

Union Budget evokes mixed response

FOIJ terms it industrial friendly; Cong, NC, PDP claim nothing for poor, unemployed youth, farmers

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 1: The Union Budget presented in the Parliament today by the Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman has evoked mixed response in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Congress Party in J&K has said that the Union Budget has not brought any good news for the poor, unemployed youth, the farmers besides small traders, who are worst affected by the economic policies of BJP government, causing high inflation and unprecedented price rise, large scale unemployment besides farmers sufferings.

Reacting to the budget, Congress has said that there is nothing in the budget for the unemployed youth, small business class and the tourism industry, who are worst affected sections of the Modi government's economic policies, of which Jammu and Kashmir is worst affected.

JKPC chief spokesperson Ravinder Sharma said that the budget has no roadmap for dealing with rising prices, large scale unemployment and worst economic distress on the farmers, labour and poor people. Even the much awaited MGNREGA workers wages have not been enhanced. There is no good news for the Anganwadi workers, daily wagers and the working class except a small tax rebate to middle class. The farmers, who were promised to double their income, are in great economic distress without any relief in the budget.

National Conference (NC) described the Union budget as a "big flop" and "jugglery of words", saying the only take away from it was that it was presented by a woman Finance Minister under a woman president.

"It was jugglery of words and there was nothing else in the budget. Except for playing with words and figures, I think the budget is a big flop," NC's chief spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq said.

Referring to a recent Oxfam report, which stated that the income of 84 per cent households in the country declined and the number of billionaires increased from 102 in 2020 to 142 in 2022, he said in India, the poor has become poorer and the rich richer.

"The middle class and the poor had expected that the 80C (Section of the IT Act) limit would be increased, the tax slab would be increased to Rs 10 lakh. There was no discussion on horticulture, agriculture, tourism, transport, arts, at least for Jammu and Kashmir. The people of Jammu and Kashmir had expected a lot from this budget, but there is nothing in it for poor, farmers, nothing about joblessness or employment people," the NC leader said.

Reacting to the Union Budget PDP president and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti said that this budget is not people-friendly as it has been prepared keeping in mind the interests of a few businessmen. She said the budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is the same as the ones presented by

HC directs ACB to initiate enquiry into selection of Anganwari worker

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 1: High Court has directed Anti-Corruption Bureau Rajouri to initiate enquiry into selection of Anganwari worker and take appropriate action against the erring officials.

The direction has been passed in a petition filed by Ranjan Devi, who belongs to below poverty line category and her husband is having 50% upper limb permanent disability. The petitioner, who was supposed to be engaged as being at number one position in the panel as an Anganwari worker got duped of her entitlement as Sarpanch of the village got his daughter-in-law engaged in which three Government officials lend their full support.

After hearing Senior Advocate Surinder Kour with Advocate Manpreet Kour for the petitioner, Justice Rahul Bharti observed, "this court has no iota of doubt that the petitioner became the victim of foul-play at the end of the respondent to which active and passive facilitation was led by the three member Selection Committee comprising of the officials of the time who served as the Child Development Project Officer ICDS Project Sunderbani, the District Social Welfare Officer Rajouri and the Programme Officer, ICDS Project Rajouri".

"The basis for this court to confirm its observation is that the selection panel was prepared on 06.02.2012 in terms of the panel Notice No. POR/ICDS/807-08/2012 dated 06.02.2012 and before that it was not in any manner possible for the petitioner, who is a middle pass BPL category woman,

the BJP-led Government over the last eight-nine years.

"Taxes have increased and money is not being spent on welfare schemes or subsidies. Taxes are being amassed for their crony capitalists. The taxes imposed should have benefited the people, but they have broken their backs.

"Rather than benefiting people, welfare schemes and subsidies are being done away with. The situation in the country is such that those who had risen above the poverty line have again fallen below it," Mufti said.

"The taxes have been increased, the GST (Goods and Services Tax) has been increased. Money will be taken out of the pockets of the poor and it will go to big businessmen," Mufti added.

