

INDIA'S REMARKABLE TRIUMPH

India's remarkable triumph in the U-19 Women's T20 World Cup in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday has been hailed as a historic achievement, not only for the team but also for the entire nation. The team's victory, claiming their second consecutive title, has been celebrated as a major milestone in the growth of women's cricket in India. The win resonated deeply, showcasing the exceptional talent, discipline, and determination of young cricketers, and was met with an outpouring of praise and pride across the country.

India's victory at the tournament marked their dominance in youth women's cricket on the global stage. The fact that they were able to clinch the title for the second time in a row amplified the significance of their achievement. The triumph was seen as a testament to the rising standard of women's cricket in the country, where young talent is being nurtured and given opportunities to shine.

The Indian team's triumph sparked celebrations across the nation, with cricket fans, sports pundits, and former players all voicing their admiration for the team's performance. The victory also resonated with young girls across India, inspiring a new generation to take up cricket and dream of representing the nation on the global stage.

Much of the praise focused on the team's collective effort, with each player playing a crucial role in the victory. Captain Niki Prasad's leadership was lauded, with many highlighting her ability to maintain composure and guide the team effectively through challenging situations. Her consistency with the bat was particularly notable throughout the tournament, but it was her astute decision-making that stood out in the final.

The Indian bowlers, led by Aayushi Shukla, Gongadi Trisha, Parunika and Shabnam Shakil, were also key contributors to the success. Their outstanding bowling performance in the final, which helped reduce South Africa to just 82 runs, was widely regarded as one of the turning points of the game. The bowlers' discipline and accuracy under pressure highlighted the strength of India's bowling attack.

The players' maturity and composure, despite being young and relatively inexperienced at the international level, also earned praise. Their focused approach to the chase and ability to complete the task without undue pressure showcased a high level of skill and mental fortitude. The victory was celebrated not just in cricketing circles but across the nation.

Budget with a thrust to boost agriculture and the rural economy

PROF MEENAKSHI RAJEEV



The Indian economy has shown a deceleration of growth during recent quarters where the data on GDP at constant prices shows growth rates falling from 6.7% in Q1 of 2024-25 to 5.4% during quarter two and consequently a need has been felt to boost the economy in terms of income and growth. If we look at the percentage contribution of private final consumption expenditure (PFCE), its share has fallen from 58 percent to 55.6 percent which calls for an expansion of consumption demand. Growth of PFCE has also fallen considerably to a level of 3 percent. In that regard, the rural economy assumes considerable importance as it can boost growth through rural demand generation. As per recent employment data, about 60 percent of people depend on agriculture and allied activities while the share of manufacturing has fallen from 12.1 percent to 11 percent in 2024. The agriculture sector in India however, was showing a meagre growth of 1.7% during Q2 of 2023-24, percent which only recently improved to 3.5 percent during Q2 of 2024-25. Given this scenario boosting agriculture becomes a critical strategy and the budget of 2025-26 has rightly placed considerable emphasis on this sector. Needless to say, the sector assumes significance for the state of J & K which is highly dependent on agriculture and can benefit from these initiatives.

Amongst various measures suggested by the honorable Finance Minister in the budget 2025-26, Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana, a programme that will be initiated in partnership with states, whereby there is a plan to Develop Agri-based Districts is noteworthy. The programme is envisaged to cover 100 districts that are characterized by

low agricultural productivity, and credit outtake. This is a programme where the state of J & K can take part to improve agricultural productivity for certain low-performing districts. In addition, joining hands with the local governance system, a rural prosperity and development scheme has been planned for skilling the rural youths and ensuring technological innovation and usage within the rural area itself so that rural-urban migration is curtailed. The state of J & K has already planned a skilling programme under mission YUVA and a synergy can be built with this newly announced programme. Given our urban-centric development, there has been a large rural-urban migration in the hope of getting jobs in the urban areas. However, youths often moving to the urban areas are engaged in informal jobs and subsistent self-employment, a scenario which needs to be changed.

Domestic demand for nutritious food has been increasing over the years in India, including for pulses as well as fruits and vegetables which resulted in a demand-supply mismatch for some of these crops leading to food price inflation. Data reveals that food price inflation is at 8.37 percent (in Dec 2024, MOSPI source) which is beyond the RBI's tolerance band. Such inflationary pressure in turn leads to contractionary monetary policy measures thereby dampening investment and lowering GDP growth. To be atmanirbhar in pulses, the mission for pulses is introduced in the budget, and procurement by the Government is planned. Similarly, there will be a comprehensive programme for fruits and vegetables as well. High-yielding variety seeds will also be introduced through R&D efforts so that productivity enhancement can take place. Under the mission for cotton, measures to improve productivity are announced which can boost the labor-intensive textile industry. These measures are expected to boost the rural sector in general

and agriculture in particular.

