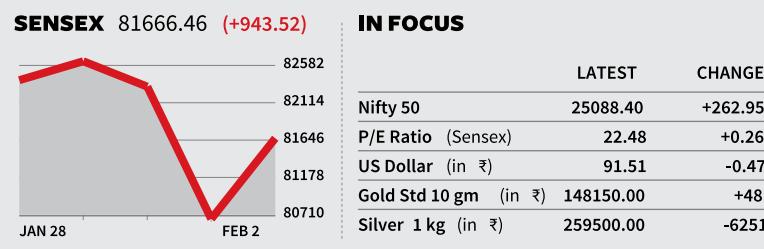


thehindu businessline.

**IN FOCUS**

	LATEST	CHANGE
Nifty 50	25088.40	+262.95
P/E Ratio (Sensex)	22.48	+0.26
US Dollar (in ₹)	91.51	-0.47
Gold Std 10 gm (in ₹)	148150.00	+48
Silver 1 kg (in ₹)	259500.00	-6251

'BANKING' ON FDI.

Centre plans to raise FDI limit in public sector banks to 49%, says M Nagaraju, Financial Services Secretary **p3**

**TRIPLE WHAMMY.**

Precious metals fell as higher CME margins, a hawkish Fed and a firm \$ outweighed bargain buying **p14**

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Regd. TN/ARD/14/2012-2014, RNI No. 55320/94

If you profit from secondary market SGB deal, govt deserves its share: FM

GOOD INTENT. Govt wants to deter people from losing money, said Sitharaman on raising the STT on F&O

bl.exclusive

Raghuvir Srinivasan
Shishir Sinha
New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman firmly defended the new taxation regime for Sovereign Gold Bonds and the increased Securities Transaction Tax on futures and options (F&O).

Talking to *businessline* on Monday, in her first post-Budget interview, she explained that Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs) were designed for long-term investors.

She said those who hold them until maturity, as originally intended, will continue to enjoy the promised tax-free benefits.

"But you went through a secondary market and then you are making a killing. Why shouldn't I get something? And you're not even holding it for maturity. Even if you hold it for maturity, you pick it up from somewhere else (secondary market). So, I'm placing a bit of a premium on it," she said.

TAXATION SCENARIOS

As proposed in the Finance Bill, there would be four scenarios for taxation of SGBs. If subscribed at the time of the launch of any tranche and redeemed at maturity (eight years), there will be no tax.

Second, if one buys SGB units in the secondary market and holds them till maturity, the capital gain will be taxable. Third, if someone buys from and sells in the secondary market, capital gains will be taxed. Fourth, if someone enters at the time of launch and redeems after five years but before maturity, the capital gain will be taxed.

GOLD TRANSITION The SGB was launched in 2015 to provide an option for shifting from physical to paper gold. Between 2015 and 2024, a total of 67 tranches were launched, and units worth 147 tonnes of gold were bought.

With gold prices rising, it became unviable for the government to bring in any tranche after 2024. However, the bonds have become very attractive in the secondary market.



MAKING A POINT. Nirmala Sitharaman, Finance Minister, during an interaction with *businessline* in New Delhi on Monday

money are generally the ones who normally don't have that kind of spare cash to speculate. So, is the government supposed to sit and watch? We want to do what we can to deter people from getting there," she said, justifying the move.

INVESTOR PROTECTION Sitharaman said the government wants to protect people from losing money.

"Of course, the market regulators will take care of other things which they have to do. We have not touched every cash transaction. I think the market will understand our intent and as to why we have done it. And it is not some sweeping brush across the board," she said.

BUDGET PROPOSAL

The Finance Minister had proposed, in the Budget, to raise STT on both futures and options by up to 150 per cent. STT on futures has been raised to 0.05 per cent from 0.02 per cent earlier, and for options, it has been raised to 0.15 per cent from the previous 0.1 per cent.

interview p5

MPC seen leaving key repo rate unchanged at its February 4-6 meet

Piyush Shukla
Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India's six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will likely keep the benchmark repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent and maintain a 'neutral' stance during its February 4-6 meeting, a majority of the 11 economists polled by *businessline* said.

Gaura Sen Gupta, Chief Economist, IDFC First Bank, said the bank expects the RBI to remain on a prolonged pause from hereon.

Also read p6

Trump speaks to PM Modi

Amiti Sen
New Delhi

US President Donald Trump and PM Narendra Modi spoke on Monday, US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor said. "President Trump just spoke with Prime Minister Modi. STAY TUNED..." Gor posted on 'X' late on Monday. The call comes at a time when External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is in the US.

Sensex, Nifty rebound on all-round buying

Anupama Ghosh
Mumbai

Vehicles) jumped 5.30 per cent, after it posted a 47.1 per cent increase in its January sales figures.

However, selling pressure was visible in select financial and healthcare stocks. Shriram Finance led the decliners, falling 3.56 per cent, followed by Axis Bank, which dropped 2.16 per cent.

Sectoral performance remained largely positive, with all indices ending in the green except Nifty IT, which declined 0.50 per cent.

Details p12

16th Finance Commission stops short of paradigm shift

Sindhu Hariharan
Chennai

The 16th Finance Commission report, placed before Parliament on Budget day, has sought to stick to its core principle of equitable redistribution of resources among the poorer States.

While the formula for arriving at the devolution has been changed across parameters, it has not resulted in a material change in the

Read more p12



Net Worth Crossed ₹ 10,000 Crore

**Striding ahead,
sustaining growth and
delivering happiness**



CITY UNION BANK



UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER / NINE MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2025

Sl. No.	Particulars	Quarter ended	Nine Months ended	Quarter ended	Year ended
		31.12.2025	31.12.2025 (Unaudited)	31.12.2024	31.03.2025 (Audited)
1	Total Income from operations (Net)	200102.86	576249.20	170712.36	673210.49
2	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and / or Extraordinary items)	41716.09	121166.61	36099.54	141662.62
3	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before Tax (before tax after Exceptional and / or Extraordinary items)	41716.09	121166.61	36099.54	141662.62
4	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after Tax (after Exceptional and / or Extraordinary items)	33216.09	96666.61	28599.54	112362.62
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
6	Paid up Equity Share Capital (face value of ₹1/- each)	7420.98	7420.98	7409.86	7409.86
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
8	Securities Premium Account	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
9	Net Worth	1015718.85	1015718.85	911749.79	941686.40
10	Paid up Debt Capital / Outstanding Debt (%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
11	Outstanding Redeemable Preference Shares	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
12	Debt Equity Ratio*	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.09
13	Earnings per share (before and after extraordinary items) (of ₹1/- each) (not annualised)	4.48	13.04	3.86	15.17
14	- Basic	4.46	12.99	3.83	15.07
15	- Diluted	5.12	5.12	4.54	2.79
16	Total Debt to Total Assets (%)**				
17	Capital Redemption Reserve				
18	Debt Service Coverage Ratio				
	Interest Service Coverage Ratio				
				Not Applicable	

* Debt represents borrowings with residual maturity of more than one year ** Total Debt represents Total borrowings of the Bank

Note: The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly / Nine months ended Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly / Nine months ended Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange websites BSE: <http://www.bseindia.com>, NSE: <http://www.nseindia.com> and Bank website: <http://www.cityunionbank.bank.in>

Place : Chennai
Dated: 02nd February 2026

QR CODE for Result



By Order of the Board
Dr. N. KAMAKODI
MD & CEO
DIN: 02039618

QUICKLY.

JS Auto Cast Foundry
raises ₹300 crore

Pune: JS Auto Cast Foundry India Private Limited (JSA), a 100 per cent wholly-owned step-down subsidiary of Bharat Forge Ltd, has raised ₹300 crore in equity from Premji Invest through a primary infusion. The company said the capital will be used to accelerate growth by expanding its casting capacity, investing in medium casting capabilities, and pursue industry consolidation through acquisitions. JSA is a key supplier of critical ferrous castings for industrial and automotive applications. OUR BUREAU

Sandeep Mehrotra is Zee's new COO for ad revenue



Mumbai: Zee Entertainment Enterprises (Zee) on Monday appointed Sandeep Mehrotra as the Chief Operating Officer-Advertisement Revenue with effect from February 3. The company's latest earnings report showed ad revenue had declined 9 per cent annually due to a slowdown in FMCG spending, impacting domestic advertising revenue. OUR BUREAU

Latent View Analytics PAT up 18.6% at ₹51 crore

Our Bureau
Chennai

Chennai-based Latent View Analytics, an AI-driven analytics, data engineering and consulting firm, reported a 18.6 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) increase in consolidated profit after tax (PAT) at ₹51 crore for the quarter ended December 2025. Revenue from operations for the quarter stood at ₹278 crore, up 22 per cent from the year-ago period.

The revenue and profit uptick came from increased demand and business from the financial services vertical, which grew 105 per cent y-o-y.

LatentView Analytics reported a total headcount of 1,727 for the December 2025 quarter compared with 1,622 in the same quarter last financial year.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

In terms of the impact of the new labour codes, Rajan Venkatesan, Chief Financial Officer, LatentView, said that employee costs for the quarter included a one-time catch up expense relating to the implementation of the code, with a total impact of ₹4.6 crore at the group level.

"On a recurring basis, we expect this to result in an in-

At 4.5 lakh units, PV despatches grow 11% on-year in January

IN FAST LANE. Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai Motor record highest-ever monthly sales

S Ronendra Singh
New Delhi

Passenger vehicle (PV) wholesales (despatches to dealers) grew by over 11 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) to around 4.5 lakh units in January, compared with around 4.04 lakh units in the same month last year, the industry indicated on Monday.

Market leader Maruti Suzuki India (MSIL) said it recorded the highest-ever despatches of 2,36,963 units that include exports and sales to Toyota. Notably, the exports also reached an all-time monthly high of 51,020 units, said the company.

In its domestic despatches, the company saw marginal growth (0.5 per cent) y-o-y to 1,74,529 units in January, compared with 1,73,599 units in the corresponding month last year.

Partha Banerjee, Senior Executive Officer-Marketing & Sales, MSIL, said that the company recorded over 2.78 lakh units in January — up 25 per cent y-o-y. As of January 31, the company has close to 1.75 lakh units pending bookings, which is more than the usual in a month, he informed.

Banerjee said that first-time customers in the four-

Starting with a bang

Auto domestic despatches for the month of January 2026 (in units)

Company	Jan-26	Jan-25	% change
Passenger vehicles			
Maruti Suzuki India	1,74,529	1,73,599	0.5
Tata Motors	70,222	48,076	46
M&M	63,510	50,659	25
Hyundai Motor India	59,107	54,003	9.5
Kia India	27,603	25,025	10.3
Toyota Kirloskar Motor	30,630	26,178	17
Honda Cars India	6,193	7,325	-15.4
Renault India	3,715	2,780	33.6
Two-wheelers			
Hero MotoCorp	5,20,208	4,12,378	26
Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India	5,19,579	4,02,977	29
TVS Motor	3,83,262	2,93,860	30
Royal Enfield	93,781	81,052	16
Commercial vehicles			
Volvo Eicher	10,601	8,489	25
Tata Motors	38,844	30,083	29
M&M	37,222	30,202	23.2
Tractors			
Escorts Kubota	9,137	6,058	51
M&M	38,484	26,305	46

Source: Companies

wheeler segment should be given the opportunity to upgrade. "Hence, we have given a price protection scheme. There will be no price increase as there is a huge pressure on commodity prices," Banerjee added.

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles reported a 46 per cent y-o-y growth to 70,222 units (48,076 units).

Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) also reported growth of 25 per cent y-o-y in its domestic despatches to

63,510 units (50,659 units).

"On 14 January, we opened bookings for XUV7XO and XEV 9S, clocking 93,689 bookings (₹20,500 crore) — in just four hours," said Nalinikanth Gollagunta, CEO, Automotive Division, M&M.

Hyundai Motor India (HMIL) said it recorded its highest-ever monthly domestic sales of 59,107 units in January (54,003).

2-WHEELER SEGMENT

In the two-wheeler segment, Hero MotoCorp saw a 26 per cent y-o-y growth to 5,20,208 units (4,12,378 units).

The strong growth in January was driven by robust performance in the scooter segment, supported by growing demand for new offerings such as Xoom and Desi. The motorcycle portfolio saw strong traction, led by Xtreme and Glamour X, the company said. Royal Enfield saw 16 per cent y-o-y growth in its domestic sales to 93,781 units in January (81,052 units). "We have crossed one-million motorcycle sales this financial year across the globe and crossed 100,000 motorcycle sales in exports," B Govindarajan, MD - Eicher Motors and CEO — Royal Enfield, said.

16th Finance Commission: Just a course correction, not a paradigm shift

Sindhur Hariharan
Chennai

The 16th Finance Commission report placed before Parliament on the Budget day has sought to stick to its core principle of equitable redistribution of resources among the poorer States. While the formula for arriving at the devolution has been changed across parameters, it has not resulted in material change in the share among the States.

DATA FOCUS.

The Commission has retained the vertical devolution share at 41 per cent but the weights have been changed in various parameters.

The most significant change in the formula is the introduction of the new horizontal criterion to reward a State's contribution to the overall economy. This ensures that the fast-growing States are rewarded. Rewarding larger States in terms of area is not a great idea and the reduction in this weight from 15 per cent to 10 per cent is a good move.

But the positives have been negated by increasing the weightage for population and decreasing that of demographic change.

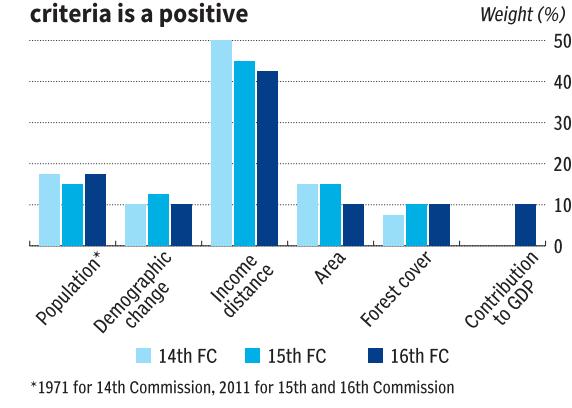
Income distance criterion (the gap between a State's per capita income and the State with the highest per capita income), still retains the highest weight, though it has reduced slightly from 45 to 42.5 per cent. This limits changes in the overall share among the States.

The 16th FC has also redefined this demographic change to account for population growth between 1971 and 2011, instead of relying on change in Total Fertility Rates, as it earlier used to.

