

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! Sitharaman presents Rs...

2023-24. "Coming to 2024-25, the total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at Rs 30.80 lakh crore and Rs 47.66 lakh crore, respectively. The tax receipts are estimated at Rs 26.02 lakh crore," she said.

Stressing that the impact of all-round development is discernible in all sectors, she said, "There is macro-economic stability, including in the external sector. Investments are robust. The economy is doing well."

People are living better and earning better, with even greater aspirations for the future, she said, adding that average real income of people has increased 50 per cent.

"Inflation is moderate. People are getting empowered, equipped and enabled to pursue their aspirations. There is effective and timely delivery of programmes and of large projects," she said.

Finance Minister said Pradhanmantri Suryodaya Yojana will enable one crore families to get up to 300 units of free electricity monthly and help them save up to Rs 18,000 annually.

"There is provision of Rs 10,000 crore for rooftop solar (scheme) in the Budget," said Finance Secretary T V Somanathan in press conference on Budget later in the day.

Earlier in the day Sitharaman in her interim Budget speech said through rooftop solarisation, one crore households will be enabled to obtain up to 300 units of free electricity each month.

This scheme follows the resolve of the Prime Minister on the historic day of consecration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, she said.

Talking about the benefits, she informed the House that there will be "savings up to Rs 15,000-18,000 annually for households from free solar electricity and selling the surplus to the distribution companies".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the 'Pradhanmantri Suryodaya Yojana' with the target of installing rooftop solar earlier in January.

"I have taken my first decision after returning from Ayodhya that our government will launch 'Pradhan Mantri Suryoday Yojna' with the aim to install rooftop solar systems in one crore houses," Modi had said on X.

The scheme will also aid charging of electric vehicles; entrepreneurship opportunities for a large number of vendors for supply and installation and employment opportunities for the youth with technical skills in manufacturing, installation, and maintenance.

Talking about India's commitment for "net-zero" by 2070, she announced a Viability Gap Funding (VGF) for harnessing offshore wind energy.

"VGF will be provided for harnessing offshore wind energy potential for initial capacity of 1 GW," she said.

According to the Central Electricity Authority data, India has a solar energy-installed generation capacity of over 73 GW.

Similarly, the data showed that wind energy capacity in the country stood around 45 GW while large hydro (over 25 MW capacity each) is 47 GW.

The biomass power/cogen capacity about 10 GW and that of small hydro (up to 25 MW) is around 5 GW, while the waste-to-energy capacity stood at 583 MW.

India has set a target of having 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030 and have 50 per cent of installed power generation capacity from non-fossil fuel sources.

President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday said in her joint address to the Members of Parliament that in 10 years, non-fossil fuel-based energy capacity has increased from 81 GW to 188 GW.

"During this period, solar power capacity has increased 26 times. Similarly, wind power capacity has doubled. We are placed at fourth in the world in terms of renewable energy installed capacity. We are ranked fourth in wind power capacity. We are at fifth position in solar power capacity," she said.

Ashwani Sehgal, President of Indian Solar Manufacturers' Association and MD of Alpek Solar, said, "It's a very positive step that the government announced in its interim Budget that 1 crore homes would get solar panel installation."

This offers a robust 30 GW opportunity and has massive upside for solar manufacturers, he pointed out.

"This announcement by our finance minister is a big welcome and game changer for solar manufacturers, environment, local job creation and shall take solar panels to all nooks and corners of Bharat," he added.

Anujesh Dwivedi, Partner, Deloitte India, said, "Empowering one crore households with rooftop solar installations, delivering up to 300 free units monthly, signifies a transformative synergy for the power sector."

This initiative not only advances renewable energy capacity installation in the country but also addresses the chronic issue of poor financial viability and subsidy dependence of DISCOMs, marking a significant stride towards sustainability and economic efficiency, Dwivedi said.

By fostering a widespread adoption of rooftop solar, this initiative not only enhances environmental sustainability but also empowers households, contributing to energy self-sufficiency and fostering a more resilient and decentralised power infrastructure for the nation, Dwivedi added.

