



## Public Finance

### **Govt. working on SEZ reforms: Commerce Secretary Barthwal**

The Centre is working on reforms in the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) domain so that movement of goods between domestic tariff area (DTA) and SEZ space is carried out smoothly without affecting the competitiveness of goods in the export markets, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said on Saturday. *(The Hindu)*

### **Govt likely to present next week White Paper on mismanagement of eco prior to 2014**

The government is expected to present a White Paper on the economic mismanagement before 2014, aiming to draw lessons from that period. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the plan during the presentation of the interim budget. The White Paper is likely to be presented next week and will examine the economic situation before 2014 when the Congress-led UPA government was in power. *(The Economic Times)*

### **India yet to see significant improvement in debt affordability - Moody's**

Moody's analyst says India's debt affordability hasn't significantly improved, keeping sovereign ratings unchanged. The government's fiscal consolidation trend is positive, but proactive measures for revenue generation and achieving the fiscal deficit target are critical. India plans to reduce the budget gap sharply by 2024/25. Economic growth is healthy, supporting momentum in revenue generation. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Budget 2024: 1111111, the attention-catching number that stands out**

Sitharaman's 'no big bang' budget holds back expected welfare spending and sops for voters. The enigmatic numbers 1111111 and 11.11 are related to capital expenditure. Sitharaman proposes to raise the capital expenditure target by 11.11% to Rs. 11.11 lakh crore for the next fiscal year. The hike in the interim budget is significant but not as dramatic as in previous budgets. *(The Economic Times)*



## Taxation

### **Tax exemption expiry date for start-ups to be extended by a year**

According to the Budget document, certain tax benefits for start-ups and investments made by sovereign wealth or pension funds, and tax exemption on certain income of some International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) units are expiring on March 31, 2024. However, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed to extend the exemption expiry date by a year to March 31, 2025, to provide continuity in taxation and trigger growth in the sector. *(The Hindu)*.

### **Budget: Tax devolution to states seen at 32%, but lags 15th FC advice**

The Union government is projected to share about 32 per cent of central taxes with states during the financial year 2024-25 against the 15th Finance Commission's recommendation of 41 per cent. The Revised Estimates (RE) for FY24, too, show a similar share of states in the central taxes at 32 per cent. In absolute terms, however, there has been an increase in the amount devolved to states compared to the Budget Estimates (BE) for FY24 at Rs 11 trillion. *(Business Standard)*

### **Budget 2024: Upto 10 mn taxpayers to be free from petty tax claims dating back to 1962**

In a relief to taxpayers grappling with outstanding tax demands, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday announced a resolution scheme for "disputed direct tax demand" dating back to even 1962. The government has decided to waive outstanding direct tax demands up to Rs 25,000 for the period up to financial year 2009-10 and up to Rs 10,000 for financial years 2010-11 to 2014-15. *(Business Standard)*

### **Tax sops to sovereign, pensions funds extended by a year**

The government has extended tax exemptions given to investments made by sovereign wealth (SWFs) or pension funds by a year to March 31, 2025. In 2020, the government had introduced a new section 10 (23FE) to provide notified sovereign and pension funds, an exemption from dividend, interest and long-term capital gains income earned from investments made in specified infrastructure businesses from April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2024. *(BusinessLine)*

### **MNCs Await Clarity on Minimum Tax**

Subsidiaries of foreign firms in India still await clarity on tax as per the 'Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Base Erosion and Profit Shifting' regulation. The rules ensure large MNCs pay a minimum level of tax on income arising in each jurisdiction they operate in. The budget didn't provide guidance in this regard. "Companies were seeking clarity on it," said Saurrav Sood, practice leader, at SW India. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Interim Budget: Tax-GDP ratio projected to be highest in FY25 since 2008-09**

The finance ministry has been conservative in revising the projection of revenues from some of its taxes such as corporation tax and central goods and services tax (CGST) for this financial year and tax buoyancy for FY25. However, the tax-GDP ratio was kept at the highest level since 2008-09 for FY24 in revised projections and further higher for FY25. Though tax buoyancy comes to 1.4 in the Revised Estimates (RE) for this financial year compared to 0.99 per cent estimated in the Budget Estimates (BE), all the increase was projected to come from personal income tax. *(Business Standard)*