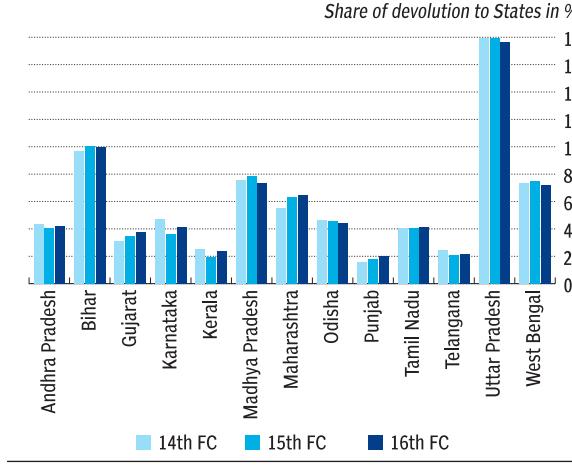
Dr M Govinda Rao, a former member of the 14th Finance Commission, said it is a good and balanced report overall and does not disturb the status quo. The 'GDP contribution' factor seems to

Share of the money pie

Introduction of GDP contribution criteria is a positive



UP, Bihar, MP and WB get highest share



ulation control measures.

Uttar Pradesh (17.6 per cent), Bihar (9.9 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (7.3 per cent) and West Bengal (7.2 per cent), which have seen a slight decline in share in the 16th FC, still hold a lion's share of the grants, essentially due to the large weightage given to the 'Income Difference' criteria.

Dr KR Shanmugam, former director, Madras School of Economics, said that the equity-efficiency balance, which was earlier at 45 per cent-15 per cent ratio, is now at 42.5 per cent-12.5 per cent, thanks to the introduction of the GDP Contribution criteria.

This moves the needle towards rewarding high growth, but is still at some distance from the demand of the States to take it higher.

GST reforms, festive demand push Hyundai Motor Q3 net to ₹1,234 cr

S Ronendra Singh
New Delhi

Hyundai Motor India (HMIL) on Monday reported a consolidated net profit of ₹1,234.4 crore for the third quarter that ended December 31, 2025 (Q3 FY26), up 6.3 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) compared with ₹1,160.7 crore in the corresponding period in the previous year (Q3 FY25).

Consolidated revenue of the company during the quarter under review also grew 8 per cent y-o-y to ₹17,973.5 crore, up from ₹16,648 crore in Q3 FY25, the company said.

The company said GST 2.0 and festive tailwinds supported domestic demand, with robust retail volumes.

SUV MOMENTUM "The third quarter performance underscores our resilience and strong execution of 'Quality of Growth' strategy, marked by healthy growth in volumes, revenue and profitability. Notably, on a year-to-date basis, EBITDA margins expanded to 12.8 per cent against 12.5 per cent last year, supported by our efforts towards improving sales mix and prudent cost control measures," Tarun

Garg, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, HMIL, said. He said compact sports utility vehicles were generating the highest sales, and there were still opportunities there because of the newly-launched, refreshed Venue.

SALES PERFORMANCE In terms of sales, HMIL grew marginally (0.4 per cent) year-on-year in domestic sales to 1,46,548 during the quarter, against 1,46,022 units in Q3 FY25, while exports grew by 21 per cent y-o-y in Q3 FY26 to 48,888 units, compared with 40,386 units in the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

Garg said the contribution of SUVs during the quarter under review stood at 70 per cent of overall sales, with 1,03,004 units, compared with 69 per cent and 1,00,637 units in Q3 FY25.

HATCHBACK DIP However, the contribution of hatchback cars (like Nios and i20) to overall sales during the quarter came down to 17 per cent (25,134 units), compared with 20 per cent (29,123 units) in Q3 FY25.

Garg said this was due to customers shifting their preferences towards compact SUVs amid more product launches.

OUTLOOK AHEAD "As we move ahead, the robust January 26 sales number gives us great momentum towards a healthy 2026," Garg added.

OVERALL GROWTH Performance during the December quarter was steady, supported by improved operating efficiencies and a measured approach to demand.

The consolidated results also reflect consistent performance by international subsidiaries and gain on disposal of a UK subsidiary, stated a release.

Ashwin Muthiah, Chairman of MPL and Founder Chairman of AM International, Singapore, said, "Amid continuing macroeconomic uncertainty, MPL's continued focus on cost optimisation, product mix and aligning with market demand has supported its competitiveness this quarter. The good performance of our international subsidiary has further contributed to the results, underscoring the strength of our M&A strategy. Going forward, we remain committed to improving internal operational metrics in a sustainable and disciplined manner."



and a measured approach to demand.

The consolidated results also reflect consistent performance by international subsidiaries and gain on disposal of a UK subsidiary, stated a release.

Ashwin Muthiah, Chair-

Revenue rise helps Ather Energy taper Q3 net loss to ₹85 cr

Our Bureau
Bengaluru

Ather Energy reported a sharp improvement in its financial performance for the December quarter, as higher volumes, stronger pricing and rising software-led revenues helped narrow losses and improve margins.

The company's net loss for Q3 FY26 fell 57 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) to ₹84.6 crore from ₹197.5 crore in the year-ago period, and narrowed sequentially from ₹154.1 crore in the September quarter.

Revenue from operations rose 50 per cent year-on-year to ₹953.6 crore, compared

with ₹634.9 crore in Q3 FY25, driven by higher scooter deliveries and better realisations. Total income stood at ₹995.7 crore for the quarter. Ather sold 67,851 units during the period, capturing a pan-India market share of 18.8 per cent, aided by strong festive demand and deeper geographic penetration.

The improvement in profitability was underpinned by a sharp expansion in margins. Adjusted gross margin climbed 111 per cent y-o-y to ₹251.3 crore, while margins excluding incentives improved to 23 per cent, up nearly 1,100 basis points. EBITDA margin narrowed significantly to (-3 per cent), with EBITDA loss reducing to ₹29.9 crore, underscoring the benefits of scale, disciplined cost management and value engineering initiatives.

TOPLINE GROWTH Ather's non

Govt mulls raising FDI in public sector banks to 49%, says Nagaraju

BID WATCH. Financial bids likely in February or March for IDBI Bank's strategic sale, says Financial Services Secy

Our Bureau
New Delhi

The Finance Ministry is contemplating hiking foreign direct investment (FDI) in public sector banks (PSBs) to 49 per cent from the current 20 per cent, a move that would bring them on a par with private banks.

The Union government's holding of shares in 12 public sector banks has not declined since 2020.

However, the percentage of its shareholding has come down in some of these banks due to the issuance of fresh shares to raise capital.

"We are still considering, and inter-ministerial con-

66

Indian economy would need 3-4 big banks, as only SBI and HDFC Bank are among the world's top 100 lenders

M NAGARAJU,
Financial Services Secretary



sultation is on for raising the FDI cap to 49 per cent," Financial Services Secretary M. Nagaraju said.

He also said: "We need the credit-to-GDP ratio to increase to 150 per cent from 56 per cent now. We need to see if we should have addi-

tional capital or deploy existing capital more effectively, or whether we should take a look at the capital adequacy ratio. All of this requires a calibrated approach."

The government allows up to 49 per cent FDI in private banks through the automatic

route, while permission is required for foreign investment above 49 per cent and up to 74 per cent.

There is also a cap of 15 per cent on holdings by any single foreign institution in Indian banks, unless relaxed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Nagaraju also said the Indian economy would need three to four big banks, as only SBI and HDFC Bank are among the world's top 100 lenders.

FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Admitting that most Indian banks do not have the financial capacity to lend large amounts, he said bigger banks would be able to

handle larger risks and extend bigger loans.

On the IDBI Bank strategic sale, he said financial bids would be invited this month or next. Nagaraju also said PSBs will launch qualified institutional placements (QIPs) of shares worth about ₹50,000 crore.

FURTHER REDUCTION

He said further reduction in LIC from 96.5 per cent through a public offering is possible in the next financial year, depending on the market conditions.

The Centre should offload another 6.5 per cent stake to meet the mandated 10 per cent public shareholding requirement by May 2027.

effectiveness of proceedings as well as align India's insolvency regime more closely with the global best practices.

It said prescribing clear conduct standards and decision-making timelines would strengthen governance, improve predictability and reinforce the Code's time-bound resolution objective. Accordingly, it recommended amending clause (sa) under Section 196(1) to read: "specify the standards of conduct for the Committee of Creditors and its members, including the period within which the Committee of Creditors shall take decisions."

The committee recommended further rationalisation of creditor-initiated insolvency, group insolvency and cross-border insolvency frameworks, while also proposing statutory timelines for case disposal by insolvency tribunals.

FLAGS CONCERN

On creditor-initiated insolvency, the committee flagged stakeholder concerns over the enforceability and bind-

ing nature of conduct standards for the committee of creditors (CoC).

It said prescribing clear conduct standards and decision-making timelines would strengthen governance, improve predictability and reinforce the Code's time-bound resolution objective. Accordingly, it recommended amending clause (sa) under Section 196(1) to read: "specify the standards of conduct for the Committee of Creditors and its members, including the period within which the Committee of Creditors shall take decisions."

A significant recommendation relates to liquidation proceedings. The committee suggested moving away from the automatic appointment of the resolution professional (RP) as liquidator.

The committee suggested moving away from the automatic appointment of the resolution professional (RP) as liquidator.

Manufacturing PMI rises to 55.4 in January

Our Bureau
New Delhi

The manufacturing sector rebounded in January as the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 55.4 from 55 in December, S&P Global said on Monday.

"Indian manufacturing firms saw a rebound in January, driven by increased new orders, output, and employment. Input costs rose moderately, while the pace of growth in factory-gate prices eased, resulting in slight margin pressure for manufacturers," said Pranjal Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC. The index is derived from responses from 400 purchasing managers.

An index above 50 indicates expansion, while one below 50 signals contraction. Survey participants said demand buoyancy, growth in new business and technology



investment supported production.

OVERALL SALES
The domestic market was the main driver of overall sales.

However, new export business increased at a slower pace.

Firms reporting an uptick cited stronger demand from Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe and the Middle East.

On the job front, goods producers continued to hire additional staff. But the pace of job creation was 'slight', though it was the fastest in three months.

Meanwhile, business confidence slipped to a three-and-a-half year low in January, with only 15 per cent of companies expecting output growth in the year ahead, while 83 per cent see no change.

PRICE MOVEMENTS
"Despite faster growth in new orders, business confidence remains muted, and expectations for future output have declined to their lowest level since July 2022," Bhandari added.

On the price front, the survey noted that input prices rose the most in four months, while output charge inflation eased to a 22-month low.

"Although output charges

rose, the rate of inflation was modest and the weakest in nearly two years. Many firms suggested that improved efficiency, better cost management and market rivalry prevented them from increasing their fees," the survey said.

INVENTORY UPDATE

According to the report, suppliers were comfortably able to meet the strengthening input demand, delivering materials more quickly than in December.

As a result, manufacturers observed a further expansion in input inventories. The rate of accumulation was marked and broadly in line with the two-year low in December. In contrast, finished goods stocks declined for the third straight month.

With outstanding business volumes rising at the start of the year, goods producers continued to add staff.

Duty remission funds cut worries exporters

Amiti Sen
New Delhi

Exporters have expressed concern over the sharp reduction in outlay for the two flagship input-duty remission schemes — RoDTEP and RoSCTL — even as expectations persist that funding could be topped up in the revised budget estimates after the rate rationalisation exercise concludes.

"Allocation under both the schemes is substantially down. We expect that the revised budget estimate will increase the allocation, as these duty-neutralisation refund schemes are crucial for our exports," said Ajay Sahai, Director General, Federation of Indian Export Organisations. RoDTEP (Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products) refunds embedded Central, State and local taxes not otherwise re-

bated, helping exporters remain price-competitive in global markets.

LESS ALLOCATION
The budgetary allocation for RoDTEP for FY27, at ₹10,000 crore, is about 45 per cent lower than the previous fiscal's allocation of ₹18,232.5 crore. The allocation for RoSCTL (Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies), which provides similar relief specifically to apparel and made-ups exporters, has also been halved to ₹5,000 crore.

"The reduction in provisions for RoDTEP in 2026-27 is disappointing. We need to approach the government again to at least restore the previous levels, if not increase them. Most export promotion councils have submitted data validating their rates, which are actually higher than the current allocation. As exports are zero-rated, we should aim for a complete refund of these taxes," said Israr Ahmed, Director, Farida Group.

LOWER OUTLAY
Another Delhi-based garments exporter said, "We have received a clarification that the budgeted amounts are provisional, as both the RoDTEP and RoSCTL schemes are currently under evaluation. We hope the outlay is increased adequately so that all valid claims of exporters are met."

Leading India into the new world

We express our sincerest gratitude to the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji for setting out an inspiring vision for India's Net Zero future. As the industry progresses steadily towards realising this vision, the Government of India's commitment to creating empowering mechanisms and policies to make India a global clean energy powerhouse has set benchmarks worldwide.

Even as India achieved 50% of its power capacity from renewables in 2025, the Government of India's progressive Union Budget 2026 is another strong step towards transforming millions of Indian dreams into a clean, green, and Aatmanirbhar future.

As the nation's leading renewable energy company, Suzlon congratulates the GoI, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Power, the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, and all Indians on the Union Budget 2026.

