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calculating applicable income tax rate -- by 50 per cent to Rs 75,000 and tweaked tax slabs for taxpayers opting for the new income tax regime.

This will lead to taxpayers under the new tax regime -- which offers lower rates of taxes but permits limited deductions and exemptions -- saving up to Rs 17,500 in tax annually, she said.

To spur employment, the Budget provided for incentives for companies, including paying for one-month salary for first-time employees, incentive at specified sale to both employee and empower with respect to their retirement fund contribution in the first four years of employment and reimbursing employers up to Rs 3,000 per month for 2 years towards EPFO contribution of each additional employee.

Also, a programme to improve skills as well internship for students and subsidised loans for higher education will be provided, she said. India's official unemployment rate in urban areas is pegged at 6.7 per cent but private agencies put it at much higher levels. Buoyed by robust tax collections and a higher-than-expected dividend receipt from the Reserve Bank, Sitharaman said the government's fiscal deficit -- the difference between the total revenue earned and total expenditure -- will be trimmed to 4.9 per cent of the GDP in 2024-25, below the 5.1 per cent figure estimated in the interim budget she presented in February. She reduced gross market borrowing marginally to Rs 14.01 lakh crore. The Budget for 2024-25 fiscal (April 2024 to March 2025) allocated Rs 1.52 lakh crore for agriculture and allied sectors, aid for building 3 crore affordable housing units in urban and rural areas, provided credit support to small and medium businesses, raised small loans to Rs 20 lakh for small business, proposed setting up 12 industrial parks, and provided for setting up a Rs 1,000 crore venture capital fund for space sector.

J&K budget for...

the UT government has increased tax and non-tax revenues through improved GST return compliance, improved billing and collection efficiency, increased dealer registration, and transparent excise auctions.

All administrative departments also intensified efforts to harness central funds by enhancing execution speed. This led to a sharp increase in receipts of funds under centrally sponsored schemes. During the last financial year, the UT government also stringently enforced borrowing limits and curtailed the culture of overdraft. With close monitoring of public debt, the UT government was successful in tapering down the off-Budget borrowings. The government has restrained revenue expenditure through austerity measures and biometric verification of beneficiaries. The UT Government also pursued Government of India for increasing central financial assistance.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo and Principal Secretary Finance, Santosh Vaidya led the UT's efforts in this direction. Crucial meetings were held in June and July 2024 in Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Finance to review these demands of the UT Government. Union Home Minister and Union Finance Minister personally reviewed the fiscal management of the UT Government in recent months.

Considering the challenges faced and the strenuous efforts made by the UT government, Government of India has agreed to provide special financial support to Jammu and Kashmir coupled with reforms to come out of the fiscal stress. Accordingly, the Union Budget which was also laid before the Parliament provides for a special central assistance of Rs.17,000 crore for Jammu and Kashmir. The Union Government has agreed to provide for the salary, pension and other costs of Jammu and Kashmir Police for which an allocation of Rs 12,000 crore has been made in the annual budget. In addition, a lump sum special grant of Rs 5,000 crore as additional central assistance is being provided in the current financial year.

As a result of this Rs. 17,000 crore of special package, the fiscal deficit to GDP ratio of Jammu and Kashmir will reduce to 3.0% in the financial year 2024-25. This special package will be part of the overall central assistance which is estimated at Rs. 67,133 crore during 2024-25. This unprecedented assistance would lead to complete improvement in fiscal position enabling the Government of Jammu & Kashmir to work towards fulfilling the developmental needs and aspirations of the people, while maintaining stable fiscal health.

The budget of Jammu and Kashmir for 2024-25 makes provisions for the ongoing initiatives for infrastructure development, sustainable agriculture, new industrial estate, PRI level works, employment generation, developing tourism, and social inclusion. During preparation of the interim budget proposals, consultations were held with all the Departments and various stakeholders to provide for ongoing initiatives and arrive at realistic budgetary numbers. For finalizing expenditure proposals, assessment of financing needs of infrastructure projects, social and economic measures undertaken by Departments was undertaken.

The budgetary exercise focused on the imperative of advancing the cause of the greater collective good within the realistically realizable resources. The budgetary estimate for this financial year 2024-25 is about Rs. 1,18,390 crore, including revenue expenditure of Rs. 81,486 crore and capital expenditure of Rs. 36,904 crore.

Budget Highlights 2024...