### **GST collection rises 10% in Jan to over ₹1.72-lakh crore**

With improved compliance, collection through Goods & Services (GST) surged to over ₹1.72-lakh crore, the Finance Ministry reported on Wednesday. This is the second all-time highest collection and the third time in the current fiscal when collection crossed ₹1.70-lakh crore. January collection, related with goods consumption and services availed in December, is 10 per cent higher than the corresponding month of the last fiscal. *(BusinessLine)*

### Thrust areas in tax policy

The digitisation of the tax system, successfully implemented over the past years, could unleash the next wave of transformation. The question is whether 2024 will be the year when the government will roll out an integrated data vision. This could be envisaged as a system where data collection, reporting and exchange elements move automatically through machine to machine-based processes between government and business taxpayers. *(BusinessLine)*



## National Accounts and State of the Economy

### IMF revises India's FY25 growth forecast upward to 6.5%

The finance ministry in its economic review before the budget has projected Indian economy to grow close to 7% in FY25. The multilateral institution projected Indian economy to grow 6.7% in FY24. The first advance estimate released by the government earlier this month pegged FY24 growth at 7.3%. *(The Economic Times)*

### Household consumption to revive in FY25, growth at 6.3%: Standard Chartered

The research group of the global bank revised its FY25 forecast upward to 6.3% from 6% projected earlier, as it projected muted inflation and higher food spending to help household consumption drive growth in the coming fiscal. "A revival in consumption could offset, partially if not fully, the impact of (1) the flattening effect of lower commodity prices on the manufacturing sector, (2) slower global growth. *(The Economic Times)*

### India likely to keep economic growth momentum in FY25 despite risks

India expects its economy to grow around 7% in the next fiscal year, outpacing the global economy. The growth will be supported by stable domestic demand and private investment. Recent events in the Red Sea crisis may impact global trade and supply chains, affecting trade flows, transportation costs, economic output, and inflation worldwide. *(The Economic Times)*

### India flags four challenges as it embarks on \$7 trillion economy path

The Finance Ministry has highlighted four challenges facing the Indian economy: AI's threat to the services sector, the trade-off between energy security and economic growth, the impact of global developments, and the availability of a skilled workforce. The Interim Budget announcement is separate from the Economic Survey, which will be released before the full budget after the general elections. *(The Economic Times)*



## Banking and Monetary Policy

### Govt to receive Rs 1.02 lakh cr as dividend from RBI, PSBs in FY25

The government on Thursday projected a dividend income of Rs 1.02 lakh crore from the RBI and public sector financial institutions in the next financial year. The government is set to earn a higher dividend of Rs 1.04 lakh crore in the current fiscal against the Budget Estimate of Rs 48,000 crore. *(The Economic Times)*

### **RBI bars Paytm Payments Bank from accepting deposits after February 29**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday ordered the Paytm Payments Bank to stop deposits and credit transactions after February 29, 2024. *(The Economic Times)*

### **State Bank of India removes 'fraud' tag from Religare Finvest**

The State Bank of India has formally removed the 'fraud' tag from Religare Finvest Limited (RFL) following the Delhi High Court's December 2023 order asking the lender to do so. SBI had tagged RFL's record as 'fraud' in the Reserve Bank of India's Central Fraud Registry database. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Digital payments rise 10.94 pc annually at September-end 2023: RBI data**

Mumbai, Digital payments across the country registered a growth of 10.94 per cent in a year through March 2023, as per RBI's index that measures the adoption of online transactions. RBI's Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI) stood at 418.77 at end-September 2023 compared to 377.46 in September 2022 and 395.57 in March 2023. *(The Economic Times)*

### **RBI makes additional amount available to primary dealers under liquidity facility**

The Reserve Bank of India will make an additional amount of funds available to standalone primary dealers under the Standing Liquidity Facility starting Thursday, a step that comes at a time when liquidity in the banking system is at a large deficit. *(The Economic Times)*

### **PSBs, housing finance stocks rule the roost**

The Interim Budget 2024 largely turned out to be a non-event for the stock markets. Sensex (71,645) and Nifty 50 (21,697) closed the day marginally lower by 0.15 per cent and 0.13 per cent respectively. However, among the sectors, the public sector banks (PSB) and housing finance stocks seem to have benefited from this Budget. The Nifty PSU Bank index surged over 3 per cent. *(BusinessLine)*