Even with various measures to improve the performance of the agriculture sector, earnings of the farmers in India are still not encouraging and there is scope for improvement. The recent round of NSSO data on situation assessment survey of farmer households (77th round NSSO) reveals that the average monthly income of an agriculture household on an average is around Rs 10,218. This is partly because a large percentage of farmers are marginal with very small holdings leading to subsistence farming. This results in minimal savings and regular need for credit to meet the working capital needs. To facilitate farmers to get loans Kisan credit cards (KCC) have been introduced and there are about 7.7 crore farmers, fishermen, and dairy farmers benefitted from KCC. Loan under the KCC gets interest subsidy under the interest subvention scheme up to Rs 3 lakhs. This limit is now enhanced in the budget of 2025-2026 to Rs 5 lakhs for loans taken through the KCC. Though it is encouraging to see that agriculture credit has been increasing over the years there is disproportionate access by farmers of different land holdings. For example, the recent round of NSSO data on the situation assessment survey of farmer households reveals that about 20 percent of loans are from informal money lenders, but it is as high as 56 percent for the farmers with the smallest land holding of 0.01 hectare.

Thus there is a need to ensure access to credit, especially for the landless, tenant as well as small and marginal farmers who often face problems due to a lack of land records as mutation at times does not take place automatically.

Climate change has also made agriculture much more vulnerable as the variability of extreme climate keeps changing over the years. In this regard, crop insurance is an important instrument for risk mitigation,

but the Prime Minister's Fasal Bima Yojana saw limited success with less than 25% of cultivated land being covered. There is a need to make this scheme attractive by introducing technologies for better assessment of crop loss by farmers and other measures. If we look at the allocation for crop insurance (Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana) in this budget, it is at Rs 12242 crore, which was Rs 15864 crore during 2024-25, thus showing a decline.

Looking at the rural livelihood options in general, one observes that farming offers only limited returns. With work as an agricultural labourer being seasonal, the rural non-farm sector has the potential to play a vital role in generating year-round employment opportunities. As per recent data, the non-farm sector accounted for around 40 percent of total employment in rural areas. While this is an encouraging trend, examining the recent NSSO 73rd (2015) round data, one observes that as high as 91 percent of rural non-farm enterprises are own-account enterprises, meaning that they employ only household members (no hired labour) with a rather low level of value addition per worker (Rs 55,495 annually). Of the rural non-farm enterprises, only 35 percent are engaged in manufacturing, and the rest are in services out of which 33 percent are in trading, and around 31 percent in other services. In the category of trading, 88 percent are again own-account enterprises, implying that most rural trading establishments are probably petty shops, which may barely support the livelihood of one family. There is a need to develop this sector through knowledge dissemination, skilling, and credit delivery. We hope that some of the measures taken in this budget to develop the MSME sector will help to boost the rural non-farm sector as well to improve the livelihood of the rural populace.

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Union Budget 2025-Nourishing world's third largest start-up ecosystem

MOHAMMAD HANIEF



On February 1, 2025, Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled her record eighth union budget in the Parliament, setting a progressive roadmap for India's transformation into 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047. This budget, which encompasses a comprehensive strategy with a focus on agriculture, MSME, investment, and exports, will significantly stimulate economic growth while addressing both immediate and long-term challenges.

The Union Budget 2025-26 has reposed faith in the middle class and continued the trend of giving relief in tax burden to the common tax-payer. The budget announcement brought a series of key announcements for the nation's middle class. One of the most discussed developments among the budget announcements has been no income tax up to ₹12 lakh.

The increase in the personal tax rebate limit - will lead to a rise in national consumption and stimulate economic growth. Along with this, the changes proposed across indirect taxes are focussed on providing impetus to domestic manufacturing. Overall, Budget

2025 has laid out a clear roadmap for 'Viksit Bharat.'

The announcement of a new fund for startups, increased investment to promote innovation in partnership with the private sector, and the launch of programmes to boost manufacturing and exports have struck the right notes for India Inc.

India's real GDP is projected to expand by 6.4% in FY25, marking the third consecutive year of growth exceeding 6%. This steady momentum is driven by a robust services sector, increasing investments, and rising rural demand.

The Union Budget 2025-2026 promises to continue government's efforts to accelerate growth, secure inclusive development, invigorate private sector investments, uplift household sentiments, and enhance spending power of India's rising middle class. The Budget proposes development measures focusing on poor, Youth, farmer and women.

The Budget aims to initiate transformative reforms in taxation, power sector, urban development, mining, financial sector, and regulatory reforms to augment India's growth potential and global competitiveness. Union budget highlights that agriculture, MSME, investment, and exports are engines in the journey to Viksit Bharat using reforms as fuel, guided by the spirit of inclusivity.

