

Budget 2018-19

In overall estimation this appears a people friendly budget in which no hurting taxes have been proposed and no desirable facilities have been ignored. In particular, the Finance Minister has taken special care of the interests of significant sectors like industries, services, taxation, tourism, power etc. A slew of more attractive incentives and privileges have been announced for most of these services which general public will hail as people-friendly innovations. In order to boost industrial enterprise in which the Government wants the youth to make their place, a slew of new incentives have been proposed. The Government is happy that tax revenues estimated to be 9931 crore rupees for 2017-18 have crossed 10,000 crore rupees mark. This has helped the Finance Minister to announce some tax relaxations that will have impact in industrial as well as transport sector. Likewise not only apples but all kinds of fruits exported from the State are exempted from toll tax. This is definitely going to give a boost to fruit industry. However, he proposed to raise the toll on tobacco in all forms from Rs. 290 per quintal to Rs. 400 per quintal and thus make up the deficiency.

A slew of incentives have been announced for the industrial sector. It is to be appreciated that the Government will consider providing suitable incentive in lieu of CST exemption to the industrial units in the State. For example the Government has provided freight subsidy to the industrial units located in the State and transporting their goods beyond 1000 kilometres outside the State. We think that this and other measures announced for the benefit of industrial units will enhance their competitive capability and in the ultimate analysis the units would be benefited. There is also good news for the hoteliers and resorts owners as the Government will be treating hotels and resorts at par with the industries.

The FM announced rolling out CM's Business Interest Relief Scheme. For all the RBI approved restructured accounts, the Government will contribute one third of the total interest payment of all these borrowers, which means monthly instalment one-third of the monthly instalment will be paid by the State Government and two-third by the borrowers. The budget brings great boon to the houseboat owners in Srinagar as the FM announced waiving of the NPAs liabilities to the tune of 147.23 lakh rupees that was the soft loan given to 19 houseboat owners. Amnesty schemes have also been proposed to grant waiver of penalty and interests on arrears of tax in respect of all dealers registered industries so far as payment of power tariff is concerned. This benefit will also trickle down to the consumers at the end of the day. Under the provisions of J&K Value Added Tax 2005, telecom operators will also be eligible to this concession. Likewise all such industrialists as owe power arrears to the Government will enjoy the waiver of interest and penalty on arrears. Small scale industrial unit owners too will be eligible to these benefits.

The Finance Minister has been liberal with the Government and public undertaking employees in more than one way. He has announced implementation of 7th Pay Commission recommendations from April 1, 2018 but effective from January 1, 2016 and also announced the release of one per cent Dearness Allowance due to the employees from July 1, 2017. Both demands were stoutly pursued by the state employees and they have the justification in view of soaring price of necessities of life as a result of price hike. It is hoped that pensioners will also get benefit from these positive measure of the Government.

An important issue that has bedevilled the administration for many years is of cadre review issue of secretarial staff. He has devised a formula that will address this issue the sum total of which is that there should not be a freezing of the employee cadre. Within specific time of service cadre reviews will have to be made and this should be helpful to GP Fund subscribers to remove the confusion once for all. Many more welfare schemes have been envisaged. Unmarried daughters of the employee who dies in harness will receive pension when her parents are no more alive. He has proposed to enhance Deposit Linked Insurance of GP Fund subscription from Rs. 10 lakh to Rs 50 lakh. Similar schemes are available for employees covered under New Pension Scheme.

One conspicuous change in the new budget presented by the Finance Minister in the Legislative Assembly is that it has eschewed the Power Budget and replaced it with Panchayat Budget. It signifies the importance of panchayat management or to put it in technical terms passing on democratic powers to the people at their doorstep.

The budget does not propose new taxes nor any drastic reduction in existing tax system except the concessions mentioned above. It has been noted that the budget takes special care of industries and state's industrial growth. The budget does not indicate any such measure that would have immediate and direct bearing on the market especially the items of daily consumption. One can call it a healthy budget though in the course of things, sections of people expect more than what has been offered. One area in which the budget has almost done little is that of employment venues for the youth in the State. Another area in which some drastic measures needed to be initiated is regular distribution of food supplies in the rural and far flung areas of the State. However, maybe these and other such matters are taken up by the Government departments in due course of time.