### **Banks' unsecured loans grow despite capital risk weight hit**

About two months after the Reserve Bank of India rolled out higher risk weights for certain segments of consumer credit, private banks have reported a capital impact of 30-100 bps due to the higher capital allocation requirement for these loans. However, this has not slowed down retail credit growth, including unsecured retail, during the third quarter. *(BusinessLine)*



## **External Sector**

### **'Collaboration is a must for India to reach \$5 tn in GDP'**

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said initiatives of Customs department like Faceless Assessment and Single Window Clearance must evolve aiming to grow trade as every partner must collaborate to help India's GDP surpass \$5 trillion by 2027-28. In a written message on 'International Customs Day 2024', Sitharaman said with a common purpose of ease of doing business for nation building, all stakeholders must come together and contribute to benefit citizen. *(The Hindu)*

### **Red Sea crisis to have differential impact across sectors; shipping cos, freight forwarders to benefit from high charter rates**

The impact of the ongoing crisis around the Red Sea in the Middle East is expected to vary depending on the industry and sector-specific and trade nuances, said a report by CRISIL. *(Financial Express)*

### **Electronics, engineering goods among six focus sectors for \$1 trillion exports target**

India has identified electronics, engineering goods, textiles, marine & agriculture, toys, pharmaceuticals, and ecommerce as the sectors that could help achieve its \$1-trillion goods export target by FY30. The commerce and industry ministry study predicts that these sectors could generate around \$670 billion of exports by 2029-30. *(The Economic Times)*

### **India-Indonesia eye pharma, transport infra & FinTech to expand economic coop**

A mega India – Indonesia Business Forum 2024 was organised in New Delhi -- marking the beginning of 75 years of creation of diplomatic ties -- aimed at promoting economic relations and nurturing growth. The forum held on Wednesday focused on attractive and potential sectors for collaborations, which are pharma, consumer goods, transportation infrastructure, tourism, e-mobility and FinTech. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Customs 2.0 in offing; to provide fully automated stakeholder service: Revenue Secy**

Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra on Saturday said the customs department is developing a fully automated trade interface system, Customs 2.0, which would also help in improving its score in the World Bank's ranking. Speaking on the International Customs Day 2024 celebrations, organised by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), Malhotra said technology is going to be the main driver in improving customs processes. *(Financial Express)*

### **Cut duty, increase PAN card transaction limit: Jewellery industry to govt**

The gems and jewellery industry has urged withdrawal of hike in Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on import of gold in the coming interim Budget and asked the government to introduce a rationalised tax structure. "The jewellery industry contributes nearly 7 per cent of India's GDP and hence, deserves a pro-business environment," apex body for the gems and jewellery industry All India Gem And Jewellery Domestic Council Chairman Saiyam Mehra told PTI. *(Business Standard)*

### **No immediate impact of US decision to pause LNG export permits: Officials**

India will not be immediately affected by the United States' decision to freeze permits for the export of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to countries with which it doesn't have a free-trade agreement (FTA), officials said. While India imports the largest chunk of LNG from Qatar, the US is the third-largest source of the fuel. Officials at the Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry said the move is not expected to affect spot volumes, which have already been bought. *(Business Standard)*

### **US hikes fees for various non-immigrant visas like H-1B, EB-5, and others**

The US has announced a steep increase in fees for various categories of non-immigrant visas like the H-1B, L-1 and EB-5, the most popular among Indians. The fee hike, first after 2016, will come into force from April 1. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. *(Business Standard)*

### **Rupee expected to weaken as odds of Fed rate cut in March diminish**

The Indian rupee is expected to decline slightly at open on Wednesday, weighed by a rise in the U.S. dollar after robust U.S. labour market data made it less likely the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates in March. Non-deliverable forwards indicate the rupee will open at around 83.12-83.14 to the dollar, compared with 83.1050 in the previous session. The rupee's intraday range in the last four sessions has been just 2 to 6 paise. (*Business Standard*)

### **China threat an opportunity for India-US ties, strong FTA: Congressman Issa**

The "threat" posed by China offers an opportunity for the US and India to make strong agreements, including a genuine Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to ensure that the two countries will look at each other as first partners, according to Darrell Issa, an influential American lawmaker. (*Business Standard*)