Peoples Conference (PC) senior vice president and former minister, Abdul Gani Vakil, lambasted the Central government for again ignoring the ailing fruit industry in the new budget.

Reacting to the Union budget Vakil said it is a sorry state to see the Central Government failing to understand that the fruit industry is the backbone of the economy of J&K, and to ignore it is to affect the livelihood of thousands of people. The State produces more than 21 lakh metric tons of apples, which contributes 8.2 per cent to J&K's GDP, provides employment to thousands of people not only in J&K but in the whole country. Despite the significant contribution of fruit industry to the state's and country's economy, the government has sidelined this vital industry.

Vakil said fruit industry got badly hit due to Covid 19, unrest, weather vagaries, illegal import of Iranian apples, increase of taxes by Bangladesh government and last year's blockade of fruit laden trucks on highway. Fruit industry incurred losses worth crores; fruit growers were expecting that, at least, the government will come forward and rescue the fruit industry, but it is unfortunate that they have again left the fruit growers dejected and disappointed.

Senior CPI (M) leader MY Tarigami said that the Union budget for 2023-24 was a "huge disappointment" for Jammu and Kashmir as the proposals contained in it failed to address the basic and fundamental issues of the region, which is mostly dependent on agriculture and horticulture.

Reacting to the Union Budget Tarigami said the budget presented by Finance Minister was just "jugglery of words" as it lacked the vision to tackle the growing unemployment, price rise and provide relief to the protesting daily wagers and other workers and employees under various government schemes.

"The budget is a huge disappointment for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. It has failed to address the basic and fundamental issues of the region, which is mostly dependent on agriculture and horticulture," Tarigami said.

He said reducing the expenditure on agriculture at the national level will have its impact on Jammu and Kashmir as well.

"The year 2022 proved to be devastating for apple growers as they suffered huge losses due to the falling prices of their produce. There was no mention or attempt to provide any relief to them. Same is true about the farmers growing wheat, rice and saffron crops who also suffered losses," he said.

He said nothing was proposed in the budget to boost business, tourism and the MSME sector.

Federation of Industries Jammu (FOIJ), has termed the Union Budget 2023-24 as Industrial friendly and beneficial for all sections of society of Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

Lalit Mahajan, Chairman Federation of Industries, Jammu and president, BBIA welcomed the proposals for the speedy development of MSME Sector as well as for the Corporate Sector within the Jammu & Kashmir and other parts of the country with the several Budget announcements, like-

introduction of PM Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman (PM VIKAS) to improve the quality, scale and reach of their products, integrating them with the MSME value chain; introduction of Vivad Se Vishwas - Relief for MSMEs under this scheme, in cases of failure by MSMEs to execute contracts during the Covid period, 95 per cent of the forfeited amount relating to bid or performance security, will be returned to them by government. This will provide relief to MSMEs; Credit Guarantee Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme will be revamped with required infusion of funds which will facilitate additional collateral-free guaranteed credit of 2 lakh crore for Micro and Small Enterprises and expand employment opportunities & the cost of the credit will be reduced by about 1 per cent.

Chamber of Commerce and Industry Jammu has hailed Union Budget, and termed it as progressive, soothing for common man.

In a statement issued to the media Arun Gupta president CCI Jammu said that much sought after cuts in tax slab will definitely go a long way in comforting

the people especially the middle class which was facing troubles in the past due to inflation and other compulsions affecting household budgets.

Gupta, however, said that the traders were expecting big sops and provisions for giving a push to their businesses which is lacking in this budget but overall the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has taken care of all sections of the society through a balanced approach and ensuring a trade-off between different entities.

PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry Kashmir has hailed the Budget announcement for artisans through PM Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman.

Talking about PM Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman- PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry Kashmir Region chairman Vicky Shaw said with announcement of this package, the artisans of Kashmir will get hugely benefited.

