retail investor.

The Budget offers incentives to strengthen the existing startup ecosystem by hiking its turnover limit

So, while it's true that the Budget will improve business sentiments, investments by India Inc. may take a few years to kick in, thus postponing economic recovery and the timelines for achieving a \$5-trillion Indian economy.

What was heartening about this Budget were the investments announced towards harnessing the potential of Science & Technology for developing the kind of future technologies that will enable India to take a leadership position globally.

The five-year Rs 8,000 cr outlay for a National Mission on Quantum Technologies is a very important investment with huge future returns as it will advance our computational and analytical capabilities and enable us to join an exclusive global league of nations harnessing this futuristic technology.

At present, India lacks a reliable genetic information bank for research. Therefore, the proposal to create a comprehensive genetic database will be critical for next-generation medicine, agriculture and for biodiversity management.

Technology and big data analytics can make research and development more efficient by analysing billions of datasets. This will now get a boost thanks to the FM's proposed policy for setting up data centre parks throughout the country and the provision of 6,000 crore for BharatNet in FY21.

Giving Startups a Helping Hand

This Budget offered incentives to strengthen the existing startup ecosystem by increasing the turnover limit for startups to claim tax exemption from 25 crore to 100 crore and for up to a period of 10 years from incorporation as opposed to 7 years earlier. It also recommended a five-year tax holiday on ESOPs.

Healthcare

The good health of the nation is essential for economic progress. The rollout of the Ayushman Bharat scheme in 2018 by the NDA government was a big step towards introducing universal healthcare coverage in our country. The expansion of health infrastructure in tier II and III cities via PPP model and upskilling of healthcare personnel will strengthen the Ayushman Bharat program. The use of Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence for preventive healthcare along with increasing the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras will take forward the government's agenda of healthcare for all.

Education

The allocation of Rs 99,300 crore for education and Rs 3,000 crore for skill development in FY21 is also a welcome step as is the proposal to attract external commercial borrowing and foreign direct investment (FDI) in the education sector.

Rural Economy

Boosting rural consumption required the government to increase its expenditure on various schemes. While the Budget had a slew of measures for the agricultural economy, the outlay for the non-agricultural rural sector increased to Rs 1.23 trillion compared to Rs 1.17 trillion last year.

Final Analysis

The measures announced in this Budget can give returns in the medium to long-term. However, we need to make sure that they are implemented fast to have the necessary impact.

WHAT THEY SAY



New reforms will give push to economy. The Govt. has announced many measures to push employment in the country. National Logistic Policy will benefit trade, business, and employment"

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister



In this budget, the Modi government has taken effective steps to rationalise the tax system, boost the basic infrastructure, strengthen the banking system, promote investment and ease of doing business"

AMIT SHAH
Union Home Minister



I am shocked & appalled to see how the Central govt plans to ambush the heritage & legacy of public institutions, after the tabling of the Union Budget in the Parliament. Is it also the end of an era? #LIC #IndianRailways #AirIndia #BSNL"

MAMATA BANERJEE
West Bengal Chief Minister



In this budget there are no words on special package, no new initiatives or projects for Bihar. We anticipated a lot for our state since there is a double engine government at helms. This #Budget2020 is a reflection of discriminatory intent of the Modi government towards Bihar"

TEJASHWI YADAV
RJD leader

Healthcare in focus with ₹69,000cr outlay

NEW DELHI: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced an outlay of about ₹69,000 crore for the health sector in the 2020-2021 Budget with ₹6,400 crore earmarked for the Centre's flagship health insurance scheme, Prime Minister Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY).

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare gets ₹65,011.8 crore up from ₹62,659.12 crore in 2019-20. The Ministry of AYUSH has been allocated ₹2,122.08 crore while there is an allocation of ₹2,100 crore to the Department of Health Research. Ms. Sitharaman said there are now more than 20,000 empanelled hospitals under the PMJAY. "We need more in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities for poorer people under this PMJAY scheme. It is proposed to set up Viability Gap funding window for setting up hospitals in the PPP (private-public-partnership) mode. In the first phase, those aspirational districts will be covered, where presently there are no Ayushman empanelled hospitals,"



the Minister said. "This would also provide large scale employment opportunities to youth. Proceeds from taxes on medical devices would be used to support this vital health infrastructure," she said.

The Finance Minister also announced expansion of the Jan Aushadhi Kendra Scheme to all districts, offering 2,000 medicines and 300 surgicals by 2024. The government, in order to boost domestic industry and to generate resources for health services, has proposed a nominal health

"This would also provide large scale employment opportunities to youth. Proceeds from taxes on medical devices would be used to support this vital health infrastructure"

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
Finance Minister

cess of 5% on imports of specified medical equipment. Also Mission Indradhanush has been expanded to cover 12 such diseases, including five new vaccines.

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

The Finance Minister said the government will encourage large hospitals with sufficient capacity to offer resident doctors diploma and fellow of

National Board (DNB/FNB) courses under the National Board of Examination.

Speaking on the budget the Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan said: "Budget estimates for the Department for Health and Family Welfare show an appreciable increase of 3.75%, while there has been a 10% hike in the allocation for the Department for Health Research. This indicates the strong focus of the government on the health sector. The Budget has positioned health as a prime mover in the journey of development and growth of the country."

Stating that the focus in Budget 2020 is on medical infrastructure, human resources in the health sector, and holistic health and wellness the Minister said: "As part of strengthening the medical infrastructure, the government will support creation of hospitals in those aspirational districts, particularly in the two and three tier cities, which do not have empanelled hospitals under Ayushman Bharat PMJAY." **AGENCIES**

Government not expecting substantial gain from AGR dues in 2020-21

NEW DELHI: It may have sought almost ₹4 lakh crore from telecom and non-telecom companies in past dues but the government is not expecting any substantial windfall in the coming year. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who provisioned ₹1.3 lakh crore in receipts from telecom licence fee and spectrum usage charge for the next financial year, said the government is looking to address the dispute over what revenues should be taken for calculating dues in a more comprehensive manner.

In her post-Budget press conference, she said the issue is a complex one and the industry players are in dialogue with the government to resolve it.

"I don't think I am looking at it purely from what the government will collect. This



particular development in the telecom sector is something which all of us have watched, going through the proceedings of the court... it would not be right for me to just comment and say we are looking at this number or that," she said to a question on enhancing revenue collection target from the debt-ridden telecom sector. The government on Saturday increased the revenue

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

"It is fairly complex issue. The industry and affected parties are also in touch with the government. We are engaging with them, the department is engaging with them. We will be addressing

this in a more comprehensive manner," Ms. Sitharaman said.

The government expects ₹58,686.64 crore under communications head in the current financial year as against a budgeted amount of ₹50,519.8 crore in 2019-20. "Receipts under 'Other Communication Services' mainly relate to the licence fees from telecom operators and receipts on account of spectrum usage charges," the Budget documents said.

The industry is saddled with ₹1.47 lakh crore in additional statutory dues in the wake of a recent Supreme Court ruling on adjusted gross revenue (AGR). Telecom companies owe the government ₹92,642 crore in unpaid licence fee and another ₹55,054 crore in outstanding spectrum usage charges. **AGENCIES**

Startups hail tax changes, say will help attract, retain talent

MUMBAI: The budget proposal for the startups ecosystem, especially the one on tax on employees stock options (Esops), received a big thumbs up from the fledgling sector.

The budget recommends a five-year tax holiday on Esops, a 10-year tax exemption for startups with under-100 crore turnover and also talks of a seed fund to push new businesses.

India is the third biggest startup ecosystem in the world and the government has been focused on pushing innovative startups through policy interventions for some years now.

Click here to read the full speech

for startups. The measures announced on Esops, taxation and seed fund will infuse tremendous energy into the ecosystem," Indian Angel Network chairman Saurabh Srivastava said.

He said the commitment to having no harassment will also boost the confidence of entrepreneurs.

Restructuring the taxation on Esops is a great breather along with definition of turnover for scaled startups doing good work, said Paynearby chief executive Anand Kumar Bajaj.

"The ESOPs always has been a very strong mechanism for start-ups to incentivize, attract and retain high performing talent. The government



proposal would allow startups to leverage ESOPs more effectively," trading platform Connect2India CEO Pawan Gupta commented.

Anuj Golecha, co-founder

for the platform Venture Catalysts said the ecosystem has reasons to be satisfied with the budget announcements.

"A dedicated investment clearance cell for providing

"The proposed seed funding support for ideation and development of early-stage startups would encourage more people to take the entrepreneurship plunge as well as support the existing startups"

ship culture," he said.

Currently the paperwork and the channels to engage with both pre and post investments are huge and the one-stop clearance would allow entrepreneurs more time to focus on their business, the Connect2India CEO observed. Harsh Jain, co-founder of Groww, said the move on the Esops will encourage more startups to get incorporated, and make it easier for them to attract and retain good talent.

The budget also proposes to provide early life funding, including a seed fund to support ideation and development of early stage startups.

"The proposed seed funding support for ideation and development' of early-stage

startups would encourage more people to take the entrepreneurship plunge as well as support the existing startups," Gupta said. Terminating the startups as "engines of growth", Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the present Esop taxation leads to cash-flow problem for the employees who do not sell shares immediately and continue to hold the same for the long-term.

"To give a boost to the startup ecosystem, I propose to ease the burden of taxation on the employees by deferring the tax payment by five years or till they leave the company or when they sell their shares, whichever is earliest," she said.

AGENCIES

GDP TO GROW AT 7.6 PER CENT (+0.25) DURING 2012-13. BETTER PROSPECTS FOR OVERALL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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All tax exemptions to be removed soon

INCOME TAX CUTS FOLLOW REDUCTION IN CORPORATE TAX RATES

NEW DELHI: After slashing income tax rates for individuals on condition that they give up exemptions and deductions, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said the government intends to remove all I-T exemptions in the long run.

Speaking at a press conference after presenting her second budget in the Lok Sabha, she said income tax cuts follow reduction in corporate tax rates in September last year.

The minister said additional capital will be provided to public sector banks as and when required.

Her budget speech did not provide for any specific number for additional capital. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman holds a folder containing the Union Finance Budget documents at the North Block in New Delhi on Saturday.

The finance minister said improvement in revenue generation gives hopes of lowering fiscal deficit to 3.5% of GDP in the next fiscal from 3.8% in the current.



'An expression of interest (EoI) for sale of govt stake in Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) will be issued shortly

Disinvestment Secretary T.K. Pandey said big ticket

stake sale will happen in the next few months and that he was confident of achieving the ₹2.10 lakh crore target set for the next financial year.

He said an expression of interest (EoI) for sale of government stake in Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) will be issued shortly.

The Cabinet had approved sale of government stake in BPCL in November last year.

MIXED REACTION

The new income tax slabs evoked mixed reactions from the public. While some hailed the move, others stated that there will not be "much gain" as taxpayers will have to forego a host of exemptions.

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

Stating that the "supposed tax cuts make for good optics", Gurugram-

based software engineer Siddhartha Tiwari said: "I am waiting for the deduction list. If deductions like HRA, 24B and 80C have been removed, then I have been short-changed."

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

Delhi-based chartered accountant Arijit Basu said, "This Budget first raises hope of the salaried middle class people and then shatters it by applying clauses. It is an anti-investment budget. If one decides to go for the new tax regime, one will not get any deduction in life insurance, housing loan interest and so on."

An act of walking the tight rope

M. M. Murugappan
Executive chairman, Murugappa Group



While the government is walking a tightrope with respect to fiscal deficit, especially due to corporate tax cuts, despite higher receipts from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), there was a case for a fiscal stimulus expected in the Budget, as the RBI has called for in the recent policy statement.

The government acknowledged its fiscal challenges, resorting to the escape clauses in the FRBM [Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act] — pushing up the deficit to 3.8% in FY20 and 3.5% in FY21 — with total expenditure increase by 13% (higher increase in capex) resulting in incremental improvements across sectors.

While continuing to remain committed to the doubling of farmer's income, the government has laid out a longer term plan for the agricultural sector, detailing 16 broad initiatives that would help achieve the government's objective. The government's move to make the sector market oriented through contract farming, land leases etc., provides a positive push to this sector. The government's recognition of the importance of non-farm activities and their role in enhancing farmers' income is a welcome move. However, the lower allocation for the MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) compared to the Revised Estimates may not be par for the course.

The govt's move to make the sector market oriented through contract farming, land leases etc., provides a positive push to this sector

CO-OPERATIVE FEDERALISM

The decision of the 15th Finance Commission to keep the net proceeds of the Union Government's tax pool unchanged at 42% to the States bodes well with the government's agenda of cooperative federalism.

The changes made in personal income tax space may reduce the tax burden of a large section of the taxpayers. However, the options need to be weighed against each other to understand the new scheme's attractiveness.

Overall, having taken cognisance of the challenges in the economy, the government has laid out its focus areas and policy direction, which could help in navigating through these challenging times. However, as with any policy, execution is the true measure of success.



Unions protest LIC stake divestment move

KOLKATA: Employee unions of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has opposed the Centre's plan to sell a part of its stake in the state-run insurance behemoth through an initial public offering (IPO), insisting that the move was "against national interest."

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the LIC would be listed as part of the government disinvestment initiative. The government proposed to sell a part of its holding in LIC through IPO, she said while delivering the Budget 2020-21 speech.

"We strongly oppose the government's plan to sell a part of its shares in LIC and the move is against the national interest," a spokesman of an employees' union told reporters here. Established in 1956, LIC is fully-owned by the central government and has the highest market share in the life insurance segment in India.

He said the LIC had contributed a lot to the economic growth and the dilution of the government's stake would "endanger the economic sovereignty of the country." LIC employee unions will stage protests across the country if the government goes ahead with its plan, he said.

In Hyderabad, development Officers of the Life Insurance Corporation of



India (LIC) are opposed to the Budget proposal to sell a part of the government holding in the insurance behemoth. It will pave the way for sale of a majority stake in future and affect several crore policyholders and the country as a whole, according to the National Federation of Insurance Field Workers of India that represents around 24,000 Development Officers in LIC.

A lunch hour demonstration against the proposal was held on Monday. It will be followed by a strike for an hour beginning 12.15 p.m. on Tuesday in which besides Development Officers (Class II), the Class I and III employees of LIC will also participate, General Secretary of the Federation's Secunderabad division D.V.V. Sivaprasad said. Thus, no work is likely at the LIC offices from 12.15 p.m.

to lunchtime, which is until 2 p.m. on Tuesday.