A comprehensive multi-sectoral 'Rural Prosperity and Resilience' programme



will be launched in partnership with states to address underemployment in agriculture through skilling, investment, technology, and invigorating the rural economy. The goal is to generate ample opportunities in rural areas, with focus on rural women, young farmers, rural youth, marginal and small farmers, and landless families.

The Budget has outlined measures to comprehensive programme for vegetables & fruits, national mission on high yielding seeds, and a five year Mission for cotton productivity amongst other measures to promote agriculture and allied activities in a major way.

The union finance minister described MSMEs as the second power engine for development as they constitute for 45% of our exports. To help MSMEs achieve

higher efficiencies of scale, technological upgradation and better access to capital, the investment and turnover limits for classification of all MSMEs enhanced to 2.5 and 2 times, respectively. Further, steps to enhance credit availability with guarantee cover have also been announced.

During the budget speech she also announced the launch of a new scheme for 5 lakh women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes first-time entrepreneurs. This will provide term loans up to Rs. 2 crore during the next 5 years.

Defining Investment as the third engine of growth, she prioritized investment in people, economy and innovation. Under the investment in people, she announced that 50,000 Atal Tinkering Labs will be set up in govern-

ment schools in next 5 years.

The introduction of the Export Promotion Mission is a step towards making Indian exports globally competitive. By bringing together the ministries of Commerce, MSME, and Finance under one umbrella, the mission will ensure a coordinated approach to policymaking and implementation. This integrated effort will help exporters navigate international trade complexities with greater ease, support small and medium players in tackling non-tariff measures, and provide the necessary financial and regulatory support to expand their global footprint.

The establishment of BharatTradeNet (BTN) - a digital public infrastructure for international trade - is a welcome step. This unified platform will streamline trade documentation and financing needs, aligning India's trade processes with global practices. It will substantially reduce transaction costs, improve efficiency, and bring down the cost and time of doing business.

Union finance minister mentioned that support will be provided to develop domestic manufacturing capacities for our economy's integration with global supply chains. She also announced that government will support the domestic electronic equipment industry for leveraging the opportunities related to Industry 4.0. A National Framework has also been proposed for promoting Global Capability Centres in emerging tier 2

cities.

Reiterating the commitment to stay the course for fiscal consolidation, union finance minister stated that the government endeavours to keep the fiscal deficit each year such that the central government debt remains on a declining path as a percentage of the GDP and the detailed roadmap for the next 6 years has been detailed in the FRBM statement.

As India navigates global uncertainties, this budget positions the country as a potential leader, signalling to investors that it prioritises stability, sustainability, and inclusive growth. The initiatives outlined in this budget are strategic actions that can galvanise India's economy, creating a more equitable society and a vibrant marketplace for generations to come.

The union budget 2025 has charted an ambitious course for India's transformation into a developed nation by 2047. With a strong focus on boosting private investment, increasing funding in the agriculture sector, and enhancing the spending power of the people, the government has clearly indicated its commitment to an inclusive path to economic development.

In conclusion, the Budget 2025 is anticipated to bring about significant shifts in market dynamics, with consumption-driven sectors emerging as potential winners, while industries dependent on capital expenditure may face short-term challenges.

Growth Oriented and Pro-poor Union Budget 2025

OMKAR DATTATRAY

As we kick off 2025, the much anticipated Union Budget 2025 has been unveiled, offering a roadmap for India's growth, fiscal stability and social development. The finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman the first female FM is presenting her 8th consecutive and Modi government 3.0's second budget. She has presented the country's budget for the year 2025-26 in the parliament today on 1st February 2025. This union budget will be the blue print for Viksit Bharat by 2047 and sets forth the vision of a developed India. The government has outlined several strategic initiatives aimed at bolstering economic recovery post-pandemic, promoting inclusive growth, and enhancing India's competitive edge on the global stage. The budget 2025 projects economic growth rate of 6.3% to 6.8%. One of the most awaited aspects of the budget is tax relief for individuals and businesses. Taxpayers are expecting changes in tax slabs under the new tax regime, with hopes of an increase in exemption limits and standard deductions since the centre government has approved the 8th pay commission for central government employees, and pensioners as well as family pensioners will all be benefitted. There is a genuine demand for making annual income up to Rs 10 lakh tax free. The outstanding feature of the budget 2025 will be that Mahalaxmi - the goddess of wealth and prosperity will shower her

blessings on the middle income group. But finance minister Sitharaman has shown magnanimity and broadmindedness and announced a big bonanza and great relief for the salaried class and the general people and made income up to Rs 12,00,000 lakh annually free & exempted from income tax and it is no less than the gift of finance minister to the salaried class and middle income group. By this announcement of far-reaching importance Modi government has won appreciation from the salaried class, middle income group and has won the hearts and minds of the majority of the people and this great relief to salaried and middle income group will boost the political fortunes of NDA/BJP as the elections in Delhi are underway and some state assembly elections are near. The new budget 2025 will be pro people and pro poor. The household consumption, demand and investment will grow up. The budget 2025 should focus on investment, employment generation and control of inflation. In the face and middle of global economic slowdown India economy is robust as its fundamentals are strong and it will continue its march towards Viksit Bharat and there are no two views about it. The union budget 2025-26 is expected to include measures to support the economy, employment, and businesses. In the upcoming union budget, the finance ministry may take steps to revive export -boosting schemes, such as the interest Equalization Scheme -IES