Today, India is proudly

3rd largest wind energy producing nation

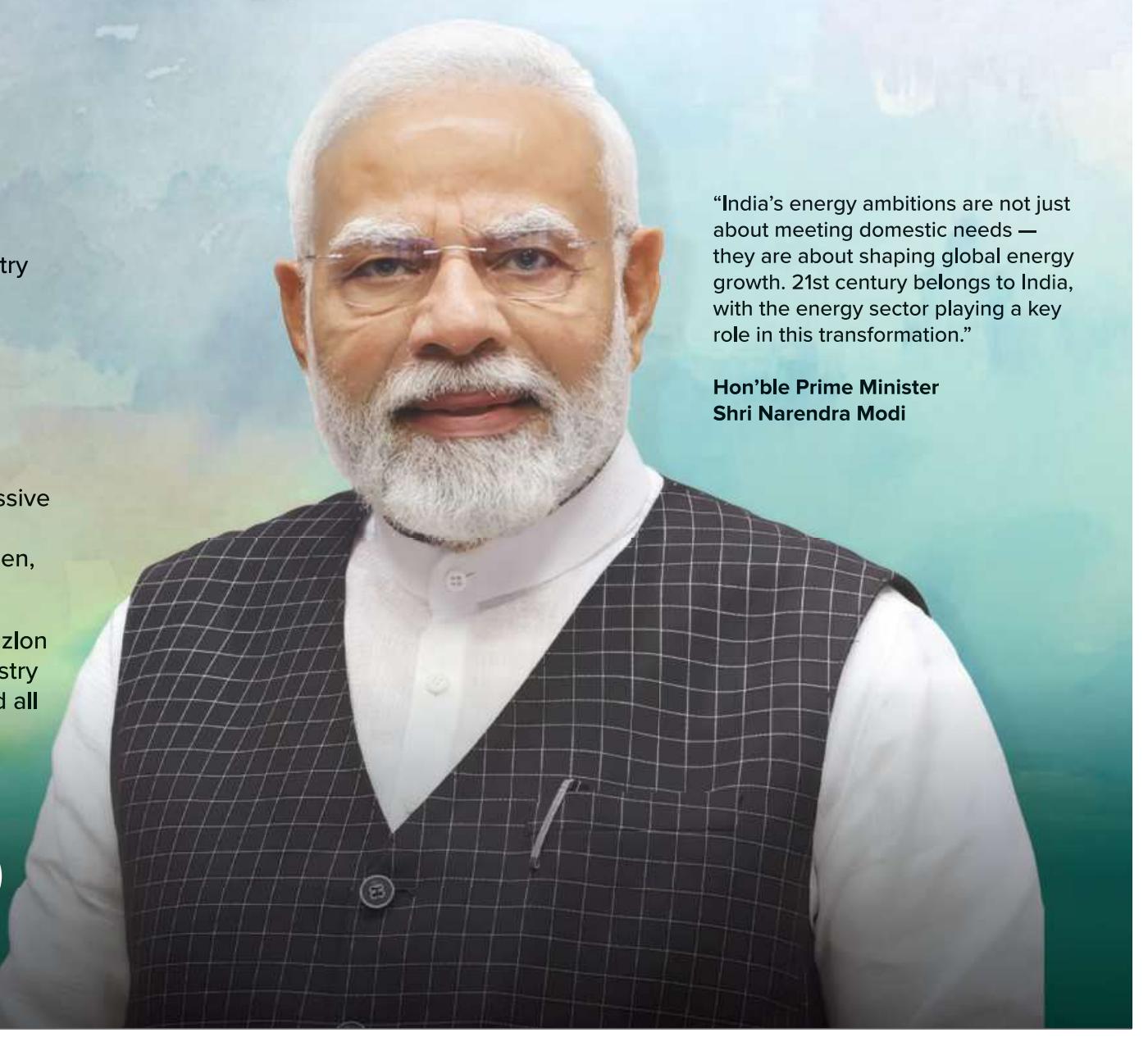
2nd largest renewables growth market worldwide

5th largest renewable energy market globally

SUZLON
POWERING A GREENER TOMORROW

"India's energy ambitions are not just about meeting domestic needs — they are about shaping global energy growth. 21st century belongs to India, with the energy sector playing a key role in this transformation."

Hon'ble Prime Minister
Shri Narendra Modi



QUICKLY.

Jaishankar heads to US
for critical minerals meet

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will be in the US from Monday to Wednesday to attend the critical minerals ministerial convened by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The trip is significant as both countries seek to add momentum to trade talks that have slackened over Washington's insistence that India stop purchasing Russian oil, as well as US market access concerns in sectors such as soya and corn. "External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will visit the US from February 2-4 to participate in the critical minerals ministerial convened by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. It will focus on supply chain resilience and cooperation in critical minerals." OUR BUREAU

'Budget proposals will give a push to aircraft manufacturing in India'

SKY IS THE LIMIT. Focus on maintenance, leasing, improving remote air connectivity: Civil Aviation Secretary

Rohit Vaid
New Delhi

The Budget has strengthened India's resolve to build domestic capacity for civilian aircraft manufacturing, with a focus on seaplanes and regional connectivity, Civil Aviation Secretary Samir Sinha told *businessline*.

AIR CONNECTIVITY

Moreover, Sinha said the measures will also support aircraft maintenance and leasing activities, while improving last-mile and remote air connectivity across the country.

According to Budget proposals, the basic customs duty will be fully exempted on components and parts required for the manufacture of aircraft for civilian train-

ing and other purposes.

According to Sinha, the exemption applies across various aircraft categories, and aligns with the government's objective of promoting domestic manufacturing and strengthening the maintenance, repair and overhaul ecosystem. Besides, the Budget has proposed measures to deepen aircraft leasing activity at Gujarat International Finance Tec-City.

Referring to the Finance Minister's announcement, Sinha said the proposal to simplify regulations and enhance the tax framework at the International Financial Services Centre will improve the competitiveness of India's leasing ecosystem.

LEASING COSTS

Lower leasing costs will help reduce airline operating expenses and contribute to



BIG PLANS AHEAD. Samir Sinha says India aims to position itself as a global manufacturing and export hub

moderating air fares, he noted. Apart from manufacturing and leasing, the Budget outlines initiatives to promote the seaplane ecosystem in India.

Seaplane-specific proposals cover both manufacturing and route development.

promoting tourism.

LOCAL PRODUCTION

According to Sinha, these measures are intended to support domestic production and improve the commercial viability of seaplane services connecting riverine and coastal regions.

He added that the production of seaplane or amphibious aircraft will be useful in connecting smaller cities, as well as coastal and riverine areas, including for tourism-related services.

On an overall basis, Sinha said the objective of the Budget proposals is to build an integrated aerospace ecosystem, supporting both civil and defence aviation, strengthening supply chains and generating high-value employment, while positioning India as a global manufacturing and export hub.



ment income. Any sum previously allowed as a deduction, or excluded from total income under the repealed Income-Tax Act, 1961, will now be deemed income under the Income-tax Act, 2025, even if no conditions were violated.

TAX LEAKAGE

Another reason for not allowing the deduction is to plug tax leakage. "People will take loans and use that interest as a deduction. To that extent, the dividend income, which was offered for earning dividend income or income from units of mutual funds.

INTEREST PAID

What this means is that if an individual has taken a loan to invest in stocks and mutual funds, then the interest paid on that loan can no longer be offset against the dividend income from the stocks or MF units.

"It's going to get taxed on a gross basis," said Rajeshree Sabnavis, Senior Advisor, Grant Thornton Bharat. The amendment will take effect from April 1.

The Budget has proposed amending the relevant section so that the deduction, allowed on interest expenditure incurred for earning dividend income or income from units of mutual funds, has been removed.

With this benefit removed, an investor in the highest tax bracket will now pay extra tax, equal to about 6 per cent of the dividend received.

However, this interest cost is not fully lost. The same interest can be added to the purchase cost of the investment to lower the capital gains tax payable when the investment is sold, said Chintak Shah, Vice-President, Anand Rathi Wealth.

While the rule change increases tax on dividends, a part of this can be recovered through lower capital gains tax later, he said, adding that the proposal will affect only those who borrow money to invest in stocks and MFs.

'Relaxation to SEZ units on domestic sales will be limited-time window'

Our Bureau
New Delhi

The relaxation on domestic sales for special economic zone (SEZ) units proposed in the Budget will be a "limited-time window" to help export-oriented enterprises tide over global uncertainties, said Revenue Secretary Arvind Shrivastava on Monday.

"SEZs' focus is exports, and that will continue to remain as exports. Therefore, this window being created is expected to be a one-time, limited-time frame window, and we hope, during this period, the various uncertainties and volatilities of the



Arvind Shrivastava,
Revenue Secretary

international trade will also pass over, and we will be in a position to get back stability on that front, too," Shrivastava stated at a CII post-Budget interaction.

TRADE DISRUPTIONS

To address concerns arising about the utilisation of capacities by manufacturing units in SEZs due to global trade disruptions, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her Budget speech, proposed a special one-time measure to facilitate sales by eligible manufacturing units in SEZs to the domestic tariff area (DTA) at concessional rates of duty. The quantity of such sales will be limited to a prescribed proportion of

their exports, she said. Necessary regulatory changes will be undertaken to operationalise these measures, while ensuring a level playing field for units working outside these zones.

The Revenue Secretary said details to implement the proposal will be worked out, and it will be in the form of

an exemption notification under the Customs Act.

"We have to ensure there is a level playing field, where duty doesn't become a deterrent for SEZs to sell in DTAs; at the same time, the treatment of duty should not be the one that results in non-level playing for DTAs.

During his address, he said the Budget focuses on empowering and honouring honest taxpayers through a trust-based system. "The Budget proposals are designed to convert the vision of a taxpayer-friendly system into practical, operational measures that empower businesses to manage their tax affairs independently and transparently through a

trust-based system," he said.

He stated that in direct taxation, several key reforms have been introduced to enhance taxpayer control. The timeline for revising Income Tax returns has been extended by a quarter, allowing taxpayers time to correct errors voluntarily without intervention from the department.

Additionally, the system of updated returns, which has already seen widespread adoption, enables taxpayers to report new or missing information over a four-year period.

"These measures ensure that taxpayers can proactively manage their liabilities, reduce disputes and retain greater control over

their assessments," he noted.

Meanwhile, addressing a separate session, Anuradha Thakur, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, said the economy had demonstrated strong macroeconomic resilience amid a fragile global environment, supported by a stable financial system that has mitigated risks.

On State finances, she said, "States must judiciously manage resources, in line with the Finance Commission's mandate, with the 50-year interest-free loans to States supporting productivity-enhancing capital expenditure and long-term growth."

+ Allocation for India AI Mission cut to ₹1,000 cr; govt aims to encourage private funding: Experts

Vallari Sanzgiri
Mumbai

The Central government has halved the allocation for the India AI Mission to ₹1,000 crore in FY27, according to the Budget documents. In the previous Budget, the allocation was ₹2,000 crore, of which only ₹800 crore is being spent according to the revised estimate.

This comes even as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman spoke of cutting-edge technologies such as AI applications serving as force multipliers for better governance. The revised estimate for the current year is ₹800 crore.

"Last year's ₹2,000 crore was only on paper, whereas revised estimates showed that the government used only ₹800 crore. In that

sense, it is 25 per cent higher," said Ashutosh Sharma, Vice-President, Research Director at Forrester, adding that private funding is one of the reasons why the government is offering tax incentives for data centre build-outs.

KEY OBJECTIVE

He pointed out that the Budget this year is in line

with the government's main objective to push private investment in this area. Sitharaman has proposed a tax holiday till 2047 to any foreign company that provides cloud services to customers globally by using data centre services from India, and a safe harbour of 15 per cent on cost in case the company providing data centre services from India is

quicker and more affordable financing for suppliers. "Treating TReDS receivables as asset-backed securities will deepen liquidity multifold and enhance the secondary market expansion for invoices discounted," he said.

MORE LIQUIDITY

The proposal to introduce trade receivables as asset-backed securities has the potential to unlock additional liquidity by attracting new classes of investors and developing a secondary market for MSME receivables, he added.

Sundeep Mohindru, Founder and Promoter, MiXchange, said the credit guarantee support on invoice discounting on TReDS and the integration of GeM with TReDS would enable

a related entity, Rajashri Sai, Founder & CEO, Impactree.ai, a global enterprise intelligence company, said he expects India's IT and services sector to evolve from largely execution-led to one that is insight- and outcome-driven, powered by AI, data platforms and digital infrastructure over the next decade.

"This transition will also open new categories of jobs and specialised skills across the ecosystem. What will be critical is ensuring that emerging technologies are accessible beyond large enterprises. If implemented well, these missions have the potential to help MSMEs and mid-sized IT players participate meaningfully in global value chains, while positioning India as a trusted hub for next-generation digital services by 2047," he said.

setting a strong benchmark for other corporates to follow. "The proposed extension of CGTMSE credit guarantees support to invoice discounting on TReDS further deepens the availability of working capital for MSMEs, and will enable TReDS platforms to onboard a wider and more diverse MSME base," he said.

CRISIS REMAINS

However, experts say the real crisis for millions of MSMEs remains. "₹8.1 lakh crore is still locked in delayed receivables (per Economic Survey 2025-26), crippling cash flows, forcing high-cost borrowing and driving closures. One single, high-impact reform could change this forever. Phased mandatory routing of all credit-based procurement from MSMEs through TReDS, with non-compliance making such credit terms illegal [forcing buyers to pay cash on delivery or in advance only]," said Anil Katia, ex-banker and finance professional.

ketan Gaikwad, MD and CEO, RXIL, said mandating TReDS as a transaction settlement platform by CPSEs will not only ensure timely payments and competitive financing rates for MSMEs, but also provide the government with a transparent, system-led view of MSME payment cycles across CPSEs.

Relief for jewellery exporters in SEZs as Budget opens sales in domestic markets

Suresh P Iyengar
Mumbai

The Budget proposal to allow units in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to sell in the domestic markets will help jewellers hit by falling exports due to geopolitical issues. They will also be able to utilise idle capacity.

While overall gem and jewellery exports between April and December were flat year-on-year at \$20.75 billion, exports to the US plunged 44 per cent to \$3.86 billion (\$6.95 billion) in the same period due to punitive tariffs.

SEZ MEASURES

To address concerns about the utilisation of capacities by manufacturing units in SEZs due to global trade dis-

ruptions, the Budget has proposed a special one-time measure to facilitate sales by eligible manufacturing units in SEZs to the domestic tariff area (DTA) at concessional rates of duty.

The quantity of such sales will be limited to a pre-specified proportion of manufacturers' exports. Necessary regulatory changes will be undertaken to operationalise these measures, while ensuring a level playing field for units working in the DTA, it added.

INDUSTRY REACTION

Kirir Bhansali, Chairman of the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council, said limited sales from SEZs to the DTA at concessional duties will enable factories to use idle capacity, safeguard jobs and strengthen trade



amid US tariffs and global demand volatility.

He pointed out that the removal of the ₹10 lakh cap on courier exports is a big boost for e-commerce, enabling MSMEs, artisans and small jewellery brands to reach global buyers directly, with smoother returns handling and quicker turnaround

times. Extending the duty-free import of lab-grown diamond seeds and Sawn Diamonds till March 2028 is a timely and practical step. It keeps input costs low, supports production and exports.

It also safeguards a fast-growing segment where India already leads globally, helping secure the future of our industry, said Bhansali.

Colin Shah, Managing Director, Kama Jewelry, said the introduction of a special one-time facility for SEZ units to supply to the DTA at a concessional rate of duty will enhance capacity utilisation.

The support for SEZ units selling in the domestic market, along with continued backing for diamonds and lab-grown diamonds, gives a real boost to manufacturing and trade, he said.

Centre proposes TReDS as settlement platform for MSME purchases by CPSEs

Piyush Shukla
Mumbai

With Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) platforms helping micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in receiving ₹7 lakh crore in funds, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has proposed mandating TReDS as the transaction settlement platform for all purchases made from MSMEs by the central public sector enterprises (CPSEs).

"To leverage its [TReDS] full potential, I propose... to mandate TReDS as the transaction settlement platform for all purchases from MSMEs by CPSEs, serving as a benchmark for other corporations," said Sitharaman.