The Federation said the faith and trust bestowed by common man on LIC by "saving blindly their hard earned money" will be impacted by the stake sale. The government proposes to shed its stake by way of an Initial Public Offering (IPO). Moreover, in critical financial situations LIC would not be able to come as a saviour to the country. The stake sale is also bound to hit the dividend payouts of LIC. The payouts had been substantial — ₹2,611 crore last year — used for country's development, a release said.

According to Mr. Sivaprasad, there are around 24,000 DOs in LIC. He estimated their number across the four LIC divisions of Telangana to be around 800.



Deposit insurance cover raised to ₹5 lakh

NEW DELHI: The government has decided to increase the insurance cover for bank deposits to ₹5 lakh from ₹1 lakh, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her Budget speech. This is the first time since 1993 that the deposit insurance cover has been raised.

The Finance Minister assured that there was a robust mechanism in place to monitor the health of all Scheduled Commercial Banks and that depositors' money was safe. "The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) has been permitted to increase [the] Deposit Insurance Coverage for a depositor, which is now ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh per depositor," she said.

The clamour for higher cover for bank deposits grew stronger following the Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative Bank crisis, where depositors are facing restrictions on deposit withdrawals. The RBI imposed the restrictions fol-

lowing financial irregularities at PMC Bank. At present, the withdrawal from the bank is capped at ₹50,000.

"Raising deposit insurance cover to ₹5 lakh from the current ₹1 lakh is significant and will give a big comfort to depositors," Shanti Ekambaram, president — Consumer Banking, Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd., said. The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) had proposed to increase the deposit insurance limit to the ₹3-5 lakh range following the crisis at PMC Bank. The DICGC Act will have to be amended to increase the deposit cover. The increase in deposit cover will increase the cost for the banks. "The increase on deposit insurance to ₹5 lakh will increase bank premia costs to these institutions," Abizer Diwanji, Partner & Leader Financial Services - EY India, said. The present premium rate is 10 paise for a deposit of ₹100.

'We wanted to make sure money is in people's hands'

FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN HAS EXUDED CONFIDENCE IN BEING ABLE TO REDUCE THE FISCAL DEFICIT VIA INCREASED REVENUE GENERATION. IN THE POST-BUDGET CONFERENCE, SHE ALSO SAID THAT NEW INCOME TAX SCHEME WILL GIVE PEOPLE THE OPTION TO DECIDE HOW TO SAVE. EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW

What are the exemptions being offered under the new income tax regime?

The intention is to reduce the rates as much as to simplify the structure. We wanted to be sure that money is in the hands of the people, by not paying a tax which they don't need to pay. Particularly for the middle class and the lower middle class, we have brought the income tax down. Ideally, a new scheme without any exemptions would have been the best, but still because there are some exemptions which are absolutely indispensable, we have kept it at a minimum.

How will you encourage savings under the new regime?

When there's more money in your hand, then you will be in a better position to decide where you want to save, instead of me directing you. So I am allowing you to have more money in your hand, and depend on your judgement where you want to make a saving.

What will the tax charter

entail?

If I am right, there are only three countries in the world which have enshrined the rights of a tax payer in their laws — Canada, U.S. and Australia. It's an article of faith for us to respect wealth creators. It's an article of faith for us to make sure

that the honest taxpayer is not suspect. And, therefore, we have made it a point to bring it into the Act itself as a charter, the details of which will come out.

Will it be possible to go from a fiscal deficit of 3.8% to directly achieve

the 3.5% target?

Look at the way revenue generation is improving now. In the last three months itself, the GST collection has crossed ₹1 lakh crore, and there will be incentives because of the corporate tax rate cut. So I guess revenue generation improvement will

give me that little comfort so that I can come down from 3.8% to 3.5% in the next fiscal, with the disinvestment also going to be effective.

There has been no allocation for recapitalisation for banks this year. Most of the mergers which were announced

If I am right, there are only three countries in the world which have enshrined the rights of a tax payer in their laws — Canada, U.S.

last year will take place now. So what is your recapitalisation plan? I have not said I won't give any money for recapitalisation. You're saying I have not given any numbers for recapitalisation, but I've also not said, 'No, I will not give'. Which means, as and when there is a need, we'll certainly consider.



WHAT THEY SAY



The union budget, saying that it would neither help strengthen the economy nor ensure social security or development, but only further increase inflation and unemployment in the country."

PINARAYI VIJAYAN
Kerala Chief Minister



The Finance Minister's assertion that wealth creators will be respected offers a massive boost to business confidence and entrepreneurship in the country. "But the biggest takeaway for me was the call out from the Finance Minister that 'wealth creators will be respected'"

SUNIL MITTAL
Chairman, Bharti Enterprises



The Budget 2020 saying adequate funds to the tune of ₹1.60 lakh cr has been allocated for agriculture and its allied sector including irrigation for the next fiscal. A 16-point action plan has been chalked out for realising the target of doubling farmers' income by 2022, several schemes like PM-Kisan are being implemented are benefitting the farming community"

NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR
Agriculture Minister



The Union Budget 2020-21, terming it as "common man-centric", while the opposition Congress slammed it saying that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was completely silent on the issue of unemployment"

PRAMOD SAWANT
Goa Chief Minister

Being optimistic is fine but FM shall be realistic

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman recently presented her second Budget. It is not a spend-and-stimulate exercise despite the fact that it has overrun the 3.3% target on fiscal deficit by as much as 0.5 percentage point. Nor is it a feel-good budget even accounting for the new tax regime for personal income tax with lower rates. It reflects the difficult circumstances under which it has been drawn up: falling tax revenues, rising borrowings and the need to rein in spending. It will certainly disappoint those who were expecting a big bang stimulus in terms of increased public spending or additional boost for investment. There were calls in the run-up to the Budget for the Minister to relax the fiscal deficit target so that she could spend to revitalise the economy. In the event, as things turned out, Sitharaman did oblige them on the deficit front but that was more to compensate for the less-than-expected growth in revenues and not for extra spending. She has taken cover under a clause in the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act that gives her leeway to breach the set target. That said, the Budget has been built on the assumption of a nominal GDP growth rate of 10% in 2020-21, which does appear optimistic given the state of the economy now. The nominal growth rate for fiscal 2019-20 as per government estimates is 7.5%. The recovery from here has to be sharp to justify next year's projection. The gross tax revenue growth projection of 11.99% also appears very optimistic especially because it has been built on the premise of a 11.54% rise in corporate tax collections. Given the slowdown in profit growth and the lower corporate tax rate now, it is debatable if this projection can be met.



CP CHANDRASEKHAR ON HOW SITHARAMAN'S HANDS WERE CLEARLY TIED BY CIRCUMSTANCES AND IDEOLOGY

An exercise bereft of macroeconomic vision

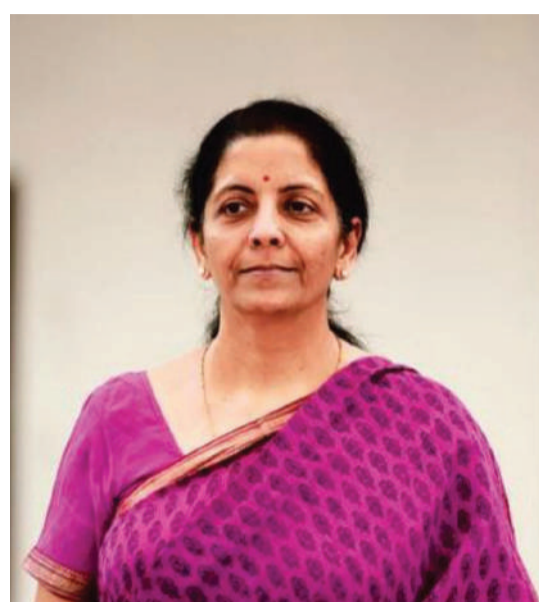
Though Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman laboured for well over two hours when delivering the Union Budget speech, it is likely that the aspect of the speech that will receive popular attention would be the restructuring of income tax slabs and reduction in rates that would benefit the tax paying middle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

Budget 2020-21 was being presented at a critical time for the economy, with growth decelerating sharply, and evidence of adversity not just in the informal economy but in the corporate sector as well. With official data suggesting that, even prior to 2019-20, unemployment was at a record high and agriculture was languishing, news of slowing growth was disconcerting. The pressure on the Finance Minister to show that she is making an attempt to kick-start the economy was considerable.

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

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

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



to near standstill.

It was to strengthen the attempt at diversion, the Finance Minister possibly chose to offer, following her bonanza for the corporates in September last year, significant tax concessions to a middle class for which much of annual income falls in the ₹5 lakh to ₹15 lakh range. She also removed the dividend distribution tax currently levied on corporates and left dividend income to be taxed as income of the recipient. If estimates reported in the speech turn out correct, these together would entail a revenue loss of ₹65,000 crore.

On the fiscal deficit

These revenue losses should make things even more difficult when it comes to staying close to the fiscal deficit target, even at the modest expenditure levels projected. Yet, according to the Budget speech, despite significant shortfalls in revenue in 2019-20, the fiscal deficit was at 3.8% rather than the targeted 3.3%, and that in 2020-21, it is projected at 3.5% as compared with the medium-term target of 3.0%.

Underlying those numbers is the assumption of significant tax buoyancy in a period of depressed growth, a sharp increase in non-tax revenues from communication services of an estimated 74,000 crore following the Supreme Court's judgment on computation of licence fees and spectrum charges, restrained expenditure estimates, and off-budget transactions.

A telling example of the last of these is the food subsidy bill for 2019-20, which was a year when the Food Corporation of India (FCI) was saddled with huge stocks and would have to be compensated for the difference between the economic cost and price at which the grain is sold through the Public Distribution System.

Since the FCI would have paid for procurement and incurred carrying costs and had to be compensated for food sold, the actual requirement of subsidy in a year when procurement and stocks were at record levels should have been high. But as against the provision of ₹1,84,220 crore in the Budget for 2019-20, the revised estimate for food subsidy is placed at ₹1,08,688 crore or 40% lower than the Budget estimate.

Falling allocations

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

Despite such massaging and pruning of the numbers, getting the needed fiscal-deficit-bottom-line has required reliance on ambitious targets for receipts from disinvestment. In the Budget for 2019-20, the Finance Minister had provided ₹1,05,000 crore from disinvestment.

However, even by January 2020, receipts under this head stood at around a mere ₹18,000 crore. Yet, the "revised estimates" for 2019-20 (which are still projections) for receipts from disinvestment presented in the Budget papers for 2020-21 are placed at ₹65,000 crore.

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

C.P. Chandrasekhar is Former Professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Views expressed are his own



ASHOK HINDUJA ON WHY FM'S SECOND THEME ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL WAS NOT INSPIRING

Should India have taken more risk?

Budgets are becoming more an indicator of policy orientation rather than unleashing big bang reforms. If we take that charitable view, there is lots that meets the eye. Three themes laid out by the FM on Aspirational India, Economic Development for All and Caring Society raised the expectation for the afternoon. But was there enough to pull the country out of this slowdown was the question in our mind.

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

Wellness, the second pillar of Aspirational India, got an allocation of 69,000 crore with emphasis on private/public partnership of creating hospital infrastructure is clearly in the right direction but given the dismal state of health care, this is a sector that could with more focus. Continued focus on Swatchh Bharat & piped water supply with attendant budgetary support again are the right focus.

Education, the third pillar of Aspirational India, needs to deal with an In-



dia that by 2030 has the largest working population on the planet. Announcement of New Education Policy is welcome, but content needs to be seen. ECB/FDI for education is positive.

FM's second theme on Economic Development for All was not inspiring. Industrial Development in terms of End-to-End Clearance Portals, Boosting Manufacturing in Electronics, 5 New Smart Cities to manufacture Networked Products were some of the mentions. Clearly more work requires to be done to move India into the global supply chain and the promise

of Make in India and potential of high employment remains a distant dream.

Infrastructure development, the second pillar of the FM's Economic Development theme also went along expected lines. Fast track clearance of road projects, public/private participation in railways, inland water development, 100 more Udaan type airports, and electrification of discom reforms are worthy mention. Very little impetus on real estate sector, which is in deep distress. Again, infrastructure, that creates huge employment and is a crying need for the country could have done with bolder initiatives.

The third pillar of FM's Economic Development theme, the New Economy had the right sound bytes on AI/ML/fintech/policy on data centre parks/quantum technology. These were policy initiatives but without substantive investment data except Bharat Net, the fibre-to-home initiative which will cover 100,000 gram panchayats at cost of 6,000 crore.

Caring Society, the third theme of the FM focused on Women & Child as its first pillar. Gross enrolment of girls across all stages of schooling exceeds boys is clearly a worthwhile achievement. Six lakh anganwadi workers now upload nutritional data of 10 crore households through smart phones is supported by 35,000 crore allocation to nutrition-related programme is welcome. No manual cleaning of sewers and technology, legislation & funding to

support is vital to get rid of this social evil. Culture and tourism again is a big employment generator did not receive the attention that it deserves.

There was more to cheer for in Part 2 of the budget. Given the slowdown of consumption, reduction of Individual Taxes for income brackets 5-15Lacs resulting in 40,000Cr revenue loss is positive for consumption. Dividend Distribution Tax abolition & lower corporate tax rates for new power generation company as well as 100% tax exemption for sovereign wealth funds in infrastructure & other notified sector along with the earlier announced dramatic reduction of corporate taxes seem to be the right moves. Indirect tax dispute redressal windows, return simplification of indirect taxes and other initiatives in indirect taxes clearly reduces cost of doing business in India and is a plus for the competitive index.

Overall, a middle of the path budget for a government that faces strong economic headwinds domestically and internationally. Given that the macroeconomic fundamentals are sound, currency is stable, inflation manageable, commodity prices are low, could it have taken more risks to pull the country out of its growth quagmire? That question does remain.

Ashok Hinduja is Chairman of Hinduja Group of Companies (India). Views expressed are his own

BOOKS: REVIEW

'All The Wrong Turns' a grim wakeup call on the economy

Not too long ago, India was the darling of the world with its rosy growth story. Then came the 2008 global meltdown and it all came crashing down. Thereafter a recovery seemed in sight with GDP growth at 8 per cent in 2018-19, but now it's down to 5 per cent in 2020-21.

