

## !! Continuations from Page 1 !! Sitharaman cuts taxes...



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman addressing a Post Budget Press Conference at National Media Centre, in New Delhi on Saturday.

lakh crore in current fiscal. Besides, an increase in dividend expected from the Reserve Bank and other government-owned financial institutions will also help to contain the losses.

The budget comes against the backdrop of the Indian economy growing at its weakest pace since pandemic and rising geopolitical risks particularly with the new US President Donald Trump threatening to impose widespread tariffs including on India.

The 6.4 per cent GDP growth estimated for the current fiscal and 6.3 to 6.8 per cent in the next are well below the 8 per cent growth needed to meet the ambitious goal of making India a developed nation by 2047.

"Our endeavour will be to keep the fiscal deficit each year such that the central government debt remains on a declining path as a percentage of the GDP," she said, projecting debt at 50 per cent of GDP by March 2031.

Other measures include a national mission to push high-yielding crops with a special focus on pulses and cotton production, hike in the limit of subsidised credit to farmers to Rs 5 lakh from Rs 3 lakh, missions to push manufacturing and exports, a new policy for labour intensive sectors like leather and footwear and a scheme to make India a global hub for toy manufacturing.

The finance minister also announced a social security cover for nearly 1 crore gig workers and a Rs 10,000 crore fund of funds for startups.

Another major announcement was setting a target of at least 100 gigawatt of electricity from nuclear energy by 2047 and amendment to nuclear liability regulations to allow private sector investment.

Sitharaman also announced reduction in duties on a raft of goods including open cells, while fully exempting critical minerals such as cobalt, scraps of lithium-ion battery, lead, zinc and a few others from import duty.

She proposed a hike in the threshold of tax collected at source on remittances under the RBI's Liberalised Remittance Scheme from Rs 7 lakh to Rs 10 lakh, benefiting the travel and foreign exchange sectors. Students and individuals seeking medical treatment will also benefit from this.

Rationalising TDS provisions, the finance minister increased the thresholds for non deduction across various TDS provisions broadly ranging from Rs 5,000 to Rs 50,000. The threshold for TDS on rent has been increased from Rs 2.40 lakh to Rs 6 lakh.

That apart, omissions of higher TDS/TCS rates are now applicable for non-filers.

She said the government aims to initiate "transformative reforms" across six domains, including taxation and financial sector, in Union Budget 2025. She said the government's development track record of the past 10 years and structural reforms have drawn global attention.

A Viksit Bharat will have zero poverty, quality education, high-quality, affordable and comprehensive healthcare, she said and added that the Budget's focus is to take everyone together on inclusive growth path.

"... this Budget aims to initiate transformative reforms across six domains during the first five years. These will augment our growth potential and global competitiveness. The domains are taxation, power sector, urban development, mining, financial sector and regulatory reforms... agriculture as the first engine," Sitharaman said.

Asserting that the Budget's focus is to take everyone together on inclusive growth path, she said the proposed development measures span 10 broad areas, focusing on 'garib' youth, 'anna daata' and 'hari', spurring agricultural growth and productivity, building rural prosperity and resilience.

## Finance Minister Nirmala...

his first budget on February 28, 1959, full budgets in the following two years and an interim one in 1962. This was followed by two full budgets. After four years, he presented another interim budget in 1967, followed by three full budgets in 1967, 1968, and 1969, presenting a total of 10 budgets.

**SECOND HIGHEST NUMBER OF BUDGETS:** Former finance minister P Chidambaram presented the budget on nine occasions. He first presented the budget on March 19, 1996, during the United Front government led by Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda. He presented another budget under the same government the next year and returned to the hot seat when the Congress-led UPA came to power in 2009.

He presented five budgets between 2004 and 2008. After a stint as Union Home Minister, he was back in the finance ministry and presented budgets in 2013 and 2014.

**THIRD HIGHEST NUMBER OF BUDGETS:** Pranab Mukherjee presented eight budgets during his tenure as finance minister. He presented budgets in 1982, 1983 and 1984 and five straight ones between February 2009 and March 2012 in the Congress-led UPA government.

**MANMOHAN SINGH:** Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh presented five straight budgets between 1991 and 1995 when he was finance minister in the P V Narasimha Rao government.

**LONGEST BUDGET SPEECH:** Sitharaman holds the record for the longest budget speech when her presentation on February 1, 2020, lasted two hours and 40 minutes. At the time, she cut short her speech with two pages still remaining.

**SHORTEST BUDGET SPEECH:** Hirubhai Muljibhai Patel's interim Budget speech in 1977 is so far the shortest at just 800 words.