On VGF for offshore wind, Dwivedi said the timely announcement of VGF for a 1 GW offshore wind capacity is a strategic move, "aligning with our national ambition to achieve 500 GW of installed capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030".

Essar Power CEO Kush Singh said, "The government's commitment to providing free rooftop solar electricity to one crore households signifies a strategic move towards resource-efficient economic growth. This initiative not only ensures energy security but also stimulates entrepreneurship and employment in the evolving renewable energy landscape."

ReNew Founder Chairman and CEO Sumant Sinha said continued priority to achieve rapid growth of the green energy sector is clear.

Announcements on VGF for offshore wind energy and allocations for solar rooftop projects will support development of the whole industry, he said.

The announcement of Rs 1 lakh crore corpus for research and development in sunrise sectors sets a positive tone for the future, encouraging us to accelerate our investments and innovations in renewable energy technologies, he said.

Budget guarantee of...

crore while keeping the fiscal deficit under control, he said.

The budget empowers the poor and middle class and will create countless employment opportunities for the youth, Modi said.

Modi said the government sets a big goal, achieves it, and then sets an even bigger target for itself.

Highlighting the government's efforts for the welfare of the poor and the middle class, he referred to the construction of over four crore houses in villages and cities and increasing the target to build two crore more houses.

Underlining the emphasis on empowerment of women, the prime minister said, "Our goal was to make two crore 'lakhpatis' among women. Now, this goal has been increased to make three crore 'lakhpatis'."

He also praised the government's flagship Ayushman Bharat scheme for its significant assistance to the poor, extending its benefits to Anganwadi and ASHA workers.

Modi highlighted the government's emphasis on empowering the poor and the middle class by creating new opportunities for them in the budget.

He spoke of the rooftop solar campaign where one crore families will avail free electricity while also earning an income of Rs 15,000 to Rs 18,000 per year by selling excess electricity to the government.

The income tax remission scheme announced in the budget, he said, will provide relief to about one crore citizens belonging to the middle class.

Discussing the major decisions taken for farmers' welfare in the budget, Modi mentioned the Nano DAP (fertiliser), a new scheme for animals, expansion of the PM Matsya Sampada Yojana and the 'Atmanirbhar' oil seed campaign that will increase the income of farmers and reduce expenses.

LG hails Interim...

and geographical inclusivity through development of all regions of the country has put the Indian economy on a fast-track. Hon'ble FM has announced several schemes for the biggest four castes in the interim budget. The target of 3 crore Lakhpati Didi, corpus of Rs. 1 Lakh Cr to accelerate innovations, new schemes for farmers & poor, will put the country on to a faster & high growth path".

Budget: Over Rs...

given to cabinet under which the expenditure on council of ministers, cabinet secretariat, Prime Minister's Office, hospitality and entertainment of the government come.

Among the paramilitary forces, Rs 32809.65 crore was given to the CRPF from a revised estimate of Rs 31389.04 crore in 2023-24, Rs 25027.52 crore to the BSF (Rs 25038.68 crore in 2023-24), Rs 13655.84 crore to CISF (Rs 12929.85 crore), Rs 8253.53 crore to ITBP (Rs 8203.68 crore in 2023-24), Rs 8485.77 crore to SSB (Rs 8435.68 crore in 2023-24) and Rs 7368.33 crore to the Assam Rifles (Rs 7276.29 crore in 2023-24).

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is mostly deployed for internal security duties, operations against terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir; Naxals in central and

eastern India and the insurgents in the Northeast.

The Border Security Force (BSF) mostly guards the Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Bangladesh borders besides it is also deployed internal security duties. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) guards vital installations like nuclear plants, airports, metro networks.

The Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) guards the Sino-Indian border; the Shashastra Seema Bal (SSB) guards the Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan borders, the Assam Rifles protects India's border with Myanmar.

While the Intelligence Bureau (IB) has been allocated Rs 3195.09 crore (Rs 3268.94 crore in 2023-24), Rs 11177.50 crore to the Delhi Police (Rs 11940.33 crore in 2023-24), Rs 506.32 crore to the Special Protection Group (SPG) (Rs 446.83 crore in 2023-24).

The IB is India's internal intelligence agency, the Delhi Police guards the national capital and the SPG provides the security to the Prime Minister.