But then, as a new book says, there hasn't been a single decade since 1950 when the Indian economy hasn't lurched from one crisis to another. More importantly, how did China do it while India fell far, far behind?

"Though few people realise it, the strategy that China has followed since the late 1970s — and that India only partially followed till it almost gave it up in the 1970s — was the same as that was first depicted by Alfred Marshall

in his 'Principles of Economics' while attributing competitive efficiency to the emergence of what later came to be called (in his honour) 'Marshallian industrial districts' — a clustering of firms in a similar industry operating from a certain geographic area proximately located close to a city," T.C.A. Ranganathan and T.C.A. Srinivasa Raghavan wrote in "All the Wrong Turns" (Westland/pp349/₹799).

The co-location of several firms of the same industry allows a number of benefits, sometimes called benefits of agglomeration or externalities, the book says.

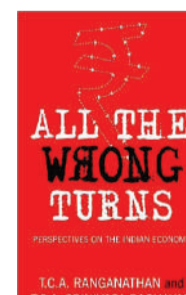
What is forgotten in India-China comparisons is that China also focused on 'combo' development: cities/industries/commercial zones "together as an integrated issue. The 'foreigners',

attracted by the amenities available in the newly well-planned cities, built their vast variety of factories in these government created and managed zones", the authors explain.

The authors then present six essays, most of them some 60 pages long, on six critical areas:

There hasn't been a single decade since 1950 when India didn't lurch from one crisis to another, says the book

agriculture, manufacturing, international trade, banking, fiscal policy and institutions. The first four have been penned by Ranganathan, a career banker with



All the Wrong Turns
By TCA Ranganathan and TCA Srinivasa Raghavan
Westland Publications
349 pp. | ₹799

close to four decades of experience who retired as Chairman of the Export Import Bank of India, and the remaining two by Srinivasa Raghavan, an economic journalist of some four decades standing. What then ails the Indian economy?

* Agriculture: It's not that agriculture and farmers do not get state support in other countries; they do but mostly it is in the nature of 'income support' (i.e. farmer-oriented or land-oriented income transfers), not 'production distorting support' (crop support schemes such as fertilisers, water, power pricing, subvented loans, MSP and procurement price an-

nouncements etc) practised by the Indian authorities.

The debate on agrarian distress "requires to be made more holistic instead of being studied only under a 'partial equilibrium' framework with 'ceteris paribus' assumptions. Quick fixes and palliatives frequently announced by various 'fast thinking' members of the governing class will never be appropriate substitutes," the book says.

"In sum, what emerges is that the other peer countries, without exception, followed a certain structural model. The Indian state believes otherwise and has taken the less travelled path. This has influenced the evolutionary path of the various sub-components, making the story of banking in India rather chequered if not interesting," the book says.

Thanks to its economic policies, India — instead of becoming a manufacturing economy where the mass of the people earn regular wages, salaries — has become a service providing one.

VISHNU MAKHIJANI

FIVE OBSERVATIONS

ON FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN'S RECENT BUDGET

- 1 SPEECH WAS TOO LONG TO FINISH**
The two hours and 40 minutes budget speech was so long that the minister was unable to even finish it. She tabled the last two pages because she felt unwell by the end.
- 2 FAILS TO ACKNOWLEDGE PROBLEMS**
Not mentioning the worst unemployment numbers in more than four decades during the budget presentation is understandable, but not acknowledging the problem at all is not justified.
- 3 NO SCOPE TO CALL IT DREAM BUDGET**
On the growth front, it can be argued that this budget's promise is not what will be termed a "dream" or a "big bang", terms previously used to describe budgets. But was there any scope for it?
- 4 JOB CREATION IS THE ONLY WAY OUT**
There is not much in the budget by way of efforts that will directly create jobs. It is now clear that jobless growth is a real concern. Only economic revival can automatically create more jobs.
- 5 IT MAY NOT HURT BJP POLITICALLY**
Some experts are of the opinion that the economy has bottomed out and that the worst is behind it, this budget is unlikely to hurt the BJP politically. Only time will tell how correct their views are?

LETTERBOX

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Govt bites the fiscal deficit bullet

THE FISCAL DEFICIT TARGET FOR THE NEXT YEAR IS PEGGED AT 3.5% OF THE GDP, SAYS THE MINISTER

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

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman cited Section 4 (2) of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act that provides for a trigger mechanism for a deviation from the estimated fiscal deficit on account of structural reforms in the economy "with unanticipated fiscal implications".

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

The fiscal deficit target for the next year is pegged at 3.5% of the GDP. "...the return path is being laid before Parliament as a part of the Medium Term Fiscal Policy-cum-Strategy Statement. This fiscal path



“This fiscal path commits us to the path of fiscal consolidation without compromising on the needs of investment out of public funds”

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
Finance Minister

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

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

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

commits us to the path of fiscal consolidation without compromising on the needs of investment out of public funds," Ms. Sitharaman said.

The government said net market borrowings for 2019-20 would be 4.99 lakh crore and 5.36 lakh crore for the next financial year. The Finance Minister said a good part of the borrowings for the financial year 2020-21 would

go towards capital expenditure of the government that had been scaled up by more than 21%.

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

on Saturday.

However, market participants said the scope for interest rate reduction is now ruled out with a higher fiscal deficit number. "Increase in fiscal deficit will put pressure on inflation, which is on the rise. The Reserve Bank of India will not have much scope for further rate cut," said the treasury head of a large public sector bank.

Kumar Mangalam Birla
Chairman, Aditya Birla Group



Taking the economic challenges head-on

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

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

Many of these have an element of continuity from the initiatives taken in the past.

For example, the option of migrating to a lower tax structure by forgoing exemptions, that was given to the corporates in September, has now been given to cooperatives and to individual taxpayers up to an income of 15 lakh. The latter would boost consumption at the bottom of the pyramid, which is quite crucial in the current economic context. The lower corporate tax rate of 15% for new manufacturing investment companies has been extended to power generation companies as well. The partial credit guarantee scheme for NBFCs is proposed to be expanded. All these are reinforcements of the proactive efforts that the government has been making to reinvigorate India's growth story. The FM has rightly acknowledged the issues that have been hampering the competitiveness of Indian manufacturers in certain areas — including the rising trend in imports from FTA partners. The review of rules of origins requirements under the FTAs, strengthening of the provisions related to safeguard duty and the provisions against dumping are welcome steps to ensure a level playing field for Indian companies.

The National Infrastructure Pipeline envisaging an investment of 103 trillion that was announced a few weeks back is going to play the most important role in realising India's growth potential over the medium-term and in achieving the ambitious goal of a \$5-trillion economy. The Budget has made sizeable provisions to get this pipeline going. Timely implementation of these projects will also require concerted and coordinated actions to expedite clearances, to iron out any ground-level issues and to address sectoral policy concerns that may come up. Given the slowdown in tax collections and the need to maintain spending in a slowing economy, sticking to the original fiscal deficit targets was always going to be difficult. Still, the FM has managed to limit the deviation from the original deficit trajectory to 0.5% of GDP. The next year's ambitious disinvestment target — which includes selling of stake in LIC and some strategic divestments — will be helpful in this regard.

While focusing on these near-term challenges, the FM has not lost the sight of the long-term, structural issues. The demographic dividend that India has been experiencing currently can be fully leveraged only if we are able to invest adequately in skill-building.

The sizeable provision of almost 1 lakh crore for the education sector, along with the steps to get more private sector play and foreign investment in higher education, are exciting. The FM talked of different initiatives to link the skilling programmes to the needs of the employers (including special bridge courses to prepare teachers and nurses for the demand in other countries), which is the right way to go.

On another long-term issue of environment and climate change, India has been playing a proactive role with its early initiatives in the aspects of renewable energy and electric mobility. This Budget — apart from taking some additional steps in these areas — has focused on two additional and increasingly critical aspects i.e. addressing the water stress in one hundred districts and incentivising States for improving the air-quality of cities. These announcements reflect that the government is alive to the emerging concerns.

The Economic Survey this year talked of creating a conducive environment for wealth creation by building trust. One sees a reflection of the same in this Budget — the most prominent being the enshrinement of the "taxpayer charter" in the statutes.

WHAT THEY SAY



Budget allocation for diesel buses procurement by STUs and NIL customs duty for lithium ion batteries, doesn't seem to have been considered, although we are yet to go through all the fine prints"

RAJAN WADHERA
President, SIAM



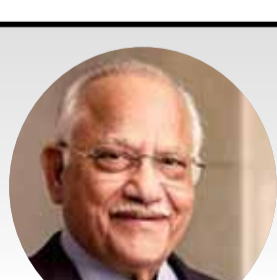
The Union Budget is disappointing and a labyrinth of data. It lacks a plan to deal with the economic slowdown and inflation. The budget had nothing for farmers, unemployed youth, the poor and women."

KAMAL NATH
Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister



The Union Budget as "visionary, futuristic, growth oriented, transformative and all-inclusive. The Budget gives impetus to fulfilment of aspirations of the middle income groups with focus on home for all by giving subsidy to first time buyers and announcing relaxation in income tax"

JP NADRA
BJP president



It is a sound Budget and I am happy to see the government's focus on reviving economic growth. The proposed amendments to the Companies Act for removing criminal action in case of tax disputes is a step towards infusing trust among India Inc"

PRATHAP C. REDDY
Apollo Hospitals Group Chairman

Allocation for MGNREGS slashed by ₹9,500 crore

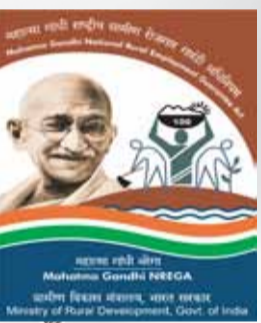
NEWDELHI: Despite a slowdown in the rural economy and the need to stimulate rural demand, the Centre has slashed budgetary allocation for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme by ₹9,500 crore for the coming year.

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

MGNREGS, which provides 100 days of unskilled work for every rural household, helps generate rural employment and provides a social safety net. Before the Budget, a number of economists had suggested that putting money directly into the hands of rural consumers at the bottom of the pyramid would be needed to create liquidity and spur consumption demand.

'Will meet demand'

Asked about the cut, Economic Affairs Secretary Atanu



Chakraborty said that if additional allocations were required for the scheme, it would be given later in the year.

"MGNREGS is a demand-driven scheme. This year, we went up because there was a demand for this in certain areas and the full money was provided. For the next year, it's a usual, normal level of funding, which has been provided for MGNREGS. If there is an additional demand from some areas which comes up, we will again meet it accordingly at RE stage," he said in response to The Hindu's query during a post-Budget press interaction. **AGENCIES**

P Chidambaram likens Budget to box office flop

CHENNAI: Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said the Union Budget was like a movie which bombed after the first show, as it did not address the key challenges faced by the economy and did not take steps to stimulate demand by putting more money in the hands of poor people.

Speaking at a session organised by Southern Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he hoped that the government would make some adjustment in the Budget after a debate in Parliament. "After 160 minutes of Finance Minister's Budget speech, there was no narrative in the Budget. The government is still in the denial mode about the challenges faced by the economy," Mr. Chidambaram said.

The former Union Minister began by saying that he would speak for 160 minutes taking cues from the Finance Minister, much to the delight of the audience.

He said the two key challenges for the economy was



people were not buying (demand constrained) and both domestic and foreign investors were not making investments. The obvious solution to address the challenges were to increase government spending on schemes which would have directly put money in the hands of the poor who would have started spending on goods and services.

Mr. Chidambaram said the government could have deferred or slashed expenditure that had a long gestation period like the river cleaning project or building 100 more airports under Udan scheme and instead increased allocations for Mahatma Gandhi

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme and PM Kisan scheme.

"The FM could have allocated ₹1 lakh crore to MGNREGA and told the States to pay the arrears. Instead the allocation has been ₹71,000 crore for 2019-20 in the revised Budget estimate and cut to ₹61,500 crore for 2020-21," he said. Mr. Chidambaram said similarly PM Kisan was a reasonably good scheme where ₹6,000 was given to farmers every year.

"Either the amount given should have been increased to ₹12,000 or its scope should have been extended to cover tenant farmers. Out of the earlier budgeted amount of ₹75,000 crore under PM Kisan, the government would spend ₹54,000 crore in 2019-2020. The next year allocation was again ₹75,000 crore," he said. On the domestic and foreign investments not taking place, Mr. Chidambaram said one of the steps was tax incentives. **AGENCIES**

A long record speech but an abrupt end

NEW DELHI: On February 1, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman added two firsts to her second budget — at two hours and 41 minutes, it was not only the longest Budget speech in independent India but also the first left incomplete with the Minister stopping two pages short of ending her speech.

In the length of her speech, Ms. Sitharaman beat her own record — the interim Budget speech in 2019 lasted two hours and 17 minutes. She peppered this speech with poetic flourishes, making a point of quoting Kashmiri poet Dinanath Kaul, Tamil sage Thiruvalluvar and ancient Tamil poetess Avvaiyar.

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

Ms. Sitharaman paused while speaking at the end of her marathon speech and sat down as she reportedly felt unwell. She took a sweet, a

sugar boost, and was seen wiping sweat off her forehead. Her blood pressure reportedly fell and she was advised to sit. Colleagues appeared to offer her candy. Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur was seen giving her a glass of water. As she appeared reluctant to continue, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh asked her if she

was well enough to continue. She told Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla that there were only two more pages and the Budget should be considered read.

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

Green signal for more private trains

NEW DELHI: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday proposed a budgetary allocation of ₹70,000 crore for the Indian Railways, with overall capital expenditure of ₹1.61 lakh crore for the next financial year in the Union Budget.

While the capital expenditure for 2020-21 saw an increase of a mere 3% from ₹1.56 lakh crore (revised estimates) for 2019-20, the Budget promises increased investment for passenger amenities and safety-related works, including track renewals, level crossings and road over/under bridges. The ₹1.61 lakh crore outlay comprises ₹70,000 crore from budgetary support, ₹250 crore from the Nirbhaya Fund, ₹7,500 crore from Internal Resources and ₹83,292 crore from Extra Budgetary Resources.

