

OPINION 8
WHAT'S CIVIC VERSUS
CULTURAL NATIONALISM?**WORLD 12**
VIOLENCE MARK ANNIVERSARY
OF MYANMAR ARMY RULE**AVENUES 13**
MAKE RIGHT
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Big infra push to usher eco into 'Amrit Kaal'

Digital currency, 30% tax
on digital assets, 35% hike
in capex to ₹7.5 lakh crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A big infra push to revive the Covid-19 hit economy, few populist measures, no tinkering with personal income tax, and 30 per cent tax on digital assets were some of the key highlights of the Union Budget that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said will usher the Indian economy into Amrit Kaal, the 25-yearlong lead up to India@100.

The ₹39.45 lakh crore Budget proposes massive spending on highways and affordable housing, among other sectors, with a view to firing up the key engines of the economy to sustain the economic recovery from the pandemic.

The Finance Minister ignored the economic wizards lay emphasis on fiscal consolidation and instead prioritised economic expansion.

The absence of populist measures will provide the Government much-needed leg room to increase spending on infrastructure to create jobs and boost economic activity. At the same time, the Sitharaman did not tinker with income tax slabs or tax rates.

"We are marking Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, and have entered into Amrit Kaal, the



25-year-long leadup to India@100," the Minister said, adding, "The fundamental tenets of the Budget include transparency of financial statement and fiscal position, and reflect the Government's intent, strengths, and challenges."

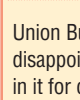
Her Budget for the fiscal year beginning April 2022 proposed a massive 35 per cent jump in capital expenditure to ₹7.5 lakh crore, coupled with the rationalisation of customs duty, an extension of time for setting up new manufacturing companies and plans for starting a digital currency and tax crypto assets.

Some of the key areas for boosting infrastructure spending are: 5G spectrum auction, expanding national highways by 25,000 km, interlinking of rivers, and manufacturing of 400 new generation Vande Bharat trains.

Continued on Page 12

SALIENT POINTS

- Fiscal deficit pegged slightly higher at 6.9% in FY22
- Subsidies to fall 39% to ₹4.33 lakh crore
- Defence budget increased to ₹5.25 lakh crore from last year's ₹4.78 lakh crore, with a major push on procurement of military hardware from domestic industry
- Taxpayers can update their ITRs within 2 yrs with additional tax
- 5G spectrum by March, service roll out this year
- Scheduled banks to set up 75 digital banks in 75 districts
- Battery swapping policy to promote electric vehicles
- Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs till March 2023

Budget people friendly, creates new opportunities for jobs and growth
PM MODINothing for middle class, poor in Union Budget
— RAHUL GANDHIBudget has 'zero' for common people, Government lost in 'big words signifying nothing'
— MAMATA BANERJEEUnion Budget disappointing, nothing in it for common people
KEJRIWAL

Road to recovery! 25K km in '22-23

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

National highways (NH) will be expanded by 25,000 kilometre (km) during 2022-23 and the national ropeway development programme will be taken up in the public-private partnership (PPP) mode, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said tabling the Union Budget.

"The national highways network will be expanded by 25,000 km in 2022-23 besides PM Gati Shakti Master Plan for Expressways will be for-

mulated in next fiscal to facilitate the faster movement of people and goods," the FM said.

Sitharaman also announced contracts for the implementation of multi-modal logistics parks at four locations through the PPP mode will be awarded in 2022-23.

The Minister said that as a preferred ecologically sustainable alternative to conventional roads in difficult hilly areas, the national ropeways development programme will be taken up on

Rural job scheme
funds cut by 25%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even though the dependence of the country's poorest on MNREGA soared during the pandemic because of wide-spread unemployment due to job cuts and gloomy economy, the allocation in Budget 2022 for the Government's rural employment programme has been slashed by 25 per cent.

The MNREGA fund allocation is ₹73,000 crore for the financial year 2022-23, down from the revised estimate for the previous year (2021-22), which was ₹98,000 crore.

Continued on Page 12

400 new Vande
Bharat trains in
three years: FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday announced four hundred new Vande Bharat trains will be manufactured over the next three years. "Four hundred new-generation Vande Bharat trains with better energy efficiency and passenger riding experience will be developed and manufactured during the next three years," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her Budget speech.

These new train sets are going to be made of lightweight aluminum, as opposed to steel, making each around 50 tonnes lighter, consuming much less energy than their steel counterparts, she said.

Railways Ministry officials said they are already manufacturing 44 Vande Bharat trains in order to have these trains running on at least 75 routes by August 15, 2023, as announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech.

While the FM said the trains will be manufactured and developed over the next three years, it is not clear when they will be operational. She also said 100 PM GatiShakti Cargo Terminals for multi-modal logistics facilities will be developed in next three years.

Continued on P12

BJP replaces Swati with Rajeswar, shifts Pathak to Lko Cantt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Bharatiya Janata Party sprang a surprise when it dropped Women Welfare Minister Swati Singh and changed the constituency of Law Minister Brajesh Pathak.

The party also denied ticket Vidhan Sabha Speaker Hriday Narayan Dikshit as it announced 17 candidates for Lucknow and adjoining areas that will go to the polls on February 23.

Swati Singh was sitting MLA from Sarojininar, on the outskirts of Lucknow. Speculations were rife that she and her husband Dayashankar Singh, who is vice-president of the party, wanted to contest from that constituency. The party played safe and refused tickets to both husband and wife.

Instead, Dr Rajeshwar Singh, the former joint director of Enforcement Directorate who took voluntary retirement recently and joined BJP a day earlier, was given a ticket from Sarojininar.

In another surprise, the party changed the constituency of Law Minister Brajesh Pathak from Lucknow Central to Lucknow Cantonment, thus denying ticket to sitting lawmaker Suresh Tiwari. There were speculations that Aparna

Bisht Yadav, the daughter-in-law of Mulayam Singh Yadav, who had joined the BJP recently, would contest from Lucknow Cantonment.

Even BJP MP from Prayagraj, Rita Bahuguna Joshi, had asked for a party ticket for her son Mayank from Lucknow Cantonment constituency, which she had won twice – once as Congress candidate and in 2017 as BJP candidate.

"The BJP played safe and gave ticket to Brajesh Pathak from that constituency as he also wanted a change in his constituency," a top BJP leader said.

The BJP also changed its candidate from Bakshi-ka-Talab as sitting lawmaker Avinash Trivedi was replaced by Yogesh Shukla. Anjani Srivastava is a BJP candidate from Lucknow West and Rajnish Gupta from Lucknow Central.

The party has repeated Neeraj Bora from Lucknow North and Urban Development Minister Ashutosh Tandon from Lucknow East.

The party replaced Hriday Narayan Dikshit with Ashutosh Shukla in Bhagwant Nagar constituency of Unnao.

In another surprise, the party gave ticket to Jaya Devi, wife of Union Minister Kaushal Kishore, from Mahabadi while Shashank Trivedi will be the party candidate for Maholi.

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*Plus applicable tax as per rules. Figures in Rupees

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866 nominations filed for third phase polls

Lucknow (PNS): Altogether 866 candidates have filed nominations for 59 assembly seats for the third phase of polls in Uttar Pradesh where polling is scheduled on February 20. A total of 866 candidates filed their nominations for the third phase polls with 362 candidates submitting their papers on Tuesday, the last day of nominations. Tirwa assembly seat in Farrukhabad district has the highest number of 22 candidates. There are 20 candidates each in Firozabad and Madhaugarh seats. The scrutiny of the nomination papers will be done on Wednesday. Meanwhile, for the fourth phase polls on 60 seats where polling will be held on February 23, 293 nominations have been filed so far with 141 filed on Tuesday.



NOTICE

I Arjun Singh S/O Suraj Pal Singh R/O 2/91, Swarn Jayanti Vihar Koyla Nagar, Kanpur Nagar 208011, Affirm and State on Otha That I have changed my son's name from VIKASH Singh to VIKAS Singh for all future purposes.

NOTICE

Be it known to all that in my Passport my husband name is Sardar Gur Mohan Singh, which is wrong. In future my husband is known with correct name Gur Mohan Singh. Surjeet Kaur D/o Late Mr. Sohan Singh R/O 28/1, Chander Nagar, Alambagh, Lucknow

NOTICE

That I have sworn affidavit before Shri Soddanavar advocate and Notary at Hukkeri on 23Dec 2021. to effect change of name of my son's name from VAIBHAV to VAIBHAV SHIVANAND VARJ in all My Army records. R/O- Ghodageri, Tal : Hukkeri, Dist: Belagavi.

NOTICE

That I have sworn affidavit before Shri Soddanavar advocate and Notary at Hukkeri on 23 DEC 2021. to effect change of name of my wife from : BHAGYASHRI to BHAGYASHRI SHIVANAND VARJ in all My Army records. R/O- Ghodageri, Tal : Hukkeri, Dist: Belagavi.

NOTICE

That I have sworn affidavit before Shri Soddanavar advocate and Notary at Hukkeri on 23DEC 2021. to effect change of name of my son's name from SURAJ to SURAJ SHIVANAND VARJ in all My Army records. R/O- Ghodageri, Tal : Hukkeri, Dist: Belagavi.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Dahari Chouhan, 46 years (Army No. 14621920Y Rank Havildar retired), S/o Sahdev Chouhan, Village- Masua (Matahi), Post-Bhagwat, District- Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh declares that my village name is wrongly recorded as Mathali. and wife name as Sheela Chouhan, Sheela. Her correct name is Sheela Devi and Village correct name is Masua (Matahi). Sheela Chouhan, Sheela, and Sheela Devi, Village Mathali, Masua (Matahi) are same and identical person vide affidavit sworn before notary public Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh

Union budget progressive, beneficial for farmers, youth and women: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath termed the Union Budget 2022-23 as progressive and beneficial for farmers, youth and women. He praised and thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for introducing a budget that catered to the needs of all sections of society. Commenting on the Union Budget 2022-23 on Tuesday, Yogi said that the minimum support price (MSP) provisions would help double the income of farmers.

While presenting the Budget, the Union finance minister said that a new scheme would be launched in PPP mode under which farmers would be provided with digital and hi-tech services. She also said that the use of 'Kisan Drones' would be promoted for crop assessment, digitisation of land records, spraying of insecticides and nutrients.

The chief minister said the initiatives announced in the budget would help in creating 60 lakh jobs and UP having the maximum youth population would be benefitted the most. Yogi also praised the Modi government for introducing schemes like Mission Shakti, Mission Vatsalya that would empower women.

He expressed happiness over the implementation of Ken-Betwa Link Project, which aims to provide irrigation benefits to 9.08 lakh hectares of farmers land and drinking water supply to over 60 lakh people.



HE EXPRESSED HAPPINESS OVER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KEN-BETWA LINK PROJECT, WHICH AIMS TO PROVIDE IRRIGATION BENEFITS TO 9.08 LAKH HECTARES OF FARMERS LAND AND DRINKING WATER SUPPLY TO OVER 60 LAKH PEOPLE

A provision of Rs 1,400 crore has been made for it in the Union Budget 2022-23.

Yogi also highlighted the announcement of 400 new Vande Bharat trains that would help in transportation. He also praised the Gati Shakti National Master Plan which is described as a transformative approach for economic growth and sustainable development. As many as 100 PM Gati Shakti

cargo terminals will be constructed across the nation to boost the infrastructure for logistics.

The chief minister said that the initiative would help in building infrastructure across the country and help in developing roads, railways, airports, ports and waterways.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the Union Budget 2022-23 laid down the

PROVISIONS RELATED TO UP IN 2022-23 UNION BUDGET

■ UP will get Rs 1,46,498 crore as devolution of state share in central taxes and duties while Rs 15,000 crore will be provided to the state as Finance Commission grants.

■ UP will get Rs 1,900 crore for Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural) and Rs 12,000 for Jal Jeevan Mission.

■ Estimated expenditure on national highway projects by the Central government in UP in 2022-23 is Rs 16,350 crore. Some of the important projects to be taken up in 2022-23 are Lucknow-Kanpur Expressway (63 km), Varanasi-Kolkata Expressway (642 km) and Gorakhpur-Siliguri Corridor (520 km) and international connectivity between Sonauli and Gorakhpur (80 km).

■ During 2022-23 fiscal, 32 important projects with a cumulative length of 1,533 km with total capital cost of Rs 46,627 crore.

■ Ken-Betwa river linking project costing Rs 44,605 crore will also be implemented.

■ Estimated expenditure on various schemes of the development of water resources, river development and Ganga rejuvenation is Rs 957 crore. This includes Rs 500m crore for Namami Gange and Rs 170 crore for Atal Bhujal Yojana and Rs 194 crore for accelerated irrigation benefit programme and command area and water management.

■ Rs 6,241 crore will be provided for Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan.

foundation to steer the economic developments for the next 25 years.

Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma said that the Union budget would benefit all sections of society, particularly women, youth, farmers and traders and it would prove to be a big boon for organic farming.

State Finance Minister Suresh Khanna said that UP would be the main beneficia-

ry of 60 lakh new jobs to be created as per the announcement made in the Union budget. He said the number of farmers benefiting from the MSP would increase as the budget in this head has been increased.

He said the hike in the outlay for the infrastructure projects would be a booster to mega projects like expressways, airports and rapid rail projects.

Opposition criticise Union budget

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party welcomed the Union budget, while the opposition parties criticised it, saying it was disappointing for the people of all walks of life particularly the poor, youth and the farmers.

The Samajwadi Party criticised the budget, saying it was directionless and inflationary and the Narendra Modi government had ignored the interests of the middle class, the worst hit by the two-year-long spell of COVID-19 pandemic. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said here on Tuesday that the budget had proved that the BJP had little concern for the plight of the common man. He said the recession in the economy due to the pandemic had destroyed millions of small businesses, devastating millions of people. "The people had used their savings for their survival but the budget has proved to be another disaster for them as far from mitigating their woes it will fuel inflation," he said. The SP chief said no relief measure had been announced in the budget for the common man. "People had pinned high hopes from the budget like relief in income tax. But there is no such thing as the priority of the BJP government is the corporate and big business houses," the SP president charged.

Raising the issues of farmers, Akhilesh Yadav said, "There is no mention of giving legal guarantee for MSP to the farmers and also no mention of providing jobs to the

youths." He alleged that the BJP governments' sole focus in the Union budget was winning the assembly elections in five states.

SP general secretary Ram Gopal Yadav said, "It is the most directionless and disappointing budget and I will rate it three on a scale of ten."

Criticising the reduction in custom duty on diamonds, he said the government seemed to believe that the poor women were the main customers of the diamonds.

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati said the Union budget was brought to woo the public with new promises and alleged that the Centre had forgotten to implement the old announcements.

Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) president Shivalp Singh Yadav also criticised the budget, saying no relief had been announced for the middle class, particularly for the salaried class. Moreover, he said, no relief had been announced for women in the budget. The Communist Party of India said the Union budget would make the corporate community and industrialists rich and impoverish the common man.

The CPI said in a statement that the Union budget was destructive in nature and it would widen the financial gap between the rich and poor. The party said the budget had disappointed the people of Uttar Pradesh. Rashtriya Lok Dal leader Anil Dubey while reacting to the budget said the issues of common man and farmers were ignored in the budget.

RLD likely to field candidate from Sarojininagar

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the Samajwadi Party refraining from announcing a candidate from Sarojininagar assembly seat in Lucknow, speculations are rife that its alliance partner Rashtriya Lok Dal may field a candidate and contest the election from this constituency.

Bharatiya Janata Party's sitting legislator from Sarojininagar has been vying for a party ticket and ironically competing against her husband and BJP state vice-president Daya Shanker Singh, causing the BJP brass to delay the declaration of the candidate for the seat.

On the other hand, the SP is studying the ongoing fight for ticket in the BJP camp to decide its strategy and has delayed announcement of a candidate from Sarojininagar.

The SP has fielded Anurag Bhadauriya from Lucknow East. He had contested the 2017 assembly election from Sarojininagar but lost by over 34,000 votes.

"Former MLA Sharda Pratap Shukla, who won the seat on a SP ticket in 2012, is also not a choice as he has been rather inert politically. The delay in finalising a candidate for Sarojininagar seat by the party brass has fuelled speculations that the SP could ask the RLD to field its candidate from the seat. Also, the SP leadership does not want any dissent as it could send a wrong signal to the rival camps," the source said.

"In this scenario, RLD leader Anil Dubey seems to be a good choice in view of the 50,000 Brahmin voters in this constituency. The SP also has a good following and voters in rural parts of this constituency," the source said.

When contacted, Anil Dubey said that he would contest the election if the party brass directed him but till date he had received no such instructions.

Mayawati to kick-start BSP campaign today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati will kick-start her party's campaign for UP assembly elections by addressing a public meeting at Kothi Meena Bazaar in Agra city on Wednesday.

A BSP spokesperson said that Covid protocol and the model code of conduct would be strictly adhered to in the party's first poll meeting in Agra.

All party candidates of districts in Agra division will be present in the public meeting.

After reaching Agra airport by an aircraft, Mayawati will reach the rally ground by a chopper.

Mayawati will hold public meetings division-wise in the UP polls and will also campaign in Punjab, where the BSP is contesting the assembly polls in alliance with Shiromani Akali Dal.

It is noteworthy that in the 2022 UP elections, the BSP is going it alone on all 403 assembly seats. The party has so far announced 293 candidates for the first five phases of the elections, in which preference has been given to social engineering.

So far, 81 upper caste candidates have been fielded by the BSP. It has also given tickets to 63 members of Scheduled Caste, 80 of Other Backward Classes and 69 Muslim.

The party claimed that it was contesting elections on the issues of development and good governance and promised to change the destiny of Uttar Pradesh through development and progress if the BSP formed a government in the state.

On Monday, the BSP had released a list of 61 candidates. It fielded Santosh Kumar Tripathi against Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya from Sirathu assembly seat in Kaushambi and Ravi Prakash Maurya from Ayodhya. In the



MAYAWATI WILL HOLD PUBLIC MEETINGS DIVISION-WISE IN THE UP POLLS AND WILL ALSO CAMPAIGN IN PUNJAB, WHERE THE BSP IS CONTESTING THE ASSEMBLY POLLS IN ALLIANCE WITH SHIROMANI AKALI DAL

latest list, the party has given tickets to 15 Scheduled Castes and nine Muslims. Kaushambi and Ayodhya seats will go to polls in the fifth phase on February 27.

Human trafficking racket busted in Bahraich, 5 held

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A human trafficking racket was busted and five people were arrested while a woman held by them was freed in Nanpara town of Bahraich, police said on Tuesday.

Bahraich Senior Superintendent of Police Keshav Choudhary said a joint operation was launched on Monday evening by the Sasrastra Seema Bal (SSB) and the Uttar Pradesh Police with the help of a non-governmental organisation after learning about the activities of the gang.

He said the team arrested four women -- Sudha, Usha Devi, Lakshmi and Kusuma -- and one man, Ramdal Yadav, during the operation.

The woman rescued from the gang is a 23-year-old widow of Bahraich, the SSP said, adding that she was handed over to her family members.

Choudhary said the arrested women admitted during interrogation their involvement in human trafficking in the past as firoz.

Hassan Firoz, who works as a child protection officer with a local NGO that is work-

ing against human trafficking, said, "Our NGO had received information that a gang of human smugglers is active on the Indo-Nepal border. The members of the gang are marrying widows and poor women from neighbouring Nepal in India. They smuggle and sell them in metros as well as in Gulf countries on the pretext of marriage. The accused were trying to sell the widow from Bahraich as well."

The NGO had informed the anti-human trafficking unit of the SSB and the local police officers about the activities of

the gang, he said.

Acting on the information, an operation was conducted by the police and the SSB, police said.

On Sunday, an NGO member posed as a customer and contacted the women members of the gang. The member made a deal with them to "buy" the widow for Rs 70,000. On Monday, the gang members were caught when they reached a predetermined spot to hand over the widow for cash to the NGO worker posing as a customer, police said.

All the accused had been sent to jail, police said.

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Vaccination of 100 pc targeted adults completed 698 test +ve, 2,230 recover in city

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh, which completed 100 per cent Covid vaccination of the targeted adult population, reported 4,901 new coronavirus positives cases in the last 24 hours while in the same period 12,263 people recovered from the infection.

However, 26 COVID-19 deaths were also reported across the state during the last 24 hours. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, while reviewing the situation here with Team 9,

claimed that the Covid third wave is under control in the state. "On an average, 2-2.5 lakh Covid tests are being conducted every day and there is a steady decline in the positivity rate. There has been a 50 per cent decline on Tuesday compared to more than one lakh active cases on January 17," he said.

At present, there are 47,198 active cases in the state out of which 44,929 people are receiving health benefits at home.

The chief minister said it

was clear that a very small number of Coronavirus infected people were in need of hospitalisation. He said this infection was like a viral fever so there was no need to be scared of it, but all precautions should be taken.

Yogi said that so far more than 26.16 crore Covid vaccines have been provided to the citizens in the state and more than 70 per cent of the adults had taken both doses of the vaccine. He said about 68 lakh adolescents in the age group 15-17 had

received the vaccine cover and more than 60.91 per cent of eligible people had also received the booster dose.

Meanwhile, 698 people tested positive for novel coronavirus infection in the city, while 2,230 COVID-19 patients recovered during the last 24 hours. At present there are 8,812 active cases and there were three deaths in the city. Amongst those who died included a 55-year-old man at SGPGLMS who was suffering from intestinal lung disease, a 32-year-old woman from

Ballia suffering from bone marrow disease and a 59-year-old suffering from kidney disease who died at the Apollo Medics Hospital. Amongst those who tested positive included 122 in Chinhat, 101 in Aliganj, 68 in Alambagh, 68 in Indiranagar, 37 in Silver Jubilee area, 75 in Sarojininagar, 56 at NK Road, 41 at Red Cross area, 23 in Tudiaganj. They included 58 travellers, 243 contacts, 207 with Influenza-like-illness, 19 pre-surgicals and 19 healthcare workers.

Missing youth found hanging

Lucknow (PNS): A 23-year-old youth was found hanging in a mango grove in Malihabad police station area on Tuesday. The deceased was identified as Sachin Yadav of Baheliya village in the area. He was hanging from a tree with a rope tied around his neck.

The incident came to light when some villagers went to the mango grove to attend the call of nature. Some of them identified the body and informed the family of the deceased about the incident.

Sachin was missing since Monday. The body was sent for autopsy. Sachin's father had ended his life 12 years back

when he was serving a jail term. Sachin was to marry a girl and his tilak function was scheduled on February 5.

RECOVERED: A joint team of Para police and the flying squad recovered ornaments worth Rs 60 lakh from a man during a vehicle checking drive on Mohan road on Monday night. While checking vehicles, the team spotted a car bearing the registration number of Rajasthan.

The occupants in the car, identified as Ashish Mittal, Jitendra and Deepak, all of Jaipur, could not show any paper relating to the ornaments. The cops called income

tax officials and handed over the recovered ornaments to them.

Meanwhile, the Para police arrested a man wanted in connection with the murder of property dealer Sandeep Pal of Kakori. and carrying a reward of Rs 15,000. The accused was identified as Santosh Lodhi of Para. Sandeep was gunned down on January 22 by Santosh and his aides who later dumped the body behind a plywood factory in the area. Police had earlier arrested Manish Gautam, of Kakori, Vikash Gautam and Sachin Rawat, both of Para, the three aides of prime accused Santosh Lodhi.

32 file nominations

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As many as 32 papers were filed for the assembly seats in Lucknow district on the fifth day of nominations on Tuesday.

District Election Officer Abhishek Prakash said that three papers were filed for Malihabad constituency, six for Bakshi Ka Talab, three for Sarojininagar, three for Lucknow West, five for Lucknow North, three for Lucknow East, five for Lucknow Central, three for Lucknow Cantonment and two for Mohanlalganj seats.

Amongst those who filed their nominations included independent Ajay Kumar Rawat and Neelam Saroj from the Bahujan Awam Party who filed their nominations for Malihabad constituency.