The Finance Minister also introduced a credit guarantee support mechanism through CGTMSE for in-

voice discounting on TReDS platforms.

"Treating TReDS receivables as asset-backed securities will deepen liquidity multifold and enhance the secondary market expansion for invoices discounted," he said.

MORE LIQUIDITY

The proposal to introduce trade receivables as asset-backed securities has the potential to unlock additional liquidity by attracting new classes of investors and developing a secondary market for MSME receivables, he added.

Sundeep Mohindru, Founder and Promoter, MiXchange, said the credit guarantee support on invoice discounting on TReDS and the integration of GeM with TReDS would enable

quicker and more affordable financing for suppliers. "Treating TReDS receivables as asset-backed securities will deepen liquidity multifold and enhance the secondary market expansion for invoices discounted," he said.

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Businesses want stability, not a disturbed environment, says Nirmala Sitharaman

ON A FIRM FOOTING. The Finance Minister explains the nuances of Budget proposals, expressing her confidence in meeting the revenue targets; defends tax on derivatives

bl.interview

Raghuvir Srinivasan
Shishir Sinha
New Delhi

In the first media interview after presenting her ninth Budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman sat down with *businessline* at noon on Monday to explain the nuances behind her proposals and schemes. Relaxed, yet sharp with her replies, Sitharaman was confident of meeting the revenue projections, even as she stoutly defended the proposals to increase tax on derivatives and to tax secondary market transactions in sovereign gold bonds.

Edited excerpts:

With most tax reforms already done, what was your thought process when you sat down to prepare the Budget?

First, the message that stability is what we want to give in terms of tax administration. When I say tax administration, it does not include tax rates. Businesses want stability. They don't want a disturbed environment. They don't want frequent changes in the administration. They don't want frequent changes in the tax rates. So, stability should not be disturbed was one of the principles.

Second, having given up to ₹12-lakh tax exemption and having brought the rate down for every slab under the new tax regime, there wasn't much that I could have done.

Second, GST also has been done and anyway there's nothing that I can do on the GST in the Budget. So, having already given away on tax, there wasn't anything that I could do except for simplification and making the process a bit more friendly. One comprehensive work which I had spent time on was Customs simplifications.

You've assumed healthy buoyancy in direct tax estimates despite collections being lower than the Budget estimate this year. What gives you the confidence that you will be able to meet the projections, especially in income tax?

Essentially, we have constantly been nudging taxpayers to also look at what they're paying. By pre-filling forms, we are giving them the opportunity to recognise and acknowledge, and pay the necessary tax. Not just that, we are also making sure that the tax payment base widens. Lots of campaigns are happening, so we think all this will pay off.

So, you are confident that the projected 11.73 per cent growth in income tax will be met?

Personal income tax collections will be met, yes. In fact, because of last year's rate reduction, meaning exemption being provided up to ₹12 lakh, I think there will be more people who will be encouraged to come in.

The revised capex estimates are lower than Budget estimates...

See, actually, much before you complete the question on that, I want to say again that some Opposition leaders have also commented, and also a former Finance Minister, that with compression of expenditure, you're able to bring your fiscal deficit under control, and so on.

It's not the intent from our side to reduce capital expenditure. It's been given, but the process where having received one tranche of money, the States are expected to send a utilisation certificate for us to release the next tranche. Till

such a time, the utilisation certificates don't come, I can't release. So that will still be lying in my account.

That's not "not spending it". Before March 31, it can get cleared for all you know. So that is one explanation.

On capital expenditure again, are we reaching a situation where departments and States are not able to spend?

States are spending. In fact, I speak very strongly in favour of the States' capital expenditure. They are willing to absorb two-three times more and they're delivering also. That is why I'm encouraged this time to say I will give more. Every State showcases the signature projects they've completed, wherever I go. But to the extent that I wanted the tied portion of it where they would do some reform and take more, it's a bit slow. States should come forward for that.

You've built the Budget on the old series GDP numbers. When the new one comes, what happens to the fidelity of these Budget numbers?

Will they stay or...

You'll have to see closer to the time. A lot of people are talking about it. Good that you're asking. I couldn't have said that I won't do the Budget till such a time that number comes. Is it also right for me to ask MoSPI (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation) to compress it all and give it to me in January?

Obviously not...

So given these two possibilities, I had to come with the Budget with the existing base and see how it goes when the new series comes at the end of February '27 or something like that. So at that time, we'll take a call. I can't guess what the number will be.

At ₹95,692 crore, the allocation for VB-G RAM G is much higher than what you set aside for MNREGA last year. Plus, there is ₹30,000 crore as pending MNREGA reimbursement.

We are looking at some ₹1.6-1.7 lakh crore in all, if you account for the contribution by States...

VB-G RAM G has actually brought a system, which will be a lot more efficient. Address 125 days work, make sure that the Centre's portion is not brought down at all.

We are happy to say that the States can also participate in it. They will also have skin in the game. So, it is good that the system functions efficiently without getting gamed. MGNREGA, unfortunately, in many States, ended up being gamed. There were instances of men and women, who were not in the productive age or physically capable, who were shown working in the fields or digging sarovars, people who were well over 80 years were shown as beneficiaries. Look at the comments which CAG is making on NREGA.

So, our attempt is to keep the commitment intact, but bring in an efficient system in which all stakeholders participate. It shouldn't be the case that the utilisation certificates come in such a laid-back fashion that they do not stand scrutiny. And I'm giving money on it. A certificate which can't stand scrutiny, which is going to get fiscal benefits. It is not anybody's responsibility.

So, we've proved our commitment to it by making the allocation here and the overhang which is there from earlier MGNREGA commitments. We've also apportioned money. Take that. Clear all your dues. We're not asking you to sit with dues and we're not disowning the commitments given earlier. But we need a system which is effective.

VB-G RAM G has actually brought a system, which will be a lot more efficient. Address 125 days work, make sure that the Centre's portion is not brought down



If trade considerations affect me, yes, I can understand it. For strategic reason, somebody stops. For friendliness, not friendliness, somebody else stops. Am I supposed to be sitting and watching all these vulnerabilities? We have to do something

So, this allocation actually takes the wind out of the sails of the criticism...

That's right, yes. We have not just brought in a law; we are putting our money where our mouth is.

When the Budget was made, the overall external environment must have been a big factor in your calculations. Some of the import duty realignments are products such as almonds, walnuts and apples, and nuclear power equipment, aircraft parts... where the US has an edge. Was that a factor?

No, not at all. Canada can also supply. That's not the route I have taken. Customs duty reduction on these were driven by the need for energy self-sufficiency. We've announced a policy for small modular reactors. If we want to keep our commitments for 2070 net zero, we cannot keep extracting coal.

In the process of going nuclear, till such a time our domestic capacities increase in producing equipment for it, how will I match these two conflicting demands? Would we wait for domestic manufacturers to manufacture the equipment and then start small nuclear [reactor]? It cannot wait. So till such a time I am able to quickly ramp up my capacities, till such a time that our companies can produce, we will have to import. And that is why I have reduced duties. That is true for nuclear, and that is true for critical minerals. Because we need it for attaining *atmanirbharta* at the earliest in these crucial things, where supply chains can be disrupted for non-commercial considerations.

If trade considerations affect me, yes, I can understand it. For strategic reason, somebody stops. For friendliness, not friendliness, somebody else stops. Am I supposed to be sitting and watching all these vulnerabilities? We have to do something.

Markets didn't like the securities transaction tax increase on derivatives. What is the thought process behind increasing it?

Obviously, it is not revenues...

Not at all revenues. What we've done is that we are not touching

STT in general. We are touching only futures and options. This is an area where people are continuously calling us to say that the public is losing money. And those losing money are generally the ones who normally don't have that kind of spare cash to speculate. So, is the government supposed to sit and watch? We want to do what we can help to deter people from getting there. Of course, the market regulators will take care of other things which they have to do. That's not my domain. But here, do I do something or not? We have not touched every cash transaction. I think the market will understand our intent. It is not some sweeping brush across the board. It's only picking like a toothpick on certain specific areas.

Your move to tax sovereign gold bond market transactions is a surprise. The government was caught in a bit of a spot because of the rise in gold prices. But taxing the secondary market transaction, is it meant to take back some of the gains?

It is not with that intent. When it was launched, those who came in, came with an intent of investing, to wait. Therefore, if you held it till maturity, you had the benefit. So, I have given them a word for something. We are not taxing them. You joined in at the original place of issue and you are holding it till maturity, you get the benefit. But you went through a killing out of it. Why don't I get something? And you're not even holding it for maturity. Even if you hold it for maturity, you pick it up from somewhere else — secondary market. So, I'm placing a bit of a premium on it. So if you obtained it initially, but you are still not holding it till maturity, I am sorry, yes, I need to tax you. So we now have a four-fold classification — Point 1 and 2 addressed, no tax, Point 1 addressed but not 2, taxed, Point 1 and 2 not addressed, taxed. You start trading in the market and then also want the tax benefit.

Can you dwell on the Orange Economy, which has got specific mention in your speech?

For our youth and for our country to understand excavation sites, today it is possible to have an experiential touristic approach. You can go to those sites. I was involved very personally

with Adichanallur in Tamil Nadu, where we want to impart the benefit of going through this experience to people.

It is one thing to learn about archaeology from books, but it is quite another to see a well-excavated site. How is this excavation done? How are you digging things out? And what care is taken when some things are taken out and others are left? You can't really extract it without damaging it and bringing it out. So, you leave it there. But it can still be an experience to see it. People can make their way down to see it without damaging it.

That is the kind of experiential tourism we want to encourage. We want to give a complete experience of going down and seeing how, with gentle brush, things are being taken out. In Adichanallur, much before the floods which affected Thoothukudi, we had done glass topping for all these excavated blocks. From standing on the block you could see what's being dug out. So, it is for that experience I have named these sites.

But why did you choose Adichanallur and not Keezhadi?

There was a good discussion between the State and the Centre about which one to choose between Adichanallur and Keezhadi. The State government chose Keezhadi, and we went ahead with Adichanallur. I am not blaming any one individual, but every possible hindrance has been created for Adichanallur work.

Despite that, the Centre is working to get that done. The land was disputed. Then somebody took us to court. The State government 'tried' helping. But never mind, we are going ahead.

Why is Adichanallur not Tamil Nadu? Only Keezhadi is Tamil Nadu? You, as State government, chose to go ahead with Keezhadi and we chose to go ahead with Adichanallur despite periodic obstructions being laid. You should also equally help us in developing Adichanallur.

What would the High Power Committee on banking do? Can we consider this as a precursor to amalgamation and merger of PSBs?

No, not a precursor to amalgamation, I don't know what the committee is going to say. I can't presume. Even if I mention it in the terms of references (TORs) and if suppose they say no amalgamation, will I go ahead with amalgamation? No. So I'll have to wait.

This is going to be a high-profile exercise because we want Indian banks to acquire a certain stature. We also need a number of banks for India's comprehensive development. You need banks everywhere, you need big banks, you need NBFCs to be activated. They are doing well. But we need more NBFCs to work. Maybe sectoral NBFCs. I am opening up the entire gamut of banking in India. Banking which we need for 2047. Let the committee come up with the report.

And who will be the members of the committee, mainly from the industry?

I have not given that much of a thought. We want people who have a nose for banking. People who have had an experience in banking, who can set an agenda for us.

I wanted to tell you that you disappointed a lot of us journalists by not making any announcement for poll-bound States...

Every poll-bound State has got something. And non-poll-bound States have also been mentioned. Bengal has been given Dankuni East-West corridor. Bengal will also have the benefit of inland waterways, and the link to the ports

So, that route is always available. And now, a lot of the well-performing States will benefit too...

Yes, because they brought in this contribution to GDP for the first time. As a result of which Haryana and States which contribute to the GDP, southern States, Karnataka will always get a substantial sum.

You need banks everywhere, you need big banks, you need NBFCs to be activated. They are doing well

again because Howrah is congested. Kerala, Tamil Nadu both are getting rare earth corridor. Tamil Nadu has got a defence corridor. It is now getting a rare earth corridor as well. Would you thank Prime Minister Modi for it, please? Both corridors are going there.

Uttar Pradesh had a defence corridor, but a rare earth corridor is not going there. Would you feel happy about it? Because I get a sense that a select few politicians in Tamil Nadu derive satisfaction when they hear somebody else has not got it. Whether I get it or not, you've got it. Now both corridors are with you.

Can I ask some other State to say I didn't even get one corridor? There is high-speed rail. Is it not going to Chennai? And by now, how many high-speed trains and Vande Bharats have reached Tamil Nadu?

There's the promotion of coconuts and cocoa which helps...

Yes, thank you for reminding. Every aged coconut tree, which has to be removed and a sapling given, this programme is going to cover it. Doesn't it benefit coconut orchards, which were devastated in a cyclone?

I went to Thanjavur district at that time. I saw in Nagapattinam, Thanjavur, all coconut trees were thrashed. This scheme is going to help all of them. Coconut farmers, particularly in Thanjavur district, will benefit. Kerala, similarly, gets coconut and cashew.

But these are general announcements, right? It's not like a certain amount going to Tamil Nadu...

We never give that kind of money to anybody.

Last time, you gave for Polavaram to Andhra Pradesh...

But that was a statutory commitment given during the AP Reorganisation Act. So, I had to give them.

The 16th Finance Commission has retained 41 per cent vertical devolution, subject to some cesses being subsumed in the overall devolution kitty. So, now which are the cesses that you will agree to devolve to the States?

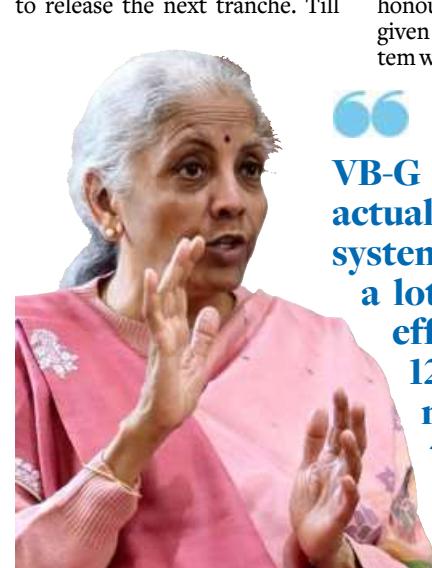
No, cesses are a constitutionally given right to the Centre. That right is with us.

But the Commission has recommended that...

You will get to know the details. Let me recall, we brought in the pan masala Health to National Security Cess. I voluntarily said public health is a State subject and even though that was a cess, which is entirely the Central government's, I still said I will give a portion of it to the States.