The budget allocated Rs 3199.62 crore for security related expenditure and Special Infrastructure Scheme for Left Wing Extremist Areas, Rs 335.00 crore for Border Area Development Programme, Rs 214.44 crore for safe city projects, and Rs 330.00 crore for Land Port Authority of India.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS...

- ▶ Viability gap funding for wind energy
- ▶ Setting up of coal gasification and liquefaction capacity
- ▶ Phased mandatory blending of CNG, PNG and compressed biogas
- ▶ Financial assistance for procurement of biomass aggregation machinery
- ▶ Rooftop solarization-1 crore households will be enabled to obtain up to 300 units of free electricity per month
- ▶ Adoption of e-buses for public transport network
- ▶ Strengthening e-vehicle ecosystem by supporting manufacturing and charging
- ▶ New scheme of biomanufacturing and bio-foundry to be launched to support environment friendly alternatives
- ▶ >10 crore LPG connections released under PMUY
- ▶ 36.9 crore LED bulbs, 72.2 lakh LED Tube lights, and 23.6 lakh Energy efficient fans distributed under U-JALA
- ▶ 1.3 crore LED Street Lights installed under SNLIP
- Infrastructure and Investment**
- ▶ Implementation of 3 major railway corridor programmes under PM Gati Shakti to improve logistics efficiency and reduce cost
- ▶ Promotion of foreign investment via bilateral investment treaties to be negotiated
- ▶ Expansion of existing airports and comprehensive development of new airports under UDAN scheme
- ▶ Promotion of urban transformation via Metro rail and NaMo Bharat
- Health**
- ▶ Encourage Cervical Cancer Vaccination for girls (9-14 years)
- ▶ Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 to be expedited for improved nutrition delivery, early childhood care and development
- ▶ U-WIN platform for immunisation efforts of Mission Indradhanush to be rolled out
- ▶ Health cover under Ayushman Bharat scheme to be extended to all ASHA, Angawadi workers and helpers

- Housing**
- ▶ Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Grameen) close to achieving target of 3 crore houses, additional 2 crore targeted for next 5 years
- ▶ Housing for Middle Class scheme to be launched to promote middle class to buy/build their own houses
- Tourism**
- ▶ States will be encouraged to undertake development of iconic tourist centres to attract business and promote opportunities for local entrepreneurship
- ▶ Long-term interest free loans to be provided to States to encourage development Projects for port connectivity, tourism infrastructure, and amenities will be taken up in islands, including Lakshadweep
- Agriculture and Food Processing**
- ▶ Government will promote private and public investment in post-harvest activities
- ▶ Application of Nano-DAP to be expanded in all agro-climatic zones
- ▶ Atmanirbhar Oilseeds Abhiyaan-Strategy to be formulated to achieve atmanirbharta for oilseeds
- ▶ Comprehensive programme for dairy development to be formulated
- ▶ Implementation of Pradhan Mantri Matsaya Sampada Yojana to be stepped up to enhance aquaculture productivity, double exports and generate more employment opportunities
- ▶ 5 Integrated Aquaparks to be set up

- Achievements of Taxation Reforms**
- ▶ Direct Tax Collections more than trebled in last 10 years
- ▶ Number of return filers swelled to 2.4 times
- ▶ Faster refunds: Reduction in average processing time of returns from 93 days (2013-14) to 10 days (2023-24)
- Average monthly Gross GST**
- ▶ Collections doubled to Rs 1.66 lakh crore in FY24
- ▶ Increase in tax buoyancy of State revenue from 0.72 (2012-16) to 1.22 in the post-GST period (2017-23)
- Positive sentiment about GST**
- ▶ 94% industry leasers view transition to GST as largely positive
- ▶ 80% of respondents feel GST has led to supply-chain optimisation
- Decline in import release time since 2019 by:-**
- ▶ 47 per cent at Inland Container Depots
- ▶ 28 per cent at Air Cargo complexes
- ▶ 27 per cent at Sea Ports

Azad urges Govt...

programme. Among others present on the occasion included Mohd Amin Bhatt, Provincial President; Peer Bilal, Zonal President; Amir Bhatt, Distt President; Shafiq Shabnam Provincial General Secretary; Umar Kakroo, former Chairman MC Baramulla and others.