Welcoming the Union Budget with allocation of Rs 35581 crore for J&K presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday, PHD Chamber lauded the initiatives taken for MSMEs and especially the Artisan community. Since craftsmanship and artistry have been a source of livelihood in Kashmir since olden days, we believe the announcement of PM Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman Scheme will enable the Artisans of Kashmir to improve the quality, scale and reach of their products by integrating them with the MSME value chain.

"We are pleased to see the substantial 33% hike in the Capex outlay at 10 lakh crore which is the highest ever, amount of all budgets," he added.

Rahul Sahai, Chairman PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry Jammu Chapter has also welcomed the Union Budget. In a statement Sahai said that allocation of Rs 35581 crore for J&K presented by Finance Minister during her budget speech is very appreciable.

Sahai applauded J&K Govt good going in achieving of Capex targets and said that we are pleased to see the substantial 33%

hike in the capex outlay at 10 lakh crore which is the highest ever, amount of all budgets. He said that the Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSME and tax exemption for the hardworking middle class recognized the need to support in difficult times.

In a major relief to MSMEs, as mentioned in case of MSMEs failing to execute contracts during the COVID period, 95% of the forfeited amount relating to the bid or performance security would be returned to them by government and government undertakings will definitely boost the morale of the MSME Sector, he added.

Describing the Union Budget 2023-24 as a bonanza for middle class, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) J&K Executive Member Raman Suri today said that the biggest relief for working class is the changed tax slab. The money thus collected, he added, is going to transform the country with completion of mega projects of roads, highways and railway lines.

He said the digital payments have arisen to 76% in transactions and 91% in value terms. The biggest relief for common people is that the majority of documents available in Digi Locker for individuals will be able to have all their required papers handy. Setting up of entity DigiLocker for use by MSMEs and large businesses will also help the country go digital and thus, transparent.

JK Kissan Council president Tajinder Singh Wazir said that Union Budget presented by the Finance Minister today has provided a new hope to the small and marginalized farmers and cooperative bodies. He said massive centralised storage capacity will help farmers a lot.

SCOPE, an apex body of Public Sector Enterprises comprising the Union Finance Minister in presenting a growth oriented inclusive budget for all with impetus on infrastructure, green environment and skill development. While appreciating budget Atul Sobti, Director General SCOPE said that the Budget is likely to have a multiple effect in both social and economic sectors.

Dulloo reviews progress on 'One Nation One Fertilizer' scheme

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 1: Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Agriculture Production Department, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a meeting to review progress on Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhi Kendra-PM-KSK (One Nation One Fertilizer) at Civil Secretariat.

Directors Agriculture, Jammu and Kashmir, Director Law Enforcement, DBT Coordinator and representatives of fertilizer companies including CFCL, IFFCO, IPL and NFL

attended the meeting in person and through virtual mode.

Additional Chief Secretary was briefed about progress on implementation of PM-KSK in Jammu and Kashmir.

Dulloo took stock of present status of district and company wise list of PM-KSK besides seeking details about districts allotted to fertilizer companies for developing PM-KSK in J&K and Ladakh UTs.

He was informed that four PM-KSK are already functional in different districts while more

PMKSKs would be made functional in other districts soon.

He impressed upon the fertilizer companies to ensure that the work on other PMKSKs would be started soon while ensuring completion within stipulated timelines.

Dulloo asked the Fertilizer Companies to develop all the district HQ retailers as PM KSK as per guidelines given by the Department of Fertilizer, Government of India within the time frame ensuring all facilities at the outlets.

Protest against SSB for conducting exams through blacklisted company

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 1: Youth Against Corruption (YAC) today held a protest against Jammu Kashmir Service Selection Board for conducting the crucial recruitment exams through a blacklisted company.

A number of YAC activists and job aspirants from different districts of Jammu and Kashmir assembled near Press Club Jammu and held protest demonstration to show their resentment against JKSSB as well as LG administration for their failure to maintain transparency in the public recruitments.

While talking to media during the protest demonstration, YAC volunteers said that JKSSB did not learn anything from its prior frauds as it hired again a blacklisted company which is indulged in malpractices over more than 10 recruitment exams conducted in various states.