An amount of ₹12,000 crore has been allocated for construction of new lines, ₹10,599 crore for track renewal, ₹2,250 crore for

“The total receipts of the railways comprising earnings from passenger, goods...sundry other heads and railway recruitment boards are targeted to increase by 9.5% in the Budget Estimates of 2020-21 over the Revised Estimates (RE) of 2019-20”

gauge conversion, ₹700 crore for doubling, ₹5,786.97 crore for rolling stock and ₹1,650 crore for signalling and telecom. For passenger amenities, the allocation is ₹2,725.63 crore.

The government expects its revenue receipts to increase by ₹23,880 crore to ₹2.25 lakh crore. In the next fiscal, the Indian Railways expects earnings from passengers to grow to ₹61,000 crore from ₹56,000 crore in 2019-20, and from goods to grow by more than ₹12,000 crore to ₹1,47,000 crore.

"The total receipts of the railways comprising earnings from passenger, goods...sun-

dry other heads and railway recruitment boards are targeted to increase by 9.5% in the Budget Estimates of 2020-21 over the Revised Estimates (RE) of 2019-20," the Budget document stated.

The operating ratio, which was envisaged to be 95% in BE 2019-20 and revised to 97.46% in RE 2019-20, is expected to be 96.2% in 2020-21. An operating ratio of 96.2% means that the Railways is spending 96.2 paise to earn 100 paise.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during her Budget Speech proposed setting up a large solar power capacity alongside the rail tracks, on

the land owned by the railways, besides re-development of four stations, operation of 150 passenger trains via public-private partnership mode and introduction of more Tejas type trains to iconic tourist destinations.

Ms. Sitharaman also proposed a 148-km Bengaluru suburban transport project at a cost of ₹18,600 crore, which would have fares on the metro model.

The Railway Board has said that the third 'corporate' train to be run by IRCTC will run between Indore and Varanasi, and is likely to begin operations mid-February. The overnight train, which will have the same rakes as those of the Humsafar Express, will run three days a week — two days via Lucknow and one day via Allahabad.

While the first two trains operated by IRCTC (on the Delhi-Lucknow and Ahmedabad-Mumbai routes) were chair cars, this one will have sleeper coaches. **AGENCIES**



OPPOSING POLICY Sonia Gandhi leads a protest against CAA outside the Parliament

Govt allocates ₹100 cr to host G-20 Presidency in 2022

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said that India will host the G-20 Presidency in 2022 and that ₹100 crore has been allocated for this purpose.

During this meeting, India would be able to drive the global economic and development agenda, the Finance Minister said while present-

ing the Budget for 2020-21 in Parliament. "I am happy to inform that India will host G-20 Presidency in the year 2022 — the year of 75th anniversary of independence of Indian Nation," she said.

India would be able to drive considerably the global economic and development agenda during this

presidency, the Minister said.

"For this historic occasion, I allocate a sum of ₹100 crore to begin the preparations," she added. The G20 (or Group of Twenty) is an international forum for the governments and Central bank governors from 19 countries and the European Union (EU). **AGENCIES**

A DIVIDEND DISTRIBUTION TAX FOR COMPANIES
WILL BE SCRAPPED, ENTAILING A
REVENUE LOSS OF ₹250 BILLION

ALSO READ | ₹2826.92 CRORE SET FOR SPORTS BUDGET * P10 | NEW SELECTORS BY THIS MONTH: GANGULY * P10

No more double tax on dividends

DIVIDEND WILL NOW BE TAXED ONLY IN THE HANDS OF THE INVESTORS, DECLARE THE NEW BUDGET

NEW DELHI: The government fulfilled a long-standing demand of the capital markets when it proposed scrapping the dividend distribution tax (DDT) that is levied on companies. Dividend will now be taxed only in the hands of the investors.

This would come as a relief for companies and capital market participants who have been lobbying hard for the removal of DDT at the company level, which, they felt led to double taxation as such payouts are also taxed at the investor level.

Currently, companies are required to pay 15% tax plus applicable surcharge and cess on the dividends. Further, investors that receive more than ₹10 lakh as dividend in a financial year have to pay 10% tax on such income.

"It has been argued that the system of levying DDT results in increase in tax burden for investors and especially those who are liable to pay tax less



The dividend shall be taxed only in the hands of the recipients at their applicable rate"

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
Finance minister

while that for individuals it was a little less than 15%.

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

"Impact on taxation of large retail investors may be nega-

tive, as dividend is expected to be taxable at the maximum slab rate in their hands. The effective tax rate for individuals falling in highest tax slabs is 42.74% i.e. there will be an additional burden of 28.492%," explained Mr. Shah. Meanwhile, the government has also proposed allowing deduction for the dividend received by holding company from its subsidiary.

According to Mr. Shah, foreign investors can now claim benefit under the double tax treaty where the tax rates range from 5% to 15%, which will result in direct saving of 20.56% for such overseas entities. "... non-availability of credit of DDT to most of the foreign investors in their home country results in reduction of rate of return on equity capital for them... This is another bold move which will further make India an attractive destination for investment," said the finance minister. **AGENCIES**

WHAT THEY SAY



The main issue is unemployment. I did not see any concrete, strategic idea that could help our youngsters get jobs. There were redundant things in the budget and I did not see any central idea. There are no jobs. Nothing happened here to help you"

RAHUL GANDHI
Congress leader



This is the longest non-budget, budget speech. Nirmala Sitharaman is perhaps the only Finance Minister who was asked to lay down her speech to let the members go for lunch. And this is when she didn't give details of the revenue earned by government and its expenditure plans"

SITARAM YECHURY
CPI(M) General Secretary



Tax cut ki goli mat do (don't lie about tax cuts). Read the fine print on the so-called IT cuts. Govt removes incentives to 'save' in a nation where there is no social security"

DEREK O'BRIEN
TMC's spokesperson



By reducing GST on household consumption items, families have benefited and they have to incur less expenses for essentials. Announcement of various initiatives for warehousing and transport, will certainly boost the ground-root economy leading to an overall positive push"

PRANAY BHATIA
Partner & Leader/ Tax & Regulatory Services, BDO India

Indian Budget will attract more FDI: US industry leaders



NEWDELHI: The 2020-21 Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will improve the ease of doing business in India and attract more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), U.S. industry leaders have said. Presenting her second Budget in Parliament on Saturday, Ms. Sitharaman offered tax breaks to foreign investors and specifically those like sovereign wealth funds who are willing to place a long-term bet on the economy.

She said the Budget was aimed at boosting incomes and enhancing purchasing power, stressing that the economy's fundamentals were strong and inflation was well contained. Despite a slowdown in growth, the global outlook for investment in India remains strong and therefore the budget was a great opportunity to convert the global sentiment into action, said Mukesh Aghi, president of US-India Strategic and Partnership Forum (USISPF).

Complimenting Ms. Sitharaman for taking measures to boost investment in infrastructure sector, including digital, Mr. Aghi said the USISPF believed that the budget could have gone further to liberalise sectors

such as insurance that are in need of capital.

On ease of doing business, measures such as simplified GST returns, no audit requirement for MSMEs with up to ₹5 crore turnover, instant issuance of PAN by furnishing Aadhaar, pre-filing of tax returns, faceless appeals and assessments will further enhance India's image from an ease of doing business perspective. Together, these steps show that India's tax policy is moving in the right direction, Aghi said. Noting that e-commerce is a bright spot of the Indian economy and expected to touch \$84 billion by 2021, Mr. Aghi urged the government to reconsider its decision to impose 1% TDS on e-commerce. This creates differential treatment of sellers on these platforms and the burden will be ultimately passed on to the consumers, he said.

Welcoming the Budget, the U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) said that abolition of the dividend distribution tax (DDT) removes a major disincentive to foreign companies seeking to set up operations in India. The Finance Minister has taken solid steps to increase foreign investment and boost Make in India, it said. **AGENCIES**

Second tranche of debt-based ETF within this quarter

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said the second tranche of debt-based exchange traded fund (ETF) is likely in the current quarter. Ms. Sitharaman in her second budget on Saturday proposed to deepen the bond market and announced floating of a new debt ETF comprising primarily of government securities.

The first bond ETF launched recently was a great success.

"Debt-based exchange traded fund (ETF) recently

This will give retail investor access to government security as much as giving an attractive investment for pension funds and long-term investors

put out by the government was a big success. Government proposes to extend this by floating a new debt ETF consisting primarily of government securities.

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

On Sunday, she said the second tranche of Bond ETF is likely within the current quarter. The Cabinet gave the approval to launch Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund or Bharat Bond ETF in December 2019. It was the first corporate bond ETF launched in India. **AGENCIES**

LIC IPO may come in 2nd half of FY21

NEWDELHI: Listing of insurance behemoth Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) may be done in the second half of the next financial year, Finance Secretary Rajiv Kumar said on Sunday.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the Budget 2020-21 on Saturday announced stake sale in LIC through an initial public offer in the next fiscal.

There are a number of processes which have to be followed for the listing and some legislative changes would also be required for the listing of LIC, Mr. Kumar said. "We will follow the extant procedure for listing and for other things including the legislative changes it requires in consultation with the Ministry of Law and that process we

'We will follow the extant procedure for listing and for other things including the legislative changes it requires in consultation with the Ministry of Law'

already started ... listing in the second half of FY21 seems logical," he said.

Listing of LIC will bring in greater transparency, public participation and also deepen the equity market, he told PTI in an interaction. Asked about the quantum of dilution, Mr. Kumar said, it could be 10% but no decision has been taken so far.

The government aims to garner ₹90,000 crore from

the listing of LIC and stake dilution in IDBI Bank in the next fiscal out of total disinvestment target of ₹2.10 lakh crore. The government currently owns 100% in LIC, while it holds around a 46.5% stake in IDBI Bank. "Listing of companies on stock exchanges discipline a company and provides access to financial markets and unlocks its value. It also gives opportunity for retail investors to participate in the wealth so created. The government now proposes to sell a part of its holding in LIC by way of Initial Public Offer (IPO)," the Finance Minister had said in her Budget speech.

Market participants are quite bullish about LIC and said it could be "IPO of the decade" akin to the Saudi Aramco listing. The 60-year-old state-owned firm, LIC, is the country's largest insurer, controlling more than 70 per cent of the market share. **AGENCIES**

New dividend distribution tax norms may encourage investments, debt MFs

MUMBAI: A day after the Union Budget proposed removal of the dividend distribution tax (DDT) levied on companies, the government has said the new regime is expected to encourage more people, especially in the low tax bracket, to invest in the capital market.

The government has further said with dividend now being proposed to be taxed in the hands of the investors at the applicable slab rate, non-residents will get some relief even as it addresses the "issue of inequity in dividend taxation". "Single rate of taxation is always inequitable as it favours taxpayers who are in higher tax brackets and works against those who are in lower tax brackets," says a statement from the Central Board of Direct Taxes.

"Thus, it was a case of reverse subsidy from the poor to rich taxpayers. Further, non-residents were taxed at a higher rate than the treaty rate with the possibility of no tax credit in the home



country," it said. According to the government department, while the DDT was pegged at 15%, the effective rate touched 20.56% due to surcharge and cess. Additionally, individuals were required to pay another 10% plus surcharge if the dividend income exceeded ₹10 lakh in a fiscal.

The government believes that the new regime, however, would encourage individuals in low income bracket to invest in the capital market as the tax incidence would drop significantly.

"...person with an income

'The rate similar to DDT for distribution of income by debt fund was 25% for individual and HUF and 30% for others'

up to ₹5 lakh will not have to pay tax on dividend income as against 20.56% paid by them indirectly. Similarly, under the new tax regime, persons with an income from ₹5 lakh to ₹7.5 lakh would pay tax at 10% and persons with ₹7.5 lakh to ₹10 lakh would

pay tax at 15%," it explained.

All these taxpayers would benefit from the abolition of the DDT as the tax to be paid by them on their dividend income would be less than what they were earlier paying indirectly through it, it added. Interestingly, the government further believes that the proposal would make more investors look at debt mutual fund products as well since under the prevailing framework, the effective DDT on such products was between 38% and 50%.

"The rate similar to DDT for distribution of income by debt fund was 25% for individual and HUF and 30% for others. After grossing up and including surcharge/cess this comes to 38.33% and 49.92% respectively. Thus, the new system would encourage debt mutual fund market in India as most of individuals would pay tax at lower rate on income received from debt fund in comparison to what they were paying under the old regime." **AGENCIES**

Withholding tax rate may be cut to 4 pc

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

The move will attract more international investors to IFSC exchange. "In order to incentivise listing of bonds at IFSC exchange, I propose to further reduce the withholding rate from 5% to 4% on interest payment on the bonds listed on its exchange," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her Budget speech.

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



A govt that is clueless on the economy

It has long been suspected that the Narendra Modi government lacks a deep understanding of India's economy, how it works and how to assess its condition at any point in time. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget speech of over two-and-a-half hours was mainly an exercise in tomm-tomming the achievements of the government, particularly "the Prime Minister", with an announcement of some income tax cuts thrown in for good measure.

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

Low on economic intelligence

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

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

Going by the Budget's thrust, the government is either clueless as to what the economy needs right now or has chosen to brazen it out. The slowing of the economy has been remarked upon for at least two years by now, and the cries have by now almost reached a crescendo. Slowing growth is only part of the story. Less visible in the data optics is the high unemployment rate, the highest in close to half a century. Listening to the Budget speech, one would not get the slightest sense of this. We are told that the fundamentals are strong, that the economy is set to attain the projected \$5 trillion level on time, and that the government is committed to macroeconomic stability (read 'deficit reduction').

Modinomics and tax reforms

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

If there is a core to the Budget, one that may be taken as the strategy it embodies, it would be the attempt to stimulate growth through tax reforms. The Budget is quite elaborate in this area. It proposes a simplification of tax filing for both firms (the Goods and Services Tax) and individuals (Income Tax) and speaks for amending the IT Act to allow for a "taxpayer's charter" which will set taxpayers free from harassment, for the Finance Minister a sequel to the ending of the "dreaded inspector Raj".

Then there is the 'Vivaad se Vishwas' scheme to settle tax disputes speedily and smoothly; tax compliance is to be strengthened; the tax refund process simplified; and taxation of Employee Stock Options (ESOPs) deferred for up to five years.