Death toll in...

the Boniyar area of Uri, resulting in the death of seven persons and injury to eight others, they said.

The injured are being treated at different hospitals with two of them referred to the SKIMS Hospital at Soura here for specialised treatment, police said.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has expressed grief and announced an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh each for the next of kin of those who lost their lives in the accident.

Snowfall at Vaishnodevi...

areas in the higher reaches had received light snowfall, most of the upper reaches experienced moderate snowfall at the fog-end of the Chilla-i-Kalan.

The snowfall at the end of Chilla-i-Kalan brought cheers to the tourists as well as the locals associated with the tourism sector.

Thursday's snowfall shut down the Srinagar-Jammu national highway as it was blocked due to shooting stones between Ramsoo and Banihal. The alternate Mughal road and the Srinagar-Leh highway are closed for traffic due to snow accumulation. However, the snowfall brought cheer to the residents.

"Finally, there is snow in the plains of Kashmir. We thank God for this blessing," Mehraj Ahmad, a resident of the city here, said.

He expressed hope that the coming days will see more snowfall in the valley.

Irfan Ahmad, a resident of Ganderbal, said while the snowfall was the need of the hour for the valley as it was essential for sustenance.

"We witnessed a prolonged dry weather. Our glaciers have melted, there was hardly any snow left on the mountains before the recent snowfall. Snow is really important for our sustenance. Without it, our water resources would have dried up, it could have hit our horticulture especially fruit produce, and the dry spell resulted in many respiratory ailments. So, it is essential we have a good snowfall," he said

The valley's orchardists also expressed happiness over the snowfall.

"We thank God as the long wait is finally over and it is snowing across Kashmir. the snow is very beneficial for the farmers and orchardists. People in Kashmir were under distress because there was no snow in the plains which could have meant doom for the horticulture produce.

"However, the snowfall now has infused a new life into it and we hope there is more snow in the days to come," a farmer in Kulgam said.

The MeT Office has said the weather would remain cloudy with light snow at few places till the afternoon and there would be a gradual improvement thereafter.

On Friday, the weather is likely to remain dry with a possibility of very light snow at isolated higher reaches.

There is a possibility of light to moderate snow/rain (in Jammu) at many places of J-K on February 3-4, and the weather is likely to remain dry thereafter till February 12, the weather office said.

Srinagar city recorded a minimum temperature of 0.2 degrees Celsius -- down from 2.2 degrees Celsius on the previous night.

Pahalgam recorded a minimum temperature of minus 4.1 degrees Celsius,

Kazigund minus 0.4 degrees Celsius, Kokernag minus 1.4 degrees Celsius and Kupwara minus 0.7 degrees Celsius.

Gulmarg registered a low of minus 7.6 degrees Celsius and was the coldest place in the valley.

Jammu-Srinagar NH...

is about to start", traffic police said on X.

Over 200 vehicles are stranded at different points of the 270-km highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country.

They said work is on to reopen the highway for traffic but incessant rains in the Ramban-Banihal sector were proving to be an impediment.

The traffic police advised people to avoid journey on the highway till the weather improves and the road is clear.

CS takes holistic...

the visitors expect of it. He asked for roping in different tourism promotion players across the country and taking them on FAM tours here for increasing the footfall at each location.

For Gharana wetland the Chief Secretary asked for reaching out to the bird watching associations across the country besides taking measures for improving the amenities and facilities there. He also stressed on connecting the nearby famous destination of Suchetgarh by road for creating a tourism circuit there. He asked them to look for the international and national best practices followed in this branch of tourism.

Dulloo also asked for requesting the BSF for adding frequency of parade at Suchetgarh border. He made out that in addition to that the facilities should also be upgraded for catering to the enhanced rush of tourists to this spot.

For Jajjar Kotli near Katra the Chief Secretary impressed upon the Tourism Department to restore its earlier fame. He called for making the hutments and other infrastructure functional by outsourcing it at an earliest. He told them to add other activities to the list for diverse group of visitors especially school children.

