



**"The irony of the situation is depressing. We want Kashmir to be part of India, but we do not want Kashmiris to be part of Indians"**  
P CHIDAMBARAM, Congress leader



**"The central government will give a befitting reply to Pakistan for being the sponsor of terrorist activities in the Valley"**  
PRAKASH JAVADEKAR, Union minister



**"The BJP is polarising the country to hide its failures. With a reduced credibility, the BJP and its ideologue will again rack up the emotive issues. The situation that we are facing today is a grim reminder of how low the communal forces can stoop to axe their own grind"**  
FAROOQ ABDULLAH, National Conference president

## 1st tranche of PM-KISAN may cover 24 mn farmers


**SANJEEB MUKHERJEE**  
New Delhi, 21 February

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to kick-start the direct income support scheme for farmers (PM-KISAN) on February 24 from Gorakhpur, by transferring the first installment of ₹2,000 to at least 24 million farmers across the country.

The number can go up further, as names of 5-6 million beneficiaries are getting added to the PM-KISAN portal.

Officials said details of over 26 million farmers were uploaded by states on the official PM-KISAN website, of which 2 million have been rejected in the first round of verification because of wrong land records, non-linking of bank account, among other reasons.

## IN BRIEF SC to consider listing of petitions seeking review of Rafale verdict



The Supreme Court on Thursday said it would consider listing of pleas seeking review of its December 14 verdict dismissing the need for an investigation into the deal to procure 36 Rafale fighter jets from France. A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi said four applications or petitions have been filed in the Rafale matter and one of them is still lying with the registry on account of defect. "The combination (of the judges) of bench will have to be changed. It is very difficult. We will do something for it," the bench, also comprising Justices LN Rao and Sanjiv Khanna, said when lawyer Prashant Bhushan sought urgent listing of the petitions in the Rafale case.

## 10-day coal mine stir shrinks NTPC Kaniha generation by 40%

NTPC's 3000 Mw super thermal power station at Kaniha near Talcher suffered a major setback in generation as a 10-day stir at the linked Kaniha open cast coal mines paralysed supplies. The agitation by locals over employment, was called off Thursday with production resuming at the mines of Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL), a Coal India Ltd (CIL) subsidiary.

## ₹ drops 13 paise to 71.24 versus dollar as crude oil rises



The rupee skidded by 11 paise to close at 71.24 against the US dollar on Thursday as rising oil prices and a strengthening greenback weighed on the market sentiment. At the Interbank Foreign Exchange (forex) market, the domestic unit opened strong at 71.06 and rose to 70.91.

## Capital requirement of PSBs to shrink to ₹25K crore: Moody's

Moody's Investors Service on Thursday said the government fund requirements of public sector banks will shrink substantially to about ₹20,000-₹25,000 crore in the year ending March 2020 (fiscal 2020) on improving asset quality. The government on Wednesday announced to pump in an additional ₹48,239 crore in 12 public sector banks (PSBs) in this fiscal to help them maintain regulatory capital requirements and finance growth plans.

## Gas demand to rise by 3.5% annually till FY23, says CRISIL

Gas demand is expected to post a 3.5 percent CAGR between 2018 and 2023 fiscals to 191-193 MMSCMD mainly on the back of the incremental demand expected to come from the fertiliser and city gas distribution (CGD) sectors, says a CRISIL survey.

## MINUTES OF MONETARY POLICY MEETING

# RBI acted to give growth a chance

**ANUP ROY**  
Mumbai, 21 February

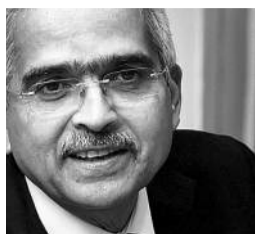
The six-member monetary policy committee (MPC) decided to give growth momentum a push through a rate cut, to encourage private investments and employment generation, at a time when inflation looked benign in the coming months.

It was also the need to "correct the past inaction" on interest rates, as external member Ravindra Dholakia put it, according to the minutes released on the RBI website, that prompted a rate cut. In earlier policies, except Dholakia, no other monetary policy committee (MPC) member thought it fit to cut rates even when inflation was well below the target of 4 per cent. The RBI had in the October policy even changed the stance to "calibrated tightening" from "neutral" earlier.

Under the chairmanship of Governor Shaktikanta Das, the committee voted four against two for a 25 basis point repo rate cut. Viral Acharya and Chetan Ghate voted to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent. All of them, though, favoured bringing the stance back to neutral.

Das said sustained low inflation, indications of food prices remaining low in the coming days, and weakened growth impulses "underscore the need to act decisively", and that there was a need to "seize the initiative and create a congenial environment for growth to revive and ensure a sustained trajectory".

Executive Director Michael Patra, who has been a strong advocate of a rate hike in earlier policies, saw merit in a cut this time. Had he continued with his earlier stance, the verdict would have been a draw and the new governor would have had to cast his additional vote.