Ashok Sharma

India is famous for various festivals which reflect our rich culture and traditions. These festivals, besides serving to break the monotony of life, help in bringing all the people together irrespective of their caste, community, religion, social background etc. Among the festivals which are celebrated with gaiety and enthusiasm in India, Baisakhi, Deepawali, Christmas, Holi, Eid, Guruparab etc. have great religious and social significance and are celebrated by the young and the old alike with pomp and show. One such festival which has more social than religious significance and is eagerly awaited by one and all, is the wonderful festival of Lohri. Like all over northern India, this festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm and gaiety in Jammu region, invariably on January 13 every year. This festival marks the beginning to the end of biting chill of winter season and people welcome the arrival of longer days after the Winter solstice.

Lohri is also associated with the harvest of Rabi crops as it is during this time that the fields of Rabi crops such as wheat promise a good harvest and farmers, on seeing their fields, cannot help celebrate the occasion. Various legends are also associated with this festival. The most famous among them is the legend of Dulla Bhatti whose real name was Abdullah Bhatti. He is believed to have lived in Punjab during the reign of Emperor Akbar. According to Punjab folklore, he used to act in the 'Robin Hood' manner, steal or rob the money of the rich and rescue the poor girls from being sold as slaves in the slave

markets. He would arrange their marriage to boys in the village and give them dowry from the money stolen from the rich. Among these rescued girls were Sundri and Mundri who have now come to be associated with the folklore 'Sunder Munderiye'. Besides 'Sunder Munderiye', girls sing other Lohri songs such as 'Hulle nee maiye hulle! Do beri patte jhulle! Do jhull payeaaan Khajuraan, Khajuraan sutya meva' etc.

This beautiful festival is celebrated with great exuberance all over Jammu region, especially in the rural areas. Preparations for the celebration of Lohri begin days ahead of the festival. People in villages begin to collect logs, twigs, branches, cowdung cakes days before to make bonfire on eve of Lohri. On the day of the festival, young boys and girls are in high spirits. The girls visit houses where new births have taken place and sing in chorus 'Aan kuretricholiye, aan giga moriye, aan giga jammya, taan gur panya, taan gure diyan rewrian, taan pan masorian' and demand money and gifts from the elders. The young boys prepare Chajjaa from bamboo and decorate it with coloured paper. Carrying the Chajjaa, they perform 'Chajja dance' and move from house to house in the villages/towns singing and shouting 'Bhambora bhai bhambora, chhaja mora bhai chhaja mora'. Most people consider it auspicious to give them something and ensure that they don't leave emp-

Lohri Aayee Re.....

tyhanded. The children praise those people who give them good gifts and money by singing 'Dabab bharya leeraan da/Ae ghar amiraan da/The box is full of cloth strips/This house belongs to rich people) and for those who refuse to give them anything, the boys sing 'Hukka bhai hukka/Ae



ghar bhukha '(Hukka! Ae Hukka, This house is of the misers). Throughout the day, people visit the houses of their relatives and friends and exchange gifts and greetings with each other. In these days of technology and social media, people post various colourful messages and SMSs to their friends and relatives. Some schools and other educational institutions also celebrate this festival in their premises on this day or a day before. On this occasion, wooden twigs are arranged, a bonfire lit and children and teachers sing traditional songs and dance to the tune of the drum beats. Many days before the festival, bazars wear a festive look

and are agog with activity. People buy things such as walnut, groundnut, gachak, popcorns, sesame, flax, gur etc. which are in great demand on Lohri. The shopkeepers and vendors have a hey day. People soak rice overnight and prepare 'tricholi' by adding groundnut, rewri, gur,

been bethored but not married) on this auspicious occasion of Lohri. Though Lohri is celebrated all day, the main function of Lohri is organised in the night. People light bonfire, worship the fire God by offering groundnuts, walnuts, rewris etc to the fire and circling around the bonfire three times. They also seek the blessings of Agni Devta (Fire God) for their well being and prosperity. In houses that have recently witnessed pleasant happenings such as marriage, childbirth etc. Lohri celebrations reach a higher pitch of excitement. The newly wedded couples put on new dresses and seek blessings from their elders/relatives for their prosperous and happy married life. The star attraction of Lohri celebrations at night in villages is the 'Heran Dance' (Deer dance) performed by a group of dancers. Two artists bend down to become deer or heran and perform dance. They are surrounded by five other dancers including one dressed as joker and four others dressed as girls. While dancing, the 'Heran' lies down at the feet of the Head of the family and gets up only when some gifts in the form of money/grains is offered. They move from home to home all night dancing and demanding gifts from the elders. Many others join them as they move on and the number of the revellers may swell to hundreds. It is a festive occasion with everybody participating in fun and merry making and moving on braving the cold