- Handwara to be set-up.
- "Attainment of TB free status in all the remaining districts.
- "2,176 new Kindergartens to be established.
- "18,499 Schools to be provided sports equipments", 2,584 Schools to be provided ICT labs and Smart Classrooms, 43 Robotic Labs and 30 Virtual Reality Labs to be established.
- "Establishment of Science Centres in 100 Schools and vocational Education to be introduced in new 554 Schools.
- "20 national sports events to be organized in 2024-25.
- "Placement drives for 1,000 pass outs to be organized in collaboration with big business and industrial establishments.
- "New initiative to create ecosystem for promotion of enterprises and self-employment, generate over 5 lakh opportunities for self-employment and expand investments through credit support.
- "New age courses to be introduced in 10 Industrial Training Institutes.
- "Outreach and counselling activities to be conducted for aspiring job seekers through Model Career Centers (MCCs).
- "All persons with disability to be covered under Nirmaya Health Insurance Scheme.
- "11 Shakti Sadan and 04 Sakhi Niwas to be established.
- "7,708 women beneficiaries with establishment of 1,502 units to be targeted under self-employment scheme
- "80 schools to be transformed into smart schools in tribal areas." An addition of 3,014 MW installed capacity in phased manner till year 2026-27 with cumulative increase of design energy of 10,714.50 Million units per annum.
- "Creation/Augmentation of 38,150 KVA Distribution Transformer; Replacement of 14,000 Ckm of dilapidated LT bare conductor.
- "Providing of reliable power supply to the far-flung and remote areas of Gurez." 5,000 Kilometres of road length to be black-topped during 2024-25
- "194 new projects sanctioned at an estimated cost of Rs 1023.42 crore under NABARD to be taken for execution during 2024-25.

"Rs 1000 crore new road and bridge projects to be taken up under NABARD loan assistance under RIDF Tranche XXXX during 2024-25.

"Completion of 60 ongoing bridges is targeted during 2024-25.

"4.26 lakh households to be provided Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) to achieve 100% coverage under tap water connections.

"Shahpur Kandi Dam project likely to be commissioned which will benefit Jammu and Kashmir with 1,150 cusecs of irrigation water facilities to 32,186 hectare of land in Kathua and Samba.

"Balance work of Tawi Barrage to be completed. 197 minor irrigation schemes to be completed during 2024-25, which envisages creation of irrigation potential of 38,723 hectare.

"All projects to be completed under Smart city mission.

"Western Foreshore Road along Dal Lake, Srinagar to be constructed.

"Introduction of 200 e-buses under PM e-Bus Sewa scheme.

"Inter Model Station (IMS) in collaboration with NHAI to be developed at Katra.

"Finalization of Master Plan of all 78 Cities/Towns.

"Development of Sewerage network of Houseboats in Dal-Nigeen Lake, including sewerage network of hamlets inside lake.

"Implement of Van se Jal, Jal se Jeevan, an innovative water conservation techniques through water shed management approach, promote sustainable agricultural practices and revitalize traditional water bodies, including wetlands.

"Conservation and rejuvenation of Wular Lake to enhance the livelihood of the local people, through ecotourism.

"Completion of construction of 1,500 flats as transit accommodation for Kashmiri Migrant employees during 2024-25.

"Remainig 276 posts out of 6,000 posts under PM-Package for Kashmiri Migrants to be filled in 2024-25.

"e-KYC of all beneficiaries under Public Distribution System to be completed.

"Roll out of Smart PDS in Jammu and Kashmir:

"4,000 AC agriculture pumps to be replaced by Solar Pumps in phased manner under PM-KUSUM

"Around 04 MW rooftop solar power plants to be installed on the government buildings. 22,494 Government buildings to be 100% solarised in phased manner.

"5,000 improved biomass cook-stoves to be provided in the tribal areas to reduce indoor air pollution and fuel use.

"Solarization of all routes and camps of Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra.

"Operationalization of Bio-Technology Park at Kathua.

"Young Scientist Awards/Fellowships among the outstanding researchers.

"IDTR at KotBhalwal, Jammu to be completed and operationalized in 2024-25." Institute of Inspection and Certification Centre (ICC) at Samba, Jammu to be completed in 2024-25." Implementation of Vehicle Location Tracking Platform (VLTP) for safety of women in public transport vehicles.

"Automated Testing Stations (ATSS) to be established for testing fitness of motor vehicles in private sector.

"Construction of Modern Bus Terminal at TRC, Srinagar.

J&K Govt dismisses...