But the cherry on the cake is surely the reduction of the income tax rates on income less than ₹15 lakh, which the Finance Minister clarified will leave income tax rates in India the lowest they have ever been. By lowering the income tax rate, the programme of cutting taxes which had commenced with the lowering of the corporate tax rate in 2019 has been carried forward.

Need for public investment

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

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

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

The Minister also proposed to float a new debt ETF consisting primarily of government securities. "This will give retail investors access to government securities as much as giving an attractive investment for pension funds and long-term investors," she said.

The Budget also highlighted the success of the recent debt-based ETF floated by the government. The Bharat Bond ETF, introduced in December, raised more than ₹12,000 crore, against its issue size of ₹7,000 crore. Bharat Bond ETF invests in AAA rated bonds issued by public sector companies.

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

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Man causes virtual traffic jam on Google Maps with 99 phones

BERLIN: Call it bizarre but a German artist, Simon Weckert, has posted a video on YouTube, showing how he "hacked" Google Maps with 99 smartphones and a wagon to create "virtual traffic jams" on the streets of Berlin.

Weckert put 99 smartphones with Google Maps on into a small wagon cart and then wheeled that cart around various streets in Berlin, including outside the Google office, Android Authority reported on Monday.

The smartphones "apparently fooled Google Maps" into thinking that there was a high concentration of users on those streets.

Because the second-hand phones were in a cart, Maps was further tricked into believing that the traffic was slow-moving.

As a result, the navigation app started showing virtual traffic jams by turning green streets to red in the online navigational tool, showcasing how digital technology can have a real impact on the real world.

Basically, Google Maps' servers interpreted the situation as traffic congestion, and began showing this to others on the street. This, in turn, prompted drivers to turn away and avoid streets where there was actually no traffic. Google was yet to officially comment on Weckert's experiment. "I work for Google Maps and I know quite a bit about how this works. I believe this is possible," tweeted a senior software engineer for Google Maps. With its geo tools, Google has created a platform that allows users and businesses to interact with maps in a novel way, well, unless Weckert aims to play around it. **AGENCIES**

Pak lawyer moves SC against suspension of Musharraf's death sentence

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani lawyer has appealed to the Supreme Court to set aside the verdict of a High Court that annulled the death sentence of self-exiled former President Pervez Musharraf.

The special court in Islamabad on December 17 last handed down the death penalty to the 74-year-old retired general, now based in Dubai, after six years of hearing a high-profile treason case against him.

The Pakistani Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government led by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had filed the treason case against the former army chief in 2013 over the imposition of an extra-constitutional emergency in November 2007, which led to the confinement of a number of superior court judges in their houses and sacking of over 100 judges.

On January 13, Mr. Musharraf's trial in the high treason case was declared as "unconstitutional" by the Lahore High Court (LHC), leading to the annulment of the death sentence against the former President.

The LHC declared that the formation of the special court was "unconstitutional" and that the treason case against Mr. Musharraf was not prepared in accordance with the law.

In an appeal on February 3, senior counsel Hamid Khan, representing petitioner, advocate, Taufiq Asif, requested the apex court to set aside the LHC verdict by declaring it illegal and without lawful authority, Dawn newspaper reported on February 4. The petitioner argued that the High Court, through its order had virtually invalidated and rendered ineffective Article 6 of the Constitution, which has special significance and importance in the constitutional history of Pakistan. **AGENCIES**

Coronavirus: China converts an exhibition hall into a makeshift hospital in Wuhan

BEIJING: Hundreds of empty beds lined an exhibition centre converted into a makeshift hospital at the epicentre of China's deadly virus epidemic on Tuesday, awaiting coronavirus patients.

Authorities are scrambling to provide facilities, beds and medical treatment for an influx of sick people in Wuhan in central Hubei province, the ground-zero of China's fight against the virus. The disease has killed more than 400 people and infected a further 20,000 in China, nearly all of them in Hubei, and spread to two-dozen countries since it emerged in December.

Hong Kong and the Philippines have also reported deaths, and the World Health Organization has declared the crisis a global health emergency. State media said the converted exhibition centre, along with a nearby gymnasium, will house an extra 3,400 beds and provide "emergency treatment and clinical testing" for those infected with the virus in Wuhan.

In its daily update Tuesday, China's National Health Commission said there had been 64 new deaths from the virus — all in hardest-hit Hubei province — bringing the national toll to 425. Other coronavirus patients began



arriving Tuesday at a field hospital in Wuhan built from scratch in under two weeks, State media said, following a round-the-clock construction marathon that became a national social media sensation.

Fifty patients arrived at the military-run facility, the state-backed China Daily reported, with images showing workers in protective suits pushing people in wheelchairs up a ramp and into the pre-fabricated structure. As reports surfaced of bed shortages in hospitals in Wuhan, construc-

tion began on Huoshenshan — Fire God Mountain in Chinese — on Friday January 24.

Fire and thunder

Fire and thunder are traditionally associated in China with protection against illnesses. All workers wore masks, as mandated by the authorities for the entire population of Wuhan, and were checked for fevers during their breaks. By the following Friday, they had laid 400 prefabricated shipping-container-like rooms, after

setting concrete foundations and routing the power supply to the complex.

The two-floor facility was handed over to the army on Sunday and will be staffed with 1,400 military medics, including some with experience dealing with SARS and Ebola. State media had initially reported that patients would begin arriving Monday — inside the 10-day timeframe authorities had set out when construction began.

However, with the death toll surging in Wuhan and

elsewhere in Hubei province, it was not immediately clear what overall impact the hospitals would have on the virus spreading elsewhere. The city also plans to convert three existing venues, including a gymnasium and an exhibition centre, into hospitals, the Wuhan government said. The three buildings will be turned into healthcare facilities with a total of 3,400 beds to take in patients with mild symptoms.

Livestreamed

Footage of the mammoth construction effort was livestreamed continuously on social media and watched tens of millions of times. It has also been feted endlessly in State media as an example of the decisive response to the public health crisis after authorities in Hubei faced a torrent of public anger for perceived incompetence, including delays in announcing the public health emergency.

Local Communist Party secretary Ma Guoqiang acknowledged Friday that officials had worsened the spread of the virus by failing to restrict travel earlier. When a lockdown and blanket travel ban were finally introduced, they swept up more than 50 million people in Wuhan and nearby cities. **AGENCIES**

Major cut in financial allocation for Nepal

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

The 2019-20 Budget had allocated ₹1,200 crore to projects in Nepal but Saturday's numbers show that India has allocated only ₹800 crore to the projects under way in

Nepal for 2020-21. The development is likely to cast a shadow on the work that India partners in the crucial Himalayan neighbour which has in recent months showed warmth towards China.

Substantial cut

The Budget also showed substantial reduction for "other developing countries" that will now receive ₹120

crore compared to last year's allocation of ₹150 crore.

Similar reduction was also noticed in the African department where ₹350 crore has been allocated for next year in comparison to last year's ₹450 crore. Allocation for Latin American countries has increased and currently ₹20 crore will be spent on diplomacy with the region which is a favoured area of new Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla.

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

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

Bhutan tops chart

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

Seattle City Council passes resolution against CAA, NRC

SEATTLE: The Seattle City Council, one of the most powerful city councils in the U.S., on Monday unanimously passed a resolution condemning India's recently-enacted Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Reaffirming Seattle as a welcoming city and expressing solidarity with the city's South Asian community regardless of religion and caste, the resolution "resolves that the Seattle City Council opposes the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Amendment Act in India, and finds these policies to be discriminatory to Muslims, oppressed castes, women, indigenous, and LGBT people".

Introduced by Indian American City Council member Kshama Sawant, the resolution urges the Par-

liament of India to uphold the Indian Constitution by repealing the CAA, and to stop the National Register of Citizens, and take steps towards helping refugees by ratifying various UN treaties on refugees.

"Seattle City's decision to condemn CAA should be a message to all who wish to undermine pluralism and religious freedom. They cannot peddle in hate and bigotry, and expect to have international acceptability at the same time," said Ahsan Khan, president of Indian American Muslim Council.

Thenmozhi Soundararajan of Equality Labs, which organized the community in support of resolution, welcomed its passage. "We are proud of the Seattle City Council for standing on the right side of history today. **AGENCIES**

Imran leaves for Malaysia to placate Mahathir for skipping key summit

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on February 3 embarked on a two-day visit to Malaysia to placate the country's leadership after he skipped a major summit of Muslim nations in Kuala Lumpur, solidify the bilateral strategic partnership and discuss the situation in South Asia.

Prime Minister Khan's visit will contribute to further strengthening the historic Pakistan-Malaysia ties and taking bilateral cooperation to a higher level, the Prime Minister's Office tweeted.

Mr. Khan's visit to Malaysia at the invitation of his Malaysian counterpart Mahathir

Mohamad comes after he skipped the Kuala Lumpur summit of some 20 Muslim countries in December attended by leaders from countries like Iran, Turkey and Qatar.

Mr. Khan did not attend the summit, reportedly due to pressure exerted by Saudi Arabia, which had extended liberal financial assistance to Mr. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government to stave off the looming economic crisis, Dawn newspaper reported. The Express Tribune, quoting sources, reported that the visit of Prime Minister Khan is aimed at removing misgivings Malaysia may have about Pakistan for skipping



the Kuala Lumpur summit.

Pakistan initially confirmed its participation at the summit but changed its mind after Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries voiced concerns over it. Riyadh is reported to have viewed the summit as an at-

tempt to create a new Islamic bloc, the reports said.

J&K situation

During his visit to Malaysia, Prime Minister Khan will also highlight the human rights and humanitar-

ian situation in Jammu and Kashmir, his office tweeted on February 2.

He would also emphasise the importance of "averting risks to regional peace & stability posed by India" and underscore the importance of peaceful resolution of Jammu and Kashmir, it said.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir has already angered India with his provocative comments on Kashmir and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, prompting New Delhi to impose restrictions on the import of refined palm oil from Malaysia, the top supplier of the commodity to the country. **AGENCIES**

Indo-US business deal likely during Trump's India visit

NEW DELHI: India and the U.S. are set to seal a trade deal during President Donald Trump's planned visit to India in the last week of February, multiple sources said.

Trade officials of India and the U.S. are giving final touches to the deal expected to cover specific sectors, they said. Trump is set to visit India on a two-day trip between February 23 and 26.

The main segment of the visit will take place in the national capital, though an option of having a short visit by Trump to another city is being explored. The cities being considered include Agra and Ahmedabad.

A high-level logistics team from Washington handling Trump's foreign trips visited India last week as part of preparations for his maiden tour of India as the U.S. president.

"The trade deal and a pact on further enhancing defence cooperation are likely to be sealed during the visit by the U.S. president," said a source.

India is seeking exemption from high duties imposed by the US on certain steel and aluminium products as well as resumption of benefits on tariff on certain products under their Generalised System of Preferences. India is also pressing the U.S. to facilitate greater market access for its products in the U.S. in sectors such as agriculture, automobile, auto components and engineering.

On the other hand the U.S. wants greater market access



for its farm and manufacturing products, dairy items and medical devices in India. In 2018-19, India's exports to the U.S. stood at \$52.4 billion, while imports were \$35.5 billion. Trade deficit dipped from \$21.3 billion in 2017-18 to \$16.9 billion in 2018-19.

India received FDI worth \$3.13 billion from the U.S. in 2018-19, higher than \$2 billion in 2017-18. India had invited Trump to grace the Republic Day parade as the chief guest last year but the U.S. President could not come due to scheduling issues. During his visit to the U.S. in September last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had reminded Trump of his invitation to him to visit India along with his family.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during their visit to Washington last month conveyed to the U.S. side that India was waiting to host Trump. Trump will seek re-election in presidential polls scheduled to take place in November. **AGENCIES**

UN takes no action on order against Myanmar on Rohingyas

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Security Council has discussed the International Court of Justice's order that Myanmar must do all it can to prevent genocide against the Rohingya Muslims, but failed to agree on a statement.

Myanmar's ally China as well as Vietnam, which is part of the regional Association of Southeast Nations along with Myanmar, objected, diplomats said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the meeting was closed. Instead, the European Union members of the council urged Myanmar in a joint statement to reporters afterward to comply with the measures ordered by the U.N.'s top court, stressing that they are "compulsory under international law."

France, Germany, Belgium and Estonia along with former council member Poland also urged Myanmar "to take credible action to bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations."

"Myanmar must address the root causes of its conflicts, in Rakhine State, but also in Kachin and Shan States," the EU members said. "Accountability of perpetrators of human rights and humanitarian law violations is a necessary part of this process." More than 700,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh after Myanmar security forces launched a crackdown on the Muslim minority in August 2017 in response to an attack by a Rohingya insurgent group. Bangladesh currently houses over 1 million Rohingya refugees.

Myanmar has long claimed the Rohingyas are "Bengali" migrants from Bangladesh, even though their families have lived in the country for generations. Nearly all Rohingyas have been denied citizenship since 1982, effectively rendering them stateless, and they are denied freedom of movement and other basic rights. **AGENCIES**

**Somalia declares massive locust infestation a national emergency**

MOGADISHU: Somalia on Sunday declared a locust infestation sweeping the Horn of Africa to be a national emergency, as insects devastate food supplies in one of the poorest and most vulnerable regions in the world.

"The Ministry of Agriculture... has declared a national emergency in view of the current desert locust upsurge, that poses a major threat to Somalia's fragile food security situation," the ministry statement read.

Experts say the locust swarms are the result of extreme weather swings, and Somalia's declaration — the first country in the region to do so — is aimed at boosting national efforts in tackling the

hungry insects.

The locusts, part of the grasshopper family, have led to what the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has termed the "worst situation in 25 years" in the Horn of Africa.

"Food sources for people and their livestock are at risk," the agriculture ministry added. "The desert locust swarms are uncommonly large and consume huge amounts of crops and forage."

The emergency declaration was made to focus efforts and raise funds, because it was critical to contain the locust swarms before harvests are due in April, the ministry said.

Desert locusts, whose destructive infestations cause



major crop damage and hunger, are a species of grasshop-

per that live largely solitary lives until a combination of

conditions promote breeding and lead them to form

The desert locust swarms are uncommonly large and consume huge amounts of crops and forage

massive swarms. "Given the severity of this desert locust outbreak, we must commit our best efforts to protect the food security and livelihoods of Somali people," said Minister of Agriculture Said Hussein Iid.