Regarding the promotion and publicity of Ranjit Sagar Dam the Chief Secretary asked them to initiate multiple water sports and adventure activities there. He called for full utilisation of its potential besides taking all the precautions for the safety of visitors there.

He also took note of the measures being taken to make Mantalai a spiritual hub of yoga. He stressed on making the facilities and world-class infrastructure raised there available to the potential tourists as its occupancy should get the most priority now.

The Chief Secretary also took note of the current footfall and availability of facilities at Surinsar, Mansar and at other locations here. He told them to make micro plan of all these places for making them attractive to public.

As far as the pilgrim tourism is concerned the Chief Secretary asked them to develop the sites of Ambharan, Kameshwar Temple, Purmandal, Uttar Behni and Shiv Khori religious sites. He asked for taking steps for making the visit of pilgrims and tourists comfortable there.

He also took note of the development of the Mubarak Mandi heritage complex and development of trail up to Raghunath Bazaar here. He asked them to act swiftly now as everything is on paper and needs implementation on ground.

The Commissioner Secretary, Tourism, Yasha Mudgal gave inputs about the status of facilities there and the footfall of tourists at each location. She also highlighted the future plans for each location and the timeline by which these plans are going to be implemented here across all these tourist destinations.

130 JKAS officers, 123 Tehsildars, 88 DySPs transferred

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: In a major reshuffle, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has transferred 230 bureaucrats, including Junior JKAS and JKAS officers, Tehsildars and police officers, officials said on Thursday.

According to the order issued, those transferred include 45 Junior JKAS officers, 85 JKAS officers, 123 Tehsildars and 88 Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySPs).

This is the major reshuffle in the civil administration since Atal Dulloo took over as Chief Secretary in December last year.

For detail of transferred orders visit our website www.statetimes.in.

J&K BJP says interim Budget is ‘people-friendly’

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: The BJP in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday termed the interim Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as "people-friendly", while opposition National Conference claimed it had nothing for the people and was "disappointing".

"I think this is a very good budget and it will help speed up the development of Kashmir," BJP's J-K spokesperson Altaf Thakur told PTI here.

"This is a people-friendly budget. The backbone of Kashmir is the tourism industry and the announcement for interest-free loan in the Budget will bring a new revolution in Kashmir's economy. This provision will take Kashmir's tourism industry further ahead," Thakur said.

He also lauded the provisions in the Budget to empower Anganwari and ASHA workers and hailed the announcements made for youth welfare and employment.

Chasfeeda, a woman entrepreneur, welcomed the finance minister's women-centric announcements in the Budget and appealed the women to grab the opportunities.

"...The government is doing a lot for women. I think every woman should come forward and take benefit of the opportunity to become independent," Chasfeeda said.

The Women and Child Development Ministry has been allocated Rs 26,000 crore in 2024-25, an increase of 2.52 per cent from the previous budget.

The Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0 (Umbrella ICDS - Anganwadi Services, Poshan Abhiyan, Scheme for Adolescent Girls) saw the highest allocation of funds at Rs 21,200 crore, followed by the Mission Shakti (Mission for Protection and Empowerment for Women) which has been given Rs 3145.97 crore.

Rotary Club Rajouri Grand distributes sweaters among school children

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NOWSHERA: The country can progress only when children become educated and become partners in progress. This was said by Charter President Rotary Club Rajouri Grand, Lokesh Bakshi while distributing school sweaters to poor



children studying in government schools.

Rajesh Mehta, President of Rotary Club Rajouri Grand said that after visiting many government schools under Rajouri Education Zone, we prepared a list of such children who belong to poor families and about 300 poor children were given sweaters.

Club Secretary Dr. Sachin Vaidya said that through this initiative, not only education is being encouraged, but also a good and correct way is being shown to the children of poor families to protect them from cold during the winter season.

While sharing the experiences of student life with the students, he said that acquiring knowledge should be given priority in school.

Rotarian Umesh Sharma, Rotarian Navneet Bahri, Rotarian Amardeep Singh, Rotarian Rafiq Mir, Rotarian Vishal Sapotra, Rotarian Ankur Gupta were also present on this occasion.