Bazil Ahmad Mir, Junior Assistant in School Education Department, son of Manzoor Ahmad Mir, resident of Khurhama Lalpora, District Kupwara, is also involved in the commission of offence of nurturing drug syndicate in and around Lolab area and has become a full fledged trafficker of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, having direct relationship with the terrorists/secessionists ecosystem.

Mushtaq Ahmad Pir, Selection Grade Constable in J&K Police, son of Abdul Ahad Pir, resident of Kalmoota, Vilgam Handwara, District Kupwara, being resident of border area in Kupwara had established contacts with narcotic drug smugglers across the border in Pakistan and was running a drug cartel in the North Kashmir belt. He had a direct association with the kingpins of narco-terror syndicate operating across the border and has a direct relationship with terrorists/secessionists ecosystem. Mohd. Zaid Shah, Village Level Worker in the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, son of Hassam Ul Din Geelani, resident of Basgran, Uri, District Baramulla, is a hardcore drug peddler. He had received huge consignment of heroin from drug smugglers across LoC in PoJK, playing pivotal role in the generation of funds derived from narco trade that inevitably gets channeled to sustain terrorists- secessionists' ecosystem in J&K. He was at the forefront of running a drug cartel in north Kashmir belt and was in constant touch with the individuals of J&K Origin, who had exfiltrated into Pakistan in 1990, for terrorist training and are currently settled in PoJK. Government has adopted a Zero tolerance policy towards the anti-national elements who have been taking advantage of being in the Government service.

Terror funding: ED...

assisting Arshad Ahmed Ali in laundering drug money through their partnership in M/s New Style Car Bazar. He provided a front of legitimacy for illegal financial activities, helping obscure the origins of the proceeds of crime, said Enforcement Directorate (ED) spokesperson, adding "Both Arshad Ahmed Allie and Fayaz Ahmed Dar were accused under PMLA for offenses including concealment, possession, acquisition, and use of proceeds of crime, which were linked to drug trafficking activities with connections to terrorism. Jammu SSP Vinod Kumar and his team also supported Enforcement Directorate (ED) to expose the nexus and arrest the duo in money laundering case.

Budget sets in...

payments. The Modi government has also offered to initiate many steps, which will help in reducing litigation and these will be of immense relief to the common masses, he observed. Chugh said this visionary Budget will help all sections of the society and take the nation to new heights. "It will make India a leading economy in the world", he added.

Budget will empower...

and measures highlighted in the budget will greatly benefit J&K. Natural farming, mission for oilseeds, vegetable production, supply chains and national cooperation will ensure inclusive growth for farmers, villages and labourers, he added.

"Jammu Kashmir has seized the opportunities of the 21st century and our youth are building a proud and prosperous Union Territory. Budget-2024 with focus on 'Employment & Skillig' and new schemes will give fresh impetus to youth empowerment and it will pave the way for higher participation of women in the workforce," the Lt Governor said.

The Lt Governor said the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan for saturation coverage for tribal families in tribal-majority villages and aspirational districts will be a game-changer. "Budget-2024 ensures that the system at grassroots is strong and caring and people enjoy the fruits of social justice," he said.

Three Judicial Officers...

adjustment against the post of Civil Judge (Senior Division) is made by the High Court. Shafiq Mushtaq Lone, Munsiff Sankoo with additional charge of Munsiff, Zanskar is transferred and posted as Munsiff/ Additional Special Mobile Magistrate, Jammu and Deldan Angmo, Munsiff Leave Reserve, High Court Wing Jammu is transferred and posted as Munsiff, Sankoo. She shall also hold the additional charge of Munsiff, Zanskar.

Justice Tashi Rabstan lays foundation stone for multipurpose utility in DCC, Leh

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Acting Chief Justice, High Court of J&K and Ladakh, Tashi Rabstan, on Tuesday laid foundation stone for multipurpose hall in the District Court Complex, Melongthang, Leh, through virtual mode, from Jammu wing of the High Court.

The multipurpose hall would come up at Melongthang, Leh at an estimated cost of Rs. 19.78 crore, which will comprise of Ground Floor Auditorium Hall with capacity of 260 persons, Separate Lounge and Dining Hall, and a Gymnasium. Whereas, the first floor of the building will comprise of a Conference Room, Mediation Hall, Physiotherapy Room and Media Room. The Project is being executed by PWD Leh, and has to be completed within 18 working months.

In the course of his virtual address on the occasion, while Justice Tashi elaborated upon the usage and benefits of the upcoming Multipurpose Hall, impressed upon the Executing Agency for timely



Acting Chief Justice Tashi Rabstan laying foundation stone for multipurpose hall in District Court Complex, Melongthang, Leh, through virtual mode, from Jammu wing of the High Court.

completion of the same.