Independent candidates Kiran Dubey, Vandana, Balram Tripathi of Samdarshi Samaj Party, Kishore Kumar from Kishore Rajya Party, Sanjay Singh Rana from Bhartiya Sarv Dharam Party, Rishi Jaiswal from Gandhian People's Party filed their nominations from Bakshi-ka-Talab constituency.

Arvind Singh from Teesra Vikalp Party, Kallu Singh from Bhartiya Satya Chetna filed their papers from Sarojininagar seat.

Independent candidates Gulab Ahmad, Aman Khan, Kananat Siddiqui from Jan Abhiyan Party Atul Tewari from the Bhartiya Shakti Chetna Party filed their nominations for Lucknow West seat.

Independent candidate Mridul Kumar and Ashish Kumar Sinha from the Bahujan Samaj Party filed their nominations from Lucknow East constituency.

Amrishi Singh Pushkar from Samajwadi Party and Shrawan Kumar from Bhartiya Dharam Nirpeksh Party filed their papers for Mohanlalganj seat.

Sadar Jaffar from Congress and Dharmendra Gupta from Voters Party filed their papers for Lucknow Central seat.

Satyendra Kumar Tewari from Rashtriya Jati Jagat Aarakshan Virodh Party, Surendra Kumar from the Rashtriya Teesra Vikalp Party, Sachinad Srivastava from Janata Brigade Party, Bhupendra Pratap Singh from Bhartiya Shakti Chetna Party, Ashish Saxena from Janata Dal United and Anil Pandey from the BSP party filed their nominations for Lucknow Cantonment seat.

Independent candidate Anurag Mehrotra, Ajay Kumar Srivastava from Congress, Kaushal Kishore from Maulik Adhikar Party, Laxmi Prakash Dixit from Congress and Noor Mohammed from the Gandhian People's Party filed their papers for the Lucknow North seat.

Amrishi Singh Pushkar, the sitting MLA from Mohanlalganj, filed his nomination for the same constituency as a member of Samajwadi Party, said that he was confident that he would win by a margin of 50,000 votes. "This has always been an area of the Samajwadi Party.

His movable assets are worth Rs 1,08,70,000 and the market value of his movable assets is Rs 8,43,10,000. He said that if he won then he would work on the issues of farmers, roads and schools and install hand pumps where the farmers do not get water for irrigation.

Sadaf Jaffar, a teacher who is currently working as a translator and has filed his nominations from Lucknow Central, said that he had switched from teaching to politics. Her movable assets are worth Rs 6,46,864 and immovable assets worth Rs 25,00,000.

She said while teaching history and political science she realised that the thin line between mythology and history was being erased in the text books and that what she was teaching in terms of social rights was not being practiced on the ground. "Hence I took to activism and then later joined the Congress party as a member of the party" she said.

Forty-two-year-old Ashish Kumar Sinha from the BSP, who filed his nomination for the Lucknow East seat, is practicing at the civil and High Court in Lucknow. He said that he was standing for the elections for the first time. "I have always helped people and then felt that we should carry it out at the administrative level or government level and hence I decided that I need to be active in politics," he said.

FORM NO 5
THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
(9/2-A, Panna Lal Road, Allahabad-211002,U.P.)
(Area of Jurisdiction, Part of Uttar Pradesh)
Summons for filing Reply & Appearance by Publication
No..... Date: 12.01.2022
(Summons to defendant under section 19(3), of the Recovery of Debts Due to Bank and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules, 1993)
Original Application No. 822 of 2019
Indian Overseas BankApplicant
Versus
Fauran Singh & AnotherDefendants To,
1. Fauran Singh, S/o Chirauji Lal, R/o village Kehari, Tehsil Sadabad, District, Hathras. (Borrower & Mortgagee)
2. Lakhan Singh, S/o Fauran Singh, R/o village Kehari, Tehsil Sadabad, District, Hathras. (Guarantor)
In the above noted application, you are required to file reply in paper book form in four sets along with documents and affidavits (if any), personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner in Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the Tribunal on 17.02.2022 at 10.30 A.M. failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.
Registrar
Debts Recovery Tribunal
Allahabad

Kanhaiya Kumar attacked in Congress party office

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In Lucknow to campaign for Congress candidates, Kanhaiya Kumar was allegedly attacked during a programme at the UP Congress headquarters in Mall Avenue on Tuesday.

A youth allegedly threw a liquid mixed with ink at Kumar while he was proceeding towards the stage.

However, Congress leaders claimed that "acid" was thrown at Kanhaiya Kumar and not ink but the move was foiled and in the process, some drops fell on some youths standing nearby.

Even as the incident caused a stampede-like situation at the UPPCC headquarters, the accused youth was caught by the police and the injured were sent to the nearest hospital for treatment.

ADCP (Central) Raghavendra Mishra said that the accused was quizzed in police custody wherein he revealed his identity as Devansh Bajpayee of Chowk.

Admitting that he had mixed chemicals in the ink, the accused told the police that he attacked Kanhaiya as the leader made statements which were anti-national in nature.

"Kanhaiya is a traitor. Why should his programme be held in Lucknow? How can someone who is against the country be our?" he asked nonchalantly.

The high drama at UPPCC headquarters unfolded while people were waiting for Kanhaiya Kumar, who arrived late in the programme. As he moved towards the stage, a group of youths threw a chemical-like liquid at him, causing an uproar. In the melee, Devansh Bajpayee was caught by Kanhaiya's supporters and handed over to the police.

Congressmen alleged that the act was the handiwork of workers of Bharatiya Janata Party's frontal outfit Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad as they wanted to disrupt the party's function.

It was alleged that the BJP was



scared of Kanhaiya Kumar and hence the attack was planned to stop him from campaigning in Lucknow.

On its part, the BJP charged that the attendance was very thin at Kanhaiya's programme and that was why the Congressmen themselves enacted the drama, as a face saving measure.

This is not the first time that Kanhaiya Kumar's event has been involved in controversy. In 2018, a man had thrown ink at Gujarat MLA Jignesh Mevani and Kumar in Gwalior. The two were in Gwalior to address a seminar at the Chamber of Commerce Bhawan as part of their 'Samvidhan Bachao' protest. Mukesh Pal of the Hindu Sena allegedly threw ink at both when they were about to address the seminar.

Later, while embarking on a door-to-door campaigning for party candidates in Lucknow, Kanhaiya Kumar said that under the leadership of Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, the assembly elections were going to be big.

"Since the incident of Hathras, Unnao and Lakhimpur Kheri took place, Congress has been on the streets seeking justice. Those who

did not even build the country were selling the country. Congress has built India, so it is saving the country from such people," he said.

On Tuesday, the Congress released a list of four candidates for the upcoming state elections. The party fielded Shakeel Ahmed Noori from Pilibhit constituency, Azimushhhan from Shahabad, Neha Tiwari replaced Gayatri Tiwari in Kalyanpur (Kanpur) and Adishakti Dikshit will contest from Tindwari.

Sources said that Bikru widow Khushi Dubey's mother Gayatri Tiwari refused to contest the assembly elections from Kalyanpur as her name was missing from the voters list. Subsequently, the Congress replaced her with her daughter Neha Tiwari (Khushi Dubey's younger sister) as the party candidate. Neha is the younger sister of Khushi Dubey. Khushi's mother felt that she would not be able to campaign vigorously and hence changed her mind.

"We do not wish to do anything that will weaken our fight for Khushi's release. Neha is better positioned to fight the elections and raise Khushi's issue," said a member of the family.

Political parties repose less faith in abilities of women

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Women candidates fielded in the Lucknow district by prominent political parties for the forthcoming assembly elections are far outnumbered by their male counterparts, showing yet again that political parties repose less faith in the abilities of women to win a Vidhan Sabha seat for them.

One look at the scenario reveals the truth. Out of all the candidates announced by the Bahujan Samaj Party for the nine assembly constituencies in Lucknow district, there is no woman. The Samajwadi Party has fielded only one female candidate out of the nine candidates announced for the assembly seats in Lucknow district.

The Congress, which gave the 'Ladki Hoon Lad Sakti Hoon' slogan, has fielded three woman candidates, including two Muslims, for the assembly seats in Lucknow while the Bharatiya Janata Party is yet to announce its candidates.

Aam Aadmi Party, which is contesting the UP assembly polls in a big way this time, has announced candidates for seven constituencies of Lucknow, all of them being males.

Amongst the woman candidates given tickets in Lucknow are Samajwadi Party's Pooja Shukla, a former student of Lucknow University who became active in student politics in 2012 and was also arrested when she waived black flag at a programme organised in LU on the arrival of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Congress has fielded three woman candidates -- Mamta Chowdhary from Mohanlalganj, Sadaf Jaffar from Lucknow Central and Shahana Siddiqui from Lucknow West.

Sadaf Jaffar, a single mother who has participated in several protests and is contesting election for the first

time, while commenting on why woman were not given tickets for elections, said that it was because they did not have muscle power and lacked masochism that surrounds the electoral politics.

"If given the opportunity, women perform very well. We have several examples," she said.

Regarding voters' confidence in women candidates, she said the response was very good. "I have been visiting homes during my door to door campaigns and have been getting very good responses from the people," she said.

Sadaf Jaffar, who has been a teacher in several schools, said that she joined the Congress in 2018 and secured a ticket to contest election in 2022. "I had been a social activist for almost 10 years and before I joined the Congress, I was leading several protests and agitations. I have been continuously fighting and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra saw my struggle and hence gave me a ticket," she added.

Mamta Chowdhary, who is contesting assembly election for the first time, said that except for the Congress, no other party was interested in fielding female candidates

When asked why their party had not fielded any female candidate in Lucknow district, BSP district president Ganga Ram Gautam said that their party itself was headed by a woman leader.

"We are sensitive to the fact that women have to be fielded and they have been fielded in the entire UP in good numbers but there are several factors which have to be considered when a candidate is fielded from any constituency," he said.

AAP state president Sabhajeet Singh, when asked the same question, said that the names of the candidates from two constituencies had yet to be announced and people should wait and watch.

Criminal arrested after encounter

Lucknow (PNS): An accused wanted by the Ashiyana police in connection with different crimes was arrested after an encounter with the cops in Thakurganj on Monday.

The accused, who opened fire on the police team, sustained bullet injuries when the cops returned the fire.

The Thakurganj police had arrested accused Mahendra Rastogi, 35, around 5 pm on Monday. During interrogation, the accused said that he could take the police to the location where he had kept the psychotropic substances. However, the accused opened fire on a police team during the search operation in an attempt to escape.

In the retaliatory firing by police, Mahendra suffered bullet injury and was admitted to KGMU's Trauma Centre.

Police said the accused was named in 19 FIRs for murder, loot, dacoity and under the NDPS Act. Police recovered 950 gram of psychotropic substances and one country-made pistol.

(for political parties to publish in the newspapers, social media platforms & website of the party)
Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates
(As per the Commission's directions issued in pursuance of the Order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in contempt petition(C) no. 2192 of 2018 in WP(C) no. 536 of 2011)

Name of Political Party : Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation
Name of the Election : Vidhan Sabha 2022
Name of State : Uttar Pradesh
(1) Name of the Constituency : 180-Rae Bareilly
Name of the Candidate : Phoolchand

Sl.no.	Criminal antecedents	
a.	Nature of the offences	143,504,505,353 IPC & 174,146,147 Riv Act1986 & 7-CLA Act
b.	Case no.	468/2012
c.	Name of the Court	ACJ(JD), Raebareilly
d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	No
e.	Date of conviction, if any	Not Applicable
f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	Not Applicable
g.	Any other information required to be given	Nil
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere 'winnability' at the polls (not more than 100 words)	The candidate leads struggles of peasants and masses. F.I.R. is due to political reasons.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	People reposed faith on him.

(2) Name of the Constituency : 359-Sikanderpur
Name of the Candidate : Sriram

Sl.no.	Criminal antecedents	
a.	Nature of the offences	1 147,148,149,332,353,308,325,504,506 IPC, 3(1) x SC/ST Act,7-CLA Act, 3-Protection of damage of govt. property act. 2 147,148,353,336,323,504 IPC, 3-Protection of damage of govt. property act. 3. 3-Protection of damage of govt. property act.
b.	Case no.	1 4471/02, 2 1686/03 3 1863/03
c.	Name of the Court	1 C.J.M.Ballia, 2 C.J.M.Ballia, 3 C.J.M.Ballia
d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	1.No, 2.No, 3.No
e.	Date of conviction, if any	Not Applicable
f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	Not Applicable
g.	Any other information required to be given	Nil
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere 'winnability' at the polls (not more than 100 words)	The candidate leads struggles of poor peasants and is popular mass leader. F.I.R. is due to political reasons.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	People reposed faith on him.

(3) Name of the Constituency : 379-Zamania
Name of the Candidate : Ishwari

Sl.no.	Criminal antecedents	
a.	Nature of the offences	1,143,341,342,504 IPC,3/6 SPA Act, 2 143,352,504,506 IPC, 7-CLA Act
b.	Case no.	1 4232/12, 2 4163/13
c.	Name of the Court	1 ACJ,M.Ghazipur, 2 C.J.M.Ghazipur
d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	1.No, 2.No
e.	Date of conviction, if any	Not Applicable
f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	Not Applicable
g.	Any other information required to be given	Nil
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere 'winnability' at the polls (not more than 100 words)	The candidate leads struggles of poor peasants and women. F.I.R. is due to political reasons.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	People reposed faith on her.

(4) Name of the Constituency : 399-Marihan
Name of the Candidate : Jeera Devi

Sl.no.	Criminal antecedents	
a.	Nature of the offences	1,323,504,506,354 IPC 2,143,147,186,553 IPC & 7-CLA Act
b.	Case no.	1. 1248/2020, 2 2278/2020
c.	Name of the Court	1 C.J.(JD),Mahila Utpadan, Mirzapur, 2 ACJ(SD),Mirzapur, 3 ACJ,Mirzapur
d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	1.No, 2.No, 3.No
e.	Date of conviction, if any	Not Applicable
f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	Not Applicable
g.	Any other information required to be given	Nil
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere 'winnability' at the polls (not more than 100 words)	The candidate leads struggles of poor peasants and women. F.I.R. is due to political reasons.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	People reposed faith on her.

(5) Name of the Constituency : 395-Chhanbey (SC)
Name of the Candidate : Dharmraj

Sl.no.	Criminal antecedents	
a.	Nature of the offences	1, 302, 120-B IPC, 2, R.C.N.-09/2018-2019, Forest Range, Damanganj, Dt 7-8-2018. 5/26 Forest (Conser.) Act 1927, Sec 9,39,44,49A,49B,50,51 of Wild Life Protection Act 1972.
b.	Case no.	1. 61/2019, 2 N/A
c.	Name of the Court	1. ADJ 1st, Mirzapur, 2 N/A
d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	1.Yes, 2. No
e.	Date of conviction, if any	Not Applicable
f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	Not Applicable
g.	Any other information required to be given	Nil
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere 'winnability' at the polls (not more than 100 words)	The candidate leads struggles of poor masses. His name was added later on to the original F.I.R due to political reasons.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	People reposed faith on him.

(6) Name of the Constituency : 400-Ghorawal
Name of the Candidate : Suresh

Sl.no.	Criminal antecedents	
a.	Nature of the offences	1, 5/26, Ind.Forest Act(UP amend 2000), 17A,27,29,39,50,51,52 Wild Life Prot. Act 1972, 2/3 Forest (Conser.) Act. 2. FIR no. 212/2014, P.S. Halva, Sec 323,506,332,353,147,148,149,307/IPC & 5/26 Forest (Conser.) Act 1927, Sec 2/9/27/49/51/52 of Wild Life Protection Act 1972. 3. FIR no. 663/2016, P.S. Lalgaon, Mirzapur, Sec 188,283,290 IPC.
b.	Case no.	1.5145/2017, 2 N/A, 3 N/A
c.	Name of the Court	1 JM, Mirzapur, 2 N/A, 3 ACJ, Mirzapur
d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	1.No, 2.No, 3.No
e.	Date of conviction, if any	Not Applicable
f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	Not Applicable
g.	Any other information required to be given	Nil
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere 'winnability' at the polls (not more than 100 words)	The candidate leads struggles of peasants and poor masses. F.I.R. is due to political reasons.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	People reposed faith on him.

(7) Name of the Constituency : 147-Hargaon (SC)
Name of the Candidate : Arjun Lal

Sl.no.	Criminal antecedents	
a.	Nature of the offences	1. FIR no.599/2020, P.S. Hargaon, Sitapur, Sec 188,269,270/IPC & Sec 3 Epidemic Disease Act, 2. FIR no.375/2021, P.S. Hargaon, Sitapur, Sec 2/3 Pub. Property Damage Act
b.	Case no.	1 N/A, 2 N/A
c.	Name of the Court	1 N/A, 2 N/A
d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	1.No, 2.No
e.	Date of conviction, if any	Not Applicable
f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	Not Applicable
g.	Any other information required to be given	Nil
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere 'winnability' at the polls (not more than 100 words)	The candidate leads struggles of peasants and poor masses. F.I.R. is due to political reasons.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	People reposed faith on him.

Union Budget evokes mixed response

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Amidst the shadows of the corona pandemic affected economy, the Union Budget presented by the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has brought a mixed response from the political parties, entrepreneurs and others here on Tuesday. Though the Budget was hailed by local Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders, most of the opposition parties strongly criticised it as the Budget failed to meet the expectations of the common man suffering from price-hikes. Though the Budget surprised many as it avoided imposing much burdens on the common man despite economic slow-downs due to pandemic, the mood in all the local offices of stock markets was jubilant.

There was also mixed views on the Budget among the entrepreneurs and traders during the live debates at many places. Under the banner Indian Industries Association (IIA), a live debate was held at Vinayak Plaza (Maldahiya) while under the auspices of Varanasi Yapar Mandat at Saroja Palace. Though most of the experts welcomed the Budget, many raised eyebrows over some of its provisions saying that the same was brought in view of upcoming assembly elections in five states including UP. Expressing his views, Geographical Identifications (GI) expert Padma Shri Dr Rajni Kant said, 'The Budget will serve as a lifeline to the artisans, weavers, women, farmers and domestic industry and strengthen government efforts of making the nation Atmanirbhar (self-reliant) and help the local products to go to



Live discussion going on Union Budget in Varanasi on Tuesday.

Pioneer

global.

Former Mayor Ram Gopal Mohle has described the Budget as strengthening the vision of an all-inclusive and self-reliant India. 'In the budget, full care has been taken of farmers, youth, small and medium industries and business. The special thing is that the expansion of private sector has also been outlined in the Budget so that employment opportunities can be expanded,' he said, adding that the government has given a befitting reply to the opposition's false allegations by announcing a record-breaking procurement target on MSP and other measures aimed at reducing the cost of agriculture. 'Solutions have also been given for the new challenges to come. At the present time, when the country's economy is on a path of development to come out of the shadow of the corona pandemic, there cannot be a better Budget than this,' he felt.

According to former president ICAI (Varanasi Branch) Ajay Kumar Mishra, the provision of 25,000 kms of roads and construction of 80 lakh buildings is a welcome step keeping in mind the infrastructure sector. 'The revising ITR for two years and extending the deadline for taking inputs in GST till November next year will bring convenience to the traders and reduce tax disputes,' he said, and added that overall, the budget is balanced.

Rajat Pathak of Rajat Synergy Group said that small trader or individual taxpayer can do his revised returns any time within two years by taking cognisance of the error in his income tax, there will be relief. 'With this, good coordination will be established between the Income Tax department and the taxpayer and the revenue collection of the government will increase as well as the small taxpayer will get freedom from unnecessary

penalty,' he said, adding that the tax exemption period for startups has been extended by one more year till 2023, which will prove to be a very helpful step for new entrepreneurs in the period of recession due to corona in the last two years.

Mayank Agarwal, co-founder of Humsafar Diesel Door Delivery startup said, 'The Budget is a welcome approach as it has drafted many things to boost investments in the country and the startup ecosystem overall. The eligibility of tax exemption claiming tax holidays for startups would be exempted till March 31st, 2023. We welcome this new move focusing on the MSME sector which would further boost the lower end of the spectrum. The new move can also lead to an increase in the demand for diesel door delivery startups. This would encourage budding micro entrepreneurs to come up in this segment.'

Thousands take holy dip in Ganga

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Braving cold waves and foggy conditions, thousands of devotees thronged 84-odd ghats of river Ganga to take holy dip in sacred river water on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya here on Tuesday. However, rush was not as heavy as seen usually on this auspicious occasion due to the third wave of the coronavirus pandemic. As it is the biggest bathing festival of ongoing Magh Mela in Prayag, it is also expected that even on Wednesday, there would be rush when the devotees would come here on their return journey from Sangam in Prayag for taking bath in river Ganga and offering prayer at one of the Dwadasa Jyotirlingas, Kashi Vishwanath



Devotees taking a holy dip in river Ganga on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya in Varanasi on Tuesday.

Pioneer

temple in this holy city. The administration had already imposed some traffic and other restrictions in Kashi Vishwanath Corridor and its adjoining areas for two days. The shivering cold wave

could not discourage the faith of the devotees as in almost all the areas and localities near the river Ganga whether it was Bainsasur Ghat in the north, Assi ghat in the south and Dashaswamedh Ghat in the

mid, there was rush of hundreds of devotees.

Many of the devotees maintained silence till they offered prayers after taking a holy bath. Elaborate security arrangements have been made at the ghats.

Right from the early morning hours, the ghats like Dashaswamedh, Rajendra Prasad, Ahliyabai, Assi, Panchaganga, Sheela, Scindia, Nagwa, Bhainsasur, Rajghat, Narad, Kedar, Hanuman, Ravidas and Tulsi Ghat witnessed gathering of huge number of devotees. Rush was also seen at different ghats across the river at Ramnagar and Parao areas.

After taking bath, the devotees offered daans to the Brahmins and poor people including beggars.

EC guidelines for election of MLC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A candidate to contest the Varanasi local body MLC constituency is required to attach the authorisation letter of the political party while submitting nomination papers if has association with it as it is mandatory as per the guidelines of the Election Commission.

As per schedule of the election for the Varanasi local body MLC constituency, the nomination papers will be submitted from February 4 between 11 and 3 pm after the notification to be issued by the Returning Officer and District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma same day at 11 am. The nomination papers will be submitted at the courtroom of the Additional District Magistrate (ADM-E) in the Collectorate

premises here. The last date to file the nomination is February 11 but the nomination papers could not be submitted on the public holiday. The nomination papers will be scrutinised on February 14 and the nomination could be withdrawn on February 16 between 11 am and 3 pm and thereafter the list of valid candidates will be published. The voting and counting will be held on March 3 and 14 respectively.

The term of Brijesh Kumar Singh alias Arun, elected member of Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council from Varanasi Local Authority constituency, is ending on March 7, 2022, Sharma informed adding, all the processes of nomination will be held in the courtroom ADM-E.

The candidates to contest the election should be citizens

of India and have not been disqualified by the Election Commission. It is necessary that the name of the candidate should be in the electoral roll of any assembly constituency of the state and they are required to attach it's certified copy with the nomination papers. The number of proposers shall be ten and their names should be in the electoral roll of the Legislative Council. The age of the candidate should not be less than 30 years. The amount of security will be Rs 5000 for SC/ST and Rs 10,000 for other categories.

If a candidate belongs to any political party, then he is required to give it's authorisation letter in Form-AA-BB while submitting the nomination papers as it is mandatory as per the guidelines of the Election Commission.

Nomination papers can be given by the candidate himself or his proposer.

The candidates are required to attach the caste certificate issued by the competent authority in respect of SC/ST with nomination papers besides 15 photographs shot within three months from the date of nomination. The photograph should be stamp size (2 cm x 2.5 cm) of white/off-white background with full face towards the camera, simple face expression and open eyes. The photograph can be color or black & white as per the convenience of the candidate. The photograph should be in simple clothes.

Photographs in uniform are not allowed. The photograph should also not be in a hat and black colored glass, Sharma informed.

One Covid death reported in Varanasi

VARANASI (PNS): Though, the positive cases and active cases of COVID-19 continued decreasing but one death was reported from the deadly novel coronavirus infection in Varanasi district on Tuesday giving an alarming signal.