**TIMING:** The Budget was traditionally presented on the last day of February at 5 pm. The timing followed a colonial era practice when the announcements could be made in London and India at the same time. India is 4 hours and 30 minutes ahead of the British Summer Time, and so presenting the budget at 5 pm in India ensured that it was happening in the daytime in the United Kingdom.

The timing was changed in 1999 when the then finance minister Yashwant Sinha in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government presented the budget at 11 am.

Since then budgets are presented at 11 am.

**DATE:** The Budget presentation date was in 2017 changed to the 1st of February to allow the government to complete the Parliamentary approval process by March-end and allow implementation of the Budget from the start of the fiscal on April 1.

Presenting the Budget on February 28 meant that the implementation could not start before May/June after accounting for 2-3 months of the parliamentary approval process.

## SUMMARY OF UNION...

innovation initiatives  
Gyan Bharatam Mission for survey and conservation of manuscripts to cover more than one crore manuscripts

FDI limit enhanced for insurance from 74 to 100 per cent

Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 to be introduced for decriminalising more than 100 provisions in various laws

Updated income tax returns time limit increased from two to four years

delay in TCS payment decriminalised

TDS on rent increased from Rs 2.4 lakh to 6 lakh

BCD exempted on 36 lifesaving drugs and medicines for treating cancer, rare and chronic diseases

BCD on IFPD increased to 20% and on open cells reduced to 5%

BCD on parts of open cells exempted to promote domestic manufacturing.

To boost battery production, additional capital goods for EV and mobile battery manufacturing exempted.

BCD exempted for 10 years on raw materials & components used for ship building.

BCD reduced from 30% to 5% on frozen fish paste and 15% to 5% on fish hydrolysate.

## People's budget, force...

products to shine globally.

The tax relief will provide big benefits to the middle class and salaried employees, he said, adding the Budget announcement that those earning up to Rs 12 lakh will have to pay no income tax will present those entering the job sector with a big opportunity.

The prime minister praised the "historic" decision to promote the private sector in

nuclear energy, saying civil nuclear energy will ensure a significant contribution to the country's development in the future.

Stressing that the Budget has prioritised all employment generating sectors, he highlighted two key reforms, including granting infrastructure status to shipbuilding that will boost the construction of large ships in India and accelerate the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' programme.

Including hotels in 50 tourist destinations under the infrastructure category will provide a major fillip to tourism, Modi said, noting that the hospitality industry is the largest employment sector.

He said the country was progressing with the mantra of 'Vikas bhi, Virasat bhi' (development as well as heritage).

He asserted that the announcements for farmers will lay the foundation for a revolution in the agricultural sector and the entire rural economy, as he highlighted that under the PM Dhan-Dhanya Krishi Yojana irrigation and infrastructure development will take place in 100 districts.

Increasing the limit of Kisan Credit Card from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 5 lakh will provide greater assistance to farmers, he added.

"The Budget has a 360-degree focus on manufacturing to strengthen entrepreneurs, MSMEs and small businesses, creating new jobs," the prime minister said, underlining that sectors like clean tech, leather, footwear and toy industries have received special support under the National Manufacturing Mission.

He stressed that the goal is to ensure that Indian products shine in the global market.

Modi said the Budget places special emphasis on creating a vibrant and competitive investment environment in the states.

In this context, he mentioned the announcements to double the credit guarantee for MSMEs and startups besides the introduction of a scheme to provide loans up to Rs 2 crore without guarantee for SCs, STs and first-time women entrepreneurs.

The Prime Minister said the announcements for gig workers, including their registration on the e-Shram portal for the first time, and enabling them to access healthcare and other social security schemes reflect the government's commitment to the dignity of labour.

He said that regulatory and financial reforms, such as Jan Vishwas 2.0, will strengthen the commitment to minimum government and trust-based governance.

This Budget not only addresses the current needs of the country but also helps in preparing for the future, Modi asserted, highlighting the initiatives for startups, including the Deep Tech Fund, Geospatial Mission and Nuclear Energy Mission.

## One dead, 3...

on-the-spot death of Yasir Ali, while the driver along with two others, Junaid and Zakir Hussain, were rescued in a critical condition by the rescuers and shifted to hospital.

## Pragmatic Budget for...

budget will further boost infrastructure sector, MSMEs, energy sector, innovation, employment generation, and push transformative reforms in key sectors for more inclusive and more sustainable growth", the Lieutenant Governor added.

## Bopanna meets LG...

empowering children from underprivileged sections, a collaborative initiative by Rohan Bopanna Tennis Academy and Kamal India Foundation.