"If we don't act now, we risk a severe food crisis that we cannot afford." According to the regional Food Secu-

riety and Nutrition Working Group, East Africa is already experiencing a high degree of food insecurity, with over 19 million people facing acute hunger. Swarms of locusts, that were formed in eastern Ethiopia and northern Somalia, have moved through the region. The FAO says the current invasion is known as an "upsurge" — when an entire region is affected — however, if it gets worse and cannot be contained, over a year or more, it would become what is known as a "plague" of locusts. There have been six major desert locust plagues in the 1900s, the last of which was in 1987-89. The last major upsurge was in 2003-05. **AGENCIES**

“We are expecting participation of about 100-200 athletes across 14-16 sports disciplines at Tokyo 2020”

RAJEEV MEHTA Indian Olympic Association Secretary General

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₹2826.92 crore set for sports

₹291.42 crore earmarked for Khelo India programme

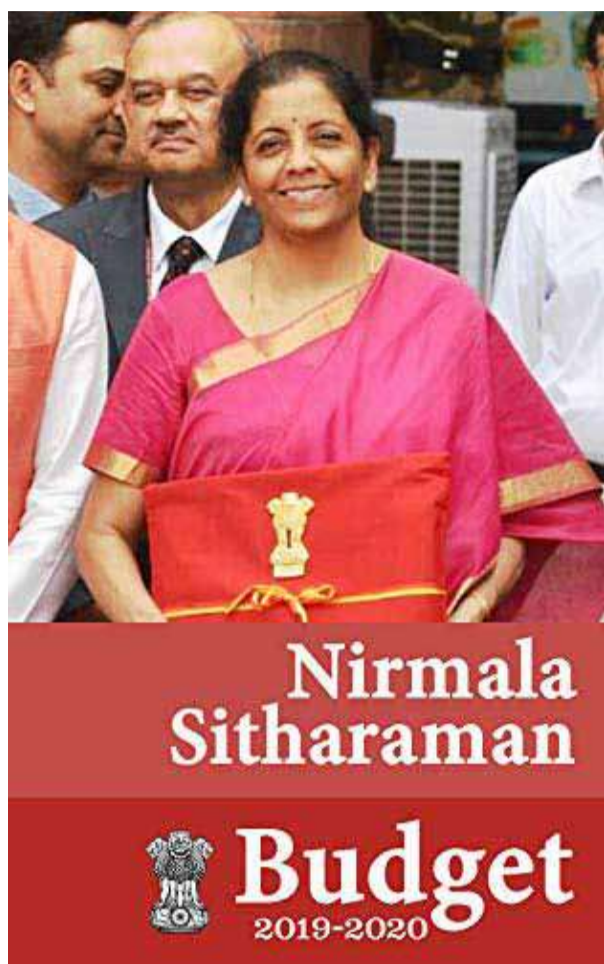
NEW DELHI: The government has allocated ₹2826.92 crore to the sports budget for the next financial year, which is up by a mere ₹50 crore from the revised estimates of 2019-20.

The government gave a substantial hike of ₹291.42 crore to its flagship Khelo India programme for development of sports at the grassroots and youth level, which meant that most of the other heads got reduced allocation in an Olympic year.

The highest reduction was for National Sports Federations with ₹245.00 crore being allocated in the union budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, ₹55 crore less than the revised ₹300.85 for 2019-20.

As far as incentives for sportspersons are concerned, the budget has proposed to slash the amount from ₹111 crore to ₹70 crore. The budget for National Sports Development Fund also got reduced to ₹50.00 from the earlier ₹77.15 crore. The government also reduced the allocation to Sports Authority of India (SAI) from the revised ₹615 crore to ₹500 crore. The SAI is the nodal organisation to manage national camps, provide infrastructure, equipment and other logistics to the country's sportspersons.

The allocation for the 2010 Commonwealth Games-SAI stadia renovation was also slashed to ₹75 crore from ₹96



Nirmala Sitharaman Budget 2019-2020

crore last year.

National Welfare Fund for Sportspersons will continue to get the same amount of ₹2 crore as earlier, while, at ₹50 crore, there was also no change

in the allocation for the enhancement of sports facilities in Jammu and Kashmir.

Laxmi Bai National Institute of Physical Education will, however, get ₹55 crore,

“After 60% increase over last year, the big increase would come in 2021-22, as there is a time gap between talent identification and hiring of high performance coaches to increased number of trainee athletes”

RADHEY SHYAM JULANIYA
Union Sports Secretary

₹5 crore more than the last budget. In the budget for 2019-20, ₹2216.92 crore was allocated for sports but it was later revised to ₹2776.92 crore. The 2020 sports budget is aimed at giving a boost to India's ambitions at the international level. According to Union Sports Secretary Radhey Shyam Julaniya, “The budget meets our present needs and future aspirations.”

“After 60% increase over last year, the big increase would come in 2021-22, as there is a time gap between talent identification and hiring of high performance coaches to increased number of trainee athletes.”

60% increase

A day after the budget, Julaniya told The Hindu, “The (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports) expenditure last year was ₹1723.01 crore. This year

the budget is ₹2776.92 crore. Thus, there is an increase of more than 60% (₹1053.91 crore) compared to previous year. Julaniya emphasised, “We have cleared past liabilities this year and rationalised the budget accounting with one budget head for one program/activity. All training programs now would be funded under Khelo India only. This required reduced allocation for NSFs (National Sports Federations) and SAI (Sports Authority of India).”

“Identification of talent for increase of athletes for training takes time. Similarly, getting high performance coaches and trainers take time. We aim to accelerate with quality. Our focus is to train larger number of athletes with high quality so as to increase use of available infrastructure. After 60% increase over last year, another jump would take place now after a year.”

On the Ministry's plans, he added, “We're developing a National Centre of Excellence for SAI regional centres and other expert necessities.”

“The capacity will be minimum 10,000 athletes who will get high performance training in 15 disciplines. The focus is to use available infrastructure. This infrastructure should be used three to four times more than now. These disciplines have been identified keeping in mind the 2024 and 2028 Olympics.” **AGENCIES**

New selectors by this month: Ganguly

MUMBAI: BCCI President Sourav Ganguly on February 3 said the two replacements in the selection panel will be picked by the end of this month.

The BCCI has sought application to replace - Chairman MSK Prasad (South zone) and Gagan Khoda (West Zone) -- in the five-member panel.

The BCCI recently formed the new Cricket Advisory Committee comprising former India players Madan Lal, RP Singh and Sulakshana Naik.

“The new CAC has been constituted and the new selectors should be picked by this month,” Ganguly said.

Among the applicants are former India players Ajit Agarkar, Laxman Sivaramakrishnan, Ameya Khurasia and Nayan Mongia.

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has invited Ganguly to become the Goodwill Ambassador of the Indian contingent at the Tokyo Olympics this year.

In a letter to Ganguly, a



former India cricket team captain, IOA secretary general Rajeev Mehta said, “The IOA extends the honour to you to be the Goodwill Ambassador of Team India to the Tokyo Olympic Games 2020. We hope you will generously extend your support for Team India.”

Mr. Mehta said this edition of the Olympics is an important milestone as it marks hundred years of participation of the country at the Games, and Ganguly's support and inspiration will

be valuable for the Indian athletes, especially the younger ones.

“You are an inspiration for a billion people, especially the youth. As an administrator you have always nurtured young talent. We are hopeful your association with Team India to the Tokyo 2020 would be a boost for our young athletes and a privilege for the Olympic movement in India,” Mr. Mehta said.

The Tokyo Olympic Games will be held from July 24 to August 9. **AGENCIES**

TRI-SERIES

India women look to improve fielding



CANBERRA: The Indian women's team will look for an improved show in the fielding department to complement its fine bowling when it takes on Australia in its second game of the Tri-series here on Sunday. India beat England by five wickets in the tournament opener on Friday. India put up a fine bowling performance, led by the spinners, to restrict England to 147, which was followed by a match-winning unbeaten 42-run knock by skipper Harmanpreet.

Good form

The top four — Shafali Verma, Smriti Mandhana,

Jemimah Rodrigues and Harmanpreet — were all among the runs, but the middle-order, comprising Veda Krishnamurthy and Taniya Bhatia, struggled.

However, India was far from impressive when it came to fielding with Harmanpreet, Jemimah and Veda dropping catches, apart from misfields, and the side will look to quickly make amends.

Happy for youngsters

“I'm really happy that our young players could play with freedom. We have to work hard on our fielding. We need to improve,” Harmanpreet had said after

the match. Defending T20 World champion Australia, on the other hand, will be desperate to bounce back after going down to England in a thrilling game that was decided via Super Over on Saturday.

Neither the Australian bowlers nor the batters, except Beth Mooney, could make much of an impact on Saturday. The Australians will also take confidence from the fact that India had lost both its matches against them in the tri-series in 2018.

The teams: Australia: Alyssa Healy, Beth Mooney, Ashleigh Gardner, Meg Lanning (Capt.), Ellyse Perry, Rachael Haynes, Jess Jonassen, Delissa Kimmince, Annabel Sutherland, Georgia Wareham, Megan Schutt, Nicola Carey, Sophie Molineux, Erin Burns and Tayla Vlaeminck

INDIA: Shafali Verma, Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Veda Krishnamurthy, Taniya Bhatia, Deepti Sharma, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Radha Yadav, Richa Ghosh, Arundhati Reddy, Harleen Deol, Nuzhat Parween and Poonam Yadav.

Kobe Bryant's death put life in perspective for me: Kohli



“You start looking at things from a different point of view suddenly and you want to enjoy every moment you're going through. You realise that what you're doing at the end of the day is not the most important thing”

VIRAT KOHLI
Indian Cricketer

HAMILTON: India captain Virat Kohli on Tuesday said the death of NBA legend Kobe Bryant in a helicopter crash has impacted his outlook towards life, which he feels, is sometimes taken for granted in pursuit of control over the future.

Bryant, a two-time Olympic gold-medallist and one of the most decorated basketball players of all time, died in a helicopter crash last month along with his 13-year-old daughter Gianna, who was also a budding hoopster.

“Firstly, it was a shock to everyone. I grew up watching those NBA games in the morn-

ing and watching what he did on court. But when someone that you have looked up to in some ways, passes away like that, it does put things in perspective,” Kohli said on the eve of the first ODI against New Zealand here. “...at the end of the day, life can be so fickle. It's so unpredictable. I think a lot of the times we get too caught up in the pressures of what we have to do tomorrow...we really forget living life and enjoying life and just appreciating and being grateful for the life we have,” he added.

Kohli said a tragedy like this makes one realise that nothing can be more important

than enjoying every moment of existence.

“...it did put things in perspective for me massively. It just makes you feel like not wanting to have control of things in front of you all the time, and just embracing life and appreciating it.”

“You start looking at things from a different point of view suddenly and you want to enjoy every moment you're going through. You realise that what you're doing at the end of the day is not the most important thing. The most important thing is life itself,” Kohli signed off. **AGENCIES**

Manpreet to lead India in the FIH Pro League matches

NEW DELHI: Manpreet Singh will lead India in the upcoming FIH Pro League matches against World No.1 Belgium, for which a 24-member team was announced on Monday with a newcomer in Raj Kumar Pal.

Harmanpreet Singh be the vice captain in the matches taking place on February 8 and 9 at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar.

Raj Kumar Pal was impressive in his stint with the India Colts team in the past season when it won a silver medal at the Sultan of Johor Cup in Malaysia.

Chief coach Graham Reid said, “The objective of these matches of the FIH Hockey Pro League is to find the balance between giving players opportunities for Olympic selection, working out our strongest combinations and continuing to demonstrate that we can compete with the best teams in the world.”

Reid added, “Raj Kumar Pal has been rewarded for his outstanding form in the



recent camps and named in the squad. He possesses extra-ordinary skills and speed, which if given the opportunity will excel against the World No.1 Belgium.”

The squad: P.R. Sreejesh, Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Harmanpreet Singh, Gurinder Singh, Amit Rohidas, Surender Kumar, Harmanpreet Singh, Rupinder Pal Singh, Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Chinglensana Singh, Raj Kumar Pal, Dilpreet Singh, Hardik Singh, Ramandeep Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Mandeep Singh, Shamsheer Singh, Gursahibjit Singh, Kothajit Singh Kadangbam, Birendra Lakra, Nilakanta Sharma, Gurjant Singh and S.V. Sunil. **AGENCIES**

Mitch Marsh, Glenn Maxwell back for Oz in ODI/T20 squads for SA

NEWDELHI: Australia has recalled allrounder Mitch Marsh and Glenn Maxwell for the one-day international and Twenty20 tour of South Africa.

Marsh last featured in an Australian side in the Ashes series last September. He hasn't played an ODI since January 2018 or a T20 international since October 2018.

Maxwell last played for Australia in October before taking a break from cricket, citing mental health issues. He returned to action in the BBL for the Melbourne Stars.

On Tuesday, Marcus Stoinis was named the Big Bash League's domestic player of the tournament, but he was left out of both squads.

“Marcus Stoinis is a stand-

by player for each squad and was unlucky to miss out due to the make-up of the current top order,” selector Trevor Hohns said in a statement Tuesday.

“It is terrific to have a back-up player of his caliber in such good form.”

Pacemen Sean Abbott and Jhye Richardson were named in the T20 squad and Matthew

Wade was included in both.

Australia will play three T20s against South Africa — on Feb. 21, 23 and 26 — before three one-dayers on Feb. 29, March 4 and March 7.

AUSTRALIAN SQUADS: One-day: Aaron Finch (captain), Alex Carey, Pat Cummins, Ashton Agar, Josh Hazlewood, Marnus Labuschagne, Mitch Marsh, Glenn

Maxwell, Kane Richardson, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Matthew Wade, David Warner, Adam Zampa. T20: Aaron Finch (captain), Alex Carey, Pat Cummins, Sean Abbott, Ashton Agar, Mitch Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Jhye Richardson, Kane Richardson, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Matthew Wade, David Warner, Adam Zampa. **AGENCIES**

India's proposal to host C'wealth Games gets UK backing

NEW DELHI: India's proposal to host the additional shooting and archery events for the 2022 Commonwealth Games has been endorsed by the British House of Lords after an extensive debate.