**"The time is opportune to seize the initiative and create a congenial environment for growth to ensure a sustained trajectory"**  
SHAKTIKANTA DAS, Governor



**"I prefer to take off the helmet but stay within the crease. That is, I vote for a change in the stance ... but to hold the policy rate at 6.5%"**  
VIRAL ACHARYA, Deputy governor



**"It will be right to consider a rate cut to correct the past inaction and provide impetus to growth without risking inflation beyond the 4% target"**  
RAVINDRA DHOLAKIA, External member



**"It is prudent to preserve sufficient policy space to insulate the economy from adverse external shocks and boost the economy in an opportune way"**  
MICHAEL PATRA, Executive director

## RBI insists banks pass on repo rate action

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday emphasised on the quick transmission of monetary policy action by banks, while taking feedback on hurdles to pass on rate cuts, the current liquidity conditions and year-end pressures.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das held the first meeting with heads of select commercial banks after the monetary policy review on February 6, 2019. The

governor wanted to know the handicaps in transmitting the monetary policy decisions, bankers aware of deliberations at the meeting said.

The meeting focused on efficient transmission into a bank's lending rates. The RBI has flagged its concern that the central bank does a lot of groundwork on the monetary policy stance, but that is not reflected in the banks' decisions, senior bankers said.

The minutes of the monetary policy committee meetings, held between February 5 and 7, showed that the six members were sure about inflation to be low in the coming months, but they differed on by what degree it would be so and for how long. The members took comfort in crude prices stabilising at a softer level and food prices expected to remain benign in the coming days. The RBI has been revising down

its inflation projection and have lowered it from October to December by between 40-80 basis points (bps). RBI's own survey also revealed a softening by 80 bps at three-month horizon and 130 bps at 12-month horizon.

Patra argued that the future momentum of inflation would be dictated by food prices, but the chances of food becoming costly in the coming days, when there is a supply glut seems to be unlikely.

"As the amended RBI Act enjoins us, if the primary target for headline inflation is achieved on a reasonably lasting basis, it opens up some headroom to address the objective of growth," Patra said.

External member Dholakia, a strong advocate of rate support to growth and a sharp critique of RBI's inflation projection ability, saw scope for 50-60 basis points rate cut.

# Govt clarifies after Gadkari tweets on water to Pak

**ARCHIS MOHAN**  
New Delhi, 21 February

In a series of tweets on Thursday, Union Minister for Water Resources Nitin Gadkari said the Narendra Modi government has decided to stop India's share of water that flows to Pakistan and supply it to people in Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab.

While Gadkari was merely stating a declared policy of the Modi government, first put forth in 2016 in wake of strain in ties with Pakistan, his office was forced issue a clarification by evening lest the minister's comments were to be misconstrued in light of the Pulwama terror attack on February 14.

In his initial tweets, the minister had also said that the construction of a dam has started at Shahpur-Kandi on Ravi river. "Moreover, the Ujh project will store our share of water for use in Jammu & Kashmir and the balance water will flow from second Ravi-Beas link to provide water to other basin states. All the above projects are declared as the national projects," he said.

The government clarified that the minister was reiterating the government's stated policy on the issue. In September 2016, the Modi government had said that "blood and water cannot flow together", alluding to Pakistan's export of terrorism



**MOREOVER, THE UJH PROJECT WILL STORE OUR SHARE OF WATER FOR USE IN JAMMU & KASHMIR AND THE BALANCE WATER WILL FLOW FROM SECOND RAVI-BEAS LINK TO PROVIDE WATER TO OTHER BASIN STATES. ALL THE ABOVE PROJECTS ARE DECLARED AS NATIONAL PROJECTS**  
NITIN GADKARI, Union Minister for Water Resources

into India. However, the government had decided not to abrogate the 59-year-old Indus Water Treaty, but that it would take steps to maximise usage of western rivers. The Indus Water Treaty was brokered by the World Bank after eight years of negotiation and signed by India and Pakistan in 1960.

Earlier in the day, the Congress party broke its seven-day silence on the Pulwama terror attack, stating that it honoured the mourning period for the death of 44 CRPF personnel who were killed in the attack, and launched an attack on the PM. Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala cited media reports to allege that the PM continued shooting for a film in the Corbett National Park on February 14 for his own "self-propagation", and stayed put till the evening despite the Pulwama terror attack in the afternoon that day.

## Post-Uri strike chief to head Cong task force

Lieutenant General (retired) D S Hooda, who led India's surgical strikes to avenge the death of its soldiers in Uri in September 2016, will head the Congress' task force on national security. Hooda, who met Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Thursday evening, will prepare a vision paper on national security in consultation with a select group of experts.

## HIGH ON ACTION

# Drone power steals the show at Aero India

UAVs flew at high speeds, detected intruders, did aerobatic maneuvers and communicated with each other

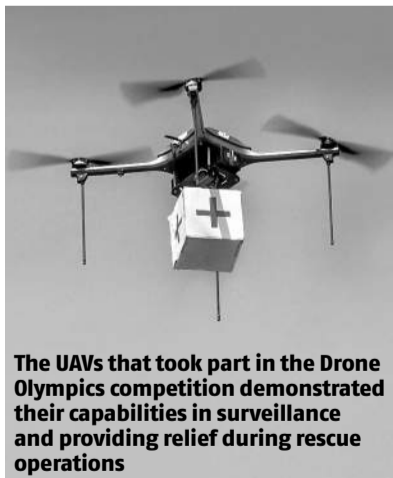
**PEERZADA ABRAR**  
Bengaluru, 21 February

On a sunny Thursday morning, the display area at the Yelahanka Air Force station in Bengaluru, the venue of the biennial Aero India show, saw the usual fighter jets and the acrobatic planes taking a break to give way to hundreds of drones. These unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) were participating in a unique Drone Olympics competition, demonstrating their capabilities in various missions, including surveillance, intrusion detection as well as providing relief items during rescue operations.