weather. Lohri is essentially a festival devoted to fire and the Sun God. It symbolises warmth and fertility. It is the time when the Sun transits the Zodiac sign Makar (Capricorn) and moves towards the North, which, in astrological terms, is referred to as the Sun becoming Ultrayran. This new configuration brings warmth to the earth and lessens the ferocity of the biting winter. It is, therefore, to beat the January chill that people light bonfire, dance around it and pray to the God of Fire by offering til, gajak, groundnut etc and seeking his blessings for prosperity and good health. The fires lit at night and dancing and singing coupled with coming together of an otherwise atomised community makes this festival all the more enjoyable. This festival relieves people from routine tensions and makes them relaxed, cheerful and happy. It is time when people from all walks of life, castes, social strata come together forgetting all their differences and celebrating the festival together. It is an occasion to share warmth and festivities with one and all. But the young generation is losing craze for the traditional festivals including Lohri. It is, therefore, the duty of parents to celebrate this festival with their children together and expose them to our rich culture. These festivals serve to spread the message of amity and brotherhood among all the people and we should carry forward this legacy and transmit this rich culture to the posterity.

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Shiban Khaibri

Many a time, we have been unfortunately observing bats in Pakistan's belfry in trying to put forth its false bravado of possessing nuclear weapons and trying to blackmail or even threaten our country. Only less than two years back, former President of Pakistan Parvez Musharraf openly said, "Who do we have these nuclear weapons for, if I say Chaudhary Sujaat's style, we are a major and a nuclear power but do we have nukes saved to be used on Shab-e-Barat?"

This eccentric reaction came from Musharraf and for that matter from many Pakistani leaders in response to India making it clear that it would not hesitate in going beyond its borders to eliminate terrorists. Terror activities against this country are going on as Pakistan's state policy of faith and while writing these lines, our four brave policemen on duty in Sopore Kashmir have attained martyrdom in a worst IED blast triggered by Pakistani coward mercenaries. During the last few days, Pakistan, as usual, has been violating the cease fire line and as a result thereof, our jawans have been hit by sniper shots and even attained martyrdom. Having comparatively been given a free hand, our forces have retaliated with appropriate measure and inflicted damage to them both in men and material adjoining borders across the

Reviewing "no first use policy"

other side. Not only do they keep on indulging in such nefarious hostile activities but back home, are providing every facility to known terrorists like Saeed who has floated a "political" party and has reportedly opened its offices as well starting from Lahore. Imagine Hafiz Saeed or his ilk getting into the corridors of power in Pakistan and going by the level of his flaunting anti India hysteria and keeping on "threatening", the possibility of terrorists in that country getting access to Nuclear weapons could not be ruled out.

Let us visualize the problem in perspective. It is authoritatively learnt that Pakistan was having more than 120 nuclear warheads and had the fastest growing nuclear weapons programme and as per estimates, by 2020, it could have enough fissile material to make 200 nuclear devices. Whom it wants to pile up the same against and even threaten to use, there can be no scope for any ambiguity or that for any guess work either. We may recall that no sooner did India go nuclear by detonating atomic devices in May 1998 under Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Government than Pakistan after only a few days, followed suit and the then Prime minister Nawaz Sharif declared, "Aaj hum nay Bharat kay saath yeh hisaab bhi pura

kiya" or "we have, today, balanced even this account with India". Pakistan has been found engrossed in justifying its nuclear weapons programme to "balance" Indian conventional military superiority and, therefore, consistently uses nuclear blackmail by threatening to use nuclear weapons if we ever crossed into their territory to neutralize terrorists there. However, Pakistan till date, has not enunciated its nuclear doctrine excepting justifying the pile up only to counter and balance the military superiority of India. On the other hand, it pithily has come out in true colours in early 2017 as according to their Head of the Strategic Planning Division, the nuclear weapons "were aimed solely against India." Please hold your breath, the threat could be executed against India even if we succeeded in "strangling Pakistan economically" or pushed Pakistan "towards political destabilization".

This time, Pakistan is facing its international isolation and diplomatically is pinned down, thanks to the visionary but very hard labored diplomacy employed successfully by Prime Minister Modi against that country. Excepting China, there is absolutely no other country in close relationship with Pakistan which makes it stu-

pidly chuffed even though China primarily has her economic and allied interests paramount in the itinerary of its relations with Pakistan. A good deal of technical and logistic support from China in helping building her nuclear arsenal is not without claiming its pound of flesh, be it tremendous exploitation of natural resources in PoK or enjoying full support to the extent of subjugation in building its economic corridor right up to the extreme of Pakistan.