Worthwhile to mention here that it is with the vigorous intervention of Justice Tashi Rabstan, who also heads the Infrastructure Committee of the High Court for UT of Ladakh, and with the upbeat co-operation of the Administration of the UT Ladakh, that a state of art judicial infrastructure is rapidly being developed in UT of

Ladakh, for the judiciary, in a record time.

Those who were present on the occasion virtually from Jammu wing of the High Court included Shahzad Azeem Registrar General, High Court, M K Sharma Principal Secretary to Chief Justice, Sandeep Kour Registrar Judicial Jammu, Amit Gupta Member Secretary J&K Legal Service

Soldier martyred as Army foils infiltration bid by terrorists in Poonch Anti-terror ops underway in Kupwara

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU/SRINAGAR: A soldier was martyred as the Army thwarted an infiltration bid by terrorists along the Line of Control in Poonch district early Tuesday, officials said.

"Alert troops foiled an infiltration bid by effectively engaging infiltrating terrorists ... in the Battal sector at 0300 hours," White Knight Corps said on X.

"During the exchange of heavy fire, one braveheart has been injured. Operations are continuing," the Corps said.

According to sources,

troops picked up the movement of the group of terrorists in the Battal forward area of the Krishnagati belt and forced the terrorists to retreat.

Lance Naik Subash Kumar was injured in the intense gunfight and later succumbed, they said, adding terrorists too suffered "loss".

The post-mortem has been conducted and the soldier's body handed over to the Army, a police officer said.

A search operation has been launched in the area, the officials said.

There has been a spurt in terror activities in the

Jammu in recent months, raising fears about the revival of militancy in the region.

Meanwhile, the security forces have launched an anti-terrorism operation in the Lolab area of Kupwara district, police said.

"Security forces have established contact with terrorists near Trimukha Top, Lolab, Kupwara. Operation in progress," the Kashmir Zone Police said in a post on 'X'.

It was not yet clear if any casualties have taken place in the initial contact between the security forces and the terrorists.

Budget heralds better growth, bright future: Modi

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday hailed the Union Budget for its measures for every section of society, asserting that it has heralded better growth and a bright future.

"The budget will act as a catalyst in making India the third-largest economy in the world and will lay a solid foundation for a developed India," he said in his televised remarks after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the budget in Parliament.

Modi lauded the budget's sharp focus on the youth, backward sections, women and middle class as also on manufacturing and infrastructure sectors, and asserted that the proposed employment-linked incentive schemes will create crores of new jobs.

"This visionary budget will uplift and empower every stratum of our society, paving the way for a brighter future for all," he said, stressing his government's commitment to generating employment and self-employment opportunities.

The employment-linked incentive scheme will create crores of jobs, he said, noting that the first salary of the first job of a youngster will now be borne by the government. He also mentioned provisions for higher education and the scheme for internships for 1 crore youths.

"Working in top companies under the scheme, the young interns will find new avenues of possibilities," Modi said.

The rise in the limit of collateral-free

loans under the Mudra scheme from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh will greatly benefit small businessmen, women, Dalits, backwards and the deprived, he added.

Modi said the development of the country's eastern region will get new momentum and energy through the budget's "Purvodaya" vision. New impetus will be given to the development of important infrastructure such as highways, water projects and power projects, he added.

"A big focus of this budget is the nation's farmers," the prime minister said, noting that the government, after unveiling the world's biggest grain storage scheme, has now introduced "Vegetable Production Clusters" which will help both farmers and the middle class.

"It is the need of the hour for India to become self-reliant in the agricultural sector. Therefore, measures have been announced to help farmers increase the production of pulses and oilseeds," he said.

Modi said the budget was aimed at making the middle class stronger and would provide a new scale to education and skills development.

"The budget has come up with strong plans to empower the tribal society, Dalits and backward classes. This budget will help in ensuring the economic participation of women," the prime minister said.

He said the budget will provide a new path of progress for small traders and MSMEs.

J&K to organize Swachhta Pakhawada from Aug 1 to 15; Secy RDD reviews preparedness

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir will organize Swachhta Pakhawada over two weeks from 1st August to 15th August 2024 with greater public participation to emphasise on sanitation, sustainability and cleanliness.