These UAVs could fly at high speeds, do aerobatic maneuvers like loops, rolls, spins and hammerheads effortlessly and communicate with each other intelligently. This is for the first time that such a competition was conducted at the Aero India.

The organisers said more than 120 applications were received of which 57 applicants were invited to participate in the competition. The 17 shortlisted teams had hi-tech startups, research institutes, students and individuals.

Team 'Dhaksha' of the Centre for Aerospace Research, MIT Campus, Anna University in Chennai, dominated the competition and won the first place in the 'surveillance hybrid design' category. 'Dhaksha' has already performed various missions for surveillance using their ingeniously designed and developed



**The UAVs that took part in the Drone Olympics competition demonstrated their capabilities in surveillance and providing relief during rescue operations**

dropping relief material like medical aid with exact precision. "We are already providing agricultural services and now we plan to get into the defence industry," said Prathyush Akepati, co-founder and CTO at Thanos Technologies.

In the surveillance category for the drones above 4 kg, team Drovengers Quad won the first place, while for drones below 4 kg, Mumbai-based start-up Sagar Defence Engineering bagged the first place. "Our mission is to move the world to the unmanned systems," said Saurabh Patil, R&D electronic engineer at Sagar Defence.

UAS-DTU, a team of undergraduate students of Delhi Technological University developing indigenous technological solutions for UAVs, won the first place for 'flying formation challenge', the last category of the competition. In this category, several drones took off in the air, communicated with each other intelligently and formed various shapes in the sky autonomously.

A prize of about ₹36 lakh was distributed among winners and runner-ups.

The Drone Olympics, organised by the Ministry of Defence, aims to encourage the UAV industry to connect with potential buyers and business partners in the country and also provide an opportunity to the Armed Forces to assess the capabilities of drones.

With 22.5 per cent of the world's UAV imports, India tops the list of drone-importing nations, according to the data

UAVs for disaster management during the 2015 Chennai floods. Some other rescue operations in which it participated included Moulivakkam building collapse, Chennai oil spill, Kurangani hills forest fire, and crowd management activities at Marina beach during new year.

"We want to make India self-reliant in UAV systems designs," said R Vasantharaj, a research scientist representing 'Dhaksha'.

Thanos Technologies, a Hyderabad-based drone tech start-up, won the first place in 'supply drop challenge', a category mainly for disaster management missions. It included

provided by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Industry experts say drone-related firms such as the ones that participated in Aero India can reduce the country's dependence on foreign UAVs. The drone demand is mainly derived from military-end user application, followed by law enforcement, precision agricultural, inspection and monitoring. "We saw some tremendous applications. So you need to have hundreds of start-ups, and industries that can come up for building these applications," said G Sathesh Reddy, secretary, Department of Defence R&D, and Chairman, Defence Research and Development Organisation.

US defence giant Lockheed Martin is already wooing Indian talent in the area of drones. Three of the winners of the competition would receive development kit given to the teams in AlphaPilot — Lockheed Martin AI drone racing innovation challenge.

"It consists drone hardware, sensors, processing platform and supporting software," said Vivek Lall, vice president of strategy and business development, Lockheed Martin.

AlphaPilot is an open innovation challenge, developing artificial intelligence for high-speed racing drones, conducted by Lockheed Martin, along with Drone Racing League. "We invite the three teams to attend one of our events in the US where our experts will help with set-up and activation," he said.

## SHOW OF STRENGTH



**Army chief Gen Bipin Rawat boards the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft 'Tejas' for a 40-minute sortie on the 2nd day of the Aero India air show at the Yelahanka air base in Bengaluru on Thursday. He described the jet as a "wonderful aircraft" and his sortie as "experience of a lifetime". He also flew in the HAL-made Light Combat Helicopter**

PHOTO: PTI  
Tejas Mark 1A may fly by 2022 PAGE 16

## HAL not interested in Rafale deal now: CMD

Steering clear of the political slugfest over the Rafale deal, Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) on Thursday said it was not interested in the French fighter jet project offsets anymore and asserted it was not being ignored by the government.

The defence public sector undertaking also said the political fight over Rafale has not affected its morale and business prospects.

"Yes, we do feel bad when there are bad things said, but it has not affected us. Our staff and middle management are more enthusiastic. This does not affect our business either," HAL Chairman and Managing Director R Madhavan said.

He also said the company was not interested in "offsets and direct purchases".

"... That was the government's decision to take it as a direct purchase and we are not interested in it," he told reporters at the Aero India 2019 air show at the Yelahanka IAF air base, north of Bengaluru.