### **Rice traders must disclose stocks starting next Friday: Food secretary**

Rice retailers, wholesalers and processors are asked that, beginning next Friday, they disclose their stock holdings, Sanjeev Chopra, Secretary Department of Food and Public, said. The reporting of stocks is irrespective of the category of rice—basmati or non-basmati, parboiled, or broken. (*ThePrint*)

### **Centre approves signing, ratification of bilateral investment treaty with UAE**

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the signing and ratification of a Bilateral Investment Treaty between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This landmark decision is expected to significantly enhance investor confidence and pave the way for increased Foreign Investments and Overseas Direct Investment (ODI) opportunities. (*ThePrint*)

### **Duty cut on mobile phone components to drop smartphone prices by 3-5 pc: Experts**

The government's move to slash the import duty on mobile phone spare parts, like battery cover, lens and SIM socket, is likely to reduce smartphone prices by 3-5 per cent, according to industry experts. A day ahead of the interim budget, India has slashed the import duty on spare parts, like battery cover, lens and SIM socket, used in mobile phone manufacturing to 10 per cent, from 15 per cent. (*ThePrint*)

### **Rupee payments double value of India's engineering exports to Russia**

India's annual export of machinery, auto parts and other engineering goods to Russia more than doubled to over \$1 billion in nine months through December as Moscow is settling trade in rupees, a top exporters' group official said. Russia has signed deals with many countries including China, Iran and India to trade in local currencies, instead of the U.S. dollar, after the West imposed sanctions on Moscow following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. (*ThePrint*)

### **'Opaque' corporate tax practices 'barrier' to US firms willing to invest in India: Garcetti**

US Ambassador Eric Garcetti on Tuesday pitched for reform in India's taxation, export control and intellectual property rights regimes for deeper bilateral economic engagement and said the "rhetoric" that everything has to be made in India could slow down the pace of the country's growth. The envoy said that "opaque corporate tax practices" are still a "barrier" to American companies wanting to invest in India and that

export control and export policies have to be changed if the country is to achieve its goals in the economic sphere. *(ThePrint)*

### **India's April-December steel imports hit five-year high as demand soars**

India's steel imports touched a five-year high in the first nine months of the fiscal year to the end of March, turning the country into a net importer of finished steel, according to provisional government data seen by Reuters on Tuesday. A spurt in economic activity and a revamp of broader infrastructure have turned India into a bright spot for both Indian and global steel makers. *(ThePrint)*

### **Indian curbs to propel Pakistan's rice exports towards record high**

Pakistan's rice exports are likely to jump to a record high in the year ending in June as rival India's decision to curb its own shipments forces buyers to purchase more from Islamabad, which is offering the grain at nearly 16 year-high prices. The record exports are helping to alleviate tight supplies following the restrictions imposed last year by India, the world's biggest exporter, and will bolster Pakistan's depleted foreign exchange reserves, which are crucial for financing imports. *(ThePrint)*

### **Gold imports rise 26.7 pc to USD 35.95 bn in Apr-Dec FY24**

India's gold imports, which have a bearing on the country's current account deficit (CAD), increased 26.7 per cent to USD 35.95 billion during the April-December of this fiscal due to healthy demand, according to government data. In December 2023, imports of the precious metal jumped by 156.5 per cent to USD 3 billion, as per the data released by the commerce ministry. *(ThePrint)*

### **India's crude oil imports edge higher in December**

India's crude oil imports rose in December on firm demand, data from Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) showed on Monday. Crude imports in December rose 1.1% year-on-year to 19.83 million metric tons, the data showed, up 7.4% on a monthly basis. Fuel consumption in India, the world's third-biggest oil importer, rose to a seven-month high in December. *(ThePrint)*

### **India leading top 25 countries in defence export: Union minister**

India is becoming self-reliant in defence production, and for the first time, leading the top 25 countries in defence exports, Union minister Ajay Bhatt said on Sunday. The Minister of State for Defence was speaking at the Advantage Vidarbha programme in Nagpur. He said the government has issued four lists of 4,666 defence components whose import is banned, resulting in huge savings. *(ThePrint)*