We have constantly been nudging taxpayers to look at what they're paying. By pre-filling forms, we are giving them an opportunity to recognise and acknowledge, and pay the necessary tax

Yes, because they brought in this contribution to GDP for the first time. As a result of which Haryana and States which contribute to the GDP, southern States, Karnataka will always get a substantial sum.



Markets didn't like the securities transaction tax increase on derivatives. What is the thought process behind increasing it?

Obviously, it is not revenues...

Not at all revenues. What we've done is that we are not touching

Can you dwell on the Orange Economy, which has got specific mention in your speech?

For our youth and for our country to understand excavation sites, today it is possible to have an experiential touristic approach. You can go to those sites. I was involved very personally

QUICKLY.

98% of withdrawn ₹2,000 banknotes returned: RBI

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India on Monday said 98.42 per cent of ₹2,000 denomination banknotes have been returned. The RBI had announced the withdrawal of the ₹2,000 notes from circulation on May 19, 2023. "The total value of ₹2,000 banknotes in circulation was then ₹3.56 lakh crore, and this has declined to ₹5.609 crore at the close of business on January 31, 2026," it said. PTI

IRB acquires Gandeva Ena assets worth ₹1,200 cr

New Delhi: IRB Infrastructure and Developers on Monday said it has completed the acquisition of Gandeva Ena (VM7) HAM highway assets worth about ₹1,200 crore. The acquisition has been made through the company sponsored IRB InvIT Fund. The assets are part of the upcoming New Delhi Greenfield Expressway. With this acquisition, IRB InvIT Fund's operational portfolio has 10 highway assets. PTI

RBI likely to leave repo rate unchanged this week: Experts

MAJORITY VIEW. After the cut in Feb 2025, the MPC may pause to allow transmission

Piyush Shukla
Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will likely keep the benchmark repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent, and maintain 'neutral' stance during its meeting this week, felt a majority of 11 economists polled by *businessline*.

Gaura Sen Gupta, Chief Economist, IDFC First Bank, said the Economic Survey for FY26 indicates real GDP growth rate of 6.8-7.2 per cent. As long as the growth remains at 7 per cent or higher, it will meet the RBI's aspiration level, she said, adding that policy easing by the RBI in the form of rate cuts and durable liquidity infusion, has supported credit off-take. The bank expects the RBI to remain on a pro-

longed pause from here on, and continue to infuse durable liquidity.

Sujit Kumar, Chief Economist, NaBFID, said, "We expect the RBI to keep policy repo rate unchanged in the February policy meeting. Neutral stance will be maintained as the economy is doing relatively well, external challenges notwithstanding."

"The RBI will keep on pumping durable liquidity through term VRR (variable repo rate) and OMO (open market operations) purchase to facilitate smooth transmission of rate cuts in economy. FY26 growth forecast may be revised to align with FAE (first advanced estimates), while FY27 estimate will be retained. Inflation forecast for Q1FY27 may be revised up slightly considering recent momentum in

Will RBI change repo rate	
Institution	Response
HDFC Bank	No
Bank of Baroda	No
YES Bank	No
IDFC First Bank	No
RBL Bank	No
NaBFID	No
CRISIL Ratings	No
India Ratings & Research	Yes, 25-bps rate cut
JCA Ratings	No
CareEdge Ratings	No
Anand Rathi group	No

base metal and crude prices along with rupee depreciation," he added.

'WAIT & WATCH'
Rajani Sinha, Chief Economist, CareEdge Ratings, said she expects the MPC to maintain status quo on both rates and stance. While inflation projections provide

room for an additional 25 basis points (bps) rate cut, CareEdge believes MPC will opt to pause and preserve policy space, easing only if growth conditions weaken.

Having already reduced repo rate by a cumulative 125 bps since February 2025, the MPC is likely to adopt a wait-and-watch approach as previous rate cuts continue to transmit through the economy, she added.

Soumyajit Niyogi, Senior Director at India Ratings & Research, however, said a 25 bps cut to 5 per cent remains a fair possibility toward the tail end of the easing cycle. Given that the repo rate is the sole active lever with the MPC, the onus lies on the RBI to maintain an easing bias and maximise transmission via OMOs and creative deployment of longer-tenor VRR," he added.

higher even as the fiscal deficit at 4.3 per cent is lower by 10 bps (against the FY26 level of 4.4 per cent).

"Going forward, yields are likely to move in the 5-10 bps band. G-Sec yield rise could be kept under check given that the government has a massive borrowing plan next year," he said.

RUPEE REBOUND

Meanwhile, the rupee recovered smartly, closing 48 paise stronger on apparent RBI intervention in the offshore and spot markets. The rupee closed at 91.5125 per dollar, down from its previous close of 91.99.

Intraday, the rupee traded between 91.4325 and 91.8325 per dollar.

FOREX ASSESSMENT

Abhishek Goenka, Founder and CEO, IFA Global, observed that overall, today's move underscored that dollar/rupee remains heavily policy-managed around key psychological levels, particularly in periods of heightened

fiscal and market sensitivity. "The RBI's intervention ensured an orderly adjustment, anchoring near-term rupee sentiment even as fixed-income markets digested the Budget's borrowing signals," he said.

Goenka noted that the decisive RBI intervention dominated post-Budget price action in the forex market. The currency strengthened by around 40-42 paise, supported by dollar sales near the 91.80 level, which can widely be attributed to the Central bank stepping in to smooth volatility following the Budget announcement, he added.

"With government planning to borrow a record ₹17.2 lakh crore, bond yields moved higher, but the RBI's swap operations helped cushion rupee liquidity and prevented spillover stress into the FX market. This reinforced confidence that the central bank remains proactive in managing both currency stability and system liquidity," he said.

Duty cut on personal imports to ease costs, boost cross-border e-commerce

Jyoti Bantia

Bengaluru

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday announced a reduction in customs duty on goods imported for personal use, cutting the levy to 10 per cent from 20 per cent to ease costs for individual consumers.

"To rationalise the customs duty structure for goods imported for personal use, I propose to reduce the tariff rate on all dutiable goods imported for personal use from 20 per cent to 10 per cent," Sitharaman said while presenting the Budget. The move applies to items



brought into the country by international travellers as well as goods ordered online from overseas for personal consumption — segments that earlier faced relatively high levies. For many consumers, these charges often emerged as surprise costs at

courier companies unless it leads to a meaningful rise in import volumes, as customs duties are ultimately borne by consumers.

Jitendra Motwani, Partner-Tax Practice, Trilegal, said, "The revised Baggage Rules strike the right balance between facilitation and enforcement, combining higher duty-free limits upto 75,000 per person with digital compliance and a trust-based settlement mechanism for honest travellers."

The duty cut is also expected to reduce friction at customs checkpoints and make the import process smoother for individual buyers.

City Union Bank net up 16 per cent in Q3FY26

Scorecard

	Q3FY26	Q3FY25	Growth %
Net profit	332	286	16
Total Income	2,001	1,707	17
Gross NPA %	2.17	3.36	119 bps down
Net NPA %	0.78	1.42	64 bps down
Total Deposits	70,516	58,271	21
Total Advances	60,892	50,409	21

Sindhu Hariharan

Chennai

Private sector lender City Union Bank reported a net profit growth of 16 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) at ₹332 crore in the third quarter ended December 2025 (Q3FY26). Profit grew on growth in advances and improvement in yield on advances. Asset quality also improved y-o-y with Gross NPA showing sequential decrease for the past 11 quarters, the company said.

Total income grew 17 per cent at ₹2,001 crore. Of this, the bank earned Net Interest Income of ₹752 cr for Q3 FY26 registering 28 per cent growth y-o-y.

Total advances increased 21 per cent for Q3 FY26 to ₹60,892 crore from ₹50,409 crore in Q3 FY25. The yield on advances for Q3 FY26 improved to 9.73 per cent compared to 9.66 per cent in Q2 FY26. MSME loans made up almost 39 per cent of the total loan book at ₹23,836 crore. Total deposits of the bank stood at ₹70,516 cr in Q3 FY26 compared to ₹58,271 cr in corresponding period last year registering 21 per cent growth.

ALL GOOD IN MSME

After many quarters, we have achieved a growth of over 20 per cent in both deposits and advances. This coupled with many other levers such as improved yield on advances and term deposits repricing have all helped in profitability, N Kamakodi, MD and CEO, City Union Bank, told *businessline*. With regard to the demand and overall economic climate in the MSME sector, he said that situation



N Kamakodi, MD & CEO, City Union Bank BUJO GHOSH

has been good and also improving as evidenced by a decline in their Special Mention Accounts.

The Gross NPA for Q3 FY26 reduced to 2.17 per cent from 3.36 per cent in the corresponding quarter last year. Net NPA decreased to 0.78 per cent in the current quarter from 1.42 per cent in Q3 FY25.

With his 15-year tenure ending in April 2026 and with regard to a new candidate for this position, Kamakodi said that the bank had already submitted the names of potential candidates to the RBI in the second week of December and is awaiting approval. "The matter is under consideration and we will share more information once the regulator gets back to us," he said.

Net Interest Margin (NIM) saw a rise and exceeded the company's own guidance, due to faster repricing of deposits and increase in Gold loan portfolio with fixed rate component. NIM is at 3.89 per cent for Q3FY26 compared to 3.58 per cent in Q3 FY25. Gold loan saw a y-o-y growth of 33 per cent and stood at ₹17,209 crore as of December 2025.

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No. PI-3584/2026/387 Date:23.01.2026
Invitation for expression of interest (EOI)

KBPS invites expression of interest (EOI) from various manufacturers/suppliers for a demonstration of technical details/specification towards the supply of manual 5-ply corrugated board making machines. Offers are acceptable up to 4.30 p.m. on 10.02.2026. For more details please contact over phone 9995412786 or visit our website www.kbps.kerala.gov.in. Sd/- Managing Director

Government of Kerala
Published Tenders from 29-01-2026 to 01-02-2026

Stationery Department
Tender ID: 2026_STY_825226_2 * Stationery Controller * Supply of Maplitho /Super Print Paper 75 gsm RA1 * Closing Date: 09-Feb-2026 * PAC: Rs1487772

Visit <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in> for more details.
Ro.No:29-01/Jan-Feb/2026/PRD/(N)12

TATA POWER
(Corporate Contracts Department)

Sahar Receiving Station, Near Hotel Leela, Andheri (E), Mumbai 400 059, Maharashtra, India

(Board Line: 022-67173188) CIN: L28920MH1919PLC000567

NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The Tata Power Company Limited hereby invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from eligible bidders for participation in following tender:

"Transportation of Bottom ash to Road development projects - Mundra Plant - FY26-27,

Enquiry No. CC/FY26/01/MTPS/Bottom ash"

For details of pre-qualification requirements, purchasing of tender document, bid security etc., please visit Tender section of our website ([URL: https://www.tatapower.com/tender](https://www.tatapower.com/tender)) and refer detailed Tender Notice. Eligible vendors willing to participate may submit their EOI along with the tender fee latest by 5th February 2026. Future corrigendum's (if any), to the above tenders will be published on Tender section on our website- www.tatapower.com only.

AHMEDABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (BRIDGE PROJECT)

Re-Invite

E - Tender Notice : 2025-26

Sr. No. Name of Work Estimated Tender Cost

1. REFURBISHMENT OF EXISTING SUBHASH BRIDGE AND CONSTRUCTION OF NEW BRIDGE ON EITHER SIDE OF EXISTING BRIDGE ACROSS SABARMATI RIVER ON ENGINEERING PROCUREMENT & CONSTRUCTION (EPC) MODE. Rs. 232,80,68,937/- (Without GST)

Tender Uploaded on Website on Date: 03/02/2026
Technical Bid Opening Date: 24/02/2026

Details & Tenders Available on <https://tender.nprocure.com>

Dy. Municipal Commissioner (AMC-Road/Bridge project)

G-Sec yields hit one-year high after Budget proposes higher borrowing

Our Bureau

Mumbai

Yields of Government Securities (G-Sec) hardened on

Monday as the Union Budget for FY27 proposed a higher government borrowing programme. However, the rupee recovered lost ground after reports of RBI intervention in the forex market.

Having already reduced repo rate by a cumulative 125 bps since February 2025, the MPC is likely to adopt a wait-and-watch approach as previous rate cuts continue to transmit through the economy, she added.

Soumyajit Niyogi, Senior Director at India Ratings & Research, however, said a 25 bps cut to 5 per cent remains a fair possibility toward the tail end of the easing cycle.

"Given that the repo rate is the sole active lever with the MPC, the onus lies on the RBI to maintain an easing bias and maximise transmission via OMOs and creative deployment of longer-tenor VRR," he added.

higher even as the fiscal deficit at 4.3 per cent is lower by 10 bps (against the FY26 level of 4.4 per cent).

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'Apple registers its highest-ever value share of 28% in smartphone market'

S Ronendra Singh
New Delhi

American tech giant Apple recorded its highest-ever value share of 28 per cent in the Indian smartphone market, as well as leading the smartphone market by 23 per cent in 2025, Counterpoint Research's Monthly India Smartphone Tracker said on Monday.

The festival-led promotions and deeper channel expansion supported revenue growth and Apple's iPhone 16 ranked as the top-shipped model in India in 2025. This also marked the highest-ever annual shipment share for an iPhone in India, the Counterpoint report said, adding that over one in every five smartphones sold in India is now premium.

SAMSUNG SECOND

Samsung ranked second (22 per cent), backed by a focused portfolio across the mass market via its A, M and F series, alongside steady premium traction led by the S series, the report said, adding that driven by a surge in demand for premium devices, the Galaxy S series accounted for its highest-ever share in Samsung's portfolio.

Overall, India's smartphone market followed a mixed trajectory in 2025, with the year starting on a softer note due to elevated inventory and fewer launches, followed by a recovery in momentum from the second quarter (Q2).

Shipments slowed again in Q4 as brands prioritised inventory correction after the festive season and managed rising component costs. Overall, the market grew a modest one per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) in volume but a stronger 8 per cent y-o-y in value, underscoring sustained premiumisation.

Looking ahead to 2026, India's smartphone market is projected to see a single-digit volume decline as rising memory and component costs weigh on demand, especially in the sub-₹15,000 segment.