He informed that the children selected from Jammu division as well as from Kashmir division will receive free boarding, lodging, education and comprehensive tennis training at Bengaluru.

The Lieutenant Governor appreciated the ace Tennis Player for his noble initiative to empower the children belonging to underprivileged sections of the society through sports and education.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor also met Nazia Bibi, International Kho Kho Player from J&K who represented India at the recently concluded Kho Kho World Cup-2025 at New Delhi. Nazia, hailing from Nagrota, Jammu was a part of the India's Women Kho Kho World Cup winning team. The Lieutenant Governor congratulated Nazia for her remarkable achievement at the international event and conveyed best wishes to her for the upcoming tournaments.

## Daring Daylight Heist...

has also appealed to anyone who may have witnessed the suspect fleeing or has any relevant information to come forward and assist in the investigation.

As the probe continues, the other jewellery shop owners and employees remain shaken by the terrifying ordeal, hoping for swift justice and the recovery of the stolen gold. The incident stands as a grim reminder of the growing need for heightened security measures in residential and commercial zones to prevent such crimes in the future.

## Par panel on...

the report. BJP members insisted that the Bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha in August last year, seeks to bring modernity, transparency and accountability in the management of Waqf properties.

On the other hand, the opposition termed it an attack on the constitutional rights of the Muslim community and interference in the functioning of Waqf boards.

## Snow in higher up, rain in plains end dry spell in Kashmir

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

**SRINAGAR:** Fresh snowfall in higher reaches and rain in the plains ended the prolonged dry spell in the Kashmir valley, with the Meteorological Department forecasting a possibility of more precipitation over the next four days.

Intermittent snowfall was reported in the higher reaches of Baramulla, Bandipora, Kupwara and Sotomarg districts of the valley, officials said.

They said traces of snowfall were seen early morning in some parts of South Kashmir. In Srinagar and adjoining areas, intermittent rainfall has been going on since last evening.

The downpour brought down the maximum temperature on Friday by couple to degrees while the minimum temperature settled above freezing point in the city last night, the Met said. Srinagar city recorded a low of 0.8 degrees Celsius last night, which was 1.4 degrees above the normal for this time of the year, the Met said.

Most places in Kashmir recorded higher than usual minimum temperatures last night except for Gulmarg skiing resort in North Kashmir, where the mercury settled at minus 7.2 degrees Celsius.

## J&K police attaches properties of drug peddler

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

**JAMMU:** Police in Udhampur district on Saturday attached several properties worth crores of rupees of an alleged drug peddler within and outside Jammu and Kashmir, an official said.

The properties, including a 3-BHK flat in Mohali in Punjab, were sealed, a J-K police spokesperson said.

Three trucks belonging to the accused, Nadeem Sambyal, a resident of Chenani in Udhampur, were seized, the spokesman said.

"The properties were found to be acquired from illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (NDPS) by the owner, who is presently under judicial custody in a case related to drug peddling registered against him in 2023," the spokesman said.

## Development poised to accelerate once statehood is restored to J&K: Farooq

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

**JAMMU:** National Conference President Farooq Abdullah said that the restoration of the promised statehood to Jammu and Kashmir will give momentum to the ongoing developmental activities in the region and help the democratically elected government alleviate the suffering of the masses.

During his interactions with the public and various delegations at his residence, the former chief minister said the Omar Abdullah-led government would ensure that the benefits of governance reach every doorstep. "The winds of change that have brought a democratic government to the region, with Omar sahib at the helm steering us towards safer shores, will work for every section of society, ensuring that the benefits of progress reach every doorstep," he said. He added that the signs of change are clear and development is on the rise, poised to accelerate once statehood is restored.

"I am confident that the Centre will uphold its promise and grant full statehood, paving the way for rapid progress," Abdullah said.

A National Conference spokesman said the delegations informed Abdullah about the significant improvements on the ground since the formation of the elected government in October last year. They highlighted how the administration has become more responsive and attentive to public concerns, with people now easily reaching out to the secretariats in Jammu and Srinagar, the spokesman said.

He added that they also raised long-standing issues that have worsened over the years due to the lack of a democratic government.

## DIPR bids adieu to Maharaj Krishen Bhat

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

**JAMMU:** Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) bid adieu to retiring employee Maharaj Krishen Bhat, Accountant (Finance Department) at a farewell ceremony, held here on Saturday.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of Joint Director Information Jammu, Atul Gupta, Deputy Director (PR), Ankush Hans, Deputy Director (HQ) Varinder Gupta, Youth Information Officer, Monika Sambyal and other officers and officials.

Maharaj Krishen Bhat has served in various government departments from 1998 and retired from the Information Department on January 31, 2025.