## **Agriculture and Rural Economy**

### **Farm loan disbursement touches 90% of Budget target in 9 months**

Disbursal of farm loans has exceeded 90 per cent of the Budget estimate in the first nine months of the current fiscal, data from the Finance Ministry showed. Given this trend, the Interim Budget may see a hike of at least 10 per cent in the estimates for the next fiscal i.e., 2024-25. "The agriculture credit target will be increased to ₹20 lakh crore, with the focus on animal husbandry, dairy and fisheries," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

said while announcing the Union Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-24 on February 1 last year. *(BusinessLine)*

### **Beyond agri theme: 4 mid & smallcap stocks to play changing rural economic matrix**

While a large part of India's rural economy is about agriculture, in the last couple of years, there has been an effort on the policy level that other parts of the rural economy which are not agricultural related get the boost. So be it horticulture, animal husbandry and fishing all of them have been a push in one form or other to increase both productivity and income levels. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Interim Budget 2024 not likely to immediately trigger consumption revival in rural economy**

The interim budget is unlikely to immediately trigger a consumption revival though increased focus on rural housing and post-harvest activities could help spur demand for daily household products and groceries in villages in the long term. Slower demand in rural markets has been dragging the overall growth of the fast-moving consumer goods segment since the past two years and companies said a normal monsoon and a good harvest could help expedite rural recovery instead of budget sops. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Ignoring an agricultural sector in distress**

The report released by the Finance Ministry and the vote-on-account presented by the Finance Minister are concerned more about portraying a glowing image of the government than about the financing plans for 2024-25. For the same reason, one is constrained to confine the discussion on the Budget to one question: was the distress in agriculture over the past decade alleviated by policy, or has it been exacerbated? All official data appear to indicate the latter. *(The Hindu)*

### **2024 Interim Budget | Marginal rise in allocations for farming, fisheries**

Maintaining that the 'annadata's' welfare is the highest priority of the Centre, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her Budget that farmers' empowerment and well-being will drive the country forward. The allocation for the Agriculture Ministry is ₹1,17,528.79 crore, an increase of ₹1,997 crore when compared with the previous Budget. The allocation for the Ministry in the revised estimates was ₹1,16,788.96 crore while the actual expenditure in 2022-23 was ₹ 99,877.01 crore. *(The Hindu)*

### **First, farmers' incomes were hit. Then, budget slashed funds for key schemes**

Despite a hit to farm incomes due to recurrent climate shocks and export curbs to check domestic food prices, the interim budget presented on Thursday slashed funding for some key schemes. The flagship crop insurance scheme was allocated ₹14,600 crore for 2024-25 (budget estimates or BE), lower than the ₹15,000 crore spent in 2023-24 (revised estimates or RE). The marginal cut comes on the back of patchy rains last year and farmers suffering crop losses. *(Mint)*

### **Budget 2024: Focus on rural boost but little for middle class**

The finance minister announced plans for greater value addition in the agricultural sector and boosting farmers' income, aside from promoting private and public investment in post-harvest activities. The interim budget laid out several key measures that are likely to assist rural employment and boost farmer income amid a weak demand for packaged goods reported from villages. However, companies said the budget did little to address subdued consumer demand among lower middle-income households. *(Mint)*



## Industry, Manufacturing, Services and Technology

### **Core sector growth eases to 14-month low of 3.8% in December**

An unfavourable base and slowdown in infrastructure activity in December, pushed core sector growth lower to a 14-month low in December, showed government data released Wednesday. The slow growth in eight core industries—coal, natural gas, petroleum refining, crude, electricity, cement, and steel—is likely to reflect in industrial output as well. The eight core industries account for 40% of the index of industrial production. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Industry welcomes plan to augment electric vehicle ecosystem**

The Centre will focus on strengthening the electric vehicle ecosystem with supporting charging infrastructure in its move towards accelerating net zero emission, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday. Mahesh Babu, CEO of Ashok Leyland's electric vehicle arm Switch Mobility, said that it was heartening to note the Centre has accorded focus on the automotive sector with plans to enhance the EV manufacturing ecosystem and charging infrastructure for boosting green growth. *(The Hindu)*