However, ever since the new Government took over in India in 2014, its diplomatic and strategic review in relations with the United States and with its former President Obama and the present one, Donald Trump has been phenomenal. The evil designs of Pakistan in being the international epicenter of harbouring and manufacturing terrorism which posed a threat to international peace, has now been understood better than before which speaks of the US suspending \$2 billion in security aid to Pakistan. Since there appears no containment of Taliban, Haqqani and other terror network in Pakistan, this penal decision has been taken by the US administration. To put it in Trump's tweet, "We got lies and deceit and providing safe havens to terrorists in return for \$33 billion aid over the last 15

years." Pakistani leadership including the terror mongers are rendered ashen - faced with this master stroke, the first of expected more, from Trump administration. The bankrupt Pakistani economy with record plummeted growth levels and unstable democracy with an increasing military hegemony coupled with vast nuclear arsenal stocked primarily and solely against our country, must lead us to review our nuclear doctrine of "no first use".

We must be alert despite knowing that a nuclear war must never be fought since a nuclear war can never be won. Having said so, we must not feel shy of pursuing a policy of preemptive strikes against our belligerent and hostile neighbor. Manohar Parrikar as our former Defence Minister had given slight inkling about this option. We must move our nuclear doctrine away from our earlier stand to a new direction. South Asian Nuclear Strategy Expert, Vipin Narang is conspicuous by his considered views on the subject. Speaking in Nuclear Policy conference in Washington DC in March 2017, Narang told that looking to the development of tactical battlefield nuclear weapons by Pakistan, India must abandon its no-first use policy and launch a preemptive strike, should there be a belief that

Pakistan was going to use any kind of nuclear weapons first.

It is important to note what Narang further said, ".....a full comprehensive counterforce strike that attempts to completely disarm Pakistan of its nuclear weapons so that India does not have to engage for iterative tit-for-tat exchanges and expose its own cities to nuclear destruction....." Needless to add, Narang's articulation impressed and caught attention of many nuclear as well as political scholars in the sub-continent and the US. The leading American newspapers carried the report prominently through their columns. We know that President Trump is not that orthodox in respect of stance on nuclear proliferation.

As expected, the rattling in the ranks of political and military hierarchy in Pakistan on prospects of India reviewing the doctrine of "no first use" (NFU) was manifest in calling our NFU as a sham. Pakistan must concede that the time had come to abandon its intermittent flawed and hollow rhetoric and the "showcasing" scare of nuclear apparition to India. It really looks like some inflated boast about no roast. Pakistan must also bear in mind that since it had no nuclear doctrine hence India's policy of "no first-use" was infructuous. It, therefore, follows that in case an eventuality unfortunately arose, India should not, under any circumstances, allow Pakistan to go first.

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Dr. Arun Mitra

Despite ongoing tensions in various parts of the world, the year 2017 ended with a positive note. The Treaty Prohibiting Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) passed by the UN General Assembly on July 7 would always be counted in red letters in history. It has raised many hopes for a better future of a world without nuclear weapons and impending humanitarian catastrophe. Good health is a basic urge of every individual. Therefore, each person yearns for a life free of violence and more so when it comes to catastrophe like the one that happened at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the 1945 killing of over two hundred thousand people and the resulting genetic mutations affecting generations thereafter. Unfortunately, instead of working for nuclear disarmament the world moved towards an unending nuclear arms race, spending billions on it, which could have otherwise been utilized for healing millions of people living in despair and sickness. That is why

Promote health not nuclear weapons

on December 10, 2017, Oslo, the capital of Norway, was filled with exciting events when the Nobel Peace Prize for this year was bestowed upon the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Large number of medical professionals from around the globe had gathered there to affirm their commitment for a healthy future through diversion of wasteful expenditure from nuclear arms race to health.

ICAN, formed at the initiative of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) in 2007 with 468 partners, has been consistently working since long for a nuclear weapon-free world. The ICAN was officially launched in Vienna, Austria in April 2007 during the Non-Proliferation Treaty preparatory committee meeting. As a result of continuous work since then in the form of lobbying with Governments in many

countries and public opinion building by the ICAN partners in respective countries, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution on July 7, 2017, by 122 votes in favour and only one against, which declared nuclear weapons illegal. This is indeed a big achievement, drawing global attention, and was recognized by the Nobel Peace Prize Committee, which announced ICAN as the recipient of this year's prize. The major thrust of ICAN was the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and that it was necessary to prohibit and then abolish them.