Last month, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) had withdrawn its threat to boycott the Birmingham Commonwealth Games over shooting's omission and instead decided to submit a formal proposal to host a shooting championship, where the medals won will be counted in



the tally of the Games.

The proposal was backed by the UK's House of Lords.

“The government welcomes the Indian Olympic Association's statement on confirming that India will take part in the games,” Baroness Diana Bar-

ran, the parliamentary under Secretary of State for digital, culture, media and sport, said in her summation address.

“The government also welcomes the proposal from India to the CGF for additional events in the sports of shooting and Archery and the CGF

is currently discussing this

proposal with its member-

“The government welcomes the proposal from India to the CGF for additional events in the sports of shooting and Archery”

BARONESS DIANA BARRAN,

The parliamentary under Secretary of State for digital

ship and following this will inform India of its decision,” she added.

When asked if she could confirm that the government would ensure that in future

versions shooting would be made a compulsory sport at the CWG instead of an optional one, she said she will pass on the matter to the minister of sports in the House

of Commons. She also said that the minister of sports in the House of Commons is simultaneously “meeting with the CGF discussing that very point and all of the costs for that event shall be met by the Indian Olympic association.”

House member Lord Karan Bilimoria described the proposal “as a manifestation of a member of the commonwealth family coming forward as a member of the family to assist in providing a solution to the issue of shooting and archery being proposed to be

held in Delhi or Chandigarh.”

He also congratulated sports minister Kiren Rijiju, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President Narinder Batra and National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) chief Raninder Singh for offering an “innovative solution.”

In a letter to the CGF President Dame Louis Martin, Batra said the cost of the shooting's conduct will be met largely by the NRAI while the archery programme will likely be funded solely by the Government of India. **AGENCIES**

POCO X2 COMES TO INDIA

The Poco X2 has been launched in India as Poco's first smartphone since its separation from Xiaomi earlier in the year. The Poco X2 starts in India from Rs 15,999.

NEW SKODA SUVs ROLL ON

Skoda Auto India announced the launch of five new Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs) for the Indian market during the Auto Expo 2020 in Greater Noida



Lamborghini India launches Huracan EVO RWD

KOLKATA: Super sports car manufacturer Lamborghini is looking to maintain the growth momentum in India although the super luxury segment has been hit due to slowdown in the automobile sector in the country, an official said.

In 2019, Lamborghini India sold 52 cars, registering a 15 per cent growth over the previous year, the official said. "We want to maintain the growth momentum in 2020. But by how much, it is not possible to say, as market sentiments are unpredictable," Lamborghini India head Sharad Agarwal said. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the launch of 'Huracan EVO RWD', a super sports car, here, Agarwal said the super luxury segment (cars priced above Rs 2.5 crore) is "not big" in the country.

The company, which has its sole manufacturing plant at Sant'Agata Bolognese in Italy, has three models in India, namely, super sports utility vehicle (SSUV) 'Urus', super sports cars 'Aventador' and 'Huracan'. "The markets of Kolkata and the east are also growing," he said, adding that the company has three dealers in Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai. The cars are shipped as CBUs (Completely Built Up) to India, he added. **AGENCIES**

Mercedes Benz drives in luxury MPV V Class Marco Polo at Rs 1.38 cr

GREATER NOIDA: German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz on Thursday launched luxury multi purpose vehicle, V Class Marco Polo, in India with price starting at Rs 1.38 crore (ex-showroom). The new model, which takes its body design from the V-Class, comes in two variants -- Marco Polo Horizon priced at Rs 1.38 crore and Marco Polo tagged at Rs 1.46 crore. The vehicle comes with camping features making it suitable for vacation and weekend trips. "The V-Class and V-Class Elite pioneered the luxury MPV segment in India and have witnessed much success ever since their launch," Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director & CEO Martin Schwenk told reporters. **PTI**

Dr Reddy's launches capsules to remove copper from blood

NEWDELHI: Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd on Friday announced the launch of Trientine Hydrochloride capsules in the US market.

Trientine works by removing copper from the blood. It is used to treat Wilson's disease, a genetic metabolic defect that causes excess copper to build up in the body. In a regulatory filing, Dr Reddy's Laboratories announced the launch of Trientine Hydrochloride capsules USP, 250 mg, a therapeutically equivalent generic version of Syprine (trientine hydrochloride) capsules approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA). **AGENCIES**

Disney Plus to launch in India through Hotstar

NEWDELHI: Disney has announced that its subscription-based streaming service Disney Plus, which launched in the US in November last year, will arrive in India on March 29 through its Hotstar app.

The announcement was made by Disney CEO Robert Iger during the company's quarterly earnings call on Tuesday. "We're excited to announce that we will be launching Disney Plus in India through our Hotstar service on March 29th at the beginning of the Indian Premier League cricket season," Iger said.

Though the Disney top boss didn't go into the specifics, he said the company will rebrand the Hotstar app to "Disney Plus Hotstar". "We see this as a great opportunity to use the proven platform of Hotstar to launch the new Disney Plus service in one of the most populous countries and fastest growing economies in the world," he added.

Disney had acquired Hot-



"We see this as a great opportunity to use the proven platform of Hotstar to launch the new Disney Plus service in one of the most populous countries and fastest growing economies in the world"

star streaming service in 2017 as part of its acquisition of Fox Studios, which also included the entire Star India group. As of now, most of the premium Disney content is available on Hotstar app. But the decision to club Disney Plus with

Hotstar will enable the Indian subscribers to finally watch some of the newer content from the studio's streaming service, most notably "Star Wars" spin-off series "The Mandalorian" which is currently only available on Disney

Plus.

Iger said the company is yet to finalise the pricing aspect of the rebranded streaming service, but it will be offered in two categories. "One will be more premium in nature that will include the entire library, so with the original programming and the other one will be more basic that will have the library and not the original programming," he said.

The Disney CEO also revealed that the company hopes to capitalise on the Indian Premier League as Star India is the official broadcaster of the league. "Priced for the market and launched at a very peak period of time for the IPL, the cricket league. "And so, we think it's an opportune moment, we take advantage of the presence of Star in the market and the millions of subscribers that they also have, we take advantage of the sports tie-in, and we use

the interface and the technology that includes the billing that already exists to launch a service, we believe, under very, very optimal circumstances," Iger added.

With Hotstar and Disney Plus bundled together, the company hopes to take on the competition from existing players in the country's streaming market, particularly Netflix and Amazon, who have already established a wide variety of Indian content on their platforms. The streaming service also faces competition with domestic players such as ALTBalaji, Zee5, Eros Now, Sony Liv and Voot.

During the earnings call, Iger also announced Disney Plus has so far amassed 28.6 million paid subscribers after its debut in the US on November 12, 2019. Besides India, Disney Plus is also set for rollout in the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Austria and Switzerland on March 24. **PTI**

Audi unveils Audi A8L in India with price starting at ₹1.56cr



NEW DELHI: German luxury car maker Audi on Monday launched the fourth generation of its flagship sedan, Audi A8L, in India with price starting at Rs 1.56 crore (ex-showroom).

The Audi A8L is powered by a 3.0-litre petrol engine, which generates 340 horse power (hp) and can accelerate from 0-100 in 5.7 seconds. Commenting on the launch, Audi India head Balbir Singh Dhillon said, "The new A8L marks the dawn of a new design era for brand Audi. The car is sophisticated, technology and feature rich."

Stating that the company has fundamentally re-engineered the car in its fourth generation, Dhillon said the

A8L has larger dimensions and is heavily customisable. "We want customers to customise their car keeping in mind their likes and requirements and are confident that the new Audi A8L will witness the same success that its predecessors have enjoyed in the country," he added.

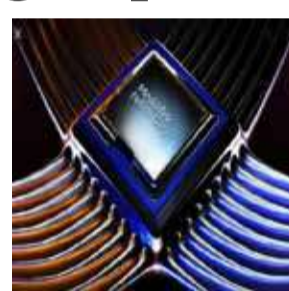
He said the A8 forms an important part of Audi's product portfolio for 2020 that focuses on the push for C&D segment cars. "The A8L is our third completely new BSVI-compliant model launch after the all-new Audi A6 and Audi Q8," he added. Dhillon said that as India moves to BS-VI emission norm from April 1, Audi will enter the new era with petrol vehicles only. **PTI**

MediaTek to roll out new gaming chipsets

NEW DELHI: Electronic chipset firm MediaTek expects to roll out new gaming-focused chipsets G70 and G80 in 5-7 smartphone models by June in India.

The company has partnered with smartphone firm Realme to roll out the first smartphone on G70 chipsets this month.

"On a global level, gaming has overtaken films as



preferred leisure activity. We have come up with G70

and G80 series that will bring premium features in affordable range of devices," MediaTek India Managing Director Anku Jain told PTI.

He said MediaTek is in talks with several partners for their roll-out and expects that 5-7 smartphone models in India will have these chipsets by the second quarter.

Meanwhile, Realme announced the roll-out of its first smartphone with G70 chipset. "Realme C3 will be the first smartphone in India to feature the world's first MediaTek Helio G70. **PTI**

Tata Motors to launch 4 products in 18-24 months: N Chandrasekaran

MUMBAI: Tata Group Chairman N Chandrasekaran on Wednesday said Tata Motors will launch at least four more products in the next 18-24 months with focus on sustainability and electric vehicles. The company is focusing on - CESS: connected, electric, shared and safe - as the future of mobility.

"Tata Motors is pushing the envelope with other group companies on safety... We have launched two models since we unveiled Tigor in 2017, and Nexa last week, at least four more products will be coming in the next 18-24



months," Chandrasekaran said. He added that Tata Motors is working with seven other group companies, and expects to invest continuously

to expand its endeavours to drive electric vehicles and sustainable mobility in India.

Also read: Auto Expo 2020: Dates, time, venue, tickets,

SAI, Hockey India ally for high performance centres

NEWDELHI: Sports Authority of India (SAI) and Hockey India have announced the establishment of the High Performance Centres in seven places across the country to provide state-of-the-art facilities to junior and sub-Junior players.

The move was aimed at grooming young talent in view of 2024 and 2028 Olympic Games.

While the National Hockey Academy at Dhyan Chand National Stadium, New Delhi, SAI Sundergarh, Odisha, SAI UDMCC, Bhopal, and SAI Bengaluru will be active within the next three months, the remaining three centres will be developed over the next one year.

These centres will be closely monitored by Hockey India and its High Performance Director and the programme will also that the athletes are provided with international exposure.

These seven High Performance Hockey Centres will be set up under the Khelo India scheme and will have expert professional training, utilization of sports science, and education of the youngsters.

"Owing to the large hockey-playing population in and around these seven cities and availability of infrastructure, SAI and Hockey India have strategically shortlisted these centres as the first seven High Performance Hockey Centres in the country, and will further be identifying other suitable centers around the country which can be converted into High Performance Centres in the future," a release said.

"The existing SAI Centres and Hockey Academies around India will serve as "feeder" centres to these new High Performance Hockey Centres, which shall hold 72 men and 72 women hockey players at each location. These young hockey players will be selected from a specific age range of 14 to 24 years in order to ensure that they are developed and prepared in time for the 2024 and 2028 Olympics."

The initial seven High Performance Hockey Centres will be established at the following locations: 1. SAI Centre, Bengaluru, Karnataka (South Zone); 2. Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, New Delhi (North Zone); 3. SAI Sundergarh, Odisha (East Zone); 4. SAI UDMCC, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh (Central Zone). Followed By: 5. SAI NS NEC, Takley, Imphal, Manipur (North-East Zone); 6. Balewadi Sports Complex, Pune, Maharashtra (West Zone); 7. SAI Centre, Ranchi and Gomke Jaipal Singh Astroturf Hockey Stadium (East Zone II).

The SAI Centre Bengaluru will remain as the main site for the senior and junior national teams. **AGENCIES**

"We have launched two models since we unveiled Tigor in 2017, and Nexa last week, at least four more products will be coming in the next 18-24 months"

bookings, how to attend Tata Motors on Wednesday announced four global unveils, a pre-production preview and a commercial launch at the Auto Expo here. It also showcases

Kia Motors launches premium MPV Carnival at Auto Expo



GREATERNOIDA: South Korean auto maker Kia Motors on Wednesday launched its premium multi purpose vehicle Carnival, and showcased a new concept for a global SUV Sonet at the Auto Expo.

Carnival is being launched in India in three different specifications at a starting price of Rs 24.95 lakh for its Premium variant (ex-showroom), Rs 28.95 lakh for its Prestige variant (ex-showroom), and Rs 33.95 lakh for its Limousine variant (ex-showroom). Kia Sonet concept will be developed further ahead of a launch in the Indian market in the second half of 2020.

Kia Motors India said it had received more than 1,400 bookings for the new car on the first day of orders and has a total of more than 3,500 bookings received till date. Kia had entered the Indian market with its SUV Seltos, which was displayed as SP Concept in the previous edition of the Auto Expo in 2018. Commenting on the India journey, Kia Motors India MD and CEO Kookhyun Shim said: "We have sought to understand Indian customers' aspirations, and match them with best-in-class products and services."

He further said, "Our latest vehicle, Kia Carnival, is a clear example of this approach. Though it represents a leap up from the Seltos, into a premium, aspirational segment, it has been devised with the same passion." Shim further said, "As the Indian market evolves, we will continue to offer customers here the best and most innovative products and services."

Kia Sonet concept is a compact SUV which will take on the likes of Maruti Suzuki's Vitara Brezza, Hyundai Venue and Ford EcoSport. Kia Motors said the vehicle will be launched in India in the second half of 2020. Carnival, on the other hand, looks to enter a segment dominated by Toyota's Innova Crystal. It is powered by a 2.2-litre VGT B6 diesel engine, paired with an eight-speed "Sportsmatic" transmission. Kia is also showcasing its Seltos X-Line Concept, a bolder reinterpretation of the Seltos SUV along with Soul EV, Niro EV, compact SUV Xceed and compact utility vehicle Stonic. **PTI**

Okinawa to sell one lakh e-scooters in 2 years, introduces maxi-scooter Cruiser

GREATER NOIDA: Electric two-wheeler maker Okinawa Scooters plans to almost double its sales to around one lakh units in the next two years and expand its sales network to 600 dealers, said a top company official.

The company, which has a line-up of 9 products, on Thursday unveiled the prototype of maxi-scooter Cruiser at the auto expo here, which it plans to launch in the third quarter of next financial year.