, offer financial support to exporters, and enable flexibility for certain service sector units in special economic zones -SEZ's. PM has said that the new year budget will be historical as it will focus on the overall development of the economy while giving big relief to the middle income group and poor people. Since the IES expired on December 31, the commerce department is seeking approval for a slightly modified version of the scheme to cover at least micro, small, and medium enterprises -MSME's. The IES is an interest -subvention scheme under which exporters are given benefits in the interest rates charged by banks on their pre-and post -shipment rupee export credits. Lenders are subsequently compensated by the government. The scheme was launched in 2015 for five years to reduce stress among exporters, especially in labor -intensive sectors and MSME's. Majority of the people are hoping for policy measures that will bring down prices of daily household items. Additionally youth are looking for announcements that will create more jobs, while the salaried class is expecting income tax concessions. The inflation rate should be checked and government should focus on areas such as travel expenses as it is getting costlier. In new budget there should be better tax rebate. Train facilities should be made even better and frequency of trains should also be increased. It is hoped that there will be several announcements for the middle

class, poor people and farmers as the farmers are the back bone of the economy and president Droupadi Murmu in her address to the joint session of the parliament made several references to the middle class. The government is expected to continue its fiscal consolidation roadmap, bringing down the fiscal deficit from 4.9 percent in FY 25 to 4.8%, with a target of 4.5% in FY 26. A major focus of budget 2025 is expected to be tax reform and simplification. The government is likely to introduce modernized Direct Tax Code -DTC, replacing the 63-year old Income Tax Act -much like how GST revolutionized indirect taxation. The focus of the budget 2025 are on the following-A-Focus on Infrastructure Development B-Digital Economy & Innovation. C-Taxation Reforms for a Simplified System. C-Focus on Health and Education D-Support for Farmers and Agriculture. E-Green Growth and Climate Action .F -Strengthening Social Welfare Schemes G-Revitalization of the MSME Sector.

The key highlights will shape the financial trajectory and financial landscape of the country in the coming year. One of the most significant thrust areas in Budget 2025 is infrastructure. The government has allocated a substantial increase in funding for key infrastructure projects, aiming to drive long-term growth and enhance connectivity across the country. Boost to rural infrastructure, focus on National Infrastructure Pipeline-NIP

Expansion, digital economy and innovation as the digital revolution continues to be a cornerstone of India's growth. A much awaited reform is the proposed simplification of the tax system. Budget 2025 outlines various initiatives designed to make tax compliance easier for both individuals and businesses. Finance minister rather the Modi government has recognized that a healthier and better-educated population is vital for sustained economic growth and thus expansion of National Health Mission and increased funding for skill development has been given top attention in the budget. India's agricultural sector remains the backbone of its economy and the budget 2025 addresses the need for long-term agricultural reforms. The government is set to increase direct cash transfers to farmers under the PM-Kisan Yojana, aiming to boost agricultural income and improve financial security.

Budget focuses on green growth and climate action. Sustainability is at the core of budget 2025 and there is special stress on clean energy investment and carbon reduction targets. Social welfare programs continue to play a pivotal role in Budget 2025. There is increased allocations for women and child welfare.

The government aims to enhance financial inclusion, with focus on expanding access to credit and banking services for rural and underserved populations. Besides this, micro, small, and medium

enterprises -MSME's form the backbone of India's economy. To ensure the growth of this crucial sector, the government is focusing on A-Easy access to credit, credit guarantee scheme extension. India aims to position itself as a global economic player with increased foreign investment. In this regard attracting FDI is one of the main initiatives as per the budget. In short the budget 2025 delivers a comprehensive vision for India's future. It focuses not only on driving economic growth but also on ensuring that this growth is inclusive and sustainable. From infrastructure development to green energy, taxation reforms to social welfare, this budget sets the stage for a stronger, more resilient economy. Budget 2025 combines modernization with inclusivity, striking a delicate balance between driving innovation and maintaining social welfare. In fact this budget is growth oriented and pro people and pro poor.

Thus it is a historical budget in many ways and it is a big milestone for contributing for a Viksit Bharat @ 2047. Hats off to the first finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman for giving a balanced budget which address the concerns of all most all stakeholders. The new year will provide us the opportunity to make India a powerhouse of global economic power and the new budget will pave way for a developed India by 2047.

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