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STATEMENT OF UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND NINE MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 31.12.2025

(₹ in crores)

Particulars	Standalone						Consolidated					
	Quarter Ended 31.12.2025	Quarter Ended 30.09.2025	Quarter Ended 31.12.2024	Nine Months Ended 31.12.2025	Nine Months Ended 31.12.2024	Year Ended 31.03.2025	Quarter Ended 31.12.2025	Quarter Ended 30.09.2025	Quarter Ended 31.12.2024	Nine Months Ended 31.12.2025	Nine Months Ended 31.12.2024	Year Ended 31.03.2025
Total income from Operations (net)	1,910.97	1,813.69	1,648.06	5,607.89	4,717.05	6,520.44	2,513.95	2,385.64	2,190.31	7,248.52	6,226.58	8,485.63
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	591.92	514.62	467.40	1,666.23	1,334.76	2,061.68	749.08	650.14	600.77	1,974.54	1,682.62	2,447.39
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	525.94	514.62	467.40	1,600.25	1,334.76	2,061.68	682.24	650.14	600.77	1,907.70	1,682.62	2,447.39
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	402.87	394.20	349.06	1,225.79	996.80	1,542.65	541.36	488.12	455.47	1,504.69	1,326.47	1,879.44
Owners of the Company	402.87	394.20	349.06	1,225.79	996.80	1,542.65	541.36	488.12	455.47	1,504.69	1,326.47	1,879.44
Non-controlling Interest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(185.51)	723.72	153.08	1,811.00	1,442.66	1,994.12	(74.35)	796.68	245.29	2,086.87	1,850.21	2,442.88
Owners of the Company	(185.51)	723.72	153.08	1,811.00	1,442.66	1,994.12	(74.35)	796.68	245.29	2,086.87	1,850.21	2,442.88
Non-controlling Interest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Paid up Equity Share Capital	111.10	111.10	111.10	111.10	111.10	111.10	110.21	110.21	110.21	110.21	110.21	110.21
Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	12,609.69	12,793.81	10,630.63	12,609.69	10,630.63	11,028.00	14,946.06	15,018.98	12,646.74	14,946.06	12,646.74	13,086.62
Securities Premium Account	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Net worth	12,720.79	12,904.91	10,741.73	12,720.79	10,741.73	11,139.10	15,056.27	15,129.19	12,756.95	15,056.27	12,756.95	13,196.83
Paid up Debt Capital/ Outstanding Debt	53,010.12	51,657.12	46,382.89	53,010.12	46,382.89	47,359.12	67,836.28	65,920.37	59,631.05	67,836.28	59,631.05	61,149.70
Outstanding Redeemable Preference Shares	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Debt Equity Ratio	4.17	4.00	4.32	4.17	4.32	4.25	4.51	4.36	4.67	4.51	4.67	4.63
Earnings Per Share (Basic & Diluted) (Face Value of ₹10/- each) (not annualised for Quarters) (on PAT)	36.26	35.48	31.42	110.33	89.72	138.85	49.12	44.29	41.33	136.53	120.36	170.53
Capital Redemption Reserve	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00
Debenture Redemption Reserve												
Debt Service Coverage Ratio												
Interest Service Coverage Ratio												
Not Applicable												

Notes:

- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly / Year ended Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly / Year ended Financial Results is available on the National Stock Exchange website (URL : www.nseindia.com) and on the Company's website (www.sundaramfinance.in)
- The above financial results for the quarter and nine months ended 31st December 2025 have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors at their respective meetings held in Chennai on 29th January and 2nd February 2026.
- The Board of Directors, at their meeting held on 2nd February 2026, has declared an Interim Dividend of ₹ 16/- per share (160%) for the financial year 2025-26 which will be paid on or after 25th February, 2026 to those Shareholders whose names stand on the Registrar of Members of the Company on the Record Date 6th February, 2026.
- On November 21, 2025, Government of India notified four new Labour Codes. The Company has reported the incremental impact of changes in new Labour Codes under "Exceptional Items" in the Standalone/ Consolidated interim statement of profit and loss for the current period, amounting to ₹ 65.98 crores and ₹ 66.84 crores respectively. The Company continues to monitor the publications on Central/State Rules and clarifications from relevant bodies and would provide appropriate accounting effect on the basis of such applicable developments.
- Previous period's figures have been regrouped wherever necessary to conform to current period's classification.
- The Joint Statutory Auditors have carried out a Limited Review of the financial results for the quarter and nine months ended 31st December 2025.

Chennai
02.02.2026

By Order of the Board
RAJIV C LOCHAN
Managing Director



Celebrating the Windman on his Birth Anniversary

In 1995, as the world developed at the expense of the planet, resource responsibility was nowhere in sight, and inclusive growth wasn't a goal, a vision was born. Laying the foundation of India's renewable energy ambition, Shri Tulsi Tanti started with one wind turbine with the conviction that progress and the planet can move together. And one bold promise - to power nations, economies, and households with clean, green power.

Today, an entire industry has risen around his promise, making India the world's third-largest wind energy producer and a preferred global partner.

As we celebrate the Birth Anniversary of the Windman, his legacy will forever live on in our steadfast commitment to building a better world for our future generations.



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1958 - 2022

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Better options ahead

Budget rightly checks speculation in derivatives

The stock market reacted rather violently to the Budget on Sunday, with the benchmark Nifty50 index losing around 2 per cent. It is another matter that Monday saw a sharp recovery. Market participants had urged a cut in securities transaction tax (STT), only to be rattled by the Finance Minister deciding to increase it instead.

The STT on sale of future contracts was increased from 0.02 per cent of contract value to 0.05 per cent and STT on sale or exercise of equity option contracts from 0.10 per cent of the option premium to 0.15 per cent. The move will, in fact, benefit the stock market in the long run. The stock market regulator had been worried about increasing speculative activity in the equity derivative segment since the pandemic, led by individual investors. It had taken a series of actions in FY25 to curb this speculation. This included cutting down the number of weekly index options, increasing derivative contract sizes and asking for upfront margin in equity trades. The STT rates on futures and options were raised 60 per cent in 2024. While equity derivative volumes are down around 25 per cent since the peak in 2024, the share of individual investors trading in the F&O segment continues to be at a record high of 31 per cent, rising sharply over the years vis-à-vis proprietary traders and mutual funds.

The STT increase announced in the Budget will act as a disincentive for these retail traders. For traders in equity futures, the outgo on STT increases 150 per cent while for traders in equity options, the increase is 50 per cent. The higher increase in STT on futures is a good idea as the capital outlay and risk is far higher. If the increase causes traders to shift to options, it is good. While the move can help increase STT collections, which were ₹52,196 crore in FY25 and are projected at ₹63,670 crore in FY26, the primary intent here is perhaps curbing speculative activity. The other important Budget proposal from a stock market perspective is the decision to tax share buybacks as capital gains in the hands of minority shareholders instead of taxing it at their income tax slab rate. This will bring down the tax incidence on investors who fall under the higher tax slabs. The proposal to tax buybacks at 22 per cent for promoters of companies incorporated in India will effectively plug the tax arbitrage between buybacks and dividend, and likely curb such buyback announcements.

There are broader Budgetary positives for investors. Company top lines will benefit from the increased spending on various infrastructure projects such as new dedicated freight corridors, new national waterways, development of infrastructure in tier II and III cities and high-speed rail corridors. Similarly, higher defence outlay will be good for defence stocks and rural consumption will get a leg-up from the allocation to the new rural employment guarantee scheme — VB-G RAM-G.

POCKET

RAVIKANTH



"This year, let's give away the employees-of-the-month awards to the ones who resign and save us some money."

Budget will foster competitiveness

GROWTH THRUST. A holistic approach, with liquidity measures for MSMEs and policies for textiles, will surely work



S MAHENDRA DEV
KK TRIPATHY

India's ambition to attain developed economy status by 2047 has sharpened the policy focus on long-term sustainable growth drivers, structural reforms and growing institutional capacity across activity sectors. Tabled on January 29, 2026, the Economic Survey 2025-26 set the broad policy direction for the Union Budget 2026, underscoring macroeconomic stability and sectoral priorities — particularly industries, and rural development — as foundations for inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth.

By prioritising structural reforms, productivity gains, stronger global trade linkages, infrastructure development and calibrated policy engagement, Budget 2026 places competitiveness at the centre of India's growth strategy. Sustained rural demand, improved agricultural production and productivity, easing food inflation and a stable macroeconomic framework form the bedrock of a resilient economic growth.

Against this backdrop, Budget 2026 places renewed emphasis on the labour-intensive textiles sector, particularly in the context of fresh market access opportunities arising out of the recently concluded Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the UK and the European Union. It delineates an integrated roadmap to strengthen self-reliance in natural fibres such as silk, wool and jute, while also supporting man-made and next-generation fibres. Key measures include modernising traditional textile clusters through capital investment in machinery, technology infusion, common testing and certification facilities, and focused support for weavers and artisans through better convergence of schemes.

By addressing long-standing gaps in competitiveness and skills, the Budget signals a strategic shift. With inherent cost advantages and vast potential for value addition, the Indian textiles industry can emerge as a global powerhouse if it decisively adopts Industry 4.0 practices, deepens collaboration with academic and



PRIORITY. Budget 2026 places renewed emphasis on the labour-intensive textiles sector

research institutions, and fast-tracks the creation of mega textile parks through a competitive, challenge-driven framework.

Budget 2026 also recognises a critical reality — village industries are steadily losing ground amid competition from mechanised production, fragile infrastructure, weak market access and limited exposure to modern skills. Low productivity due to obsolete technology, restricted credit availability, inadequate branding, poor logistics, labour migration and weak integration with contemporary value chains continue to constrain their growth.

In response, the proposed Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Initiative to strengthen khadi, handlooms and handicrafts represents a timely intervention. By focusing on global market linkages, branding, training, skilling and quality enhancement, the initiative seeks to benefit millions of weavers, village enterprises, One-District-One-Product clusters and rural youth. Critically, it may drive the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) initiating amendments to the KVIC Act, 1956, supported by statutory measures for market and export facilitation, infrastructure provisioning, credit and

The proposal to set up five university townships along major industrial and logistics corridors can significantly bridge skill gaps

risk mitigation tools, outcome monitoring, worker social security integration and decentralisation — laying the foundation for community-led entrepreneurship.

GROWTH THROUGH MSMEs

Budget 2026 goes beyond cluster revival to adopt a more holistic approach to MSME competitiveness. Alongside the proposal to rejuvenate 200 legacy industrial clusters through infrastructure and technology upgrades, it envisages the creation of champion SMEs, a dedicated ₹10,000-crore SME Growth Fund, and an additional ₹2,000-crore allocation to the Self-Reliant India Fund to safeguard micro enterprises' access to risk capital. By proposing a high-level committee to review the banking sector as part of the Viksit Bharat agenda, the Budget signals the intent to align financial sector reforms with the economy's evolving growth needs. The committee's recommendations could help identify flexible and credible pathways for future expansion without compromising financial stability, inclusion or consumer protection.

Innovative liquidity measures — mandating TReDS for Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) procurement settlements, extending Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)-backed credit guarantees for invoice discounting, and linking Government e-Marketplace (GeM) with TReDS for information sharing — are expected to ease working capital constraints for MSMEs. Coupled with professional

support through 'cooperative mitras' in Tier-II and Tier-III towns, these steps can strengthen MSMEs, deepen value-chain linkages, and enhance income, employment and wealth creation at scale.

Scaling up and modernising livestock enterprises, alongside promoting farmer producer organisations in animal husbandry and dairy is a strategic move to strengthen community-led entrepreneurship and expand rural and peri-urban employment. Targeting high value crops viz. coconut, sandalwood, cocoa, cashew and nuts will further encourage local investment, build enterprises at grassroots, enhance productivity and diversification, increase farmers' incomes and create new employment pathways.

The proposal to set up five university townships along major industrial and logistics corridors can significantly bridge skill gaps by fostering closer collaboration between industry, academia and policymakers. Such an ecosystem would enable technology-driven skill development while simultaneously reinforcing industrial growth, assuring business competitiveness and advancing India's journey towards Viksit Bharat vision by 2047.

Further, the Budget reinforces the government's focus on revitalising the cooperative sector by easing tax pressures and encouraging member-centric surplus sharing. It also facilitated policy support that recognises cooperatives as vital instruments of inclusive and community-led growth. The Budget attempts to re-energise industry and manufacturing as pillars of economic transformation.

By aligning policy intervention with the Make-in-India vision and the long-term goal of Viksit Bharat 2047, the Budget seeks to create feasible and inclusive growth pathways. The emphasis on MSMEs and rural development as growth engines underscored a people-centric approach — one that can convert aspiration into action and build a resilient, self-sustaining inclusive economy while ensuring that the benefits of development are widely and equitably shared.

Dev is Chairman and Tripathy is Joint Secretary in the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. Views are personal

A pragmatic Budget amidst challenges

Balances near-term objectives with longer-term goals, and yet earmarks a larger outlay for capex



PRASHANT KUMAR

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was faced with a plethora of challenges while penning down the Budget. First, growth was anticipated to slow in the second half of FY26. Given the global policy resets and risks, the challenge was to find fiscal tools to continue to thrust near-term growth and set the stage for a sustained trajectory of growth for the future. The growth drivers had to be domestic oriented due to slowing global growth and challenges with respect to global geopolitical risks, that can threaten the supply-side dynamics.

In this context, given the challenges of the fiscal math, another round of consumption-oriented push — either through direct or indirect tax reductions — was ruled out. The Finance Minister also had the critical task of neutralising the negative growth impact on the

labour-intensive exports sector and ring-fence the workers in this sector.

Budget 2026 does a fine balancing of near-term objectives with longer-term goals while responsibly maintaining a fiscal consolidation strategy, and yet earmarking a larger outlay for the capital expenditures of the government. Fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP is set at 4.3 for FY27, while adhering to the target of 4.4 for FY26. Achieving the fiscal targets is commendable taking into consideration a higher resource sharing with the State governments, as suggested by the 16th Finance Commission. Capital expenditure in the Budget is enhanced to 12.2 lakh crore or 3.1 per cent of GDP. Much of the capex is directed towards high-speed rail corridors, coastal cargo shipments, and national waterways.

The growth drivers targeted are the legacy industries where the attempt is to boost cost effectiveness and competitiveness. The Budget also proposes the scaling up of manufacturing in "7 strategic and frontier sectors". Within this the target is to push the semiconductor industry



CAPEX. Much of it for high-speed rail corridors, coastal cargo shipments

ISTOCK

through the India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, to fortify supply chains and develop technology and skilled workforce. The outlay for the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme, which was launched in April 2025, has been raised to ₹40,000 crore from the earlier outlay of ₹22,919 crore.

The short-term challenges, specifically the stress facing labour-intensive sectors due to the US tariffs, have also been addressed and the Budget seeks to promote globally competitive and sustainable textiles and apparels through capital support for

machinery and technological upgrading of traditional clusters. The other area that has found significant mention is MSME-focussed measures — a continuation of the last year's Budget efforts at strengthening the sector. The Budget provides equity support to SMEs via a dedicated ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund. Also, it has important measures such as making TReDS as a transaction settlement platform for all purchases from MSMEs by CPSEs. Further, TReDs receivables can be used as asset-back securities to enhance liquidity and settlement of transactions.