The officers and officials congratulated the retiree official and wished him a healthy and prosperous post retirement life.

## JMC organises Public Samvaad to address public issues

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

**JAMMU:** The Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) on Saturday organized a Public Samvaad, an outreach initiative designed to address the concerns of the general public, encourage active community participation, and provide solutions to



JMC Commissioner Dr. Devansh Yadav addressing gathering at Janipur, Jammu.

their grievances.

The event was held at Bharat Mata Patoli Park in Ward No. 35, Janipur and was led by JMC Commissioner Dr. Devansh Yadav.

The event saw active participation from ex-councillors, prominent citizens, Swachhata Champions, Swachhata Ambassadors, NGOs, members of Mohalla Welfare Committees, and the general public.

A range of JMC officers, including the Joint Commissioner (A), Joint Commissioner (W), Secretary JMC, Deputy Director (Planning), and others, also attended the program.

During the event, the speakers highlighted concerns related to streetlight maintenance, road and park upkeep, water supply, and other essential amenities. Public demands included the beautification of Janipur's main road market, repair of streetlights, improved water supply, resolution of sewerage blockages, development of smart mohallas, installation of road dividers with reflectors, gym equipment at parks, additional sanitation workers, upgrading of footpaths, the opening of a public toilet on High Court Road, and the establishment of a public dispensary in Ward No. 34.

Responding to the public demands, IMC Commissioner Dr. Yadav assured the public that all concerns and grievances would be promptly noted and addressed. He emphasized that the primary aim of this initiative was to understand the genuine demands of the public to ensure budgetary provisions were prepared accordingly in a decentralized manner for the wards.

Dr. Yadav committed to install mast lights and gym equipment in parks in Ward No. 35 and surrounding areas. He also assured that issues related to water supply, sewerage, lanes, drains, and streetlights would be prioritized. Furthermore, the Commissioner urged residents to actively participate in shaping the future of the city, highlighting JMC's commitment to enhancing civic amenities and creating a more responsive, citizen-centric governance.

The Public Samvaad initiative seeks to strengthen the relationship between the municipal administration and the residents, fostering direct engagement to ensure timely resolution of concerns and better overall service delivery.

## Vishwa Bharati celebrates Basant Panchami

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

J A M M U :

Vishwa Bharati

H i g h e r

S e c o n d a r y

S c h o o l J a m m u

c e l e b r a t e d

B a s a n t

P a n c h a m i

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S a r a s w a t i

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Some students delivered speeches on the importance of Basant Panchami as an arrival of spring season and the day honouring the Goddess of Wisdom, knowledge, music and Arts.

A special Pooja ceremony was also organised in the school reception in front of the idol of Goddess Saraswati. During Pooja, all the members of Management Committee, teachers and also the students were present.

Priest continued the pooja ritual along with the chanting of mantras by the students to invoke blessings of Mata Saraswati.

## Digilooks Health Care conducts medical camp at Shiksha Niketan

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

**JAMMU:** A team of doctors from Digilooks Health Care conducted the annual medical screening camp for students of Grades 8 to 10 at Shiksha Niketan Hr: Sec. School, Jeevan Nagar. The medical camp aimed at early diagnosis and intervention, preventing long-term health issues by

conducting routine checkups, including height, weight, blood pressure, BMI, eye screening, dental, and ENT examinations. Recognizing that "Great minds reside in a healthy body," the school extended this initiative to not only students but also staff and community members. The event commenced under the supervision of Headmaster Harish Sharma. A team of medical professionals provided their expertise during the camp. Dr. Shivani (ENT Specialist), Dr. Fozia (Dental Specialist), Dr. Anisha (General Physician), Neha and Pooja (Vitals Assessment), and Vishal (IT Executive) were actively involved in conducting health screenings. Their combined efforts ensured a thorough checkup, focusing on full-body examinations, with special attention to eye and throat health. Apart from medical assessments, the team also conducted awareness sessions to educate students on hygiene and sanitation, the importance of safe drinking water, modern lifestyle diseases, and preventive health measures. Additionally, guidance on diet, exercise, and weight control was provided to encourage a healthy lifestyle. The students received health assessment reports, and medical recommendations were referred for further advice where necessary. The Principal, Rameshwar Mengi, and Headmaster, Harish Sharma, expressed their gratitude to the medical team for their valuable contribution. Sharma emphasized, "Wellness encompasses a healthy body, a sound mind, and a tranquil spirit." Keeping this in mind, the school organized the medical camp for the welfare of students and the community.

The event was a great success, reinforcing the importance of health awareness and preventive care among students and staff.