When hundreds of millions of people across the globe go hungry, the nuclear-armed nations spend close to US\$300 million (Rs. 2000 crores) a day on their nuclear forces. The production, maintenance and modernisation of nuclear forces divert vast public resources away from health care, education, climate change

mitigation, disaster relief, development assistance and other vital services. Globally, annual expenditure on nuclear weapons is estimated at US\$ 105 billion - or \$12 million an hour. The World Bank forecast in 2002 that an annual investment of just US\$40-60 billion, or roughly half the amount currently spent on nuclear weapons, would be enough to meet the internationally agreed goals on poverty alleviation. Nuclear weapons spending in 2010 was more than twice the official development assistance provided to Africa and equal to the gross domestic product of Bangladesh, a nation of some 160 million people. The Office for Disarmament Affairs - the principal UN body responsible for advancing a nuclear-weapon-free world - has an annual budget of \$10 million, which is less than the amount spent on nuclear weapons every hour.

"The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded.... The

end of the cold war has led the world to expect a massive peace dividend. Yet, there are over 20,000 nuclear weapons around the world. Many of them are still on hair-trigger alert, threatening our own survival." - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The annual global defence expenditure is \$1,699 billion (2.2% of the global GDP). US tops the defence spending - \$611 billion. China's defence spending is \$215 billion. India is the biggest buyer of arms.

India is the 5th largest military spender with an outlay of \$55.9 billion (Rs. 3,63,350 crores) (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) annual report April 2017). India's defence expenditure is equal to 1.62% of GDP. The central health budget of India is only 0.26 percent of GDP, which is 6 times less than the arms budget.

These studies clearly indicate

Padri facing extinction

Sir,

This has reference to the article 'Padri dialect facing extinction' DE Jan 11, 2018.

It is really quite disturbing that local dialects are facing extinction due to numerous reasons. One of the reasons could be the onslaught of English and Hindi languages through print and electronic media.

English being a global language is being taught compulsarily in all schools whether Hindi or English. And it remains everybody's preference to excel in English so that one can get a decent job in Government or private sector. In this process, it is the local dialect which is accorded least preference.

It is very difficult to save any dialect unless people speaking it make every effort to use in day to day conversation, and make it a medium of writing. It is not mere Padri which is facing the threat, but there are several other dialects as well which are on the verge of extinction. The steps to preverse the dialect have been beautifully enumerated by the author in the write up. These need to be taken into consideration by the stake-holders.

Yours etc...
Sangram Singh
Bhaderwah

Delay in package

Sir,

Out of the frying pan into the fire, exactly coincides with the fact, how after seven decades of waiting, the package sanctioned by the Govt, is deliberately being delayed to be paid to the beneficiaries, concerned. Months together passed. Okayed files, are still in the air and the families concerned are very eagerly and impatiently waiting for the payment. Obviously, it appears that the process of disbursement is lacking interest and enthusiasm to help all those who were forced to leave their hearth and homes. With bullet scars on their back, these unfortunates (Refugees), were made to cross the POK, and the tragic life they passed all these years since 1947, is a beggar's description. And now, when something is done by the existing Govts at the Centre and the State, the attitude of the authorities at the helm of affairs for early disbursement of the package, doesn't seem much encouraging and helpful.

If the same speed is maintained, several more years would be witnessed before the package is disbursed. The concerned authorities are, therefore, requested to expedite the process so that no more delay occurs in payment of the amount to the concerned families.

Yours etc...
Keshwa Nand Sharma
Salchri (Sunderbani)

Readers Write

Indian Business Schools

Sir,

Refer article 'Indian Business Schools' DE Jan 11.

The author deserves appreciation for highlighting the functioning of business schools in the country. Actually all professional schools whether engineering institutes, private medical colleges or business schools have become commercial centres. Their main objective is to mint money through one way or the other. There is great concern in the country about shortage of skilled workforce, and no sincere effort is made in this direction. The products of these business schools do not have that much competence to meet the challenges of market.

The business schools must raise their level of curriculum, and teaching methodology to international standards to remain relevant to the present times. The managing committees of all professional institutes must introspect, and serve the country by providing efficient skill power.

Yours etc...
Surinder Sharma
Jammu