According to the company, Cruiser, which will be based on fast charging detachable lithium ion battery, would have a range of 120 KM in a single charge with a top speed of 100 km per hour. "At Okinawa, we are growing at a fast pace and have multiple developments



in the pipeline. We are planning to launch the Okinawa Cruiser in third quarter of the next financial year," Okinawa Autotech Founder and Managing Director Jeetender Sharma said.

The company has a sales network of 350 dealers and sold around 60,000 vehicles. "We are targeting to sell over 1,00,000 e-scooter units in the coming financial year," said Sharma. Moreover, Okinawa

will also be establishing a new facility in Rajasthan soon, he added.

Founded in 2015, Okinawa is a disrupter in the segment and is also the first company to get FAME-II approval. "Okinawa has always believed that key to innovation is in identifying the requirements of our users. Keeping this in mind, Okinawa has launched its products with unique features and eye-catching designs that would serve the purpose for users of any age," Sharma said.

The electric vehicle industry is still very nascent in India and there are many speculations and myths associated with the performance of EVs when compared with petrol run vehicles, he said.

Renault to bring mass segment EV in two years

GREATER NOIDA: French carmaker Renault has said it will have to assess import duty norm and strategy for electric vehicles space in the future as it gears up to introduce a mass market EV in the country in next two years.

The company is also looking to serve both right and left hand-drive markets from India as part of its focus on exports, Fabrice Cambolive, SVP and Chairman of Africa-Middle-East-India-Pacific Region for Renault Group told PTI during an interaction at the Auto Expo here.

Earlier, Renault India Managing Director and CEO Venkatram Mamillapalle announced that the company plans to bring

The company plans to bring one product every year in the Indian market, adding the company has to adjust to the local customers needs

a mass segment EV in India within the next two years.

"If we have to do EV, we have to do it seriously. It means we have to be clear in terms of regulations. What is more important for me is which import duty we will be paying if we are importing components here for assembling set up? Which kind



of duty we will have to pay if we export the car after assembling it here," Cambolive said.

He said if Renault wants to go for EVs it has to see what is the best way. "Of course, it is to localise, which is the way that could suit the best EV strategy

in the line up," he said. Stating that the Kwid could drive in as the first EV in India because of its "awareness and familiarity" with the market, he said it will have to be localised. "It means, we want to localise products from

the existing line-up, perhaps playing on our capacity to the extent of our blockbusters," Cambolive said.

He said Renault plans to bring one product every year in the Indian market, adding the company has to adjust to the local customers needs. He said Renault's performance in the Indian market has been "very satisfactory" since the launch of Duster, Kwid and Triber in the last few years.

"We took some lessons from what happened in the past when three years ago we decided to launch Triber here. We decided to have a product, which is a game changer, which is unique in the Indian market." **AGENCIES**



“There are thousands of films where women have been slapped by men and what’s new about it? That film (Kabir Singh) has only been the latest one and that’s why people have compared them. It’s trivialising to say that Thappad is an answer to Kabir Singh, because its way beyond that”

‘Thappad was written before the release of Kabir Singh’

“I FEEL PEOPLE SHOULDN’T LEAVE THEIR BRAIN AT HOME WHILE WATCHING A FILM”

Actress Taapsee Pannu feels people should not compare her upcoming drama Thappad with Shahid Kapoor’s blockbuster of 2019, Kabir Singh, just because the two films focus on contradictory ideologies. She adds that there are a lot of things that have been shown in Thappad about human relationships beyond a woman being slapped by a man.

The gripping trailer of Thappad starring Taapsee, prompted instant comparison with the romantic drama Kabir Singh on social media. In Kabir Singh, the hero has violent tendencies and is seen slapping the heroine, and she too slaps him. The film’s director Sandeep Reddy Vanga had defended the slapping saying a “little bit of violence” is part of a relationship.

The Anubhav Sinha-directed Thappad on the other hand takes a serious look at the issue of domestic violence, with particular focus on how violent behaviour is ground for divorce, irrespective of the number of times it happens. Simply put, even if it is just one slap, it counts as domestic violence.

Taapsee points out that the comparison with Kabir Singh is wrong. “It’s not that we have made this film (Thappad) keeping Kabir Singh in mind. I feel very sad when I hear people saying that ‘we have made a film to give an answer to another film.’ This film was written before the release of ‘Kabir Singh,’ I feel that Thappad (slap) is only a trigger, but there are so many other things that will unfold about relationships in this film.

“There are thousands of films where women have been slapped by men and what’s new about it? That film (Kabir Singh) has only been the latest one and that’s why people have compared them. It’s trivialising to say that Thappad is an answer to Kabir Singh, because its way beyond that,” said Taapsee, while interacting with the media at a promotional event for Thappad in Mumbai.

Taapsee added she would have never done a film like Kabir Singh. “I feel people shouldn’t leave their brain at home while watching a film. I congratulate the makers of that film, but I wouldn’t have done that film had I been offered Kabir Singh’s part. Obviously, I would have never done the girl’s part.” Thappad features Taapsee Pannu along with Pavai Gulati, Dia Mirza, Ratna Pathak Shah, Tanvi Azmi, Kumud Mishra and Manav Kaul. The film is slated to release on February 28. **AGENCIES**

Priyanka

in talks for THE MATRIX 4

THE MATRIX 4 CAST HAS BEEN TRAINING FOR STUNTS BEFORE THE SHOOTING, WHICH WILL COMMENCE IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA



Priyanka Chopra Jonas, according to several US media reports, will potentially star alongside Keanu Reeves in the fourth installment of The Matrix.

The film, produced by the Warner Bros. and the Village Roadshow, will be directed by Lana Wachowski. Priyanka, if confirmed, would join Keanu Reeves, Carrie-Anne Moss, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II and Neil Patrick Harris. Details about her prospective role are not known yet.

The Matrix 4 cast has been training for stunts before the shooting, which will commence in Northern California. Priyanka is a National Film Award winner with more than 60 films to her credit. Her debut show in US television, Quantico, ran for three seasons. Priyanka recently starred in The Sky is Pink. She will next be seen in Netflix’s We Can Be Heroes by Robert Rodriguez, and in the film adaptation of the Man Booker Prize winning novel The White Tiger. She will also be seen with Richard Madden in Citadel, an Amazon Prime series by the Russo brothers. **AGENCIES**

FUNDING for museums to promote tourism

NEW DELHI: In her Budget speech on Saturday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a series of steps to set up and renovate museums to promote tourism. As part of this, she announced an allocation of ₹3,150 crore to the Ministry of Culture for the maritime museum coming up at Lothal in Gujarat.

“Our government proposes to establish an Indian Institute of Heritage and Conservation under the Ministry of Culture; it shall have the status of a deemed University to start with. Acquisition of knowledge in disciplines such as museology and archaeology are essential for collecting and analysing scientific evidence of such findings and for [their] dissemination through high quality museums,” Ms. Sitharaman said in her Budget speech, adding that, currently, the lack of trained manpower is a handicap for both these disciplines. “This also affects tourism,” she said.

Five sites

Ms. Sitharaman said five archaeological sites would be developed as iconic sites with on-site Museums. They are: Rakhigarhi (Haryana), Hasti-

napur (Uttar Pradesh), Shivsagar (Assam), Dholavira (Gujarat) and Adichannallur (Tamil Nadu).

Last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced re-curation of the Indian Museum Kolkata, which is the oldest

in the country. Towards this, Ms. Sitharaman said, in the historic Old Mint building in Kolkata, a museum on Numismatics and Trade will also be located. “Four more museums from across the country shall be taken up for renovation and re-curation so that a world class experience can be offered to visitors,” she said, also announcing government support for the setting up of a tribal museum in Ranchi, Jharkhand.

States’ roadmap

Stating that growth of tourism directly relates to growth and employment, Ms. Sitharaman allocated 2,500 crore for 2020-21 for tourism promotion. She further added, “I expect the State governments to develop a roadmap for certain identified destinations and formulate financial plans during 2021 against which specified grants will be made available to the States in 2020-21.”

In this direction, she said that India has moved up from rank 65 in 2014 to 34 in 2019 in the World Economic Forum’s Travel and Tourism Competitive Index. Foreign exchange earnings grew 7.4% to 1.88 lakh crore for the period January to November 2019, from 1.75 lakh crore, she added. Mr. Modi laid the foundation stone for the maritime museum at Lothal in March last year. The project is being implemented by the Ministry of Shipping through its Sagarmala programme, with the involvement of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the Indian Navy, the Gujarat State government, and other stakeholders. **AGENCIES**

Texting while walking more dangerous and deadly

People who use a smartphone for texting while walking are twice as likely to have an accident or near miss than taking a call or listening to music, a new study suggests.

According to the findings, published in the journal Injury Prevention, smartphone texting is linked to compromised pedestrian safety with higher rates of “near misses”.

“Given the ubiquity of smartphones, social media, apps, digital video and streaming music, which has infiltrated most aspects of daily life, distracted walking and street cross will be a road safety issue for the foreseeable future,” said study researchers from University of Calgary in Canada. Worldwide, around 270,000 pedestrians die every year, accounting for around a fifth of all road traffic deaths.

“Pedestrian distraction” has become a recognised safety issue as more and more people use their smartphones or hand held devices while walking on the pavement and crossing roads.

To try and gauge the potential impact on road safety of hand-held/hands-free device activities, including talking on the phone, text messaging,



browsing and listening to music, the researchers looked for published evidence.

From among 33 relevant studies, they pooled the data from 14 (involving 872 people) and systematically reviewed the data from another eight.

They looked specifically at: time taken to start walking or begin crossing the road; missed opportu-

nities to cross safely; time taken to cross the road; looking left and right before or during crossing; and collisions and close calls with other pedestrians and vehicles.

The pooled data analysis showed that listening to music wasn’t associated with any heightened risk of potentially harmful pedestrian behaviours. **AGENCIES**

“Given the ubiquity of smartphones, social media, apps, digital video and streaming music, which has infiltrated most aspects of daily life, distracted walking and street cross will be a road safety issue for the foreseeable future”

According to the researchers, talking on the phone was associated with a small increase in the time taken to start crossing the road and slightly more missed opportunities to cross the road safely.

Text messaging emerged as the potentially most harmful behaviour, the study said.

It was associated with significantly lower rates of looking left and right, right before or while crossing the road, and with moderately increased rates of collisions and close calls with other pedestrians or vehicles.

It also affected the time taken to cross a road and missed opportunities to cross safely, but to a lesser extent. The review of the eight observational studies revealed that the percentage of pedestrians who were distracted ranged from 12 to 45 per cent, and that behaviours were influenced by several factors, including gender, time of day, solo or group crossing, and walking speed. And as signage and public awareness campaigns don’t seem to alter pedestrian behaviour, “Establishing the relationship between distracted walking behaviour and crash risk is an essential research need,” the researchers concluded. **AGENCIES**

PAMELA, PETERS part ways less than 2 weeks after wedding



Actor Pamela Anderson has split from her husband of less than two weeks, Jon Peters. Anderson, 52, and Peters, 74, got married in Malibu on January 20 in a private ceremony but never filed for a marriage certificate.

“I have been moved by the warm reception to Jon and my union. We would be very grateful for your support as we take some time apart to re-evaluate what we want from life and from one another.

“Life is a journey and love is a process. With that universal truth in mind, we have mutually decided to put off the formalization of our marriage certificate and put our faith in the process. Thank you for respecting our privacy,” Anderson said in a statement to The Hollywood Reporter.

Anderson was previously married to rocker Tommy Lee, Kid Rock, and Rick Salomon. She was recently linked to French soccer icon Adil Rami. **AGENCIES**

“Life is a journey and love is a process. With that universal truth in mind, we have mutually decided to put off the formalization of our marriage certificate and put our faith in the process. Thank you for respecting our privacy”

The “Baywatch” star had shared her first post-wedding photo with Peters eight days ago on Instagram. The two first dated when she was 19 after meeting at the Playboy Mansion. Anderson was previously married to rocker Tommy Lee, Kid Rock, and Rick Salomon. She was recently linked to French soccer icon Adil Rami. **AGENCIES**

1,800-seat arts centre proposed at IGNC

NEW DELHI: Stating that Delhi did not have a large auditorium, Union Culture Minister of State (Independent Charge) Prahlad Singh Patel told the Lok Sabha on Monday that an 1,800-seat “National Centre for the Performing Arts” would be constructed at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA).

The Minister’s reply to a question posed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP from Odisha Aparajita Sarangi comes in the wake of the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry (MoHUA) planning to redevelop the Central Vista, includ-

ing demolishing and shifting the IGNC from its current location on Man Singh Road to near Jamnagar House.

“As there is no large auditorium in Delhi with a large seating capacity, it was proposed by Ministry of Culture that a performing art auditorium may be constructed having seating capacity of 1,800 persons along with supporting public facilities like cafeteria, bookshop etc. in Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) premises. However, no final decision has been taken yet,” the Minister’s reply read. **AGENCIES**

Shalini Pandey goes to Bollywood, to star opposite Ranveer Singh



Shalini Pandey who debuted in Telugu cinema with Arjun Reddy has signed her first Hindi film, Jayeshbhai Jordaar, to be produced by Yash Raj Films and starring Ranveer Singh in the lead.

Maneesh Sharma, the producer of this film for Yash Raj, says about the 25-year old Shalini, “Our script and the vision of the film demanded a fresh face for the leading lady’s part. Shalini’s audition was so spontaneous and nuanced that we knew

immediately that she was the right person for the part. She is an assured actor with a refreshing presence, and we have confidence in backing her talent.”

Shalini began her career as a theatre actor in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, before bagging Arjun Reddy. Despite not being well versed in Telugu, Shalini dubbed for her part in Arjun Reddy and was appreciated for her performance. She also featured in a cameo in Mahanati, the biopic on late actor Savitri. **AGENCIES**

Talking about her Hindi film, Shalini says, “Being given the opportunity to be signed on as a talent and also being cast by Yash Raj Films is any artist’s dream. I’ve been blessed with this huge chance to show my mettle in the Hindi film industry and I’m incredibly thankful for it. I’m also fortunate to be sharing screen space with Ranveer Singh, one of the biggest superstars of our generation and a versatile actor. This inspires me to prepare myself to deliver the best.” **AGENCIES**