As per data made available by the Health department this evening, one death was reported from the deadly novel coronavirus infection taking the death toll to 8 in the district.

Though, there is relief in the positive cases as a total of 177 people (4.14% positivity rate) were tested positive taking the tally to 11570 while a total of 193 positive cases were reported a day earlier. A total of 438 corona patients (84.92% recovery rate) also recovered

from home isolation as well as Covid hospitals taking the cumulative figure to 9825.

The active cases also decreased to 1731 from 1999 which was reported on Monday last.

DOCTOR COUPLE HONOURED: In a laurel to the medical fraternity of the city, the Indian Medical Association, Haryana felicitated the doctor couple of Varanasi Dr Manoj Kumar Srivastava and Dr Shipra Dhar with a special honour for their campaign to 'Save Girl Child' with the motto "Girl Child is not a burden." President of Haryana Unit of IMA Dr Karan Punia and Secretary Dr Mukesh Panwar felicitated Dr Manoj and Dr Shipra with a

special honour at a function. The local doctors community, Bharat Vikash Parishad Varuna and other social organisations extended their congratulations to both for the honour.

It may be mentioned here that Dr Shipra does not charge even a single penny on the birth of a girl child in her hospital Kashi Medicare in Pahadia area and she also imparts free education to as many as 40 girls of poor families.

The couple also make available foodgrain and clothes to as many as 40 needy widows free of cost. Even the Prime Minister Narendra Modi had lauded the work of Dr Shipra and also honoured her for this noble work. Dr Manoj has written three books- Lakshman

Rekha of Lockdown, Corona Harega Desh Jitega & COVID-19 guidelines and management on COVID-19 to aware the people of the pandemic. Dr Manoj has recently received the award of the Best Magazine for the edition of health magazine Apka Ka Swasthya.

BHU SCHOLAR GETS IPBES UN FELLOW: Senior research fellow of Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development (IESD), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) Pradeep Kumar Dubey has been selected as a fellow for the globally reputed Nexus Assessment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services (IPBES) of the United Nations.

1.25 cr devotees take holy dip in Sangam on Mauni Amavasya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Lakhs of devotees took spiritual dip in Sangam on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya in UP's Prayagraj on Monday and Tuesday. The official count of the bathers is above 1.25 crore.

According to movement of stars, Mauni Amavasya began on Monday in the late evening hours. If Amavasya falls on Monday, it becomes much more significant and is called Somwati Amavasya, so a good number of people prefer to take a holy dip in the sacred waters on Monday itself.

Officially Mauni Amavasya bathing was announced on Tuesday, and devotees from far and near distances had started pouring in on Monday itself. Elaborate arrangements had been made to ensure smooth passage of this biggest bathing occasion of Magh Mela 2022. The chief secretary himself had visited the mela to monitor preparation after receiving several complaints of mismanagement, particularly in areas inundated under knee deep water owing to rising level of the Ganga.

To control and manage crowds, a one way arrangement was brought into implementa-



tion at the railway station from where devotees walked to the Sangam covering around five km.

All the parking slots were full and people found it difficult to search out a space for parking vehicles.

Alertness of the security forces and round the clock vigil ensured the passage of Mauni Amavasya without any untoward incident. Though some bathers complained about police harassment, over all pilgrims returned satisfied.

Crowd of lakhs of devotees also flouted the Covid protocol in the mela area. Although

most of the faces were covered with masks, some kept their mouths covered with a scarf, shawl, and muffler. Facing all the restrictions and chaos, devotees reached the fair area with full enthusiasm to take a holy dip.

Meanwhile, donating after bathing on Mauni Amavasya has special significance. For this reason, after bathing, people donated 'Til's laddus, tils, til's oil, clothes, gooseberry etc. to the tirth purohits. Those people whose moon is debilitated in their horoscope, they donated milk, rice, kheer, sugar, misri and batasha.

People also faced problems due to lack of proper arrangement of Ghat in Ganga near Bridge number four and five. Most of the Kalpavasis took bath here. Dandi Sanyasis and Mahatmas of Acharyanagar also took bath in the Ganga here.

In the Khoya-Paya camp, 200 people were reunited with their relatives only in morning hours. So far, 1,000 persons were united to their kin through the Khoya Paya camp. On Monday, 800 people reunited, while on Tuesday so far 200 people were reunited with their relatives.

Devotees facing hardships due to poor cellular network

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Devotees coming from across the globe to take a holy dip in Sangam on the pious occasion of Mauni Amavasya had to face untold hardship due to mobile network problems here on Tuesday.

On the auspicious time of Mauni Amavasya, the process of taking a holy dip in the Ganga started from 1.27 pm on Monday itself. This sequence intensified on Tuesday. The Mela area, spread over several kilometers, is crowded with lakhs of people. Lakhs of people simultaneously took a holy

dip in the Sangam. When the crowd increased, the mobile network from the fair area came to a standstill. Due to this, devotees found it difficult to contact their loved ones.

The problem of mobile networks was especially around the holy confluence of Ganga, Yamuna. Mobile network was not working here within a radius of about two kilometers. The devotees got upset because of this. If any acquaintance of the devotees went astray, then they were not able to find them. People coming from far flung areas were getting separated from their loved ones in the fair.

There was a crowd at the 'Khoya Paya' (lost and found) center in the fair. Thousands of people gave information about being separated from their loved ones. People were constantly being introduced. Devotees said that if the mobile network had worked then there would not have been so much trouble in finding loved ones.

People separated from their loved ones tried to contact each other on mobile. They were continuously calling but not able to talk to anyone. Devotees expressed their displeasure over the poor arrangement of mobile networks.

People coming from far

and wide had to face trouble in the fair of Mauni Amavasya, the most important bathing festival of Prayagraj Magh Mela, when people's pockets became empty. They went towards the ATM, and as soon as they entered the ATM, the guard directly replied that there was no money. Due to this, they became worried. Somewhere they tried to withdraw money through an Aadhar card, and somewhere they withdrew money from their account by reaching branches. There was not enough money in ATMs for lakhs of people who came to Magh Mela area. Due to this they had to face trouble.

BJP, 3 other major parties yet to announce name of their candidates

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

At a time when the nomination process for the fifth phase of the UP assembly polls-2022, that covers the three districts of Prayagraj, Kaushambi and Pratappgarh, the four major parties including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Samajwadi Party (SP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Congress along with their allies are yet to open their cards and announce names of their candidates from all the 22 assembly seats on offer in the region.

In Prayagraj district alone, between these four major political players, names of 48 candidates need to be declared for the 12 assembly seats, but so far only 29 names (60.41%) have been formally declared by them. The remaining 19 names (39.58%) are still awaited.

Out of the 22 assembly seats of the three districts of Prayagraj region, Prayagraj is the largest in terms of its 12 assembly seats, Pratappgarh is next with seven assembly seats

followed by Kaushambi with three assembly seats.

The delay in naming candidates is giving sleepless nights to the ticket aspirants of these parties and their supporters too. The ruling BJP could so far name only six candidates. In the 2017 elections, the saffron party had fielded candidates on only nine out of 12 seats while the remaining three seats were given by it to its ally Apna Dal (Sonela). This time, there is talk of a total of four seats going to the allies, including Apna Dal (S) and Nishad Party. Due to intense tussle for the remaining seats in its kitty including Allahabad North and perhaps Karchana, the party is still looking at its options while giving Soraon, Pratappur, Handia and Bara to its allies.

SP and Congress had fought the 2017 elections together but this time they are locked in a face-off. So far SP has announced names of eight candidates while BSP has announced nine candidates. Congress has fielded five can-

didates.

So far in Prayagraj, BJP has fielded Siddharth Nath Singh from Allahabad West, Nand Gopal Gupta "Nandi" from Allahabad South, Neelam Karwariya from Meja, Guru Prasad Maurya from Phaphamau, Praveen Patel from Phulpur and Aarti Kol from Koraon. Likewise, SP has announced names of Sandeep Yadav from Allahabad North, Ujjawal Raman Singh from Karchana, Mujtaba Siddiqui from Phulpur, Hakim Lal Bind from Handia, Ajay Munna from Bara, Ramdev "Nidar" from Koraon, Geeta Pasi from Soraon and Sandeep Patel from Meja. The Congress has announced names of Anugrah Narayan Singh from Allahabad North, Alpna Nishad from Allahabad South, Durgesh Pandey from Phaphamau, Sanjay Tiwari from Pratappur and Manju Sant from Bara.

BSP on its part has fielded Sanjay Goswami from Allahabad North, Ghanshyam Pandey from Pratappur,

Narendra aka Munna Tripathi from Handia, Devendra Mishra alias Nagarha from Allahabad West, Arvind Shukla from Karchana, Sarvesh Tiwari aka Baba Tiwari from Meja, Om Prakash Patel from Phaphamau, Ramtolan Yadav from Phulpur and Shiv Prakash from Bara.

A total of 114 people filed their nominations paper on the first day of nomination under the Assembly General Election-2022 here on Tuesday. Under which 09 people from 254-Phaphamau assembly, 06 people from 255-Soraon assembly, 10 people from 256-Phulpur assembly, 14 people from 257-Pratappur assembly, 06 people from 258-Handia assembly, 09 people from 259-Meja assembly, 04 people from the 260-Karchana assembly, 14 people from the 261-allahabad west assembly, 15 people from the 262-allahabad north assembly, 15 people from the 263-allahabad south assembly, 09 people from 264 Bara assembly and three people file their nominations from 265-Koraon assembly.

SEC intensifies door-to-door campaigns

ALLAHABAD (PNS): Even as the State Election Commission has intensified door-to-door campaigns to swell voting percentage in the forthcoming assembly polls, it has a tough nut to crack in Allahabad North assembly constituency. Known as the intellectual hub of the Sangam City, the constituency is notorious for the lowest voter turnout among 12 assembly seats of the Prayagraj district in the past elections. In the 2012 assembly polls, the district registered 55.05 per cent polling, while there was a marginal rise of 0.33 per cent in 2017 with 55.38 per cent turnout. The nine rural assembly constituencies of the district, including Meja, Phaphamau, Koraon, Soraon,

Phulpur, Pratappur, Handia, Bara and Karchana performed well in 2017, while the efforts of district election officers to increase the voting percentage in all the three urban constituencies, including Allahabad North, Allahabad South and Allahabad West went in vain. In the 2017 polls, the three urban seats recorded 48.60, 41.80 and 50 per cent polling, while the figure in 2012 stood 51.74, 40.87 and 45.04 percent respectively. The voting percentage revealed that about half of urban voters preferred to stay indoors. The turnout in rural constituencies in 2017 was: Phaphamau (58 %), Soroan (59), Phulpur (59), Pratappur (55), Handia (55), Meja (55), Karchana (62), Bara

(58) and Koraon (60). In 2012, the voting percentage stood at 57.76, 58.62, 59.61, 57.38, 57.03, 56.00, 58.65, 59.62 and 61.62 percent respectively. Officials said they have taken up a series of awareness campaigns to increase the voting percentage in the 2022 assembly polls. More focus has been paid to Allahabad North assembly segment that recorded the lowest 24 percent polling in 2007, when hardly 26.53 % males and 20.56 % females came out to cast their franchise. This time, teams of BLOs and district election officials are approaching the elite voters in Allahabad North assembly segment to inform them about the importance of their vote in a democracy. Officials said, over

6.47 lakh people live in Allahabad north assembly seat, where more than 4.38 lakh are eligible voters.

The list of voters in Allahabad north assembly seat included 4,809 wage voters and 1.06 lakh voters in the age group of 30-39. Currently, Prayagraj district has 46,02,812 voters, including 25,03,349 males, 20,98,818 females and 645 transgenders. Allahabad West has the highest (4,54,293 voters), followed by Allahabad North (4,48,327), Phulpur (4,06,028), Pratappur (4,04,518), Allahabad South (4,02,635), Handia (3,99,530), Soroan (3,78,212), Phaphamau (3,64,000), Koraon (3,50,569), Karchana (3,46,878), Bara (3,33,123) and Meja (3,24,789).



District Magistrate, City, Neha Sharma holds meeting with political party leaders on Tuesday.

Pioneer

Two-member committee set up to probe E-bus accident: DC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar, addressing the presspersons on Tuesday informed that a two-member committee had been set up to inquire into the cause of the E-bus accident which took place at Tatmil. He said the Vehicle Tracking System and the CCTV recordings at the crossing have all been gathered to be presented before the committee to fix charges of negligence. He said directive had been issued to the Kanpur City Transport Service Limited to ensure that driver and conductor should be screened before being assigned the driving of the bus on the specific route. The special committee will be arriving to carry out the probe.

He said at the time of accident there was no passenger travelling on the bus UP 78 GT 3970 and the conductor was also not on the bus. He said the bus was to be delivered at the charging station at Ahirwan. He said an FIR has been filed in the Railbazar police station u/s 279, 337, 338, 302 and 307. He said the driver of the bus, Satyendra had been arrested



Divisional Commissioner carried out spot investigation at the E-bus accident site.

Pioneer

and he was being cross questioned thoroughly. He said another issue of importance was to weigh the responsibilities of the Bus Operating Agency.

The DC said the maintenance, operations, deployment of drivers and conductors was

being done by Tirthanker City Bus Operations Pvt Ltd and this pact had been ratified through the KCTSL. He said the deceased have been listed and very soon the financial compensation will be provided to the kin of the deceased. He said it was a matter of grave

concern and thus the administration was making every effort to ensure that there was no reoccurrence in future. He said the allegation that the driver was drunk was also being probed.

VIDEO VIRAL: It may be mentioned here that Monday late night a video was viral where the driver concerned Satyendra was shown being slapped by the angry passengers for rash and drunken driving.

The video clearly showed that a car was chasing the bus and were signalling the driver to stop the bus but he kept on speeding the bus. As per evidence the officials reached the spot where the bus had been intercepted and the driver had been beaten up and they asked the passenger to disembark. Thus it became quite clear that the officials were aware that the bus driver was badly drunk and unable to drive the bus safely yet they forced him to take the bus to the charging station. It clearly shows that if the driver had been forced to get down and the bus sent to the charging station by another driver the lives would not have been lost nor so many people would have suffered grievous injuries.

Bhatia terms Union Budget as average

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Noted Company Secretary and budget analyst, Jasbir Singh Bhatia while reacting to the Union Budget 2022 in the second year of COVID-19 pandemic termed it an average budget which highly disappointed the masses. He said the common man was hopeful that there would be some incentives in the current election year but they were highly disappointed. He said despite the pandemic playing havoc nothing has been done in this direction which was quite discouraging. He said nothing much had been done in the IT slabs.

He said remarkably few real changes to the personal income tax structure in a year that had seen demands from various quarters for some sort of relief or another in times of a pandemic. He said however the big announcements included a 30 per cent tax on transfer of digital assets and a new digital rupee using blockchain technology will also be introduced by the Reserve Bank of India this fiscal.

He said overarching focus of the Budget on 'digital and technology' across sectors - infrastructure, health, education and provision of e-services to the masses. He said this budget sought to lay a foundation and blueprint of the economy over 'Amrit Kal' of next 25 years-from India at 75 to India at 100. He said India to post 9.2 per cent GDP growth, highest among all economies. He said although in the midst of the Omicron wave, the speed of our vaccination campaign had helped greatly. He said the budget

2022 had provided a sharp increase in public investment and capital expenditure provision and Strategic transfer of ownership of Air India had been completed.

Discussing highlights of the budget he said as far as Direct Taxes for Income Tax a new provision was introduced to allow taxpayers to update the past return and include omitted income by payment of additional tax. He said the updated return can be filed within 2 years from the end of the relevant assessment year. He said the tax incentives had been extended by 1 year for startups incorporated until March 31, 2023. He said the corporate surcharge to be reduced from 12 per cent to 7 per cent and an Alternate Minimum Tax (AMT) to be reduced to 15 per cent for co-operative societies.

Bhatia said for long-term capital gains on listed equity share units are subject to a maximum surcharge of 15 per cent and the proposal to cap transfer of long-term capital gains at 15 per cent. He said income from transfer of digital assets such as crypto to be taxed at 30 per cent and no deductions will be allowed except the cost of acquisition of digital assets. He said loss on sale of digital assets cannot be set off against any other income and the TDS at 1 per cent will be levied above the threshold. He said gifting of digital assets will also be taxable in the hands of the receiver.

He said in I Indirect Taxes -GST & Customs the record collection of Rs 1,38,394 crore gross GST revenues in January 2022, the highest since the inception of GST. He said the

concessional customs duty on import of capital goods to be phased out, the initial rate of 7.5 per cent to be imposed. He said more than 350 exemptions on import of some agri products, chemicals, drugs, etc. to be phased out. He said duty concession on import of parts of phone chargers, transformers, etc. to enable domestic manufacturing. He said the customs duty on imitation jewellery was raised to discourage their imports and customs duty on cut and polished diamonds, gems to be reduced to 5 per cent.

Addressing similar views noted CA and ex-Chairman of Kanpur Chapter of Institute of Company Secretaries of India, Daljeet Kaur said a digital-first approach took priority as the FM announced proposal to launch Digital currency by the RBI, and setting up of a Digital University. She said expansions under PM Gati Shakti project were also emphasised upon with National Highways to be expanded by 25,000 km in next fiscal.

The Budget is finely balanced fiscal retreat and economic recovery and focussed on a familiar strategy of driving capital expenditure to drive growth, with the intention of crowding in private investment through higher public spending. Although markets could be disappointed with a higher fiscal deficit of 6.4% of GDP for FY23 than expected, it is perhaps prudent to not undertake aggressive fiscal consolidation at this nascent stage of recovery.

She said as per the budget 2 lakh Anganwadis to be upgraded for improving child health. She said with a view to sup-

porting sectors disproportionately affected by the pandemic, FM announces extension of ECLGS till Mar-23. Given that nearly 95 per cent of ECLGS borrowers were MSMEs, this measure will ensure continued handholding of MSMEs and of which services sector especially. She said services sector, which accounted for more than 60 per cent of India's GDP, remained an important engine of economic growth, job creation, income generation and livelihood support. She said the extension of ECLG will provide a boon to lending to the MSME sector and the revamp of CGTSMSE will be an added incentive for banks to extend lending.

LAWYERS PROTEST: The legal professionals have termed the budget disappointing and said the lawyers were expecting some benefit on social security front but nothing had been done for them. The spokesperson for the Action Front convener, Ravindra Sharma said there is no provision for any pension benefit for the lawyers and said there had been a demand raised earlier that a pension of Rs 20,000 for lawyers above the age of 65 be provided but there was a big disappointment for them.

ST Bar association general secretary said the pension for lawyers was essential and appealed to the FM to include the scheme for pension to the aged lawyers. Prominent who expressed resentment were Gurmit Singh, Kuldip Srivastava, Manoj Mishra, Sarvesh Tripathi, Danish Qureshi, Samir Mishra, Anmita Anand, Shweta Vijay and several others.

LIC to modify Jeevan Akshay VII

KANPUR (PNS): The Life Insurance Corporation Of India has in an official statement issued to the press on Tuesday informed that LIC had in principle decided to modify its Jeevan Akshay VII (plan no 857). It categorically mentioned that the LIC had revised the annuity rates in respect of its annuity plans LIC Jeevan Akshay VII (Plan 857) and LIC's New Jeevan Shanti (Plan 858) with effect

from February 1, 2022. The statement also informed that the modified version of these plans with revised annuity rates shall be available for sale from February 1, 2022. The annuity amount under both annu-

ity options of New Jeevan Shanti can be calculated through calculator provided on LIC's website as well as through various LIC Apps. It also specifically mentioned that in addition to revision of annuity rates LIC's Jeevan Akshay VII (Plan no 857) can be purchased from new distribution channel Common Public Service Centres (CPSC-SPV) along with other existing distribution channels. The statement also mentioned that the plans were available both online and offline.

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NSI director inaugurates crushing season

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The National Sugar Institute, is the only sugar institute in the world where the facility was available for imparting practical training to the students. He said this was the foremost reason why the students from this institute were rated superior and were working across the globe in many sugar producing countries.

This was stated by the Director of NSI, Narendra Mohan, at the inauguration of the crushing season 2021-22 which commenced at the Experimental Sugar Factory of the NSI on Tuesday. The factory was operated to provide hands on training to the students of Sugar Technology course, whereas, the students of Sugarcane Productivity and Maturity Management learn the basics of identifying sugarcane varieties, preparing harvesting schedules and channelling sugarcane supplies.

He said the NSI had continuously carried out modernisation and today it can produce raw, plantation white or refined sugar, as per choice in this unit. Anup Kanauija, Assistant Prof. and Engineering Head of the factory said this was the only unit in the country which had two distinct techniques of decolorisation of sugar syrup based on ion exchange resins and powdered active carbon. He said this year institute shall make trials of indigenously developed automation system for controlling water requirement for condensers used for creating vacuum. He said this will be a step forward in saving the requirement of water in sugar factories.

He added that it may be mentioned here that during the season, institute shall also make trials on an innovative process of juice clarification where the impurities shall be removed by floatation instead of sedimentation as was being done in conventional process. He said the cost of plant and machinery was to be borne by the Sugar Technologists Association of India and the success of the process will open new doors for producing better quality sugar with minimum loss of sugar during processing.

Leprosy is curable and cannot be passed on by mere touch: Doctor

KANPUR (PNS): The Chief Medical Superintendent, Dr Avinash Yadav, while addressing a lecture on 'Recent advances in leprosy treatment' at the CHC, Kalyanpur said leprosy was also known as Hansen's disease and the objective to observe World Leprosy Day was to spread the message that Leprosy was Curable. In India, the prevalence rate was 0.57/10,000 population. He said there was a need to make the people understand that it was curable and cannot be passed on by mere touch and in the present times it was no more a taboo.

He said leprosy was a slowly developing, progressive disease that damaged the skin and nervous system. He said was caused by the bacteria mycobacterium leprae that causes damage to the skin and the peripheral nervous system. He said WHO recommended a protocol of multidrug therapy (MDT), which effectively controlled the disease, hence contributing to the global elimination programme and early detection of leprosy and treatment by MDT were the most important steps in preventing deformity and disability. Dr Yadav said finding new leprosy cases early was the accepted cornerstone of leprosy control strategy and added that early diagnosis needed active surveys picking up hidden cases from a large population of India which was a logistical and administrative challenge.

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PCCM, PCMD given farewell

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

In a function organised under the presidency of Additional General Manager (AGM), North Eastern Railway (NER) Amit Kumar Agrawal, at Railway Officers' Club here, NER's Principal Chief Commercial Manager (PCCM) Sudhir Chandra Prasad and Principal Chief Medical Director (PCMD) Dr Satyendra Pal Singh Sachdeva who were retiring from railway service on Monday were given a farewell. On the occasion AGM said they have been experts in their field of work and have rendered remarkable services to the Indian Railways. The AGM said that NER has made a lot of progress during their tenure. On the occasion the AGM presented memento to PCCM Sudhir Chandra Prasad and PCMD Dr Satyendra Pal Singh Sachdeva. The function was conducted by the Deputy Chief Engineer/ Gorakhpur Region Ravinder Mehra in which all Covid-19 prevention guidelines were followed. Meanwhile 34 non-gazetted railway personnel NER headquarters retiring on Monday were presented gold



plated medals, service certificate etc by Senior Personnel Officer (SPO) Basant Lal. On this occasion SPO said all the retiring employees had spent most of their lives in railway service for which the railway administration was grateful to them. After retirement he said all of them had come in the category of senior citizens. He said they should spend most of their time in social service and national interest with which their health and routine will remain good. In this programme all Covid-19 prevention guidelines were followed. **NERPOA MEETING:** The meeting of North Eastern

Railway Promotee Officers' Association (NERPOA) was held under the chairmanship of its president, Krishna Singh, on Monday, Joint Secretary/ Publicity CP Chauhan said. While conducting it, its general secretary, Ramesh Pandey, garlanded AK Rai, Assistant Financial Adviser/Expenditure who was retiring on Monday and presented a memento to him on behalf of the association. Pandey extended best wishes for his healthy and happy life. On the occasion RP Chand, Ajay Rishi, YK Mandal, Sanjay Kumar Mishra, and Munni Lal Gupta along with others were present.