### **Goa attempts to woo industries, aspires to be a 'logistics hub'**

Goa, known for its pristine beaches and fun-loving culture is attempting to change gear from being a tourism revenue-led State to an industry destination. Assuring political stability to investors, the State government led by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant unveiled a new industrial policy that includes easing land allotment procedures for potential investors. *(The Hindu)*

### **UDAN hits an air pocket, 60% cut in Budget allocation**

The budgetary allocation for the regional connectivity scheme UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) has been slashed by 60% after a record-high grant last time. The fund is spent on reviving unused and underused airports in Tier-2 and -3 cities. The Centre has set aside ₹502 crore for the scheme compared with the previous Budget Estimates of ₹1,244 crore, which was also the highest-ever allocation for the scheme since its launch in 2017. *(The Hindu)*.

### **Centre moots ₹1 lakh-crore corpus for R&D**

Signalling a commitment to research and innovation for India's "tech-savvy youth," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her interim Budget speech on Thursday, mentioned a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore, that would be available on 'minimal or nil interest rates' to "encourage" the private sector to invest in research and development in 'sunrise sectors.' It was not clear if this corpus was targeted at a specific Ministry or intended as a more broad-based encouragement to research. *(The Hindu)*.

### **Focused cuts, fewer layers: Tech industry layoffs enter new phase**

Last year, Mark Zuckerberg declared 2023 to be a "year of efficiency." His company, Meta, soon laid off a third of its employees. Amazon, Google and Microsoft also cut tens of thousands of workers. Their worlds did not stop. Not only that, the companies were rewarded. Their stock prices soared. Some divisions were more productive. And the companies — including X, formerly known as Twitter, which has chopped nearly 80 percent of its staff since late 2022 — continued operating. *(Business Standard)*

### **Budget 2024: Industry leaders 'happy' with Modi govt's 'prudent' budget**

Budget 2024: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's interim budget presentation on Thursday has swayed the sentiments of industry leaders, who said they are happy with the government's position on the financial roadmap of India ahead. Reacting to the pre-election Budget, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Director General Chandrajit Banerjee called it a "very prudent budget," which lays the path for the country's strong foundation. Follow the full coverage of Budget 2024 here. (*Business Standard*).

### **Interim Budget: Apparel industry will surely benefit, says Sunil Sethi**

Support for the growth of industry is indeed welcome. Infrastructure – physical, digital and social – coupled with fostering research, innovation and technology augur well for the country. Housing, particularly rural, and attention to women's education and entrepreneurship as also loans will surely help in the development of the cottage and handloom sector. (*Business Standard*).

### **Budget 2024: PLI outlay for electronics, auto and pharmaceutical goods increased**

The Centre has significantly increased the expenditure outlay for the production linked incentive schemes (PLI) related to manufacturing in electronics, automobiles and the pharmaceutical industry. The expenditure allocation for PLI schemes for Auto OEMs and component manufacturers saw the largest rise, growing from ₹484 crore as per last year's revised numbers to ₹3,500 crore allocated for the 2024-25 financial year. (*BusinessLine*)

### **Budget 2024: Edible oil industry seeks early formulation of policies to achieve self-reliance**

As Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a special focus to promote edible oil crops, the sector expects an early roll out of a strong policy framework on the lines of the one the Government introduced for the growth of oil palm plantations in the country. (*BusinessLine*)

### **Activities in solar industry going through the roof as Suryodaya Yojana is expected to create \$32-billion market**

Prime Minister Modi's announcement of the Suryodaya Yojana for enabling one crore residential rooftop solar plants—a new market worth \$32 billion—has gingered up activities in the solar sector. Businessline learns that the government has asked banks to come up with loan products to support the programme, by February 1, at relatively low interest rates, (about 8-9 per cent). (*BusinessLine*)

### **Budget 2024: Rs 10,000 cr rooftop solar boost for 10 million families**

The interim budget proposed a big push to the rooftop solar segment, outlining that 10 million households will be enabled to get up to 300 units of free electricity every month under the Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana with an outlay of Rs 10,000 crore. "There is a provision of Rs 10,000 crore for rooftop solar scheme in the budget," finance secretary TV Somanathan said in a post-budget press conference. (*The Economic Times*)

### **Government approves continuation of export incentive scheme for apparel, garment till March 2026**

The Union Cabinet Thursday approved the continuation of the Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL) scheme for apparel, garments and made-ups till March 31, 2026, a move aimed at enhancing the export competitiveness of garment and made-up sectors. (*The Economic Times*)