Recognising the sharp growth of data centres across the world and to attract global investments in this area into India, a tax holiday is provided till 2047 to foreign companies that provide cloud services to customers globally by using data centre services from India. This is important as the services sector receivables, especially from GCCs, have been a principal resource to contain any significant negatives on the external current account balances.

The writer is Managing Director and CEO, YES Bank

India's AI push gets real with strategic pivot

Budget identifies sovereign AI and scalable technologies as priorities to realise Viksit Bharat vision



HARSHIL MATHUR

By utilising technology and artificial intelligence as the backbone to advance the vision of Viksit Bharat, Budget 2026 strikes a fine balance between ambition and inclusion. The strategic roadmap ensures that digital transformation is more than a lofty goal; it is a tool for equitable development. At a time when the world faces heightened economic uncertainty, this Budget identifies sovereign AI and scalable technologies as its strategic priorities. The approach anchors national progress towards technological self-reliance to realise the Viksit Bharat vision.

A key need for India has been truly inclusive growth. A growth engine that encourages the use of technology across



FOCUS. Championing emerging tech

the country, be it in large cities or smaller centres. However, the roadblocks to this democratisation through technology have centred on a lack of awareness and education. The government has identified this as a key pain point and is addressing it through a high-powered committee that will identify areas of growth, including an impact assessment of AI on jobs and skill requirements.

Indian tech companies are growing at a breakneck speed, with consolidated annual revenue projected to cross \$280

billion in FY26, supported by a workforce of over six million. The country has solidified its position as a global nerve centre, hosting over 1,800 Global Capability Centres (GCCs), including more than 500 dedicated to AI, increasing opportunities to create jobs.

To consolidate these wins, the government has implemented several measures to champion emerging technologies. These include over ₹10,300 crore allocated for the IndiaAI Mission, ₹6,003.65 crore outlay for the National Quantum Mission, and ₹14,000 crore set aside for the Anusandhan National Research Fund, alongside a dedicated capital pool of ₹1 lakh crore for the Research, Development and Innovation Scheme.

Technology and innovation require a financial system that is accessible and affordable. The Budget announced an expert committee to review the sector and introduce reforms to align it with market needs, while empowering NBFCs to enable efficient credit

disbursement and rapid technology adoption. A much-needed reform in Foreign Exchange Management Rules will streamline cross-border capital flows and simplify FDI compliance for fintechs. To zoom out, this Budget is a strategic pivot that will revolutionise India's tech-native economy, bridge the gap between education, employment, and enterprise. The path forward requires unwavering commitment to implementation and stronger collaboration between the public and private sectors, particularly with digital-native organisations.

Crucially, deeper collaboration between fintechs and the government will foster an agile regulatory landscape and serve as a key accelerator for next-gen digital public infrastructure. India will not just scale existing models but also reinvent the new global standard. The future belongs to those who build, and India is ready to lead.

The writer is CEO and Co-Founder, Razorpay

Fiscal consolidation revamp to aid tax reforms

DEMAND PUSH. There cannot be any slack in aggregate demand if the 7 per cent annual growth is to be sustained. Composition of government expenditure will support growth measures



DK SRIVASTAVA

Tax reforms in 2025-26, especially GST-related measures, have led to a calibrated pace of fiscal consolidation to support growth. After achieving a reduction of 40 basis points in the government's fiscal deficit-GDP ratio from 4.8 per cent in 2024-25 to 4.4 per cent in 2025-26 (RE), the reduction in 2026-27 (BE) is only 10 basis points. In fact, both the government's net tax revenues and non-tax revenues as percentage of GDP have experienced a shortfall of 20 basis points each in 2026-27 (BE) as compared to 2025-26 (RE).

This was partly made up by an increase in non-debt capital receipts to the extent of 20 basis points of GDP which may largely be due to expected disinvestment receipts. As a result, the government's total expenditure relative to GDP in 2026-27 (BE) has been reduced to 13.6 per cent from 13.9 per cent in 2025-26 (RE). In fact, it was even higher at 14.1 per cent in 2024-25.

In order to still show commitment to continued fiscal consolidation, the government has settled on a more relaxed pace of annual adjustment. In

fact, the Finance Minister confirmed what was already indicated in the Economic Survey (ES) 2025-26 which is that the debt-GDP target would be 50 per cent +/- 1 per cent for 2030-31.

This gives the government flexibility to make annual adjustments in the fiscal deficit target depending on the performance of tax and non-tax sources. It may be recalled that the cyclical movement in fiscal deficit in the presence of a shock such as Covid in 2020-21 has been unduly asymmetric. Fiscal deficit-GDP ratio, which was 3.4 per cent in 2018-19, deteriorated to 9.2 per cent in two years.

However, it has taken six years to reduce it to a level of 4.3 per cent of GDP by 2026-27 (BE). The fiscal deficit and debt targets of 3 per cent and 40 per cent of GDP respectively for the government, per the FRBMA appears several years away.

FINANCE PANEL SUGGESTIONS

Along with the Budget, the report of the 16th Finance Commission was also presented. In the context of vertical sharing, the Commission retained the

The Finance Commission chose not to recommend any revenue deficit grants nor any sector/State specific grants



FISCAL PATH. There is an in-built flexibility in the fiscal consolidation path based on the tax revenues /ISTOCKPHOTO

41 per cent share for the States in the government's sharable tax revenues. This resulted in providing for the same level of assignment to states in 2026-27 (BE) at 3.9 per cent of GDP as in 2025-26 (RE). There are, however, significant implications with respect to the horizontal transfers to the States.

The Finance Commission chose not to recommend any revenue deficit grants nor any sector/State specific grants. In fact, it has not indicated any outcomes based on their assessment of

individual State's financial positions in their recommendation period. The argument for not giving any revenue deficit grants was that States' aggregate revenue deficit amounted only to 0.3 per cent of GDP.

It may, however, be noted that the revenue deficits of individual States cannot be aggregated since revenue deficit of one State cannot be adjusted against the revenue surplus of another State. The horizontal scheme of transfers of the Finance Commission

depends entirely on the scheme of tax devolution. Major losing States in the 16th Finance Commission's scheme when compared to the shares recommended by the 15th Finance Commission, in some cases by substantial margins, are Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Nagaland, Manipur and Tamil Nadu. Going forward, sustaining a growth of 7 per cent in the medium term, as

argued by the Economic Survey, would require expansion of both government and private demand. While private demand would be stimulated by the earlier tax concessions, it is at the cost of a contracting overall government demand measured in terms of the government's total expenditure to GDP ratio. In fact, the ratio of primary revenue expenditure to GDP has fallen from 7.3 per cent in 2025-26 (RE) to 6.9 per cent in 2026-27 (BE). The share of capital expenditure relative to GDP is also nearly static. Under such circumstances, it is only the composition of the government's expenditure which may have beneficial growth supporting effects.

While global economic challenges may continue to exist for some more time, there should not be any net reduction in aggregate demand if real GDP growth is to reach its potential of 7 per cent. Much support cannot be expected from States as they have not received any additional transfers through revenue deficit and sector/State specific grants.

They may also have to bear the additional cost of the funding provisions in the transition from MGNREGA to Viksit Bharat G-RAM-G scheme.

The writer is Chief Policy Advisor, EY India. Ragini Trehan, Senior Manager, Tax and Economic Policy Group, EY India, also contributed to the article. Views expressed are personal

A Budget aligned with finance panel views

The revenue shortfalls are offset by expenditure compression, keeping the headline deficit on target



LEKHA CHAKRABORTY

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Budget for 2026-27 at a moment of heightened global uncertainty. Trade tensions, shifting monetary policy in advanced economies and persistent supply-chain fragilities all loom large.

Markets showed a short-term "random-walk" reaction to higher STT on derivatives. Yet the Budget responds with fiscal consolidation drive and forward-looking investment that should strengthen India's growth trajectory while preserving macroeconomic stability.

DEBT AND DEFICITS

With the fiscal deficit targeted at 4.3 per cent of GDP for 2026-27 — down from the 4.4 per cent revised estimate for 2025-26 — the government has reaffirmed its commitment to gradual consolidation, aligning with a medium-term path toward below 4 per cent. This steady adjustment is commendable.

The primary deficit is 0.7 per cent of GDP for FY27, revenue deficit remained constant at 1.5 per cent. Phasing out of revenue deficit is 'golden principle' of fiscal rules, however it is not advisable in times of macroeconomic uncertainties and geopolitical risks.

The debt-to-GDP ratio is estimated to be 55.6 per cent of GDP in BE 2026-27, compared to

56.1 per cent of GDP in RE 2025-26, with a medium-term anchor of 50 per cent (+@1 per cent) by 2030-31. A critical reform addresses off-budget borrowings (OBBS), long criticised by 16th Finance Commission for opacity.

To finance the fiscal deficit, the net market borrowings from dated securities are estimated at ₹11.7 lakh crore. The balance of debt financing is expected to come from small savings and other sources. The gross market borrowings are estimated at ₹17.2 lakh crore. General government debt dynamics benefit from these measures, alongside contained gross market borrowings and efforts to lengthen debt maturities.

FISCAL MARKSMANSHIP

Fiscal marksmanship underscores pragmatic management. In 2025-26, revenue shortfalls — partly due to moderate buoyancy — were offset by expenditure compression, keeping the headline deficit on target despite forecasting variances. Effective capital expenditure was adjusted downward, yet the overall consolidation path remained intact.

This responsive recalibration preserves credibility, demonstrating that revenue stability anchors expenditure planning while allowing flexibility amid uncertainties. Closer analysis of forecasting errors — whether systemic or random — could further refine future budgets.

CAPEX, PVT INVESTMENT

Capital expenditure remains a key growth driver, with Central outlay



The Budget proposals are likely to spur private investments SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

at ₹12.2 lakh crore and effective capex (including state support) reaching ₹17.15 lakh crore. This multi-year pipeline provides predictability, carrying high multipliers in an economy where private corporate sector is well positioned to respond.

Years of deleveraging have strengthened balance sheets, with debt-to-equity ratios at multi-decade lows and interest coverage ratios improved. Banking sector non-performing loans have stabilised, freeing credit channels. A meaningful pick up in private capex cycles in 2026-27 can be expected, if there is an easing to the "demand uncertainties" amidst macroeconomic and geopolitical risks.

AI, CLIMATE REFORMS

Artificial intelligence receives ₹10,000 crore for the National AI Mission (compute infrastructure, skilling 10 million youth) and a ₹5,000 crore Innovation Fund for

quantum, semiconductors, and biotechnology, with enhanced R&D deductions. The Budget has announced a 20-year tax holiday to foreign firms using local data centres built in India.

Energy transition announcements include the National Critical Minerals Mission, expanded with dedicated Rare Earth Corridors in Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, integrating mining, processing, and magnet manufacturing to address projected quadrupling of global rare earth demand by 2040.

16TH FINANCE PANEL

The Budget aligns closely with the 16th Finance Commission's recommendations for fiscal consolidation while maintaining a status quo tax transfers at 41 per cent of divisible pool to the States, prioritising macroeconomic stability.

The fiscal forecasting errors in revenue and expenditure need to

be followed up to understand the sources of errors — if systemic bias or randomness affected the fiscal arithmetic.

There is a shadow of 16th Finance Commission on this Budget. With the new tax transfer formula — Population 2011 (17.5 per cent) and income distance (42.5 per cent) take the lion share in weightage with 60 per cent total. The rest 40 per cent weightage is equally divided for four variables — demographic transition, forest, area and contribution of a State to GDP.

THE FINEPRINT

The devil lies in the details. It is interesting to note that 16th Commission's horizontal formula introduces a notable tilt towards efficiency, reportedly incorporating a new 10 per cent weight for States' contribution to national GDP alongside other criteria of income distance, area, climate and demographic performance.

This marks a departure from heavier equity focus in prior Commissions towards strategic growth.

The Budget has taken the third tier (cities) also as core partners in this journey towards Viksit Bharat, with announcements relate to "cities as the unit of analysis" and initiating allocations to float municipal bonds.

The fiscal space of subnational governments is therefore a major factor in pursuing the Viksit Bharat dream to become a developed country by 2047.

The writer is Professor, NIPFP and Member, Board of Management, International Institute of Public Finance, Munich

A credible Budget

Govt has prioritised reforms over populism



ANANT GOENKA



BUDGET. Long-term vision /ISTOCKPHOTO

Economic Regions initiative — supported by an allocation of ₹5,000 crore per region over five years — marks a shift towards agglomeration-led development, recognising the economic potential of regional clusters, temple towns and emerging urban centres.

STRATEGIC SECTORS

On manufacturing, the focus is on seven strategic and frontier sectors — particularly pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, electronics and rare earths — signals a clear intent to build domestic capabilities. Initiatives such as Biopharma Shakti and the expansion of semiconductor programmes position India not merely as a production base, but as a hub for research, innovation and high-value manufacturing. Building on the Rare Earth Permanent Magnets Scheme launched in November 2025, the Budget proposes dedicated Rare Earth Corridors in mineral-rich States, strengthening domestic capabilities and reducing import dependence in this strategically sensitive sector.

This Budget translates a long-term vision into granular, sector-specific action. The government frames its approach around the principle of *tri-kartavya* — accelerating growth, building people's capacities and ensuring inclusive development. This is underpinned by more than 350 reforms already implemented.

Public investment continues to play a catalytic role. Capital expenditure has been scaled up more than six-fold — from around ₹2 trillion in 2014-15 to ₹12.2 trillion in Budget Estimates for 2026-27 — supporting infrastructure creation, crowding in private investment and strengthening medium-term growth prospects.

Crucially, the infrastructure focus has evolved beyond highways to a more integrated logistics framework encompassing dedicated rail freight corridors, inland waterways and coastal shipping. The Coastal Cargo Promotion Scheme, which aims to raise the share of inland waterways and coastal shipping from 6 per cent to 12 per cent by 2047, reflects a long-term strategy to reduce logistics costs and enhance supply-chain resilience.

This national infrastructure push is complemented by a sharper focus on Tier II and Tier III cities. Through instruments such as InvITs and REITs, and institutions like NIF and NABFID, infrastructure development is increasingly being channelled towards these regions. The City

Growth is explicitly linked to social outcomes — whether through tourism-led employment, healthcare expansion or investments in education and skills. Sectors such as medical tourism, healthcare services and traditional wellness systems, including Ayurveda, are identified as areas where India enjoys a natural competitive advantage.

By prioritising reform over rhetoric and people over populism, the Budget strengthens the credibility of India's policy framework at a time when policy certainty is a scarce global commodity.