Election preparations reviewed

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

District Election Officer/District Magistrate Praveen Kumar Laxkar held a meeting at Collectorate on Monday with incharges appointed to hold elections and returning officers. During the review of the election related preparations till date, incharge personnel and SVEEP/Chief Development

Kumar Singh was directed to ensure that no polling personnel travelled by truck and for that purpose sufficient buses and light vehicles were to be arranged timely. City magistrate was directed to provide route chart to each vehicle and even the parking place. The DM said that each vehicle will be equipped with GPS system. It was directed too that proper arrangement

availability of all the required amenities should be ensured. Reviewing the preparations on each point the DM directed different teams to perform their works as per the direction of Election Commission of India (ECI). The meeting was mainly attended by the City Magistrate Vinay Kumar Singh, ASP (Operation) Mahesh Singh Attri and others.

DIRECTIVE: In view of assembly election Superintendent of Police (SP) Ajay Kumar Singh held a meeting of SOs and police outpost incharges of Lalganj circle at Lalganj police station on Monday. Reviewing the preparations for election SP became aware about the preventive actions and arrangements for stay of paramilitary forces. He directed the cops to ensure the facilities for the paramilitary forces as proper as it might be possible. He became aware with heinous crimes, crime against women and others. The investigating officers were directed to complete pending investigations and submit chargesheets without inordinate delay. The meeting was attended by Lalganj Circle Officer (CO) Uma Shankar, Station House Officer (SHO) Vijay Kumar Chaurasia, Jigna Station Officer (SO) Vijai Kumar Saroj, Halia SO and incharges of police outposts of the circle.

Meanwhile another report said that in order to ensure the conduct of the assembly election in a free and fair manner, the Madhyan police destroyed 'lahan', breweries and equipment for making liquor making on Monday.



Officer (CDO) Srilaxmi VS informed total 13,000 polling personnel were to be involved in which first randomisation had been done and duty chart had been sent to offices concerned along with required papers. She said master trainers had been trained who will train other polling personnel. DM said in case of sickness after the recommendation of the CDO the personnel concerned will be spared. The DM directed the CMO to make available adequate Covid and other medical kits to DPRO so that it could be made available to all the teams of polling personnel. The DM directed the returning officers to read the hand book thoroughly. Incharge transportation/city magistrate Vinay

of fuel for the vehicles should be done to avoid the unnecessary problem at the time of departure. For the observers the city magistrate was directed to ensure all the arrangements including telephone, fax, computer, vehicle, accommodation etc with the coordination of deputy district election officer. Chief Treasury Officer (CTO) RK Gupta was directed to involve sufficient staff regarding monitoring of expenditure.

Deputy District Election Officer (DDEO)/ ADM (F&R) Shiv Pratap Shukla, directed the SDMs to ensure the compliance of model code of conduct strictly and take action without delay on the complaints. He directed that all the polling stations should be inspected and

Vindhya Club's bid to provide relief to needy

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

With the aim of empowering the lives of weaker sections of the society NTPC

which clothes of about 248 women, 189 men and 205 children were provided to the needy. There was happiness on the faces of all the people after



Vindhychal Vindhya Club organised a clothes donation camp programme on Monday. Around 642 clothes were collected in this donation camp in

receiving clothes in the cold weather. Keeping in mind the precautions in view of Covid-19 infection for the collection of clothes storage

boxes were established in Vindhya Club where the residents of Vindhyanagar volunteered to donate clean, clean and useful clothes. Apart from it under an innovative initiative collecting clothes door to door, after properly folding, pressing/ironing them and keeping them in carry bags they were provided to the people. The role of Vindhya Club was commendable. The officers of NTPC Vindhychal and volunteers were present. NTPC officials said that their organisation has been delivering old clothes to the needy every year.

NTPC management has been benefiting the residents with new social works, even in future such work will be paramount for the organisation in the public interest.

Security commissioner, others retire

PNS ■ VARANASI

In Banaras Locomotive Works I (BLW) a total of 15 officials, supervisors, employees, including Security Commissioner Ajit Kumar Shahi and Assistant Financial Adviser Satyendra Bahadur Singh, retired in the month of January. In the farewell ceremony Principal Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) Pradeep Kumar Singh by presenting medals and folders to the retired personnel bid them farewell with wishes for their bright future. Along with it the entire liabilities were also paid in one lump sum. Ensuring full



compliance of Covid-19 protocol, the retirement programme was organised in Kirti Kaksh of the administrative building where the family members of the retiring employees were also present.

On the occasion Senior Personnel Officer (SPO), Headquarters, Raj Kumar Gupta, Public Relations Officer (PRO) Rajesh Kumar and member, Staff Council, Navin Sinha, were mainly present.

UNION BUDGET-2022

Budget people-friendly, progressive, says PM Modi

Kept in view well-being of poor through ‘garib kalyan’ yojana, says PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Describing the Union Budget 2022-23 as "people-friendly and progressive", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said it would make more opportunities for the common man and is full of possibilities for more investments, infrastructure and jobs.

The Prime Minister said the Budget has on the one hand kept in mind the well-being of poor by focusing on 'garib kalyan' schemes be it 'nal se jal' scheme or construction of 'sauchalay', on the other it has not lost its focus on building "internet connectivity".



Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivers his remarks on Union Budget 2022-23, via video conferencing, in New Delhi

In a televised address Modi said the budget has brought new confidence to usher development in the midst of one the most terrible calamities in 100 years, a reference to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Saying the budget brings the "trust of 100 years of development", Modi said "it will create many new opportunities for the common people, besides strengthening the economy."

"This budget is full of new possibilities for more infrastructure, more investment, more growth, and more jobs," the prime minister said, adding that it will also open up the field of green jobs. "An important aspect of this budget is the welfare of the poor," Modi said.

The Prime Minister drew attention to new scheme of 'parvatmala' launched to increase connectivity in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu & Kashmir and the North-East to increase connectivity and transport and stop migration from these regions.

He said be it roads, highways or railways - this budget has given a major boost to infrastructure, Modi said.

Disappointing, nothing for poor State like Bihar: JD(U)

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) constituent Janata Dal (United) on Tuesday described the Union Budget as "disappointing" offering "nothing to a poor State like Bihar" while top BJP leaders termed it as "visionary" and "growth oriented" that outlined the Modi government's focus on a self-reliant India.

BJP president JP Nadda asserted that the budget is inspired by the principle of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' but the JD(U) bore a divergent view on it. JD (U) Parliamentary Board President Upendra Kushwaha called it a "disappointing Budget".

"We have a long-standing

demand for a special status of Bihar and expecting that Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman would say something on it but unfortunately, she completely ignored it," he said. "The Union Budget has been beneficial for developed states but it has nothing for poor states like Bihar. Our state needs financial support from the Centre for its development," said the JD (U) leader.

In a series of tweets, Union Minister and senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh termed the budget "growth-oriented" saying the budget outlines the government's focus on Atmanirbharta (self-reliant India) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for development and pro-people reforms."

Emphasising on the

increase in capital expenditure, Singh said this year's budget has increased the total outlay for effective capital expenditure by a massive 35.4 per cent to more than Rs 10.6 lakh crores with the "bulk of the money going into the development of social and physical infrastructure in the country". Reflecting similar views, Union Minister Amit Shah said this "visionary" budget will help in making India the world's leading economy under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. In a series of tweets, Shah said the budget will change the scale of India's economy. "'This Budget, brought by the Modi government, is a visionary budget, which will prove to be a budget to change the scale of India's economy," he said, con-

gratulating Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari praised the budget for giving impetus to infrastructure development saying "It is a budget to promote modern infrastructure in the country, which will lay the foundation for a new India and improve the lives of 130 crore Indians." BJP President Jagat Prakash Nadda said the budget was inspired by the ruling party's "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas" ideology.

"This budget gives impetus to fulfilment of aspirations of the middle income groups," he tweeted. "Home for all, subsidy for first-time homebuyers, relaxations in income tax, funds allocation for development of SC/ST [Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe] community, schemes like Jal

Jeevan Mission have been announced," Nadda said.

Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Tuesday hailed the 2022-23 Budget and said it advances the opportunity for self-reliant India amid the COVID pandemic. Union Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said amidst the global economic crisis, the Budget binds together trust and development with the thread of "self-reliant India". This Budget assures and advances the opportunity for self-reliant India amid the pandemic period, he said.

Senior BJP leader and former Union minister Ravishankar Prasad said "it is historic budget and pointed to Rs 140,000 crore collection of the GST "showing resilience of the economy".

Nothing for salaried class, poor: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Opposition on Tuesday slammed the Union Budget, calling it a "Pegasus spin Budget" and a "zero-sum Budget" that has nothing for the salaried class and the poor.

Several Congress leaders, including former party president Rahul Gandhi, criticized the Modi government for presenting a "Lollypop budget" and alleged that it has exposed the government's 'anti-farmer and anti-poor' face. TMC, SP, BSP, Left parties all termed the budget a big disappointment just like the Modi government has ever since in office.

Former Finance Minister P Chidambaram termed the budget speech by Nirmala Sitharaman as the "most capitalist budget to be ever read" by a finance minister. Taking a swipe at Sitharaman, the senior Congress leader thanked Sitharaman for "remembering

that there are poor people" in the country as the word 'poor' occurs only twice, in paragraph 6, of the budget speech. He asserted that the people of this country will reject the "capitalist budget".

"I was astonished, shocked that the finance minister was outlining a plan for the next 25 years. The government seems to believe that the present does not need any attention and the public can be asked to wait patiently until 'Amrit Kaal' dawns. This is mocking the people of India," Chidambaram said at the AICC Press conference to react on the budget.

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said, "This budget is only for the rich as it has nothing for the poor. It is aimed at benefitting their own people, who are rich and nothing for the poor. This attitude is not good for the people of the country." He alleged the gov-

ernment has repeated its earlier promises, which are porving false, like constructing houses for the poor.

While West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee termed it a "Pegasus spin budget" that provided nothing to the common people who have been "crushed" by unemployment and inflation and the Centre was lost in "big words" signifying nothing, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal dubbed the Union Budget as "disappointing" and said it has nothing for the common people. Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said the Union Budget is directionless and had no provision or relief for farmers.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said it will cut into the pockets of the general public while BSP chief Mayawati said the Budget has been brought to "woo the public with new promises" and



Former Union Finance Minister & Congress leader P Chidambaram and Randeep Singh Surjewala during a Press conference at Congress headquarters, in New Delhi on Tuesday

alleged that the Centre has forgotten to implement its old announcements.

Left parties hit out at the government, saying it was "anti people" and a "bag of disasters

and deceptions".

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury questioned the government on the purpose of the Union Budget and asked why the wealthy have not been

taxed further. CPI general secretary D Raja said that the overall allocation for agricultural and allied activities has gone down from 4.26 per cent to 3.84 per cent.

I&B Ministry receives reduced allocation of ₹3,980 cr this year

New Delhi: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Tuesday received a slightly reduced allocation in the 2022-23 fiscal year. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a ₹3,980.77-crore outlay for the Ministry, which

is a decrease of ₹90 crore from last year. The allocation to the Government's autonomous body Prasar Bharati has been reduced to ₹2,555.29 crore from ₹2,640.11 crore allotted to it in the last fiscal.

Among other autonomous

bodies, the budget for only the Press Council of India was increased from ₹20 crore in the last fiscal to ₹27 crore this time.

The Films and Television Institute of India (FTII), Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC),

Children's Film Society of India and the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute saw reductions in their budget allocation.

For the IIMC, the government has earmarked ₹52 crore, down from ₹65 crore allocated for 2021-22. The FTII's

budget was reduced from ₹58.48 crore last year to ₹55.39 crore this year.

In the budget, the allocation for broadcasting under the social services head has gone down from ₹2,921.11 crore to ₹2,839.29 crore. There was

also a reduction in the budget for 'information and publicity' from ₹971.26 crore to ₹ 942.04 crore.

'Information and publicity' covers establishment expenditure of media units in the country like the Bureau of

Outreach and Communication, Press Information Bureau, Publications Division, New Media Wing, Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), Films Division, National Film Archive of India, Electronic Media Monitoring Centre and

others.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur hailed the budget as "beneficial", saying it was a blueprint to fulfil hopes and aspirations of a new India.

PNS

Personnel Ministry allocated around ₹300 crore for training bureaucrats

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government will spend close to ₹300 crore for training bureaucrats in India as well as abroad besides augmenting necessary infrastructure.

The Union Budget 2022-23 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday allocated ₹288 crore to the Personnel Ministry for the next fiscal for the purpose.

Besides this, an outlay of ₹44.25 crore has been made under "administrative reforms and pensioners' scheme" for 2022-23, which includes provision for Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances scheme for modernisation of government

offices, and pilot projects on administrative reforms which consists of promotion of e-governance, fostering of good governance, learning from success, sevottam etc.

Of the total allocation of ₹288.14 crore for the next financial year, ₹210.75 crore has been earmarked for upgradation of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) in Mussoorie to a centre of excellence, augmentation of training facilities at the Delhi-based Institute of Secretariat Training and Management (ISTM) and the National Programme for Civil Services & Capacity Building -- Mission Karmayogi.

The LBSNAA and the

ISTM conduct several training programmes for Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers and all other levels of secretarial functionaries with exposure to latest rules, regulations and aptitude.

The Union Cabinet held in September 2020 given nod to Mission Karmayogi, billed the biggest bureaucratic reform initiative, aimed at capacity building to make government employees more "creative, proactive, professional and technology-enabled".

A total of Rs 77.39 crore has been provided to the ministry for 2022-23 to meet establishment-related expenditure of the ISTM, the LBSNAA and training division of DoPT.

₹1.85 L cr allocation to MHA in Budget

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Budget on Tuesday allocated ₹1,85,776.55 crore to the Union Home Ministry, an 11.5 per cent jump over previous allocation of ₹1,66,546.94 crore. Nearly ₹20,000 crore additional funds have been allocated in the Budget for shoring up internal security apparatus.

The bulk of the allocation will go to central paramilitary forces like the CRPF, BSF and for improving the infrastructure along the international borders.

The Budget has also prioritised modernisation of police forces, intelligence gathering apparatus, women safety, cyber security and the decennial census among other such issues.

Major portion of the budgetary fund has gone to the Police - ₹1,17,687.99 crore in comparison to ₹1,09,266.30 crore given in the last fiscal.

Among the paramilitary forces, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the lead Force for internal security duties including counter-terror operations in Jammu and Kashmir, has been allocated ₹29,324.92 in comparison to ₹27, 307.42 crore given in 2021-22.

The Border Security Force (BSF), which secures India's border with Pakistan and Bangladesh, besides internal security assignments, has been given ₹22,718.45 crore in comparison to ₹21,491.14 crore given in the ongoing fiscal.

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), which protects vital installations like

nuclear projects, airports and metro networks, has been given ₹12,201.90 crore in comparison to ₹11,372.54 crore allocated in 2021-22. The Shashastra Seema Bal (SSB), which secures India's frontiers with Nepal and Bhutan, has been allocated Rs 7,653.73 crore in comparison to ₹6,940.42 crore given in the current fiscal.

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), which guards the Indo-China border, got ₹7,461.28 crore in comparison to ₹6,965.02 crore given in the current fiscal.

The Assam Rifles, mandated to secure the frontiers with Myanmar and for anti-insurgency duties in the Northeast, has been allocated ₹6,658.41 crore in comparison to previous allocation of ₹6,046.25 crore.

Likewise, the National Security Guard (NSG) has been allocated ₹1,293.37 crore in comparison to ₹1,151.16 crore given in 2021-22.

The Intelligence Bureau has been allocated ₹3,168.36 crore in contrast to this fiscal's ₹2,793.02 crore.

The Special Protection Group (SPG), which protects the Prime Minister, has been allocated ₹385.95 crore in comparison to ₹386.50 crore given in 2021-22.

The Delhi Police has been allocated ₹10,096.29 crore in comparison to ₹11,136.22 crore given in 2021-22.

While ₹200 crore has been allocated for special schemes related to women security, ₹2,744.52 crore has been given for border infrastructure and management and ₹2,754.16 crore for modernisation of police forces.

TN, Kerala farmers unhappy with Budget, say promises not fulfilled

There is nothing in Budget to boost sector: MSME

KOCHI ■ CHENNAI

A cross section of the agriculture and industries sectors in Tamil Nadu and Kerala are unhappy with the Union Budget 2022-2023 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday.

Farmers are unhappy over the Union Government's failure to implement the promise the BJP leadership had made to them before the 2014 Lok Sabha election though the party has been ruling the country uninterrupted for the last seven years, said R V Giri, national president, Consortium of Indian Farmers' Association (CIFA).

Speaking to *The Pioneer* from Virudhachalam in Tamil Nadu, the seasoned farmer said the recommendations made by M S Swaminathan led Farmers Commission remain in paper even after 15 years. "The Swaminathan Commission had recommended that farmers should get the cost of production and its 50 per cent as the procurement price or selling price from the buyers for their products. We will be able to survive only if the Government accepts that suggestion," said Giri. He said farmers across the country are disappointed with the response of the Union Government to their minimum demands.

The move to introduce organic farming in a big way has nit enthused the farming community, said Giri. "Is there any assurance that we would get the returns for the money

We contribute 35 per cent of the GDP and 48 per cent of the Indian exports. There was an expectation that the GST on products manufactured in MSME would be brought down and there would be some incentives on export. There are no special grants, schemes, and subsidies for MSMEs to boost the sector

we spend on organic farming? Moreover the farmland in Tamil Nadu is not conducive for organic farming and this would lead to a fall in the productivity," said Giri.

Tamil Nadu Small and Tiny Industries Association (TANSTIA), an umbrella organization of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), expressed disappointment over the raw deal they got in the budget proposals.

"We contribute 35 per cent of the GDP and 48 per cent of the Indian exports. There was an expectation that the GST on products manufactured in MSME would be brought down and there would be some incentives on export. There are no special grants, schemes, and subsidies for MSMEs to boost the sector. There are lakhs of units which were shut down and became Non Performing Assets. There is nothing in the budget proposals to revive these units," said S Vasudevan, vice president, TANSTIA.

Raja M Shanmugham, president, Tirupur Exporters

Association (TEA) said the review of Customs exemption and Tariff simplification would go a long way in protecting the domestic garment business. He also welcomed the exemption provided on items such as embellishment, trimming, fasteners, buttons, zipper, lining materials and packaging boxes, which will be beneficial to knitwear exporters.

The Finance Minister has given maximum thrust to infrastructure development and this is a major boost to employment generation, according to Hari S Kartha, economist-turned-columnist. He said he has not seen this kind of allocation and innovation like PM Ghati Sakthi in any previous budgets during the last four decades. "But the proof of the pudding is in the eating," said Kartha.

Kartha and Giri welcomed the move to interlink Godavari-Pennar-Kaveri rivers and termed that the scheme has the potential to make the South Indian States an ever green garden.

FIRST COLUMN

GANDHI IS REMEMBERED,
BUT GANDHI-ISM?

The recent farmers' protest was based on his principles



NILOFAR SUHRAWARDY

Mahatma Gandhi is certainly revered even today, in India and abroad. Described as “half-naked fakir” by former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, the frail-looking, bespectacled, dhoti-clad Gandhi succeeded in uniting Indians against the colonial powers to achieve India’s freedom. His strategy rested on people joining him in a non-violent struggle for independence from colonialism. The crux of his movement drew strength from people and subsequently forced the British government to acknowledge its power marked by India gaining freedom. With a law degree from London (1891) and roughly two decades’ experience in South Africa (1893-1914) as a lawyer and civil rights’ activist when he donned western attire, he returned to India in 1915. As he joined politics and familiarized himself with Indian issues back home, he opted for the Indian dress, the then popular dhoti. He began using the loin cloth from 1921 to identify himself with poor Indians. Of course, apart from being a key part of his communication strategy, this was opted for probably to bridge any communication gap between him and poor Indians. Undeniably, Gandhi did not only identify himself with the majority but also reached out to them -as one of them- and won their support. The seeds of people’s power he sowed then find resonance even today. For instance, the recent farmers’ protest is a classic example of people’s participation in a non-violent agitation compelled the authorities to take note of their grievances. The three anti-farm laws, against which farmers protested, may be viewed as representing the obvious apathy, lack of concern and perhaps ignorance of the powers that be about issues concerning farmers. If state elections in Punjab were not around the corner, the Indian government may not have withdrawn anti-farm bills.

Farmers from Punjab were most strongly represented in their protest. There is an apprehension that after elections the central government may impose similar bills again. Not surprisingly, farmers have asserted that their fight is not over yet. The chain binding people to protest together and/or support a leader may be viewed as symbolic of genuine democracy. Gandhi moved with his walking stick with the masses walking with him. The farmers’ protest would not have probably gained attention and hit national as well as international headlines if it had not lasted for a long period with thousands participating in it. Gandhi is still remembered but hardly any importance seems to be given to Gandhism. Exercise of power appears more strongly guided by what the “moneyed” minority desires, even at the cost of economic crisis for the majority. Besides, leaders appear more concerned about their “success” being marked by their own images spread around extensively on boards, posters, photographs, even their masks donned by others and so forth. For how long will the masses allow themselves to be guided by their leaders who continue to nurture their egos, serve personal interest, and their quest for their own prosperity outweighs their concern for the people? Yes, money can be and is used to purchase necessary political support. But when money strikes through inflation, etc., the aggrieved may be expected to give greater importance primarily to those united with them in their grievances. Here is where masked leadership bears little relevance against people’s voice. And when democracy echoes through people’s protests and movements, chances of it leading to an impactful conclusion exist. Sadly, even elected leaders tend to notice these grievances only when they sense the need of electoral support of the aggrieved. It is time democratically elected leaders threw away their masks, stepped out of their ivory towers, moved beyond their own shadows and gave a little more importance to Gandhism.


(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

Testing time for Priyanka’s political future

The party had favoured her over brother Rahul and appreciated her people-management skills, language proficiency and repartee

Every leader takes advantage of a crucial moment to settle down. The current UP Assembly elections will be a decisive moment for the political future of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Once considered a trump card, she now faces a massive challenge in the present elections. The party has not been in power in UP since 1989, and the organization is almost extinct. So, it will be a Himalayan task for the 49-year-old Priyanka Gandhi, who formally entered the rough and tumble of politics in January 2019.

The party has not announced her as the chief ministerial candidate. But if Congress wins by a miracle, who else but Priyanka? She admitted last week that she is the face of the Congress, asking a reporter whether any other face is visible.



KALYANI SHANKAR

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

Roadblocks to ‘Ram Rajya’ in Uttar Pradesh



ARUN SINHA

The lower castes want security, dignity and upward mobility and are not going to give up these concerns for the sake of Hindu unity

Of all the states going to polls next month Uttar Pradesh is where the BJP’s stakes are highest. The party has been using the state as a laboratory for testing a ‘Hindu model’ of Government—a model that, in the words of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, combines virasat (heritage) with vikas (development). Yogi Adityanath was seen by the party as the best person to execute the model, so he was made the Chief Minister. And, in the party’s estimation, he has done exceptionally well. In all his speeches he proudly points to the Ram temple (virasat) with one hand and to the expressways and international airports (vikas) with another.

The stakes of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) are even greater in UP. The RSS is the driver of the Hindutva ideology. The BJP is only its vehicle. The ‘Hindu model’ of Government combining virasat with vikas is the RSS idea. Those who follow the speeches of RSS leaders know that the Sangh, after winning the battle for the Ram temple, has now set itself a target for establishing a ‘Ram Rajya’ in the next twenty-five years. ‘Ram Rajya’ is but another name for ‘Hindu Rashtra’. In recent years the RSS seems to have discovered that the concept of ‘Ram Rajya’ is more saleable to the masses than ‘Hindu Rashtra’ and also safer from criticism by pluralists.