"We approached JKSSB to not lend our recruitments in the hands of a private tainted firm but they unheard our plea. When we approached the High Court and historical judgement was passed against the company, the whole JKUT Administration went to the Double Bench seeking stay on the judgement," they said and alleged that JKUT Administration was shielding a tainted firm.

Kartik Bhagat, one of the protesters, pointed out that JKSSB was going to conduct exams of Fisheries Department, Election Assistant, Labour Officer, Assistant Law Officer, Patwari, MVI, Drivers etc though this blacklisted company because of which youth have lost the faith over JKSSB and



YAC activists protesting against JKSSB at Jammu on Wednesday.

Excelsior/Rakesh

JKUT Administration.

Another protester Sushil Kumar said that the answer key which was supposed to be released on 30th December as per notification of JKSSB had gone viral on Whatsapp on 28th of December. "Since the answer key of CBT Exams is made along with the question paper, there is every possible chance that the answer key was leaked to those who paid a hefty amount for the paper," he said and added that there were high chances that the paper was again leaked and aspirants were having many inputs regarding the same.

Vinkal Sharma and Atul Sudan,

while speaking during the protest, demanded an end to the role of tainted private companies in Government recruitment. They sought investigation into awarding tender to the blacklisted company despite knowing that it was involved in such malpractices many times.

Those who led the protest, included Rohit, Ronak, Sakshar, Moim, Nasir, Rameek, Rajat, Ajay, Aditya, Manik, Aquib, Najeem, Shaqib, Shariq, Tahir, Sahil, Keshav, Abhishek, Rohit, Vishal, Rakesh, Anil, Nadeem, Ricky, Arun, Pankaj, Asif, Arif, Nadeem, Sahil, Nisar and Omar.



DSS president GS Charak addressing press conference in Jammu.

Excelsior/Rakesh

'J&K Govt cares for fallen heroes'

DSS demands National War Memorial at Dal Lake

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 1: After a consultative meeting with the executive body, president Dogra Sadar Sabha (DSS), Gulchain Singh Charak whole heartedly welcomes the J&K Government's decision to enhance the annuity grant to the Gallantry award winners of the Union Territory, he said that this enhancement has come about after a gap of 15 years as against other States/UTs revising the grants every two years.

It was a long pending repeated demand of the DSS on behalf of this very distinguished class of Gallantry award winners, who by nature are selfless, sacrificing and more duty oriented than privileges. DSS also appreciated the earlier decision to enhance the ex-gratia payments to war widows of the UT from Rs 5 to 25 lakh, who were being paid miserably lower than their counterparts in the rest of the country. The two decisions have brought in a feeling of getting closer to the rest of the nation.

The Executive body took special note of the tireless efforts of their members especially Col Dr Virendra K Sahi, Director, The War Decorated (India) and other members of Ex-servicemen Cell of DSS for their untiring efforts and raising this issue time and again at various fora.

DSS raised its pending demand of building an appropriate War Memorial on the banks of Dal Lake as a tribute to the well over 5K fallen Indian heroes from throughout the country, in protection and defense of J&K. The UT cannot ever repay for their supreme sacrifices but, in the least, give them the due honour and remember them for which every peace loving citizen of J&K will remain ever obliged to them. Their families are among the 'real stake holders' in the UT and should be offered domicile rights.

The proposed National War Memorial will enhance National Spirit, become source of inspiration for the coming generations and be a tourism attraction for all the families and relatives of the fallen heroes to visit on their anniversaries to perform tributes related rituals.

If taken up with immediate speed it will give a clear message to the world at large through the visiting delegates of the G-20 Nations in the scheduled summit meet proposed to be held in Srinagar.

Prominent among those present in the conference were Col Karan Singh vice president, Col Dr Virendra K. Sahi, Convenor Media Cell, Gambir Dev Singh Charak I/C Youth Wing, Amanat Ali Shah Joint Secy and Chander Mohan Sharma Secy I/C Media Cell.