In line with directions of the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha the Rural Development Department and Panchayati Raj in coordination with various departments and Districts Administration has planned a series of programmes for cleanliness and sanitation initiatives with involvement of public.

Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) and Panchayati Raj, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary on Tuesday discussed the detailed roadmap in a meeting with District and Block level officers, which was attended by Director General Rural Sanitation, Anoo Malhotra, Director Rural Development Kashmir, Shabir Hussain Bhat, Director Rural Development Jammu, Muntaz Ali,

Director Panchayati Raj, Sham Lal, Jt Director Planning Kamal Sharma, besides other provincial officers, ACDs and ACPs.

Dr Shahid emphasised on effective and greater public participation for promotion of scientific waste management, best sanitary practices, hygiene, cleanliness and institutional as well as societal initiatives. The two week long initiative aimed at public mobilization includes inaugural events at provincial, district and block level, cleanliness drives at public places and tourist destinations, legacy waste disposal, dedication of infrastructure to local communities, initiation of new projects at local level besides a series of awareness programs and engagement initiatives at various levels.

The Rural Development Department and Panchayati Raj will also organize Swachhta Gram Sabhas in select panchayats of all the districts for creating awareness and eliciting public participation in planning, establishment, operation and maintenance of various assets under the Swachh Bharat Mission- Grameen. In

Authority, Anoop Kumar Sharma Registrar Computers (IT), High Court, Prem Sagar Secretary High Court Legal Services Committee, Rajni Sharma Joint Registrar (Judicial) Jammu and Deldan Angmo Munsiff attached to the office of Registrar Computers (IT).

Whereas, at Leh the event was graced by the presence of Splazes Angmo, Principal District and Sessions Judge Leh, Shashi Kant Bhagat Administrative Secretary Law and Justice UT of Ladakh, Judicial officers from the District Headquarter Leh, Shafi Lassu President Bar Association Leh along with other Members, Mutalib Chief Engineer UT Ladakh, Gyatso SE Leh, Executive Engineers of PWD Construction Division and Mechanical Division Leh etc.

Fresh batch of pilgrims leaves for Amarnath shrine

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: A small batch of over 2,400 pilgrims left for the Amarnath shrine in South Kashmir Himalayas early Tuesday.

The 26th batch of 2,484 pilgrims, including 1,886 men and 536 women, left in 91 vehicles under CRPF and police escort from the Bhagvati Nagar base camp at 3:25 am. Of these, 1,715 pilgrims left in 57 vehicles and opted for the traditional 48-km Pahalgam route, while 770 devotees took 34 vehicles and chose the shorter but steeper 14-km Baltal route, they said. Today's batch is the smallest batch of pilgrims in this season so far. On Sunday, 3,113 pilgrims left for Amarnath from here while 3,281 left Jammu for Amarnath on Monday. The 52-day yatra, which commenced formally on June 29 from Baltal and Pahalgam base camps in Kashmir, will conclude on August 19.

"There is a lot of focus on manufacturing and infrastructure in the budget. This will give new impetus to economic development," Modi added.

The prime minister said that over the last 10 years, around 25 crore people have come out of poverty.

"Building on this momentum, this budget will further energise the aspirations of our neo-middle class. Unprecedented opportunities will be unleashed for our younger generation," he said.

"Also, this budget will empower the middle class like never before," the prime minister said.

Touching upon the schemes for poverty alleviation and empowerment of the poor, he highlighted the measures for three crore houses for the poor and the "Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan", which will link five crore tribal families to basic facilities with a saturation approach.

The budget brings numerous opportunities for India's start-ups and innovation ecosystem, Modi said, referring to the Rs 1,000 crore corpus fund to vitalise the space economy and the decision to abolish the angel tax.

"Record high capex will become a driving force of the economy," the prime minister said.

He said the development plans of 12 new industrial nodes, new satellite towns and transit plans for 14 big cities would enable the development of new economic hubs in the country and create numerous jobs.

coordination with departments of Health, School Education, Youth Services and Sports, Forest Ecology & Environment, Social Welfare and Agriculture, a number of programs have been planned at district, block and panchayat level.

The Secretary asked the officers to promote innovation at local level for sanitation and best practices in sustainability for which assured funding will be provided by the department.

It was also conveyed that participation of Non-Governmental Organizations, Educational Institutions, and local Community organization for effective and responsive planning for waste management in villages. The Amrit Sraovars developed by the department will also serves as focus areas for community action during the initiative. It was advised engage local media establishments for public engagement and creating awareness about sanitation, sustainability and scientific waste management in the rural areas.