When Prime Minister Modi talks of virasat and vikas they might seem like two ideas to ordinary people. But to the RSS they are not separate. They flow from the single idea of Rambhakti or complete devotion to Ram. The ruler has to be a devotee of Ram (virasat) and bring prosperity (vikas) to all his people as Ram did to his subjects as the king of Ayodhya. Thus can the ruler establish a ‘Ram Rajya’. That is the ‘Hindu model’ of government the BJP has been trying to construct in UP.

Modi and Yogi have been at pains to prove that the ‘Hindu model’ of development is far better at social inclusion than the ‘social justice’ model of government of the Samajwadi Party. The ‘Hindu model’, they say, has brought benefits to all castes and communities, unlike the Samajwadi Party Government that provided benefits only to a few castes. Social equality and social harmony have been truly established under their rule, they claim. To support their claim, they pointed to the massive support of the non-Yadav backward classes and dalits their party had amassed in the recent years. If you were to believe Modi and Yogi, UP was well on its way to becoming a ‘Ram Rajya’, with a Rambhakti ruler ruling as honestly, justly and non-discriminatingly as Ram and the people of all classes having absolute trust in his justice and fairness as the subjects of Ram had in Ram’s.

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THE DISCONTENT AMONG THE LOWER CASTES HAS BUSTED THE SELF-ILLUSION OF THE BJP THAT IT CAN BIND ALL CASTES SECURELY WITH THE HINDUTVA GLUE. HINDU UNITY TO THEM HAS PROVEN TO BE A CHIMERA WHICH ONLY PERPETUATES DEEP SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIVISIONS

(The writer is an independent journalist and author. The views expressed are personal.)



That it was not exactly so became clear soon after the elections were announced, when a number of MLAs of the BJP whose political careers depended on the support of non-Yadav backward classes resigned from the party. The indication from their resignations was that their constituencies were dissatisfied with the BJP’s performance. And reports from grass-roots corroborated that perception. There was a large gap between the government’s propaganda of what it had given to the lower classes and the realities of the life they were living.

Ground reports spoke of the lower classes in several villages being denied financial assistance under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana to build pucca houses because they could not afford to pay the bribe the local officials demanded. Such villages included Jayapur, one of the four villages in Varanasi district adopted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the MP of the constituency. In villages declared ODF (open defecation free) several poorer people still had no toilets. In other villages the toilets constructed had turned dysfunctional.

Yogi claimed he had made women’s life secure, but in the villages girls from poorer classes going out to work in the fields or tend the cattle still faced serious risks of being molested, raped and killed. In 2020, there were 9,864 cases of assaults on women with intent to outrage their modesty in the state, according to the National Crime Records Bureau. The total number of crimes against women in the State were 59,445 in 2018, 59,853 in 2019 and 49,385 in 2020, the highest among all states.

In every case of injustice against the lower classes the perpetrators of the injustice happened to be from the better-off classes. The pradhans (panchayat heads) who demanded 20 per cent cut from the financial assistance under the PM Awas Yojana, the men who molested and raped girls in villages and the policemen who acted on the side of the perpetrators were all from the better-off classes. The poorer classes of UP had always seen themselves as ‘chhote log’ (small people) oppressed and exploited by ‘bade log’ (big people). That did not change under the Yogi rule. That is why there is disappointment among the lower classes with the BJP.

What has added to their disappointment is the opposition of the BJP to a socio-economic caste census. The poorer communities among the backward classes have come to the conclusion that unless a caste census is done the benefits of public sector jobs and college admissions would never be distributed equitably. The Yogi Government has even refused to implement the recommendation of its own Social Justice Committee for the division of 27 per cent reservations for OBCs into three categories of backward class (7 per cent), more backward class (11 per cent) and most backward class (9 per cent).

The discontent among the lower castes has busted the self-illusion of the BJP that it can bind all castes securely with the Hindutva glue. The lower castes want security, dignity and upward mobility and are not going to give up those concerns for the sake of Hindu unity. Hindu unity to them has proven to be a chimera which only perpetuates deep social and economic divisions.

Today Hindutva lies buried in the ruins of the social coalition the BJP built. The big lesson for the party is: It has to address the fundamental issues of social inequality, social injustice, economic oppression and administrative discrimination and corruption the ‘chhote log’ face in their life before it can hope to bind all castes with the Hindu glue. But as the ‘bade log’ make the core constituency of the BJP it could be the last thing the party might ever be tempted to do. And that is sure to leave the party in a state of perpetual dilemma. We will see how it resolves the dilemma in the coming years.

POINT COUNTER POINT

WHY WAS BHATTACHARJEE SUDDENLY CHOSEN BY THE BJP? THE MOVE WAS AIMED AT SECURING LEFT VOTES IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS. —TMC SPOKESPERSON KUNAL GHOSH



BHATTACHARJEE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO SOCIETY AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS. THE DECISION WAS OBVIOUSLY TAKEN WITHOUT ANY POLITICAL MOTIVE. —BENGAL BJP PRESIDENT SUKANTA MAJUMDAR



The party believed her entry could be a game-changer. Congress President Sonia Gandhi often said Priyanka, a mother of two children, would take the political plunge when she was ready. In January 2019 she became the General Secretary in charge of Eastern UP. A leader should have three qualities: charisma, crowd-pulling, ability to convert the masses into votes. It is only the third, converting the crowds into votes, Priyanka is yet to achieve.

However, she is no greenhorn in politics. For close to two decades she played politics with backroom decisions. Her role was confined to Uttar Pradesh. Priyanka’s involvement in UP goes back to her father, Rajiv Gandhi; She was helping him in his campaign trail in Amethi and her mother’s constituency Rae Bareilly. She also took care of her brother’s Amethi he lost in 2019. There are many pluses and minuses for Priyanka’s political career. A Gandhi family member is an added advantage. She has taken charge of the party when the Congress support base is lowest in UP and the country. The party had favored her better than her brother Rahul Gandhi and appreciated her people skills, language proficiency, and repartees.

With no base, the party has been floundering since 1989. The upper castes have moved to the BJP, the backward classes to SP, and the Dalits to BSP. Minority voters are split among SP, BSP, and Congress. Before Priyanka, the biggest challenge is to recover the party’s social base or create a new one. The party had a bare 7 per cent vote share in 2017. Above all, the BJP has the upper hand with a divided opposition. The party’s alliance experiments with the BSP in 1996 and the Samajwadi Party in the 2017 Assembly elections failed miserably. Congress has adopted the ‘eklachalo’ strategy in 2022 UP assembly elections and thus isolated while other parties like TMC and NCP have aligned with the SP. Any anti-incumbency against the BJP seems to be going to the SP-RLD combine.

While the other parties depend on caste and religious cards, Priyanka has chosen the gender card and brought out a special women’s manifesto promising to restore their self-esteem and self-reliance, employment and more opportunities to enter politics. “Ladki Hoon, Lad Sakti Hoon” is her poll slogan.

Priyanka has made some politically correct moves to improve the Congress profile, like consoling the family of the Hathras rape victim, arranging transport for the migrants from Uttar Pradesh, etc. Yet, Congress remains out of reckoning due to lack of organization, absence of second-rung leaders, factionalism, and indiscipline.

Her minuses are also many. Some complain she is inaccessible and arrogant. She has not been able to strengthen the party in the past two years. It is indeed a gamble that the party has decided against alliances. Priyanka’s revamp of the party organization has upset many seniors and old-timers who feel side-lined. Under her watch, senior leaders like RPN Singh and Jitin Prasad and four declared candidates left recently. Many think that she should have checked the erosion when the party is weak.

Interestingly, Priyanka is expanding her role beyond Uttar Pradesh, going to Punjab and Goa and perhaps acquiring a national profile. The mess in Punjab resulted in the exit of chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh and the appointment of Navjot Singh Sidhu as the new PCC chief due to her influence. The UP polls will decide what works, Priyanka’s chemistry or the poll arithmetic. Her success would depend on her appeal to women and youth. It is nobody’s case that Priyanka could bring back the Congress rule in the state, but even if she could ensure an improvement for the party, it will go a long way.

Defence Budget hiked by 5%

68 per cent of total capital outlay earmarked for procuring weapons made in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The defence budget on Tuesday for the next fiscal saw a modest hike of nearly five per cent with the Government giving a determined push for indigenization to ensure self-reliance. Nearly 68 per cent of the total capital outlay was earmarked for procuring weapons manufactured within the country in an effort to make India a manufacturing hub of the world.

While the total outlay for current financial year 2021-22 was pegged at Rs 3,68,418 crores, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman allocated Rs 3,85,730 crores for the 2022-23. The current fiscal ends on March 31.

However, the government was committed to security of the nation and all the demands of the armed forces for modernization will be met without

any budgetary constraints, sources said later.

Nearly 2,01,000.00 crores for the next fiscal was allotted for defence(civil)catering to projects like infrastructure building. If this amount is added to the defence outlay comprising capital and revenue, the overall figure comes to 5.25 lakh crore for 2022-23. Last year's allocation was Rs 4.78 lakh crore.

With the objective of sustaining the momentum of modernization to maintain operational readiness, Rs 1,52,369 crore was set aside for purchasing new weapons, aircraft, warships and other military hardware. The revised capital expenditure for the ongoing was Rs 1,38, 850crores. It means the capital outlay for the coming fiscal saw a jump of Rs 14,000 crores.

As regards boosting the capabilities of the Indian defence industry, 68 percent of the capital outlay was set aside for locally made weapons.

"Sixty-eight per cent of the capital procurement budget will be earmarked for domestic industry in 2022-23, up from 58 per cent in 2021-22," Sitharaman said in her budget speech. The finance minister said defence

research and development will be opened up for industry, start-ups and academia with 25 per cent of defence research and development(R&D) budget earmarked for it.

"Private industry will be encouraged to take up design and development of military platforms and equipment in collaboration with the DRDO and other organisations through SPV (special purpose vehicle) model," she said.

The minister also said an independent nodal umbrella body will be set up for meeting wide-ranging testing and certification requirements.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh described as an "excellent move" the proposal in the Budget to set aside 25 per cent of the defence R&D budget for start-ups and private entities in the financial year 2022-23.

He also welcomed Sitharaman's announcement that 68 per cent of the defence capital procurement budget would be allocated towards procurement from domestic industry.

"The 68 per cent of defence capital procurement budget has been allocated towards local procurement. It is in line with the 'Vocal for Local' push

and it will certainly boost the domestic defence industries," he tweeted.

He said substantial amounts have been allocated towards research and development in several sectors including defence. "The proposal to reserve 25 per cent of the R&D Budget for Startups and Private entities is an excellent move," the defence minister said.

However, the major bulk of the overall defence allocation like previous years saw revenue outlay far more than capital expenditure. The revenue budget for the next fiscal was Rs 2,33,000 crores. This allocation caters to expenses on payment of salaries and maintenance of establishments. Separately, an amount of Rs 1,19,696 crore was allocated for defence pensions.

Coming to allocations to the three Services, IAF got the highest capital allocation totaling Rs 55,586 crores. It will enable the IAF to procure aircraft to address the issue of dwindling fighter jet squadron strength.

The Navy was the second highest with a capital budget of Rs 47,590 crores followed by the Army with an outlay of Rs 32,015 crores.

Digital university, one class-one TV channel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Among the major initiatives in the education sector proposed by the Centre in its annual budget on Tuesday, a digital university on the 'hub-and-spoke' model and expansion of 'one class-one TV channel' programme through 200 channels for providing supplementary education in regional languages in schools have been proposed by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The finance minister said that due to the pandemic-induced closure of schools, children, particularly in the rural areas and those from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribe, and other weaker sections, have lost almost two years of formal education.

"Mostly, these are children in government schools. We recognise the need to impart supplementary teaching and to build a resilient mechanism for education delivery. For this purpose, 'one class-one TV channel' programme of PM eVIDYA will be expanded from 12 to 200 TV channels. This will enable all states to provide supplementary education in regional languages for classes 1-12," she said.

Towards Higher education, Rs 40,828 crore has been allo-

cated to the Education Ministry's Higher Education Department which is an increase of 6.6 percent over the current financial year. In 2021-22, the budget for the Higher education department was Rs 38,350.65 crore and it further dropped to Rs 36,031.57 in the revised estimates.

Besides school education outlay for 2022-23 is at Rs 63,449.37 crore, nearly Rs 9,000 crore more than 2021-22. The country's biggest school education scheme, the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, has been allocated Rs 37,383.36, an increase of more than Rs 6,000 crores from Budget 2021. Funds for the Kendriya Vidyalayas and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas have increased to Rs 7,650 crore and 4,115 crore respectively.

The digital university will be established to provide access to students across the country for world-class quality universal education with personalised learning experience at their doorsteps. This will be made available in different Indian languages and ICT formats, she said.

"The university will be built on a networked hub-spoke model, with the hub building cutting-edge ICT expertise. The best public uni-

A digital university on the 'hub-and-spoke' model and expansion of 'one class-one TV channel' programme through 200 channels for providing supplementary education in regional languages in schools have been proposed by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

versities and institutions in the country will collaborate as a network of hub-spokes," added Sitharaman.

The finance minister proposed that in vocational courses, to promote crucial critical thinking skills and give space for creativity, 750 virtual labs in science and mathematics, and 75 skilling e-labs for a simulated learning environment, will be set up in 2022-23.

"High-quality e-content in all spoken languages will be developed for delivery via internet, mobile phones, TV and radio through Digital Teachers. A competitive mechanism for the development of quality e-content by the teachers will be set up to empower and equip them with digital tools of teaching and facilitate better learning outcomes," she said. Sitharaman announced that for developing India-spe-

cific knowledge in urban planning and design, and to deliver certified training in these areas, up to five existing academic institutions in different regions will be designated as centres of excellence. "These centres will be provided endowment funds of Rs 250 crore each. In addition, AICTE will take the lead to improve syllabi, quality and access of urban planning courses in other institutions.

The overall financial allocation for the education sector for 2022-23 has increased to Rs 1.04 lakh crore from Rs 93,224 crore (Budget estimate) in 2021-22 as the minister laid emphasis on digital modes of education to reverse learning losses caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The revised estimate for 2021-22 is Rs 88,001 crore.

"World-class foreign universities and institutions will be allowed in the Gujarat International Finance Tec (GIFT), City to offer courses in Financial Management, FinTech, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics free from domestic regulations, except those by IFSCA to facilitate the availability of high-end human resources for financial services and technology," she said.

Govt proposes high-level committee for urban planning

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To bring a paradigm change in urban planning and development in view of rapid urbanisation, the Modi Government on Tuesday proposed setting up a high-level committee of urban planners, economists and institutions to recommend policies for urban development, capacity building, planning, implementation, and governance.

Presenting the Budget, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government is planning a paradigm change in making policies for the urban sector as nearly half of the country's population is expected to live in those areas by the time India turns 100. She noted that by the year 2047, when India celebrates 100 years of independence, around half of its population is likely to reside in urban areas, which would require orderly development.

"By the time of India @ 100, nearly half our population is likely to be living in urban areas. To prepare for this,

orderly urban development is of critical importance. This will help realize the country's economic potential, including livelihood opportunities for the demographic dividend," she said. For this, the minister stressed that there is a need to nurture the mega cities and their hinterlands to become current centres of economic growth.

"On the other hand, we need to facilitate tier 2 and 3 cities to take on the mantle in the future. For this to happen urban planning cannot continue with a business-as-usual approach," she said adding for urban capacity building, the support will be provided to the states.

"Modernisation of building byelaws, Town Planning Schemes (TPS), and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) will be implemented," she said, adding this would facilitate reforms for people to live and work closer to mass transit systems.

"The Central Government's financial support for mass transit projects

and AMRUT scheme will be leveraged for formulation of action plans and their implementation for facilitating TOD and TPS by the states," the minister said.

Experts are of the view that the move is likely to bring about global best practices for urban development. "It is a significant step for defining cities considering the future of mobility, work, health, education and living," said Anish Kumar, Co-Lead, Transform Rural India Foundation.

Last year, government think tank NITI Aayog's report titled "Reforms in Urban Planning Capacity in India" stated that concerted actions were required to bring in more structure, professionalism, and identity to the urban planning profession. It added that 63% of the 7,933 towns and cities (urban settlements) in India do not have master plans, which are considered critical for managing urbanisation challenges. While large scale investment was being made in cities, most cities faced urban planning related issues.

₹1,32,513 cr for agriculture sector; Kisan Drone for crop assessment

Govt increased the agricultural credit target to ₹18 lakh crore for the 2022-23 fiscal from ₹16.50 lakh crore for the current fiscal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Keeping in mind that agriculture is a fundamental part of India's recovery process and a crucial sector of the Indian economy, the Union Budget 2022-23 proposed Rs 132513.62 crore for the agriculture sector, a marginally hike by 4.5 per cent as compared to the last year and stressed to promote Kisan Drone for crop assessment, digitization of land records, spraying of insecticides, delivery of digital and hi tech services to farmers.

The government has increased the agricultural credit target to Rs 18 lakh crore for the 2022-23 fiscal from Rs 16.50 lakh crore for the current fiscal.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that focused

on ensuring assured income to farmers with an announcement of Rs 2.37 lakh crore towards direct payments for minimum support price (MSP) to wheat and paddy farmers for the fiscal year 2022-23.

Farmer leaders claimed that the amount of Rs 2.37 lakh crore towards the MSP is less than the previous year when a total Rs 2.87 lakh crore was paid to them. They also claimed that the budget on agriculture is a revenge on farmers' protests.

To finance startups and rural enterprises working in agri-space, the minister said the government will facilitate a fund with blended capital raised under the co-investment model through NABARD.

She said the government will promote chemical-free natural farming throughout the country with a focus on farmers' lands in five-kilometre wide corridors along the river Ganga in the first stage.

For the delivery of digital and high-tech services to farmers, she said the government will launch a scheme of public-

private partnership (PPP) model with the involvement of public sector research and extension institutions along with private agri-tech players and stakeholders of agri value chains.

As per the Budget document, the fund allocations for the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's flagship schemes- Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY) is proposed to be Rs 15500 crore in the current fiscal year as compared to the Rs 15989 crore last year.

Reacting on the Budget, Dr KC Ravi, Chief Sustainability Officer, Syngenta India Pvt Limited said that the emphasis on use of Kisan Drones for crop assessments, land records, spraying of insecticides and micronutrients, which will be a game changer for the agriculture sector.

The Budget allocation for the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying has been increased by 44 per cent to Rs 6,037.31 crore and for Food Processing Industries by 2.25 times to Rs 2,941.99 crore for the next fiscal.

₹2,600 cr allocated for Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Budget 2022-23 has allocated Rs 2600 crore to the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry has been allocated Rs 2,600 crore for the construction of non-residential office buildings of the Central Vista project, including the Parliament and Supreme Court. This is Rs 767.56 crore more than Rs 1,833.43 crore given in the last fiscal.

The redevelopment project of the Central Vista -- the nation's power corridor -- envisages a new triangular Parliament building, a common central secretariat, revamping of the three-kilometre Rajpath boulevard that stretches from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate, a new prime minister's residence and a new Prime Minister's Office as well as a new Vice President's Enclave.

A sum of Rs 2,600.99 has been allocated for the construction of non-residential office buildings, including the Parliament and Supreme Court of India. For residential purposes, the ministry has been given Rs 873.02 crore.

Six infrastructure firms, including Tata Projects

Limited, L&T Limited and Shapoorji Pallonji and Company Limited, are in the race to win the contract to construct the Executive Enclave, which will house the new PMO, Cabinet Secretariat, India House and National Security Council Secretariat.

According to the proposed plan, the Executive Enclave will come up on the south side of the South Block in plot number 36/38 in the high-security zone in Lutyens' Delhi. Last year, Larsen & Toubro Limited had been awarded the contract for the construction and maintenance of the first three buildings of the Common Central Secretariat.

Tata Projects Limited is constructing a new parliament building while Shapoorji Pallonji and Company Limited is executing the redevelopment work of the Central Vista Avenue stretching from the Rashtrapati Bhavan to the India Gate under the Central Vista redevelopment project.

In November last year, Jharkhand-based infrastructure firm Kamladitya Construction Pvt Ltd had been awarded the contract for constructing a Vice-President's Enclave.

Law Ministry allocated ₹1,525 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Law Ministry has been allocated Rs 1,525 crore in the Union Budget 2022-23 to provide funds to the Election Commission for purchase of new electronic voting machines and destruction of obsolete voting machines. The ministry has also been allocated funds for Lok Sabha polls and photo identity cards for voters.

The Legislative Department in the Union law ministry is the nodal agency to deal with issues related to Election Commission and electoral laws. A sum of Rs 1525 crore has been allocated for providing funds to Election Commission for procurement of ballot units, control units and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trial Units (or paper trail machines) and ancillary expenditure on electronic voting machines and destruction of obsolete voting machines. One control unit and at least one ballot unit make for one EVM.

Following a stringent protocol, old EVMs are destroyed under the watch of an expert panel. An EVM has an average life of 15 years. Under the Organs of Election head, a total of Rs 292 crore has been allocated, including Rs 180 crore for Lok Sabha elections and Rs 18 crore for election photo identity cards.

The provision for Lok Sabha elections is for meeting "carry forward liability" in respect of charges for conduct of parliamentary polls. The last Lok Sabha elections were held in 2019. The provision for identity cards for voters is for reimbursement of central government's share to states and UTs on issuance of photo-identity cards to the voters.

Funds for MNREGA slashed by 25% for year 22-22

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even though the dependence of the country's poorest on MNREGA soared during the pandemic because of widespread unemployment due to job cuts and gloomy economy, the allocation in Budget 2022 for the government's rural employment programme has been slashed by 25 per cent.

The MNREGA fund allocation is Rs 73,000 crore for the financial year 2022-23, down from the revised estimate for the previous year (2021-22), which was Rs 98,000 crore. This is 25.51 per cent less than the revised estimate for the current financial year.

MGNREGA is aimed at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas of the country by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

In the first phase, the scheme was implemented in 200 most backward districts with effect from February 2, 2006. This was subsequently extended to additional districts, 113 with effect from April 1, 2007 and 17 from May 15, 2007.

The remaining districts were included under the Act

The MNREGA fund allocation is Rs 73,000 crore for the financial year 2022-23, down from the revised estimate for the previous year (2021-22), which was Rs 98,000 crore. This is 25.51 per cent less than the revised estimate for the current financial year

with effect from April 1, 2008. The Act now covers all rural

districts of the country. Data shows that the demand for rural jobs have increased during the lockdown period when many labourers return to their villages.

In December 2018, 1.9 crore households had demanded work under MNREGA. In December 2019, that dipped slightly to 1.7 crore households. But by December 2020 - the year of the prolonged lockdown — there was a big jump in the number of households demanding work, to 2.7 crore. Last December, the demand for work continued to remain higher than pre-pandemic levels, at 2.4 crore, as per the Government statistics.

SP has defined its agenda by fielding tainted individuals and rioters: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a scathing attack on the previous Samajwadi Party government, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that by fielding tainted individuals and rioters as their candidates in the election, the SP had defined its agenda well before the elections.

Addressing voters at Sivalkhas and Kithore assembly constituencies in Meerut as well as at Modinagar in Ghaziabad to seek votes for the respective Bharatiya Janata Party candidates, Yogi said: "During the tenure of the pre-

vious government, no daughter was safe, youths were unemployed and farmers were committing suicide. There was a riot every third day and when the youths revolted, the government got false cases registered against them."

"When we took over, we waived loans worth Rs 36,000 crore of 86 lakh farmers, including one lakh farmers of Meerut district alone. We made record payments to the sugarcane farmers while 2.54 crore farmers benefited from the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi. We provided government jobs to five lakh youth and we also

ensured the safety of daughters, which was perennially under threat during the SP government. And there was not a single riot in five years of our government," Yogi remarked.

He added: "We have taught a lesson to all the criminals, mafia and gangsters. We cannot allow our innocent youths like Sachin and Gaurav to be killed while trying to save their sisters."

According to Yogi, SP's red cap is a threat to society. "The cap means riots, road robberies as well as stealing of farmers' equipment such as pumping sets," he said.

Rajasthan Cong calls Budget 2022-23 'directionless'; BJP says 'growth-oriented'

PTI ■ JAIPUR

The Rajasthan Congress on Tuesday dubbed the Union Budget as "disappointing and directionless", while the state BJP welcomed the budget, calling it "growth-oriented".