Literary, Music and Fine Arts events mark Day 2 of ANTARNAAD

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 1: 36th Inter-University North Zone Youth Festival-ANTARNAAD, organized by the University of Jammu under the aegis of Association of Indian Universities (AIU) today entered its second day with a plethora of literary, musical and fine arts competitions.

On the second day of the festival, Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Hqs, Manish Sinha was the chief guest of the Western Group song competition, held at



Students presenting Western group song during ANARNAAD at JU on Wednesday.

General Zorawar Singh Auditorium. The venue also witnessed competitions like Western Solo contest and Western Instrumental contest, which were attended by more than 15 universities and 80 participants.

At The Business School, a debate competition was the highlight of the day, wherein the former Head of the English Department, Prof Posh Charak was the chief guest. The topic for the debate was "The Presidency of G20 summit will make India Vishwaguru", wherein the participating students from 14 Universities gave splendid performances.

Meanwhile, bringing their creative ideas to fruition, students from 14 universities participated in Rangoli competition. The theme of the Rangoli contest was 'Folk Element: Connecting Religion and Culture' in which participants made awesome geometrical patterns in a confluence of colours depicting different shades of Indian culture and religion.

The venue witnessed another creative event of an on-the-spot Cartooning on the theme, "Traditional Folk (Spirituality Symbol Domination)", in which 14 Universities participated and expressed their creativity.

Another venue of the festival featured three major events, including Classical Instrumental (P), Classical Instrumental (NP) contests and Mime, wherein participants enthralled the audience with their extraordinary display of talent. The participating teams includ-

ed University of Jammu, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya Haridwar Uttarakhand, GADVASU-Ludhiana, SKUAST-Jammu, Doon University Uttarakhand, Punjab University Chandigarh, University of Kashmir, Cluster University of Jammu, Punjab University Patiala, CT University Ludhiana, IK Gujral Punjab Technical University Kapurthala, Himachal Pradesh University Shimla, GNDU Amritsar, Lovely Professional University, Chandigarh University, Punjab Agricultural University

Ludhiana, Maharaja Ranjit Singh Punjab Technical University Bathinda and DAV Jalandhar.

As a part of Youth Festival, Vice Chancellor Prof Umesh Rai also inaugurated an Exhibition of art work by eminent alumni of JU. Simultaneously, Prof Nareesh Padha, Dean Academic Affairs, inaugurated Selfie Point and Arvind Jasrotia, Registrar of the University, flagged off Jammu 'Jammu Darshan' Bus, provided by Jammu Tourism.

Day 3 on Thursday will feature One Act Play, Light Vocal, Classical Vocal, Photography, Poster Making, Elocution and Mehandi.

DC Doda reviews implementation of JJM

Excelsior Correspondent

DODA, Feb 1: District Development Commissioner, Doda Vishesh Paul Mahajan today set March 31, 2023 as deadline for the completion of ongoing Jal Shakti Department schemes.

District Development Commissioner, who is also Chairman of District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM) under Jal Jeevan Mission was reviewing the status of work on the under execution Water Supply Schemes, here in his office chamber.

The Executive Engineers were asked to complete the allotted works physically and financially by March 31st and settle the bottlenecks, if any within a week. The DDC also asked the JSD to resolve issues with the Forest Department to ensure timely completion of prestigious JJM projects aimed at



DC Doda Vishesh Paul Mahajan chairing a meeting on Wednesday.

to provide safe tap water to all households as envisaged in the scheme.

The meeting was informed that out of 185 tendered projects under JJM, 124 projects have been allotted, and work on 106 projects is under execution.

Regarding the construction of Slow Sand Filtration plants, the meeting was informed that work out of 5 proposed projects, work on

2 has been started on the ground.

The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer, SE Jal Shakti, DPO ICDS, Assistant Commissioner Development, ACP DODA, DIO Doda, Principal DIET Doda, CMO Doda, Executive Engineers of JSD and Irrigation Department, AEEs, JEEs, Representative of DFO Doda and other officials of Jal Shakti department.

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