### **3 new railway corridors will solve problem of passenger wait list: Railway Minister**

The problem of passenger ticket wait list will be over once the three multi-modal economic corridors announced in the interim Budget on Thursday are constructed in another five years, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. *(The Economic Times)*

### **EV sector may have to wait longer for FAME subsidy extension**

The firms operating in the electric vehicle sector that had hoped for an extension of the FAME subsidy will have to wait probably for the full budget post Lok Saha polls as Thursday's interim budget had no mention of it. *(The Economic Times)*

### **Interim Budget: EV push may create 250,000 jobs in five years**

Jobs in the country's electric vehicle sector may receive a boost in the coming years fueled by the Interim Budget promise to support EV manufacturing and charging infrastructure, said staffing companies and company officials. *(The Economic Times)*



## **News on Kerala**

### **Kerala facing unprecedented economic crisis: Finance minister KN Balagopal**

The Kerala government is anticipating an unprecedented financial crisis in the upcoming fiscal year, coinciding with the Lok Sabha elections. Balancing the imperative to maximize revenue with the need to implement numerous populist public projects poses a formidable challenge for the government. Finance Minister KN Balagopal sheds light on how he plans to navigate these challenges in the annual budget, set to be presented on February 5, revealing his concerns and outlining strategic plans in this interview. *(The Economic Times)*.

### **Priority is to develop beach tourism and enhance hospitality standards, says Kerala Govt**

The Kerala government is committed to aligning beach tourism projects with current demands and enhancing hospitality standards. The recently renovated Samudra Kovalam, a beachside resort of the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC), now features world-class facilities. This will boost Kerala's standing as a hub for destination weddings and MICE tourism. The government is making efforts to create the best facilities for this niche area *(The Economic Times)*.

### **State govt. to sell property owned by Travancore Cements in Ernakulam and Vaikom**

The government has decided to sell the property owned by Travancore Cements in Ernakulam and Vaikom to settle the firm's liabilities, Industries Minister P. Rajeev said in the Assembly on Tuesday. Replying to a calling attention motion by Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan on the need to settle issues at Travancore Cements, he said that global tenders had been called for the property sale and once the sale of land is completed, the processes to pay off the liabilities would be set in motion *(The Hindu)*.

### **State for developing port premises to attract tourists**

Though Kerala has 17 minor ports, some of which had forged trade ties with foreign merchants centuries ago, these ancient harbours have been lying idle of late due to the

poor coastal shipping activities along the Kerala coast. But soon, tourists visiting Kerala will get a feel of the State's maritime history and how the port premises were used in the past. (*The Hindu*).

### **Tax incentives will boost investments in Kerala, says KSSIA ahead of Budget**

Tax incentives can attract fresh investments in the State as proved by the State Budget in 1979 when the then Finance Minister announced a five-year sales holiday for industrial units launched from April 1, 1979. Even a small step like the one taken in 1979 can generate considerable interest from would-be investors, said A. Nisaruddeen, president of the Kerala State Small Industries Association (KSSIA) in a pre-Budget note to Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal(*The Hindu*).

### **Kerala ignored Union's suggestion that States can hold caste census**

The State government, which expressed its inability in the Supreme Court to conduct a socio-economic caste census (SECC) on the ground that the Union had not shared the data of the 2011 exercise, has turned a blind eye to the Union government suggestion that State governments can conduct any census for their own requirements(*The Hindu*).

### **Sabarimala Greenfield Airport has got site defence clearance from Centre: Kerala govt**

The Kerala government on Thursday said in the Assembly that the Central government has granted site and defence clearance for the Sabarimala Greenfield. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that an application for security clearance is under consideration of the Ministry of Home Affairs(*Mathrubhumi English*).

### **Kerala Govt hikes wages of over 60,000 Anganwadi workers, helpers**

The Kerala government on Sunday announced a wage hike for over 60,000 Anganwadi workers and helpers in the state with an increment of up to Rs 1,000. A total of 60,232 workers in the sector would benefit from the pay hike. At present, Anganwadi workers and helpers draw a monthly salary of Rs 12,000 and Rs. 8000 respectively in the state. (*BusinessLine*).

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