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said the budget will further lead to rise in fiscal deficit and has no special provision for farmers, common man, poor and women.

"The fiscal deficit of the central government has doubled in the last seven years. After this budget, the deficit is going to rise further. There is no special provision for farmers, common man, poor, women and deprived sections in the budget," Gehlot said in a statement.

He said new employment figures have been presented in the budget but no concrete

action plan has been made for it. "Its fate will also be similar to the promise of two crore jobs per year," the chief minister said.

"The citizens of Rajasthan, who gave 25 MPs to the NDA from this budget, have been completely disappointed. No announcement has been made for National Project status to ERCP, 90:10 ratio of Centre-State expenditure in Jal Jeevan Mission, Jaisalmer-Kandla railway line and establishment of MEMU coach in Gulabpura," he said.

"This budget will prove to be a budget to increase inflation, to fill the pockets of industrialists and to empty the pockets of common man, farmer and labourer," the senior Congress leader said.

Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee president Govind Singh Dotasra said the Union

Budget has "disappointed" youths, farmers and the common man.

Terming the budget as directionless, he also said Rajasthan "got nothing in the budget".

He said the announcement to promote organic farming along the Ganga river was only because of the Uttar Pradesh elections. "The budget is disappointing which has no vision and direction. Be it farmers or youths or women, all are disappointed at the budget," he told reporters.

"Entire country is agitated over inflation but there was not a single announcement by the finance minister on controlling the inflation," he said.

"All the 25 MPs including three ministers from Rajasthan failed to get anything for the state in the Union budget," he added.

Govt allocates ₹900 cr for newly set up Union Ministry of Cooperation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Tuesday announced a Rs 900-crore allocation in the Budget 2022-23 for the newly set up Union Ministry of Cooperation, besides cutting down the Alternate Minimum Tax (AMT) on cooperative societies to 15 per cent and surcharge to 7 per cent.

Out of Rs 900 crore, Rs 350 crore has been allocated for the Digitalisation of Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies and Rs 274 crore for Prosperity through Cooperatives—two centrally sponsored schemes of the Ministry.

"Currently, cooperative societies are required to pay alternate minimum tax at the rate of 18.5 per cent. However,

companies pay the same at the rate of 15 per cent. To provide a level playing field between cooperative societies and companies, I propose to reduce this rate for the cooperative societies also to fifteen per cent," Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her budget speech.

Those cooperatives having total income of more than Rs 1 crore and upto Rs 10 crores will have reduced surcharge on cooperative societies from 12 per cent to 7 per cent.

"This would help in enhancing the income of cooperative societies and its members who are mostly from rural and farming communities," the Minister said.

Since the formation of the Cooperation Ministry, the Government has been taking steps to boost the cooperatives

Out of ₹900 crore, ₹350 crore has been allocated for the Digitalisation of Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies and ₹274 crore for Prosperity through Cooperatives—two centrally sponsored schemes of the Ministry

in the country, banking on them to help achieve its 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' mission and target of doubling the income of farmers across the States.

There are about 30 lakh cooperatives in the country. Managing Director of National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) Sundeeep Nayak hailed the budget provisions. He said digitisation of

cooperatives will help bring transparency, ensure better access to market and finance, facilitate social benefits, and ensure the benefit of farm loans reaches the last mile because in a few states agri-credit is still disbursed through PACs.

Primary agriculture cooperative societies (PACs) — commonly known as agri-cooperative credit societies — are village-level lending institutions based on cooperative principles. They provide short and medium term loans to rural people to meet their financial requirements.

The Centre has decided to develop a national database of cooperatives that will help in better implementation of the proposed national policy on cooperatives to be announced soon.

Budget proposals to boost growth, generate jobs: Experts

New Delih: The Budget proposals on capital expenditure, MSME sector, and digital banking will boost growth and promote job creation, say experts.

Among other things, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled a bigger Rs 39.45 lakh crore Budget, with higher spending on highways to affordable housing with a view to firing up the key engines of the economy to sustain a world-beating recovery from the pandemic.

Commenting on the Budget announcements, Shyam Srinivasan, MD and CEO, Federal Bank, said 35 per cent increase in capex for infra development, 65 per cent defense capex for local companies, tax incentives for startups, new cargo terminals – all indicate the refreshingly clear and well-structured aspiration of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Sanjeev Krishan, Chairman PwC in India was of the view that Budget 2022–23 continues to provide much-needed relief to the COVID-hit MSME sector. The revival of MSMEs is critical both from growth and employment perspective, and these measures are geared towards building a vibrant MSME sector, he said.

Kapil Mehta, Co-founder, SecureNow Insurance Broker said

the main benefit of the budget for insurtechs is the emphasis on MSMEs and future growth. There are a host of measures aimed at small business, ranging from credit guarantee schemes to improving the ease of doing business, that help MSMEs navigate economic uncertainty, he added.

Founder and CEO Tushar Aggarwal, Stashfin was of the view that support announced for digital payment and banking will be welcomed by the sector. He said building awareness of digital payments and promoting financial literacy is critical to India achieving the vision of a USD 1-trillion digital economy.

Dhanuka Agritech Group Chairman RG Agarwal said, 'It would have been also apt had the Finance Minister... reduced GST and customs duty rates on some of the agro-chemicals products, which would have reduced the overall cost for the farmers.

On the government's proposals, Omkar Rai, Ex-DG, STPI said the Union Budget has all the ingredients needed to make India the world's biggest startup ecosystem. The extension of the incorporation period for eligible startups will certainly give a boost to this segment, he said. Rishad Manekia, Founder and MD, Kairos Capital said the taxation

along with the introduction of an Indian CBDC in 2022 gives a much clearer idea about the way forward for the blockchain ecosystem in India and how the government is thinking about this space.

Ujjwal Singh, CEO and President, Infinity Learn said the extension of the PM eVIDYA initiative 12 to 200 TV channels will give the segment the requisite boost.

Piyush Gupta, CEO, Polytrade expects that in near future the government will continue to support and encourage digital currencies that will propel the GDP to USD 5 trillion as envisaged by the government.

Manish Chandra Co-founder and Director RailRestro said the announcement of 400 Vande Bharat trains is an encouragement for more public-private partnerships in the Indian Railways and this will help unlock the underlying opportunities in the sector for maximum growth, revenue generation and job creation.

The provision of ₹48,000 crore under Prime Minister Awas Yojana for completion of 80 lakh houses will help the government in achieving its target of Housing For All, said Housing.com group CEO Dhruv Agarwala

PTI/PNS

Design-led scheme for 5G ecosystem to pitch India as manufacturing hub: Industry

New Delhi: Government's push on fibreisation and technology will spur connectivity, while the design-led scheme announced in the Budget for 5G ecosystem will bolster India's position as a manufacturing hub, telecom industry said on Tuesday.

Budget announcements including those around 5G spectrum auction and 100 per cent fibreisation with PPP model would provide the required impetus to accelerate ubiquitous and reliable internet connectivity, Nitin Bansal, managing director, India and Head-Networks - Southeast Asia, Oceania and India at Ericsson, said.

HFCL Ltd managing director Mahendra Nahata said the expected spectrum rollout for 5G in 2022, combined with the scheme for design-led manufacturing for 5G equipment under the PLI scheme will not only lead to sectoral advancements but also spur job opportunities.

"...We are delighted to hear that contracts for laying optical fibre in villages will be awarded under BharatNet project under PPP model in 2022-23. This will help the telecom industry in providing affordable broadband and mobile communication in rural and remote areas," Nahata observed. Prashant Singhal, TMT (Technology, Media, Telecom) Emerging Markets Leader, EY, noted that allocating 5 per cent of annual USOF collection will significantly bolster rural connectivity.

"Strengthening of the BharatNet infrastructure through PPP model will

enhance the connectivity backbone of an increasingly digital nation. Globally, 200 telcos in 78 countries have already launched commercial 5G services," he said.

According to Singhal, a clear focus on 5G spectrum auctions and rollout will help India to catch up with the rest of the world. The budget announcement has given much-needed push for 5G, Singhal said adding government's move to launch a design-led manufacturing scheme will help to position India as a hub for 5G equipment manufacturing and exports.

Sterilite Technologies' (STL) managing director Ankit Agarwal believes that budget will accelerate India's digital ambitions.

"...It sets the foundation for India's 5G readiness through spectrum auctions, R&D impetus, USOF allocation along with a boost for domestic manufacturing through a timely 'Design-led manufacturing' scheme," Agarwal said.

As per Deloitte India, Partner and telecom sector leader, Peeyush Vaish, the PLI scheme extension to 5G rollout and the commitment on fibre in all villages by 2025 will give an additional thrust to investment in new technologies in the telecom sector.

Telecom Sector Skill Council, CEO, Arvind Bali, said the announcement of spectrum auction in 2022 for 5G rollout and the scheme for design-led manufacturing is likely to "uplift" human resource requirements significantly as also the need to train the existing and new workforce.

Centre to borrow record ₹11.6 lakh cr in FY'23 to meet expenses

New Delhi: The Government will borrow a record ₹11.6 lakh crore from the market in 2022-23 to meet its expenditure requirement to prop up the economy hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is nearly ₹2 lakh crore higher than the current year's Budget estimate of ₹ 9.7 lakh crore. Total market borrowings of the government for 2022-23 are estimated at ₹11,58,719 crore, according to the Budget document.

The Revised Estimates for the same for 2021-22 are ₹ 8,75,771 crore, as against the Budget Estimates of ₹9,67,708 crore.

Even the gross borrowing for the next financial year will be the highest-ever at ₹14,95,000 crore as against ₹ 12,05,500 crore Budget Estimate (BE) for 2021-22. However, the gross borrowing has been revised downwards by nearly ₹2 lakh crore to ₹10,46,500 crore for the current financial year.

Gross borrowing includes repayment of past loans. The government raises money from the market to fund its fiscal deficit through dated securities

and treasury bills. Speaking at a post-Budget media interaction, Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said green bonds announced in the Budget is part of the overall borrowing target for the next financial year.

These would be issued for specific sectors and there are set of investors who would like to put their money in sectors that promote sustainable development, he said. At this point of time, he said, this would be issued in the domestic market.

Finance Secretary and Expenditure Secretary T V Somanathan also emphasised it as part of the total borrowing projected at ₹11.58 lakh crore.

Government raises its market loans under the Scheme of Sale of Dated Government Securities. These auctions are conducted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), as debt manager to the central government. Besides, the government has completed the conversion of special securities issued in lieu of adhoc treasury bills into marketable securities during 2003-04.

PTI

Govt allocates additional ₹51,971 cr to settle Air India's debt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Following successful disinvestment, the government on Tuesday allocated an additional ₹ 51,971 crore towards the settlement of outstanding guaranteed liabilities of Air India in the Union Budget. This amount has been accounted in the revised estimates of total expenditure in 2021-22.

Of the total allocation of Rs 51,971 crore, the government has allocated Rs 9,259 crore to Air India Assets Holding Ltd (AIAHL), a government-owned special purpose vehicle set up to handle Air India's debt and non-core assets, for the next financial year starting from April 1. Air India Assets Holding Limited (AIAHL) was set up in 2019.

"The provision (of ₹9,259 crore) is kept for servicing of loan transferred to special purpose vehicle as a result of financial restructuring of Air India," the Budget document said. In the budget speech on Tuesday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the revised estimate of capital expenditure for this fiscal is ₹6.03 lakh crore. This includes an amount of ₹ 51,971 crore towards settlement of outstanding guaranteed liabilities of Air India and its other sundry commitments, she added.

As per the revised estimates for 2021-22, the SPV — AI Asset Holding Ltd — has received ₹62,057 crore, of

which ₹ 36,254 crore was infused as equity for repayment of past government-guaranteed borrowings of Air India; ₹12,357 crore for repayment of borrowings for sale and lease-back rentals for aircraft; and ₹ 13,446 crore for repayment of other dues and liabilities. According to the budget document, the government infused ₹ 36,254 crore in AIAHL during 2021-22 "for repayment of past government-guaranteed borrowings of Air India Limited".

Moreover, Air India was given a grant-in-aid of ₹1,944 crore and loans of ₹4,500 crore in 2021-22 to cover "cash losses during Covid period", the document said.

Air India was taken over by Tata Group firm Talace Pvt Ltd on January 27. Through a competitive bidding process, the government sold loss-making Air India to Talace for ₹18,000 crore.

As part of the deal, Talace paid ₹ 2,700 crore in cash and took over ₹ 15,300 crore debt of the airline. The remaining debt and borrowings of Air India were transferred to AIAHL.

As on August 31, 2021, Air India had a total debt of ₹61,562 crore. The airline also had about ₹15,000 crore excess liabilities towards unpaid fuel bills and other operational creditors. Meanwhile, in the budget, the civil aviation ministry has been allocated an amount of ₹10,667 crore for the next fiscal.

TDS on property sale to be levied on higher of stamp duty value or sale amount

New Delhi: The Union Budget 2022-23 proposed one per cent tax to be deducted at source (TDS) on payment for purchasing immovable property of over Rs 50 lakh will be based on the higher of the stamp duty value or the actual sale value/consideration. Currently, an individual is required to deduct tax on the sale value of immovable property if it exceeds Rs 50 lakh.

Presenting the Budget in the Parliament, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday proposed the amendment to do away the anomaly in the law.

As per the Finance Bill, 2022, presented in Parliament along with the other Budget documents, the government proposes to amend Section 194-IA of the Income Tax Act, in order to remove inconsistency with Section 43CA and 50CA of the law. This amendment, if done, will take effect from April 1, 2022. The new rule proposes to bring a parity mechanism between sale value considered for tax deducted at source (TDS) and capital gains calculations. Explaining the rationale behind the amendment, the Finance Bill said Section 194-IA of the Act provides for deduction of tax on payment on transfer of certain immovable property other than agricultural land.

The sub-section (1) provides for deduction of tax by any person responsible for paying to a resident any sum by way of

consideration for transfer of any immovable property (other than agricultural land) at the time of credit or payment of such sum to the resident at the rate of one per cent of such sum as income-tax thereon.

The sub-section (2) provides that no deduction of tax should be made where the consideration for the transfer of an immovable property is less than ₹ 50 lakh. As per the provisions, TDS is to be deducted on the amount of consideration paid by the transferee to the transferor, the document said.

"This section does not take into account the stamp duty value of the immovable property, whereas, as the provisions of section per 43CA and 50C of the Act, for the computation of income under the head profits and gains from business or profession' and 'capital gains' respectively, the stamp duty value is also to be considered," the document said.

Thus, there is inconsistency in the provisions of section 194-IA and sections 43CA and 50C of the Act, the ministry pointed out. "In order to remove inconsistency, it is proposed to amend section 194-IA of the Act to provide that in case of transfer of an immovable property (other than agricultural land), TDS is to be deducted at the rate of one per cent of such sum paid or credited to the resident or the stamp duty value of such property, whichever is higher," the document said.

PNS

Rupee slips 17 paise to close at 74.82 against US dollar

Mumbai: The rupee pared its initial gains and settled 17 paise lower at 74.82 against US dollar on Tuesday as caution set in among forex market participants after the Government in the budget revised fiscal deficit target upwards for FY'22.

The country's fiscal deficit is projected to be higher at 6.9 per cent this fiscal as against 6.8 per cent estimated earlier, weighing on sentiment.

Investors also took note of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announcing that the government will borrow about ₹11.6 lakh crore from the market in 2022-23 to meet its expenditure requirement, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 74.53 against the American dollar, witnessed an intra-day high of 74.41 and a low of 74.87 against the greenback. The local unit finally ended the day at 74.82 a dollar, 17 paise lower than its previous close of 74.65.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.19 per cent lower at 96.35. Gaurang Somaiahy, Forex & Bullion Analyst, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said, "The rupee rose in the first half of the session but volatility remained low ahead of the important Union Budget that was announced today.

PTI

Gold rallies ₹333 on global trends

New Delhi: Gold in the national capital on Tuesday rallied ₹333 to ₹47,844 per 10 grams in line with firm global trends along with rupee depreciation, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal settled at ₹47,511 per 10 grams. The rupee dipped 14 paise to close at 74.79 (provisional) against the US dollar. Silver dipped ₹68 to ₹61,164 per kg, from ₹61,232 per kg in the previous trade.

In the international market, gold was trading in the green at USD 1,803 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 22.60 per ounce.

PTI

Realty stocks jump up to 6 pc post Budget

New Delhi: Shares of real estate companies on Tuesday jumped up to 6 per cent after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced allocation of a whopping ₹ 48,000 crore for completion of 80 lakh houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), both rural and urban, during the next fiscal year.

Oberoï Realty jumped 5.76 per cent, DLF gained 3.55 per cent, Sobha Limited went higher by 2.32 per cent, Indiabulls Real Estate 1.60 per cent, Sunteck Realty 1.06 per cent, Godrej Properties 0.40 per cent and Macrotech Developers Ltd

0.20 per cent on BSE.

The realty index jumped 1.74 per cent to 3,877.85. Among housing finance companies, AAVAS Financiers zoomed 8.25 per cent, Can Fin Homes Limited jumped 1.33 per cent, Repco Home Finance gained 0.61 per cent and GIC Housing Finance 0.16 per cent.

In her Budget speech, the minister said: "In 2022-23, 80 lakh houses will be completed for the identified eligible beneficiaries of PM Awas Yojana, both rural and urban. ₹48,000 crore is allocated for this purpose."

PTI

Markets march higher after Budget hikes infrastructure spending, avoids new taxes

Mumbai: The Sensex soared 848 points while the Nifty reclaimed the 17,500-mark on Tuesday after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled a bigger ₹39.45 lakh crore Budget, with higher spending on infrastructure to spur economic recovery and create jobs.

Metal, realty and cement stocks saw robust buying, while selling in auto and telecom counters capped the gains. After a strong start, the BSE Sensex succumbed to a sudden bout of selling following the Budget presentation, but staged an immediate rebound to end 848.40 points or 1.46 per cent higher at 58,862.57, marking its second straight session of gains.

On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty surged 237 points or 1.37 per cent to end at 17,576.85.

Tata Steel hogged the limelight in the Sensex pack, zooming 7.57 per cent, followed by Sun Pharma, IndusInd

Bank, L&T, UltraCement, ITC, Titan and HCL Tech. In contrast, M&M, PowerGrid, SBI, Bharti Airtel, NTPC, Maruti and Reliance closed in the red, shedding up to 1.67 per cent.

Sitharaman on Tuesday presented her fourth Budget, with higher spending on sectors ranging from highways to affordable housing with a view to fire up the key engines of the economy to sustain a world-beating recovery from the pandemic. Contrary to expectations, Sitharaman did not tinker with income tax slabs or tax rates.

Her Budget for the fiscal year beginning April 2022 proposed a massive 35 per cent jump in capital expenditure to ₹7.5 lakh crore, coupled with the rationalisation of customs duty, an extension of time for setting up new manufacturing companies and plans for starting a digital currency and tax crypto assets.

PTI

AAP: Anti-farmer Budget, nothing for common man

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Chief Minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday said that the people have been left hugely disappointed by the Union Budget 2022-23.

Taking to the micro-blogging website, twitter, Kejriwal said, "The public had huge aspirations from the Budget due to the pandemic's woes. The people have been left bereft. There's nothing in this budget for the common man, nothing that will reduce the backbreaking inflation."

Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia both hit out at the BJP-ruled Centre saying the Union Government presented an ill-thought Budget.

Sisodia said, the Budget was the most anti-farmer one in the history of India. "The Centre did not just reduce allocation for the minimum selling price (MSP) of crops but also the number of beneficiaries of MSP and procurement targets. What the Centre has done to our farmers is nothing less than stealing from the plate of the hungry and 60 lakh jobs in five years are nothing more than a *jumla*. What will you do with these jobs when 5.5 crore people roam unemployed in the present. The PLI

scheme under which the Centre wants to generate employment has not created one job in two years. The Centre is bent on defunding education; they reduced education sector's budget so poor's children stay uneducated," he said. "The Centre must allocate six per cent of its Budget to education for this policy to become a reality. But in reality, the Centre is reducing the education budget.

They reduced the already abysmal share of education from 2.67 per cent to 2.64 per cent. The Budget for skilling was reduced by a staggering 30per cent. They talk about the merits of the NEP but continue to defund the education sector. There cannot be a bigger hypocrite than this regime."

"Despite seeing the tragedies of Covid, the Centre did not increase the budget allocation for the health sector. Are the lives of the common man a joke?"

"The Middle Class feeds India's economy but the BJP's Central Government has backstabbed it today. Reducing tax slabs could have increased the purchasing power of the already stressed Middle Class.

"Also, barely ₹325 crore was allotted to Delhi from a total of ₹8.16 lakh crore in central taxes.

Not a single penny allotted to the MCD while all other civic bodies have been given funds by the Centre," he added.

"We are all aware that 60 per cent of the employment in our country depends solely on our agricultural sector. For the past one year, our farmers left their fields and sat on the roads braving all kinds of harsh weather, demanding MSP rights and the repealing of the three black farm laws.

"Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated today that the target for the purchase of paddy and wheat has been reduced from 1,286 MT to 1,208 MT. Imagine the blindness of this Government that reduced the procurement target of two crucial crops like these. MSP allocation has been reduced from ₹2.48 lakh crore to ₹2.37 lakh crore. They did not just reduce their targeted procurement but also the Budget allocation essential for the agriculture sector by 4.5 per cent. This is a complete fraud," he added.

"The Centre itself is admitting that it is reducing the scope of the scheme and the beneficiaries will reduce from 1.97 crore farmers to 1.68 crore. There could not have possibly been a more anti-farmer Budget in our history," he said.

FM raises allocation for Delhi Police to ₹10K crore in Budget

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has been allocated a total budget of ₹10,355.29 crore in the Budget estimates 2022-23 in comparison to budget estimates 2021-22 allocation of ₹8,654.26 crore, with an additional allocation of ₹1,701.03 crore.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday presented the Union Budget for 2022-23. Just like last year, she read out the Budget speech from a tab.

According to a police statement, ₹9,808.39 crore has been allotted for establishment related expenditure. Of this ₹287 crore shall be incurred under capital section for installation of CCTV security surveillance system across Delhi, procurement of various advanced equipment for law and order modernisation.

It also talked about upgradation of communication systems like cyber highway and digital trunking radio system besides implementation of Intelligent Traffic Management System (ITMS) and induction of various types of vehicles for policing.



Budget disappointed many, says Congress

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar said that the Union Budget has disappointed the unemployed, traders, shopkeepers, small business persons and people devastated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Kumar said that Delhiites had expected the Union Budget to provide some relief to the people but they were totally disappointed.

"The frequent hikes in the prices of petroleum products, including petrol, diesel and cooking gas, had upset the average household budget beyond recovery and the rollback of Excise Duty would have given them some relief. But the Union Budget has only protected the interest of the rich friends of the Modi Government, who have become richer and richer," he said.

The Congress leader also said that thousands of people had died in Delhi due to the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving many families headless and without any earning member, and many children without both their parents. But the Budget has not provided them any financial relief, nor any compensation for the families of Covid Warriors, who died in the line of duty.

Kumar said that Delhiites had expected the Union Budget to provide some relief to the people but they were totally disappointed

Kumar said that with elections to the Municipal Corporations of Delhi round the corner, the Union Budget should have allocated sufficient funds to the fund-starved BJP-ruled MCDs, as the Corporations have not been able to pay the salaries of sanitation workers, teachers, nurses, doctors and the paramedical staff, but the Modi Government's Budget has not announced any bailout package for MCDs.

Kumar said that the both Prime Minister Modi and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal have left Delhiites to fend for themselves, as despite having sufficient funds, the Delhi Government has been squandering the money for wasteful purposes and not for the development and welfare of Delhiites, while the Modi Government's sole purpose of the Budget seems to be using it to fulfil its devious political agenda.

UKRAINE CRISIS

Russia denies responding to US plan on de-escalation

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian officials on Tuesday denied reports that Moscow sent Washington a written response to a U.S. proposal aimed at deescalating the Ukraine crisis, a day after the two countries exchanged sharp accusations at the United Nations Security council.

The Kremlin is seeking legally binding guarantees from the U.S. and NATO that Ukraine will never join the bloc, deployment of NATO weapons near Russian borders will be halted and the alliance's forces will be rolled back from Eastern Europe.

The demands, rejected by NATO and the U.S. as non-starters, come amid fears that Russia might invade Ukraine, stoked the buildup of an estimated 100,000 Russian troops near Ukraine's borders. Talks between Russia and the West have so far failed to yield any progress.

Washington has provided Moscow with a written response to the demands, and on Monday three Biden administration officials said that the

Russian government sent a written response to the U.S. proposals. A State Department official has declined to offer details about the document, saying it "would be unproductive to negotiate in public" and that they would leave it up to Russia to discuss the counter-proposal. But Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko on Tuesday told Russia's state RIA Novosti news agency that this was "not true."

The agency also cited an unnamed senior diplomat in the Russian Foreign Ministry as saying that Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov sent a message to his Western colleagues, including U.S. State Secretary Antony Blinken about "the principle of indivisibility of security," but it wasn't a response to Washington's proposals.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Tuesday that there has been "confusion" and said that Russia's response to the U.S. proposals is still in the works. What was passed on to Western officials "were other considerations, on a somewhat different issue," Peskov said.

On Monday, Russia accused the West of "whipping up tensions" over Ukraine and said the U.S. had brought "pure Nazis" to power in Kyiv as the U.N. Security Council held a stormy debate on Moscow's troop buildup near its southern neighbor. U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield shot back that Russia's growing military force along Ukraine's borders was "the largest mobilization" in Europe in decades, adding that there has been a spike in cyberattacks and Russian disinformation. The harsh exchanges in the Security Council came after Moscow lost an attempt to block the meeting and reflected the gulf between the two nuclear powers. It was the first open session where all protagonists in the Ukraine crisis spoke publicly, even though the U.N.'s most powerful body took no action.

More high-level diplomacy is expected this week. In the meantime, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a decree on Tuesday expanding the country's army by 100,000 troops, bringing the total number to 350,000.

Violence mark anniversary of Myanmar army rule

AP ■ BANGKOK

A nationwide strike in Myanmar on Tuesday marked the one-year anniversary of the army's seizure of power, as protests and sporadic violence across the country renewed international concern over the ongoing struggle for power.

Photos and video on social media showed that a country-wide "silent strike" had emptied out streets in Myanmar's largest city of Yangon and other towns as people stayed home and businesses shut their doors in a show of opposition to army rule. Violence was reported as well, as the country faces an insurgency that some U.N. experts now characterize as a civil war.

Media said an explosion killed at least two people and injured dozens at a pro-military rally in a town on the eastern border with Thailand. The cause of blast was not immediately clear. The military's takeover on Feb. 1, 2021, ousted elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, whose National League for Democracy party was about to begin a second term in office after winning a landslide victory in previous



A Buddhist monk raises his clenched fist while marching during an anti-military Government protest rally on Tuesday

year's November election. Widespread nonviolent demonstrations followed the army's takeover, but armed resistance arose after protests were put down with lethal force. 1,500 civilians have been killed but the government has been unable to suppress opposition.

The anniversary has attracted international attention, especially from the United States and Western nations critical of military takeover. President Joe Biden in a statement called for the military to free Suu Kyi and other detainees, and return Myanmar on a path to democracy. The U.S. on Monday imposed new

sanctions on Myanmar officials, adding to those targeting top military officers. The measures freeze any assets the listed officials may have in U.S. jurisdictions and bar Americans from doing business with them. Britain and Canada announced similar measures.

A statement from office of U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted "an intensification in violence" and "humanitarian crises" that it said required an urgent response. Scattered pro-democracy rallies were held before start of nationwide strike in early morning, when security forces are less likely to be out on streets.

Israeli PM's remarks incitement to violence: Palestine

IAN S ■ RAMALLAH

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Ishtaye said that the remarks of his Israeli counterpart Naftali Bennett on rejecting establishment of a Palestinian state are "an incitement to violence and proof of Israeli government's anti-peace stance". Ishtaye made remarks in an official statement issued after weekly meeting of Palestinian Authority cabinet held in West Bank city of Ramallah, reports Xinhua news agency.

Bennett on January 28 said that as long as he is the Prime Minister of Israel, there will be no Oslo, referring to peace agreements signed between Israelis and Palestinians in 1993. He also said that he opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state and that he wouldn't allow any political negotiations that would lead to a Palestinian state.

In response, Ishtaye said rejecting to negotiate the establishment of a Palestinian state "proved to us and the world the scale of extremism of Bennett's government and its positions hostile to peace and negotiations". He called on the US and European Union to intervene to put an end to Israel's settlements in East Jerusalem.

Amnesty joins rights groups in accusing Israel of apartheid

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Amnesty International said Tuesday that Israel has maintained "a system of oppression and domination" over the Palestinians going all the way back to its establishment in 1948, one that meets the international definition of apartheid.

With the release of a 278-page report compiled over a period of four years, the London-based rights group joins Human Rights Watch and the Israeli rights group B'Tselem in accusing Israel of apartheid — both within its borders and in the occupied territories.

Their findings are part of a growing international movement to redefine Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a struggle for equal rights rather than a territorial dispute.

Those efforts have gained strength in decade since peace process ground to a halt, as Israel has consolidated its control over occupied territories and soured on idea of a Palestinian state. Israel rejects any allegation of apartheid, saying its own Arab citizens enjoy equal rights.

Death toll from landslides, flooding climbs to 24 in Brazil

AP ■ FRANCO DA ROCHA, BRAZIL

The death toll from landslides and flooding set off by heavy rains in Brazil's Sao Paulo state reached 24 on Monday as firefighters continued pulling bodies from the mud.

Brazil's most populous state was blasted with rain over the weekend, and hundreds of thousands of people were forced from their homes. The death toll had stood at 19 late Sunday, according to a statement from the civil defense authority.

"(I'm looking for) my nephew, his wife and a 2-year-old child," Cicero Pereira, 54, told The Associated Press beside a disaster site in the city of Franco da Rocha. "They said the bodies are still there under the mud, but until now they couldn't recover them."

Nelito Santos Bonfim, a 69-year-old resident, told AP he barely escaped with his life. "When I started running, the debris fell all over me," Bonfim said. "I got hurt, but found a hole and, thanks to God, I managed to escape."

But my father is still there. A total 27 cities were affected, of which Franco da Rocha suffered the greatest loss of life. Gov. João Doria used a helicopter to survey damaged areas Sunday and announced the equivalent of \$2.8 million in financial aid to affected cities.

Alessandro Lima de Freitas, a coordinator for firefighters working to retrieve bodies, updated his list of missing people in Franco da Rocha. He told reporters that the concentration of rain was much heavier than locals are used to.

'Most of arms seized in Mexico made in US'

IAN S ■ MEXICO CITY

The US manufactured most of the weapons seized by authorities in Mexico over the last two years, according to a report released by the Foreign Affairs Ministry here.

Mexican security forces seized 18,091 US-made weapons between January 1, 2020 and November 18, 2021, an average of 812 guns or other firearms a month, Xinhua news agency reported citing the Ministry as saying in a report. Of the weapons seized, over 10,500 were handguns and more than 7,300 were shotguns, it said.

Mexico estimates that at least half a million pieces of weapons are brought to the country illegally each year from the US and fall into the hands of criminals south of the countries' border. More than 3.9 million crimes are committed

Boris Johnson wins breathing space from 'partygate' woes

AP ■ LONDON

Caught partying during a pandemic, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson bought himself some breathing space with an apology and a promise to change. But his troubles are far from over. Johnson was battling to rally a rancorous Conservative Party on Tuesday after an inquiry slammed failures at the top that led to Downing Street staff holding boozy parties while the country was in lockdown.

He told lawmakers in Parliament "I get it, and I will fix it," promising to overhaul the way his office runs after senior civil servant Sue Gray found in her partial report that "failures of leadership and judgment" allowed events to occur that "should not have been allowed to take place." Johnson addressed

scores of Conservative legislators behind closed doors on Monday night, assuring them he took criticisms seriously and promising to get a tighter grip on a Downing Street operation that Gray found was marked by excessive drinking and dysfunctional dynamics. Johnson was rallying his Cabinet at its weekly meeting on Tuesday.

Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab defended Johnson on Tuesday, saying: "He believes he acted in good faith on the advice he had at all times." Johnson's grip on power has been shaken by revelations that his staff held "bring your own booze" office parties, birthday celebrations and "wine time Fridays" at Downing Street at times in 2020 and 2021 when Britons were barred from socializing to slow spread of the coronavirus.

Ex-South African president appeals ruling in corruption case

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

Former South African President Jacob Zuma on Monday continued with legal proceedings to remove the prosecutor in his corruption case. Zuma's lawyers are appealing the court's rejection of his application for prosecutor Billy Downer to be removed, saying he is biased and unfit to lead the prosecution. Zuma's lawyers have also accused Downer of leaking documents related to his case to the media.

His initial application for Downer to be removed was dismissed by the Pietermaritzburg High Court in October last year.

Zuma is facing corruption charges linked to the 1999 arms deal.

US military fired missiles during Yemen Houthi attack on UAE

AP ■ DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The U.S. military launched an attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels that targeted the United Arab Emirates during a visit by Israel's president, the second-such time American troops have opened fire, officials said.

The acknowledgement by the White House and Pentagon late Monday represent a widening American involvement in Yemen's yearslong war, a conflict that President Joe Biden declared nearly a year ago "has to end."

While the U.S. has ended offensive support to the Saudi-led coalition fighting on behalf of Yemen's exiled government, their involvement in defending the UAE comes as the rebel Houthis have declared Al-Dhafa Air Base in Abu Dhabi a target.

New American envoy to Japan vows support amid regional tensions

AP ■ TOKYO

Washington is "fully committed" to working with Japan to confront growing regional tensions, the new U.S. ambassador to Tokyo, Rahm Emanuel, said Tuesday.

Emanuel was speaking at a meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, where the two discussed issues including North Korea's missile advancement and China's increasingly assertive actions in the Asia Pacific. "The United States is fully committed to working with Japan as a full ally to counter the challenges and to really realizing our shared vision for a truly free and open Indo-Pacific," said Emanuel. The American envoy criticized China's use of "coercion, intimidation and disinformation" as its influence rises in the region.

FROM PAGE 1

BIG INFRA PUSH TO USHER ECO INTO 'AMRIT KAAL'

"The overall sharp rebound and recovery of the economy is reflective of our country's strong resilience," she said in her Budget speech in the Lok Sabha, vowing to lay the foundation for faster growth.

The Budget also focuses on technological intervention to improve services. As per the Budget speech by the Finance Minister, the Reserve Bank of India will issue blockchain-enabled digital currency starting this year. This could help in achieving the objective of an efficient and cheaper currency management system.

Similarly, the Budget proposes to introduce e-passport that will remove bottleneck in the passport offices across the country.

Interestingly, even though the dependence of India's poorest on MNREGA soared during the pandemic because of widespread unemployment due to job cuts and a gloomy economy, the allocation in Budget 2022 for the Government's rural employment programme has been slashed by 25 per cent. The MNREGA fund allocation is Rs 73,000 crore for the financial year 2022-23, down from the revised estimate for the previous year (2021-22), which was Rs 98,000 crore.

She unveiled a proposal to introduce digital currency by the RBI and said digital assets will be taxed at 30 per cent with no deduction for any expenditure except the cost of acquisition of such asset.

The fiscal deficit, which unexpectedly rose to 6.9 per cent of the GDP for the current fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, is projected to come down to 6.4 per cent next year and 4.5 per cent by 2025-26.

India's economy is projected to grow by 9.2 per cent in the current fiscal before slowing to 8-8.5 per cent in 2022-23 (April 2022 to March 2023). It had contracted by 6.6 per cent in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2021.

The Budget's "approach is driven by seven engines," Sitharaman said, listing roads, railways, airports, ports, mass transport, waterways and logistics infrastructure as the key areas.

"All seven engines will pull forward the economy in unison", complemented by energy transmission, IT communication, water and sewerage sector and social infrastructure, she said.

The marginal rise in fiscal deficit for the current fiscal is against the expectations of the market and experts who expected slight decline in the numbers on the back of rising tax collections.

"The fiscal deficit in 2022-23 is estimated at 6.4 per cent of GDP, which is consistent with the broad path of fiscal consolidation announced by me last year to reach a fiscal deficit level below 4.5 percent by 2025-26. While setting the fiscal deficit level in 2022-23, I am conscious of the need to nurture growth, through public investment, to become stronger and sustainable," the Finance Minister said.

The fiscal deficit of the Government for 2022-23 is estimated to be Rs 16,61,196 crore. The Revised Estimates for 2021-22 indicate a fiscal deficit of Rs 15,91,089 crore as against the Budget Estimates of Rs 15,06,812 crore.

The Finance Minister stated that the outlay for capital expenditure in the Union Budget is once again being stepped up sharply by 35.4 per cent from Rs 5.54 lakh crore in the current year to Rs 7.50 lakh crore in 2022-23.

With capital expenditure taken together with provision made for the creation of capital assets through Grants-In-Aid to States, the "Effective Capital Expenditure" of the Central Government is estimated at Rs 10.68 lakh crore in 2022-23, which will be 4.1 per cent of GDP, she said.

The total expenditure in 2022-23 is estimated at Rs 39.45 lakh crore, while the total receipts other than borrowings are estimated at Rs 22.84 lakh crore.

She further said that as against a total expenditure of Rs 34.83 lakh crore projected in the Budget Estimates 2021-22, the Revised Estimates are Rs 37.70 lakh crore.

In a bid to tap the allied farm and food processing sectors to boost farmers' income, the Finance Minister proposed higher Budget allocation for these two sectors for the next fiscal, besides announcing finance support for startups, promotion of Kisan drones and PPP mode for delivery of high tech agri-services to farmers.

Sitharaman said inclusive development is one of the four priorities of the Government moving forward.

The Budget proposals laid the foundation for strengthening of different sectors like transportation and logistics sectors (Gati Shakti), banking and fintech (75 digital units to be set up), agriculture, EV sector (battery swapping policy), among others.

On the direct tax front, to further ease compliances for taxpayers, a new IT return system will be introduced and litigation will be reduced by restricting appeal rights of revenue authorities for consecutive years.

It marginally increased the time limit to commence production by March 31, 2024, for units opting for the beneficial corporate tax rate of 15 per

cent.

To provide impetus to trust-based governance as a concept, an updated tax return system has been introduced wherein a taxpayer can file a tax return upon payment of specified taxes within 2 years from the end of the relevant assessment year.

To give a boost to the start-up community, she capped the surcharge on long-term capital gains at 15 per cent now.

As a push to promote exports, the SEZ Act will be replaced with a new legislation and States shall become partners for development of infrastructure.

In tandem, reforms are also proposed to be undertaken in the Customs administration of SEZs, with facilitation related changes to be made. From an indirect tax perspective, the concessional rate on capital goods imports under Project Import Scheme is proposed to be withdrawn, to promote domestic industry and imports will be taxed at 7.5 per cent now.

ROAD TO RECOVERY! 25K KM IN '22-23

Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said the Budget has given priority to the infrastructure sector and noted that the national ropeways development programme will benefit North East, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Kashmir.

The Budget outlay for the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has risen 68.5 per cent to Rs 1.99 trillion (from Rs 1.18 trillion in FY22). The Center's road-making agency National Highways Authority of India's budgetary outlay in the coming fiscal is set to rise by 133 per cent to Rs 1.34 trillion from Rs 573.50 bil-

lion in FY22.

Allocations to the Government's flagship scheme for rural roads -- the Gram Sadak Yojana -- have risen to Rs 19,000 crore in FY23, from Rs 15,000 crore in the FY22 Budget estimate.

Special focus in the PMGSY has been given to the construction of roads in left-wing extremist affected areas and north-eastern States, as the allocation to both these components of the rural roads construction schemes was substantially raised for the Budget 2022-23 presented by the Modi Government.

400 NEW VANDE BHARAT TRAINS IN THREE YEARS: FM

"Railways will develop new products and efficient logistics services for small farmers and small and medium enterprises, besides taking the lead in integration of postal and railways networks to provide seamless solutions for movement of parcels."

"One Station-One Product concept will be popularised to help local businesses and supply chains," she said. As a part of Atmanirbhar Bharat, 2,000 km network will be brought under 'Kavach', the indigenous world-class technology for safety and capacity augmentation in 2022-23," she said.

"Innovative ways of financing and faster implementation will be encouraged for building metro systems of appropriate type at scale. Multi-modal connectivity between mass urban transport and railway stations will be facilitated on priority."

"Design of metro systems, including civil structures, will be re-oriented and standardized for Indian conditions and needs," she said.

Railway Minister Ashwini

Vaishnav welcomed the people oriented announcements, including enhancements of super class trains. "The integration of posts and railways will bring better logistics solutions for people living in remote areas," Vaishnav said at a Press conference. He also said that the railways will introduce new products and services for small farmers and businesses.

RURAL JOB SCHEME FUNDS CUT BY 25%

The Centre has allocated ₹73,000 crore for the rural jobs guarantee programme MGNREGA for 2022-23 in the Union Budget presented on Tuesday, 25.51 per cent less than the revised estimate for the current financial year.

In the first phase, the scheme was implemented in 200 most backward districts with effect from February 2, 2006. This was subsequently extended to additional districts, 113 with effect from April 1, 2007, and 17 from May 15, 2007.

The remaining districts were included under the Act with effect from April 1, 2008. The Act now covers all rural districts of the country. Data shows that the demand for rural jobs has increased during the lockdown period when many labourers return to their villages.

In December 2018, 1.9 crore households had demanded work under MNREGA. In December 2019, that dipped slightly to 1.7 crore households. But by December 2020 - the year of the prolonged lockdown -- there was a big jump in the number of households demanding work, to 2.7 crore. Last December, the demand for work continued to remain higher than pre-pandemic levels, at 2.4 crore, as per the Government statistics.

₹48,000 cr for 80L PMAY houses for middle class, poor

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to revive the housing sector and create jobs, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday announced the allocation of ₹48,000 crore for the completion of 80 lakh houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), both rural and urban, during the next fiscal year. "In 2022-23, 80 lakh houses will be completed for the identified eligible beneficiaries of PM Awas Yojana, both rural and urban. ₹48,000 crore is allocated for this purpose," the Minister said, tabling the Budget.

The Centre would work with States for reduction of time required for all land and construction-related approvals, for promoting affordable housing for middle-class and Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in urban areas, she said.

"We shall also work with the financial sector regulators to expand access to capital along with the reduction in the cost of intermediation," the Minister said.

For better land records management, Sitharaman said the States will be encouraged to adopt Unique Land Parcel Identification Number to facilitate IT-based management of records.

On Monday, the Economy Survey highlighted that 33.99 lakh houses were completed in 2020-21 and 26.20 lakh units as of November 25, 2021, under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G) programme. For the Pradhan Mantri Awas

Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U), the survey noted that 14.56 lakh houses were completed in FY21. In 2021-22, 4.49 lakh houses were completed till December 2021.

The Union Budget 2022-23 has also allocated ₹2600 crore to the Housing and Urban Affairs for the construction of non-residential office buildings of the Central Vista project, including Parliament and the Supreme Court. This is ₹767.56 crore more than ₹1,833.43 crore given in the last fiscal.

The redevelopment project of the Central Vista — the nation's power corridor — envisages a new triangular Parliament building, a common central secretariat, revamping of the three-kilometer Rajpath boulevard that stretches from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate, a new Prime Minister's residence and a new Prime Minister's Office as well as a new Vice President's Enclave. For residential purposes, the Ministry has been given Rs 873.02 crore. Six infrastructure firms, including Tata Projects Limited, L&T Limited and Shapoorji Pallonji and Company Limited, are in the race to win the contract to construct the Executive Enclave, which will house the new PMO, Cabinet Secretariat, India House and National Security Council Secretariat.

According to the proposed plan, the Executive Enclave will come up on the south side of the South Block in plot number 36/38 in the high-security zone in Lutyens' Delhi.

Knowing one's priorities, goals and aspirations will help identify which institution is the right fit to help get where one aspire to be. Do thorough research and choose a college that makes sense rather than what's trending, says ADARSH KHANDELWAL

MAKE RIGHT CHOICE



In the life of every student comes a crossroad that'll set the course for the rest of their lives, at least professionally. When it comes to choosing a college, students are often faced with whether to go for an Ivy League vs a Liberal Arts College.

It's understandable why making the right choice between the two can be overwhelming and even confusing. On one hand, students may feel like – it's just college, on the other hand, the right college could, simply put, be life-changing.

What is an Ivy League?

It is a collective title which refers to eight prestigious universities like Columbia, Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth, Brown, Princeton, Pennsylvania, and Cornell. The terminology itself is rooted in football (these universities formed an inter-collegiate agreement governing football), today Ivy League has come to be associated with prestige and the topmost quality of education.

Every student, especially those applying abroad, dreams of getting accepted into these hallowed institutions. The reason being that

these universities carry a great deal of goodwill and open the choicest of opportunities for students.

What is Liberal Arts College?

These are rooted in a wide variety of cultural, intellectual, and social studies and activities. Their approach is more holistic, and these colleges aim to impart a broader, general knowledge and intellectual capacities. Liberal Arts Colleges are particularly appealing to students who want to pursue education and careers in critical thinking, social impact work and other humanities.

The top eight liberal arts colleges every student should consider are Williams College, Amherst College, Middlebury College, Wellesley College, Pomona College, Oberlin College and Vassar College. These are also the colleges we will be taking into consideration while drawing comparisons further down this article.

While public opinion is one thing, when it comes to matters of one's career, it always helps to look at the data and make objective analyses. And that is exactly what we have done.

While public opinion is important, when it comes to matters of one's career, it always helps to look at the data and make objective analyses

Acceptance rate mean is the rate at which a school accepts applicants. The percentage of students accepted into a school against those that applied, determines the acceptance rate of that school.

This means that the school with higher applications will reject more students, and therefore have lower (more impressive and more competitive) acceptance rates.

It is important to note that acceptance rate only refers to the percentage of students that have been accepted, and not the percentage of students who choose to attend that school. The latter refers to something called yield rate.

Acceptance rate is an important metric for colleges because it is a factor in their ranking by third party sites like US News College Rankings, which influences future aspirants as well. However, this is not the only metric to choose from, as middle-tier colleges are known to game the system by adapting tactics such as dropping application fees, to attract larger number of applications.

The acceptance ratio of Ivy leagues is higher as students prefer

the former for better pay opportunities, social capital, and other such factors. If you are a student with aspirations to make it in the world of business or of earning a higher pay right at the outset, then Ivy League is the obvious choice for you, as employers are always happy to Ivy graduates what they are worth. After all, Ivy League colleges are not just institutions, they are brand names.

The early pay of Ivy League universities is significantly higher. Having said that, colleges like Claremont McKenna shows a higher early pay than an Ivy League Brown University.

On an average, the early pay for ivy league is almost \$10,000 higher than average of liberal arts colleges.

The average median pay of Ivy League alumni ranks ahead of that of Liberal Arts alumni. While the average difference is of around \$15,000, there is a dramatic difference between the median pay of Ivy League Columbia University and Liberal Arts Wellesley College.

The writer is CEO-co-founder, Collegify

'Fuel your future with entrepreneurial skills

It is a misconception that entrepreneur skills are only for those who want to become an entrepreneur. They are required for all students irrespective of the field, says SACHIN GUPTA

The society and environment we have been living in has been witnessing unprecedented change. With the new emerging technologies and its implementation in the 21st century the world is rapidly changing. Eighty-three per cent of businesses say it's important to develop entrepreneur leaders. It is also said that the nature of the work will change by 2025 as millennials will make up to 75 per cent of the workforce.

Entrepreneurship skills and Leadership skills are essential in one's life as in to keep up with the pace of the constant change in the world. As per reports more than 77 per cent of the organisation say that the leadership is lacking as 10k baby boomers are retiring on a daily basis. The need for creativity, forward-thinking, innovative ideas, to be able to adapt to the changes, making quick but vigilant decisions relies on these skills.

It is a misconception that entrepreneur skills are essential only for those who want to become an entrepreneur. Leadership skills and Entrepreneurial skills are required for all the students without taking into consideration which field the student belongs to. Organization's look for graduates who are well accustomed and possess these skills as having these skills help them to take the chance of an opportunity and turn it into a success.

Importance of entrepreneurial skills: Having entrepreneurship skills in students is very vital as these skills increase our knowledge in communication, decision making process, time management which makes the students career life so much easier and functional. As the students possess analytical and interpersonal skills it helps in transforming the workplace in a positive light.

Develop a mindset for future: Entrepreneurship skills are necessary in every medium of our life. These skills increase our potential to develop our innovative thinking, help us develop collaboration with others and most importantly boost our confidence which is necessary in any workplace. Each career



Sachin Gupta
Chancellor Sanskriti University

has its own obstacles and entrepreneurship skills play a huge role as it helps us to view challenges as opportunities rather than a negative outcome.

Enhanced ability to grow: Students who develop entrepreneurship skills benefits from them as these skills enable them with an enhanced ability to identify the problem as well as resolve it, it helps them with team building skills which is essential to have a stable growth in ones career and also helps in innovation and creativity which helps in running the organization smoothly having a stable establishment.

It is vital to fuel students with Entrepreneurial skills as early as possible as the future is uncertain as the world keeps moving at a rapid pace. Surprisingly, organisations look for graduates having problem solving skills, self-awareness, flexibility and such more skills and these skills fall under Entrepreneurial skills.

Colleges and universities have begun the process of inculcating these Entrepreneurial skills in students as the need for them have begun to escalate. Having these skills benefits the students as they will not be obstructed with any future challenges.

Over the last few years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become the buzzwords in every sector. Given its huge potential, it's not surprising that it is amongst the most sought-after skills by employers and employees alike. AI exists as a broader concept, and an amalgamation of human intelligence with machines.

The aim behind deploying AI-based solutions is to enable machines or systems to act by themselves without repeated programmer coding. There are certain requirements in order to enjoy a successful career in AI and ML. For starters, one needs to have in-depth knowledge

of data science and statistics, and basic knowledge of data processing and software engineering. Additionally, a strong combination of both technical as well as non-technical skills can greatly help in exploring a career in AI. A few of the important technical and non-technical skills are:

TECH SKILLS

■ Computer programming: One of the fundamental skills to have is the ability to program. Computer architecture, optimization algorithms, data structures, trees, and graphs are just some of the subjects that one would need to be well-versed with.

MINDIT

■ Statistics and probability: At the root of data science is statistics. This is a core part of AI and ML, and having a working knowledge of probability concepts including conditional probability, Markov models and Bayesian principles are important.

■ Data modeling: A strong skill that can help in AI is data modelling. It is used extensively in AI to handle pattern recognition and datasets classification.

■ Strong understanding of Unix tools: AI

professionals are required to have a strong understanding of Unix tools, their functions, and how to best utilize them since most AI processing will take place on Linux-based environments.

■ Efficiency in distributed computing: Majority of the AI jobs require programmers to deal with large volume of data, which can't be processed effectively using a single machine. Programmers need to have skills in distributed computing as this data will be

equally distributed across systems.

■ Design and software: Although on record this may seem like the most irrelevant skill for the AI aspirants to have, still they need to develop this skillset as the ultimate product will be developed in the form of a software only.

NON-TECH SKILLS

■ Communication skills: AI jobs require professionals to be good communicators. In addition to having technical know-how, AI aspirants need to communicate innovative ideas effectively to their teams.

■ Collaboration: It is necessary to effectively collect data and convey the

information in a comprehensible manner to the team. This requires teamwork.

■ Marketing skills: No matter how good your idea or project is, it will not sell itself. Being able to market your ideas is crucial to succeed in the AI space.

■ Systematic and analytical thinking: Systematic and Analytical thinking is very important when building a career in AI. One needs to have a curious mindset, and a thirst for problem solving. AI aspirants need the ability to understand problems faced by users and then devise solutions accordingly.

The writer is Sumit Saurabh, director, Design Circle



The University of Melbourne, Australia invites applications for its Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology Scholarships.

International students can apply.

Award: \$5,000-\$20,000

Number of Awards: 150

Course Level: Masters

Eligibility: Must have applied for a masters program at the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology.

Supporting documents: Submit academic transcripts of all the previous schools attended and a copy of your passport.

Admission requirements: Once you know what course you want to study, you'll need to check that you meet the minimum entry requirements for that degree.

Language requirement: When you apply for a graduate degree, you'll need to meet the University's English language requirements to be eligible for a place.

How to apply: To be enlisted in the programme, students have to enroll in the master's degree programme at the university. No application is required. You will be automatically considered for this award.

Application deadline: Applicants must submit all required application materials

until June 11, 2022.

To encourage ambitious international students to take up their bachelor studies in the US, the **University of Tennessee Knoxville has announced the Global Ambassador Scholarships** for the academic year 2022-2023.

Eligibility: Maintain full-time enrollment throughout each semester.

Commit to being a U.T. Global Ambassador and adhere to the programme requirements.

Serve as an example of the Volunteer spirit as a positive peer resource for prospective international students.

Supporting documents: Must attach academic transcripts of all previous school attended and copy of passport.

Admission requirements: Aspirants must have a GPA of 3.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA) and good academic standing.

Language requirements: If a student's native language is not English, they must demonstrate English proficiency unless they are a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident.

How to apply: All eligible international undergraduate students who apply for admission during their final year in high school will be considered for this scholarship.

Application deadline: The last to apply for this scholarship is May 1, 2022. Scholarship applications after this date will not be accepted.

FLUTTER APP DEVELOPMENT AT HUBNINE INDIA

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹7,000-₹14,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/2bb6c7
Deadline: February 10, 2022

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (SALES) AT WEALTH SOCIALS

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹5,000-₹10,000 per month
Link - internshala.com/i/930116
Deadline: February 10, 2022

CONTENT CREATION AT BULLISHSEO IT SOLUTIONS

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹10,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/0bf4db
Deadline: February 10, 2022

GRAPHIC DESIGN AT AMRA

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹8,000-₹15,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/a5eeb4
Deadline: February 10, 2022

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AT SRIAAS

Location: Delhi, Gurugram
Stipend: ₹15,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/e16517
Deadline: February 10, 2022

DIGITAL MARKETING AT SAFETY CIRCLE

Location: Chandigarh
Stipend: ₹20,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/a2de88
Deadline: February 10, 2022

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AT HELPWORX TECHNOLOGY

Location: Bhubaneswar
Stipend: ₹10,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/104ebd
Deadline: February 9, 2022

INBRIEF

COE IN HUMAN-CENTERED COMPUTING AT IIITD

The Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology Delhi (IIITD) has established a new Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Human-Centered Computing (HCC).

The CoE will focus on teaching relevant courses on human-centered computing and will also facilitate research collaborations, capacity building, and exchange of researchers and experts between the European Union and India.

The CoE is established as part of the EU Erasmus+ Design and Innovation Capacity Building project that brings together IIITD, World University Of

Design and Regional Institute of Management and Technology from India; and University of Aegean, Greece, Brunel University, UK, and Politecnico di Milano, Italy, and CREATHIDEV from Europe which are anchoring the activities under this project from India and the EU respectively.

The HCC combines design principles with computing to help develop systems that support human capabilities and cater to human needs. For example, researchers developed a mobile-based learning platform for health workers.

The platform is designed so that it becomes easy to use by community health workers who have low technology exposure. CoE aims to develop design and technology solutions.

ECONOMICALLY VIABLE RENEWABLE ENERGY

The Rajasthan Solar Association launched the Centre of Excellence for Renewable Energy at the Indian Institute of Technology, IIT

Jodhpur Technology Park, last week. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between both the parties aims at

supporting research and development work for renewable energy.

The event was followed by a formal meeting of all CSR stakeholders.

MESC INKS MOU WITH MCNUJC

The Media & Entertainment Skills Council (MESC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Makhanlal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism and Communication (MCNUJC).

The MOU affirms a long-standing partnership between MESC and MCNUJC to strengthen the existing programs and offer industry oriented new edge programs embedded with On-Job training and Apprenticeship as per the new education policy.

STUDENTS OF ABWA DEVELOP SMART WRIST BAND

Students of one of the leading international schools in Mumbai, Aditya Birla World Academy robotics team called Binary Bolts have designed an innovative device SAATHI — Your Fitness Companion.

It is a smart wrist band that has been developed with the objective of motivating the elderly citizens to prioritize their health. The idea was developed for the First

Robotics Competition Qualcomm Innovation Challenge where these students won a semi-finalist award. The team took the idea further by developing prototypes of the watch and conducted efficacy research.

The students wrote a white paper based on their invention and it was published in the International Journal of Software & Hardware Research in Engineering

(IJSHRE).

The students feel that it has become crucial for elderly citizens to take care of their physical and social wellbeing and the core aim of the project was to encourage the elderly to stay active with friends and family with the help of technology that offers simple and convenient use.

It can be easily paired with a mobile app. There are two primary parts: a band and an app.

SANSKRITI UNIVERSITY RECEIVES SIRO BY DSIR

The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India has recognised Sanskriti University, Mathura as a Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (SIRO).

Chancellor Sachin Gupta said: "Research is the backbone. Our youth have unique ideas and these ideas can be converted into patents."

He believes in transforming the knowledge into reality recognition as SIRO by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) is the result of the hardwork and commitment of the students and faculty of university for their unyielding efforts in pushing the boundaries in the field of innovation and research education.

RESEARCH TEAM IDENTIFIES GENE/PROTEIN VARIATION

The Indian Institute of Technology Madras-led International Research Team has identified a gene/protein variation present among Indians and other South Asians that increased their risk of diabetes, heart attacks and hypertension.

This multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary team of researchers found that this variation was present in approximately 15 per cent of Indian and other South Asian populations.

The researchers also found that people carrying this variant are 1.5 times more likely to have hypertension, type 2 Diabetes, and coronary artery disease. This combination could account for the higher prevalence of metabolic diseases among Indians and other South Asians.

Talking about practical applications of this research, Professor Nitish Mahapatra said: "This study has implications in the area of diagnostics and personalised medicine. For example, our research findings may help in identifying individuals who may be susceptible to type 2 Diabetes. This should be useful for people with family history of cardiovascular and metabolic diseases for preventive healthcare and better management of disease."

Dhawan, Shreyas, Ashwin in top bracket along with Cummin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Top Indian players, including senior opener Shikhar Dhawan and Shreyas Iyer, along with overseas stars such as Pat Cummins and Kagiso Rabada have been bracketed in the Rs 2 crore highest base price category for the upcoming IPL auction.

The mega auction is scheduled to be held in Bengaluru on February 12 and 13 and will see 590 players go under the hammer.

The IPL announced the final auction list on Tuesday, which was pruned from the original list of 1,214 players released last month, after the franchises reverted with the players they are interested in.

Among the 590 cricketers, a total of 228 are capped players while 355 are uncapped and seven belong to associate nations.

Senior Indian players Mohammad Shami, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Umesh Yadav, Ashwin, Ishant Sharma and Ajinkya Rahane have also registered with a base price of Rs 2 crore.

While Iyer and Dhawan are the top draws, the 10 teams are also likely to be involved in a bidding war for youngsters Ishan Kishan, Devdutt Padikal,



Washington Sundar, Deepak Chahar, last season's top wicket-taker Harshal Patel, spinner Yuzvendra Chahal and fast bowler Shardul Thakur. All of them are in the top bracket.

A total of 370 Indian players and 220 overseas cricketers will be up for grabs, with as many as 48 players having chosen to place themselves in the Rs 2 crore bracket.

Among the foreign players the franchises are expected to go after pacers Trent Boult, Cummins, Rabada, the Australian duo of all-rounder Mitchell Marsh and Steve Smith, former Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan and big-hitting South African Faf du Plessis, who have all registered themselves in the top bracket.

Indian veterans such as Suresh Raina and Robin Uthappa, with a steep base price of Rs 2 crore, may not have many takers.

There are 20 players in the auction list with a reserve price of Rs 1.5 crore while 34 are in the list of cricketers with a reserve price of Rs 1 crore.

India's U-19 stars, skipper Yash Dhull, Vicky Ostwal and Rajvardhan Hangargekar, besides the likes of Shahrukh Khan,

Deepak Hooda and Avesh Khan, will also be looking to cash in and make their mark during the auction.

South Africa's 42-year-old spinner Imran Tahir is oldest in the auction while 17-year-old Noor Ahmed of Afghanistan is the youngest. Noor is currently playing in the U-19 World Cup in the West Indies.

Among all U-19 players, Indian medium pacer Hangargekar has a better auction base price of Rs 30 lakh, compared to Rs 20 lakh for others.

Punjab Kings have the highest number of 23 slots available while Chennai Super Kings, Delhi Capitals, Kolkata Knight Riders and Mumbai Indians have 21 vacancies.

The rest of the teams have 22 slots each.

Punjab Kings also head into the auction with the highest purse -- Rs 72 crore -- while the Delhi Capitals have the lowest -- Rs 47.5 crore.

Australia topped the overseas list with 47 players while 34 cricketers from the West Indies will also go under the hammer.

South Africa have 33 players, Sri Lanka 23, England 24, New Zealand 24 and Afghanistan 17.

Full-strength India, Australia face off in blockbuster semifinal

PTI ■ COOLIDGE (ANTIGUA)

Heavyweights India and Australia will face off in a blockbuster Super League semifinal of the Under-19 World Cup here on Wednesday, having beaten their opponents on the field and COVID-19 off it, on way to the last four stage.

India's preparations for the age-group showpiece were impacted heavily by the virus, with hardly any national camps or tournaments in the last two years except the recent Asia Cup.

The four-time champions started the tournament on the right note, overcoming a good South Africa side by 45 runs, but soon ran into a situation where they were struggling to field a playing XI after multiple players were found to have contracted COVID-19 hours before their match against Ireland.

Five members of the squad were unavailable for their second group clash, against Ireland on January 19 after a COVID outbreak.

Captain Yash Dhull, his deputy Shaikh Rasheed, Aaradhya Yadav, Manav



Parakh and Siddarth Yadav were part of that group and missed both the Ireland and Uganda fixtures, forcing the BCCI to fly in reinforcements.

India were without many players for their match with Uganda and had to call in six reserves to play with the non-infected members of their squad.

But a spirited India got the better of all the challenges thrown at them and soundly defeated Ireland and

Uganda before prevailing over Bangladesh by five wickets in a tricky chase in their quarterfinal match on a surface that was not conducive for playing strokes.

India are now back to full strength and in another good news, Nishant Sindhu has recovered from COVID-19 and will be available for selection for the all-important semifinal.

But if the match against

Bangladesh was any indication, India would like to improve their finishing with bat.

However, before that, despite missing many first XI players, India put up huge totals against Ireland (307/5) and Uganda (405/), and registered their biggest ever victory terms of runs against the African team.

Now up against a formidable Australian side, India will take confidence from the fact that they made the semifinals with wins on the trot despite the challenges posed by the virus.

This is the fourth time in a row that India will be appearing in the last-four stage of the competition.

India have a strong batting presence with the likes of Harnoor Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi and Raj Bawa, who broke Shikhar Dhawan's record for the highest individual score by an Indian batter at the U-19 World Cup with his 162 not out against Uganda, shouldering the responsibility, besides skipper Dhull and Rasheed.

In fact, it was Dhull who set the tone for the team with his solid 82 against South Africa in their tournament opener.

India-West Indies ODI series to be played behind closed doors: GCA



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The three-match ODI series between India and West Indies, scheduled here from February 6 to

11, will be played behind closed doors owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA) said on Tuesday. The matches will be played at the Narendra Modi Stadium. "We are all set to host West Indies Tour of India ODI Series 2022. 1st ODI on 6th of Feb will be a very special and historic match as India will be playing its 1000th ODI. Indian team will be the first cricket team in the world to achieve this feat. @BCCI #INDvsWI #teamindia," the GCA tweeted. "Considering the current situation, all the matches will be played behind the closed doors," the state cricket body said in another tweet.

After the ODIs, the two teams are scheduled to play a three-match T20 International series in Kolkata.



Pakistan through to 5th place play-off

PTI ■ COOLIDGE (ANTIGUA)

Haseebullah Khan struck a half-century as Pakistan sealed their place in the fifth place play-off with a six-wicket victory over Bangladesh despite a fine hundred from Ariful Islam in the U-19 World Cup here.

Bangladesh's innings was dominated by Islam, who arrived at the crease in the 12th over with his side on 23 for three and set about guiding them to a competitive total.

Islam had fallen for single figure scores in his two previous innings in this tournament but quickly found his groove here and brought up his half-century with a glorious six over long-on. The 17-year-old continued to lose partners – Mehran Mumtaz proving particularly potent with three for 16 from his 10 overs – but kept his composure and accelerated at the death, striking three sixes in one Awaiz Ali over to move into the nineties.

His century, from 118 balls, arrived midway through the 49th over but Islam fell to the next delivery – the ninth wicket to fall in an innings which was ended on 175 with four balls remaining.

Muhammad Shehzad and Haseebullah started confidently in reply, adding 76 in 19 overs before the former fell for 36.

Khan struck four fours and four sixes before picking out the deep square leg fielder on 78, by which time his side needed just 36 more for victory.

Irfan Khan (24) was unfortunate to be run out backing up and Qasim Akram fell for a single but Abdul Faseeh's unbeaten 22 saw Pakistan home with 21 balls to spare.

Pakistan will take on Sri Lanka in the fifth place play-off on Thursday, with Bangladesh to play South Africa for the right to finish seventh.

The United Arab Emirates concluded their best-ever U-19 World Cup campaign with a comfortable eight-wicket win over Ireland in the Plate final.

India, Australia to open cricket competition in Birmingham CWG



PTI ■ DUBAI

Cricket will mark its return to the Commonwealth Games after a gap of 24 years with India taking on Australia on July 29 in the 2022 Birmingham edition.

The league-cum-knockout women's tournament kicks off with a match between women's 2020 T20 World Cup finalists Australia and India on July 29, with the bronze and gold medal matches scheduled for August 7.

Cricket is the first discipline to announce its complete lineup for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games after Sri Lanka was confirmed as the eighth team in the women's T20 tournament, the ICC said on Tuesday.

The announcement was made jointly by the International Cricket Council and the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) following Sri Lanka's victory in the Commonwealth Games Qualifier in Kuala Lumpur last week and the subsequent CGF ratification of the island nation's entry.

Australia, Barbados, England, India, New Zealand, South Africa and Pakistan have already qualified as women's

cricket makes its first entry into the Commonwealth Games.

It will only be the second time that cricket features in the multi-discipline event after a men's competition was part of the Games in Kuala Lumpur in 1998 and is considered a massive opportunity to bring the game to new audiences.

A Shaun Pollock-led South Africa had won the gold on that occasion, beating Steve Waugh's Australian side by four wickets in the final.

ICC Hall of Famers Sachin Tendulkar of India, Jacques Kallis of South Africa and Mahela Jayawardene of Sri Lanka were among the many stars featuring in the 1998 Games.

Barbados and Pakistan are in Group A along with Australia and India while England, New Zealand, South Africa and Sri Lanka form Group B.

The ICC, CGF and Commonwealth Games Sri Lanka congratulated Sri Lanka for their qualification and looked forward to an exciting tournament.

ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice said: "It's good to have finalised the identity of the teams participating in the

Commonwealth Games.

We will have eight of the best teams competing for the gold and I am sure we will get to watch a highly competitive tournament.

"The Commonwealth Games are an important part of the women's cricket calendar over the next year. It is a huge opportunity for us to take cricket beyond the traditional strongholds and give more people around the world the chance to enjoy the game."

CGF President Dame Louise Martin said: "Cricket is a sport synonymous with the Commonwealth. We are so excited to have it back in the Games for the first time since the men's 50 over competition at Kuala Lumpur in 1998.

"The debut of women's T20 cricket will be a historic moment and a wonderful showcase of women's sport across the world."

The Birmingham Commonwealth Games, being held from July 28 to August 8, will see 4,500 athletes from 72 nations and territories compete across 11 days.

Birmingham 2022 will be the first major multi-sport event in history to award more medals to women than men.

Chennaiyin look to get mojo back against wooden spooners SC East Bengal

PTI ■ VASCO

Smarting from their heartbreaking derby S defeat, SC East Bengal will have nothing to lose when they take on Chennaiyin FC in the Indian Super League here on Wednesday.

Placed bottom of the table with just nine points from 14 outings, the Mario Rivera-coached side have all but lost their chance to stake a claim for the semifinals but will still look to improve their tally with their second win of the campaign against Chennaiyin.

SC East Bengal have conceded 28 goals in their 14 matches so far, the second-most by a team this season. They are coming off a 1-3 loss to ATK Mohun Bagan.

Since Riviera's arrival, they've been even more compact and narrow and forced teams to play from out wide. The number of crosses put in by the opposition in the last three matches highlights this playing style. In his three games in charge, the opposition have put in a total



of 80 crosses. "The confidence of a team is more related to the performance than the results. Sometimes you can play well and lose and vice-versa.

Our performance is much better than the results so the players are in a good space mentally," Rivera said on the eve of the match.

Brazilian striker Marcelo Ribeiro started for the first time for SC East Bengal in the last game, and Rivera opined his link-up play with Antonio Perosevic is one to look out for and it would have helped had he been there from the start.

"Marcelo and Perosevic's combination is one to watch out for. It is difficult because Marcelo cannot speak English but they are starting to understand each other now."

For Chennaiyin, placed seventh in the table with 18 points from 13 games, a win will catapult them back to the top-four. Lallianzuala Chhangte joined Mumbai City FC on loan on transfer deadline day but head coach Bozidar Bandovic would like to believe he has other options to fill in his boots

Japan hand Saudis first defeat in WC qualifying group



AP ■ SEOUL

A first-half goal from Takumi Minamino set Japan on the way to beating Saudi Arabia 2-0 at Saitama Stadium on Tuesday and keeping the host on course for a seventh successive World Cup appearance.

Minamino's goal from close range after 31 minutes was created by Junya Ito. The Belgian-based winger then added the second soon after the restart with a fierce shot from the edge of the area to seal a first defeat for the Saudis in Asia Group B qualifying.

Saudi Arabia, which would have qualified for a sixth World Cup with a victory, still led the group with 19 points, one more than Japan.

India beat China in back-to-back matches in women's FIH Pro League

PTI ■ MUSCAT

Indian women's team continued to make waves in the FIH Pro League as it dished out yet another masterclass to beat China 2-1 and move to the top of the standings here on Tuesday.

After defeating China 7-1 in their debut match on Monday, the Indians emerged 2-1 victorious against the same opponents at the Sultan Qaboos Complex on Tuesday.

While the win was not as goal-heavy as the previous day, what India showed was an ability to play swift, attacking hockey without losing composure.

A lack of experience and a certain level of weariness seemed to beset the China women's team right from the opening whistle of their second FIH Hockey Pro League



match against India.

Lost possession, misplaced passes and a reluctance to get back and defend contributed to a lacklustre first half performance by the Chinese team.

India, by contrast, started the match with high levels of energy and an appetite for

attacking play that rocked their opponents even further.

Pressure exerted by the Indians on the Chinese defence paid off quickly. A penalty corner in the third minute was converted with precision by Gurjit Kaur -- to add to the goal she scored in the first match on Monday.

China were fortunate not to be further behind at the end of the first 15 minutes. India created several scoring opportunities but these either flew wide of the opposition goal or were dealt with by Wu Shurong in China goal.

In the second half, China seemed to rally. They defended with more conviction and India were finding it difficult to contain Chinese attack.

As India struggled to regain the free-flowing play of the first half, China began to make their own incursions into the Indian circle.

A lovely pass that split the Indian defence left Wang Shumin with just Savita to beat. The Indian goalkeeper rushed forward but Wang was able to place the ball in the corner and restore both parity and her team's confidence levels.