The writer is President, FICCI and Vice-Chairman, RPG Group

Agriculture, rural sectors may have to wait for another day



SIRAJ HUSSAIN
JUGAL MOHAPATRA

Investment in India's infrastructure continues to be a high priority for the government. An outlay of ₹12.2 trillion is proposed for capital expenditure. This is a 9 per cent increase from the previous year. Despite corporate profitability, private corporate investment as a share of GDP has been hovering in recent years at around 11.5-12.5 per cent.

During 2004-2008, corporate investment reached a peak of 16 per cent of GDP. So, the government's continued support to infrastructure is well thought of. But investment in agriculture and allied sector does not come mainly from the Budget allocations. Instead, the Union government provides interest subvention on loans for agriculture infrastructure. In her speech the Finance

Minister highlighted the opportunity presented by allied sectors like animal husbandry, dairy, fisheries, coconut, sandalwood, walnuts, almonds etc. But there is hardly any mention of crop sector in her speech and even horticulture was not highlighted.

The overall allocation of Department of Agriculture has increased from ₹1.23 trillion to ₹1.30 trillion. Out of this, ₹600 billion is budgeted for PM Kisan and ₹635 billion is for PM Kisan Maandhan Yojana.

The actual expenditure on interest subvention for infrastructure projects funded by banks under Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Fund is not reported separately in the expenditure budget. In any case, agriculture infrastructure needs direct funding.

For example, there is no APMC in India which meets global standards while there are several airports and roads which are of highest standards. At least in the Union Territory of Delhi, the government must provide direct support from the Budget for



BUDGET. Not much for farmers ANI

modernisation of Azadpur APMC.

DIP IN RESEARCH FUNDS

Sadly, the allocation for department of Agricultural Research and Education has been decreased from ₹10.28 billion to ₹9.67 billion. There is a consensus that for higher productivity and climate resistant agriculture, much higher level of investment is needed in research.

In her Budget speech of 2024-25, the FM had mentioned that the government will conduct a detailed review of the agriculture research set-up. It was promised that funding will be provided in challenge mode by

giving an opportunity to private sector also. It must be noted that private companies have contributed enormously to high yielding seeds to horticulture crops and even maize etc. It is not clearly known if the proposal has been taken forward.

It is good that the allocation for Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) has been increased from ₹15 billion to ₹25 billion. It is in consonance with the Finance Minister's speech regarding marine goods.

Unlike in the Budgets of the previous years, no major announcement has been made regarding rural development. There is a passing mention of setting up of Self-Help Entrepreneur (SHE) Marts as community-owned retail outlets to provide marketing support to the enterprises promoted under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). The overall allocation for rural development has been enhanced only marginally (by 2.63 per cent) from ₹2.66 trillion to ₹2.73 trillion.

₹956.92 billion has been

allocated for newly announced the G Ram G. In addition, ₹30,000 crore has been provided under MGNREGA — presumably to square off the spill-over liabilities.

Outlays for the three other flagship schemes of rural development, namely, the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), NRLM, and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) have been retained almost at the same level as last year.

Rules for inter-state allocation of G RAM G scheme are yet to be framed. Hence, as of now, we do not know whether the allocation of the Central share of this scheme would be fully spent since it is anticipated that a larger share might go to the States whose institutional capacity for spending under MGNREGA has been demonstrably poor.

All in all, the Budget gives an impression that agriculture and rural sectors have to wait for another day.

Hussain and Mohapatra were former Union Secretaries in the Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development

The next Crossword no 2609 will be published on Wednesday, February 4 along with solutions for the Crossword No: 2608, which was published on Friday, January 30

'Reform express' gains momentum

The Budget's sustained investment push reflects the government's belief in infrastructure as a growth multiplier



NIRMAL K MINDRA

There is a familiar proverb that says, "The journey matters as much as the destination." The Budget 2026-27 reflects this philosophy well. It is not merely a collection of announcements, but a continuation of a reform journey what is aptly described as the *reform express*, steadily moving India from aspiration to achievement and from potential to performance.

This Budget can be viewed through five key pillars identified by Assocham — Make in India, Ease of Doing Business, MSME Growth, Digital Economy, and Sustainability & Environment. Importantly, the Budget delivers meaningfully across each of these pillars, reflecting a constructive alignment between policy priorities and industry feedback.

At a time when the global economic environment is marked by uncertainty, fragmented supply chains and rising geopolitical risks, the Budget sends a reassuring signal of stability, continuity and confidence. It reinforces the government's commitment to growth through public investment, structural reforms and inclusive development.

MAKE IN INDIA
One of the strongest pillars of the Budget is the continued emphasis on public capital expenditure as the backbone of the 'Make in India' strategy. Over the past

decade, public capex has increased more than fivefold, rising from around ₹2 lakh crore in 2014-15 to ₹11.2 lakh crore in 2025-26. This has been further raised to ₹12.2 lakh crore in this Budget.

The sustained investment push reflects the government's belief in infrastructure as a growth multiplier. Allocations across transport, urban development, power and logistics-linked infrastructure underscore the role of public spending in crowding in private investment, creating jobs and improving productivity.

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS
The Budget highlights that over 350 reforms have been undertaken in recent years, spanning GST simplification, labour codes, quality standards and compliance rationalisation. It builds on this momentum rather than resetting the agenda.

Incremental but meaningful reforms continue through simplification of tax laws, time-bound dispute resolution mechanisms, and reduced compliance friction. The move towards a new income tax framework, faster advance pricing agreements and rationalisation of transaction-related taxes reflects industry feedback on the need for certainty and efficiency.

Such reforms are critical in translating entrepreneurial intent into executable business decisions. The reform express is clearly not slowing down, it is, in fact, gathering pace.

MSME GROWTH
The Budget lays emphasis on MSMEs as engines of growth, exports and employment. A key announcement is the ₹10,000



The Budget places strong emphasis on MSMEs as engines of growth, exports and employment

crore SME Growth Fund, aimed at supporting scale-up and job creation.

Equally important is the Budget's three-pronged MSME approach of equity support, liquidity support and professional support, recognising that sustainable MSME growth requires more than access to credit alone.

Liquidity measures include further strengthening of the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS), mandating its use for CPSE purchases, providing credit guarantee support for invoice discounting, linking GeM with TReDS, and enabling securitisation of receivables. These steps directly address working capital constraints and delayed payments which are

long-standing concerns raised by the industry.

DIGITAL ECONOMY
The Budget reinforces the role of the digital economy as a driver of productivity, services-led growth and employment. The proposed Education-to-Employment and Enterprises Committee seeks to align skills with emerging market needs, particularly in services and technology-enabled sectors.

A significant industry-positive measure under this pillar is the tax holiday extended till 2047 for foreign companies offering global cloud services using Indian data centres. This provides a strong incentive for investment in digital infrastructure.

The Budget integrates sustainability firmly into the

growth framework. The ₹20,000-crore Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) programme targets hard-to-abate sectors such as power, steel, cement and chemicals, enabling emissions reduction while supporting industrial activity.

Complemented by continued investments in clean energy, efficient transport systems and green infrastructure, the Budget reflects a balanced approach, recognising that economic expansion and environmental responsibility must progress together.

LISTENING TO INDUSTRY

Overall, the Budget reflects a constructive policy dialogue between government and stakeholders. Several Assocham recommendations have found resonance in the Budget's design and priorities. However, this does not imply that all challenges have been resolved. Execution, coordination across levels of government and timely implementation will determine outcomes. Still, the policy direction is clear and aligned with the needs of a growing economy.

REFORM WITH RESOLVE

The Budget reinforces the idea that reform is a journey, not a destination. By delivering across the five Assocham identified pillars, the Budget seeks to convert India's vast potential into measurable performance.

With this Budget, the *reform express* is firmly on track, carrying India from aspiration to achievement and from promise to performance.

The writer is President, Assocham

Deepening India's role in global supply chains

The thrust on new age sectors further enhances India's competitiveness



R DINESH

The Budget sends a clear signal of continuity and credibility at a time when global uncertainty continues to test economic resilience. The Finance Minister's commitment to a fiscal deficit of 4.3 per cent reinforces the government's resolve to balance growth priorities with macroeconomic discipline.

The continued emphasis on capital expenditure, with an allocation of ₹12.2 lakh crore, reinforces that infrastructure investment is now a sustained, multi-year strategy rather than a one-off counter-cyclical measure. As this investment cycle is maturing, the focus has shifted from capacity creation to debottlenecking, integration and efficiency gains.

LOGISTICS THRUST

Proposals such as new dedicated freight corridors directly support the next phase of debottlenecking across key freight corridors.

At the same time, the development of 20 new national waterways, linking mineral-rich regions with industrial centres and ports, along with the coastal cargo promotion scheme aimed at increasing the share of inland and coastal

waterways from 6 per cent to 12 per cent by 2047, clearly reinforce the government's multimodal logistics thrust.

The creation of regional centres of excellence to address skill gaps is a welcome focus on building relevant talent.

The writer is Chairman, TVS Supply Chain Solutions Ltd

MANUFACTURING PUSH
The Budget places special emphasis on strengthening manufacturing and facilitating overseas investment into India by enabling deeper integration between Indian and global companies within international value chains. Measures such as a single, interconnected digital window for customs clearance, using imaging technology, along with targeted tax concessions and greater policy visibility, send a clear signal of intent to global investors.

The thrust on new age sectors, including AI integration and tech deployment across manufacturing and supply chains, further enhances India's competitiveness and growth potential.

For MSMEs, mandating TReDS as the settlement platform for all government procurement and integrating it with GeM creates a centralised ecosystem and can set the template for wider adoption by the private sector.

The proposed ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund provides equity support, while the Corporate Mitras initiative across tier-2 and tier-3 towns can help create MSME champions by enabling compliance and market access, allowing these enterprises to integrate into corporate and global supply chains over time.

The Budget reinforces India's growth ambition by enabling a larger role in global supply chains while building the capacity and capability of logistics and manufacturing sectors.

The writer is Chairman, TVS Supply Chain Solutions Ltd

Laying the ground for next urban growth



IRFAN RAZACK

The Budget has once again reaffirmed the government's long-term commitment to building a future-ready economy through sustained infrastructure investment and innovative financial mechanisms. For the real estate sector, the announcements on enhanced public capital expenditure, introduction of dedicated REITs for CPSE asset recycling, and the proposed Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund for private developers are particularly significant. Together, these measures will not only accelerate economic growth but also create opportunities for urban development beyond the metros and strengthen private-sector participation.

One of the highlights of this year's Budget is the rise in public capital expenditure from ₹11.2 lakh crore in FY26 to ₹12.2 lakh crore in FY27. This sharp increase signals the government's continued focus on infrastructure-led growth as a key driver of employment, investment, and overall economic expansion.

FOCUS ON INFRA
What is even more encouraging is the targeted focus on infrastructure development in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, as well as temple cities. This forward-looking approach aligns with the changing dynamics of India's urbanisation. Smaller cities are increasingly emerging as growth engines, driven by improving connectivity and digital penetration.

Enhanced infrastructure in these regions will catalyse real estate development and create demand for quality housing, commercial spaces, hospitality projects, and integrated townships. Temple cities, in particular, stand to benefit from improved civic amenities, tourism infrastructure, and

planned urban development. This will not only enhance the visitor experience but also create sustainable economic ecosystems for local communities.

The Budget's proposal to establish an Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund for private developers is a welcome step. By reducing project-related risks and improving access to long-term financing, the initiative will encourage greater private investment in infrastructure. This support will help developers participate more confidently in large-scale urban and regional development projects, leading to faster execution and improved infrastructure delivery quality.

We see immense potential in India's next wave of urban growth. With improved roads, rail links, airports, and public utilities, Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets will become increasingly attractive to developers and homebuyers.

UNLOCKING VALUE
Another landmark announcement is the move to create dedicated REITs to recycle Central public sector enterprise assets. The government has identified nearly ₹10 lakh crore of assets across railway properties, port land, power transmission infrastructure, telecom towers, and other government-owned properties for monetisation.

This is a transformative step that will unlock value from underutilised public assets and generate capital for new infrastructure investments. The REIT framework has already proven successful in India's commercial real estate market, providing investors with access to stable, income-generating assets. We believe these reforms will not only boost investor confidence but also accelerate the country's journey towards becoming a global economic powerhouse, with real estate playing a pivotal role.

At its core, this Budget addresses two fundamental goals: sustained high growth and inclusive development. With a focus on infrastructure, manufacturing, innovation and ease of doing business, the government has laid out a roadmap that will energise traditional sectors while catalysing new engines of growth.

A robust infrastructure ecosystem is the backbone of any modern economy.

The writer is Chairman and MD, Prestige Group

The long arc of India's tech growth

Budget sets the context for the next phase of India's technology journey



VENKATRAMAN NARAYANAN



helping everyone. It focuses on giving farmers digital tools, getting more women into science and tech fields, and teaching young people skills for the future. This shows smart thinking about how to grow progress for all.

The announcement of 15,000 creator labs across schools and colleges reinforces this intent, connecting education to employment and enterprise. The work of the Education to Employment and Enterprise Committee further underscores the role of services as a growth engine, while explicitly assessing how AI will reshape jobs and skills. Digital platforms are no longer peripheral, they are becoming the bridge between learning, livelihoods, and participation in the formal economy.

SUSTAINED PUSH
The continued focus on emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing is another strong signal. The allocation of around ₹2,000 crore to the IndiaAI Mission, alongside sustained backing for the National Quantum Mission, reflects a commitment to moving these

technologies from research environments into real-world adoption.

From a business view, this is huge. Demand for AI, cloud, data, and engineering solutions has moved beyond tests, it's now driving real results and baked into main strategies. This isn't just for big companies. Small and medium businesses (MSMEs) are becoming key users and partners in innovation. AI tools, online software, cloud services, and digital platforms are helping them grow fast, setting India up to have the world's most tech-savvy small business network.

The renewed emphasis on the services sector reflects a clear reading of India's demographic and economic reality. With services contributing over 55 per cent of GDP, areas such as IT services, digital transformation, product engineering, and contract R&D will continue to play a central role in job creation and value generation for a young and ambitious workforce.

It is encouraging to see the Budget particularly recognise software development, ITeS, and contract R&D as part of a single, interconnected technology ecosystem. The proposal to bring multiple IT and IT-enabled services under a unified IT services category reflects this thinking, reducing artificial distinctions between digital, engineering, and services work.

The writer is Managing Director, Happiest Minds Technologies

KALYAN KRISHNAMURTHY

Sustainable economic growth arises from a multitude of conducive factors. It needs institutions that work, systems that can scale and policies that bring more people into the fold. Union Budget 2026-27 leans into this idea. It puts the Viksit Bharat vision at the centre and looks at three levers that matter for the next decade – productivity, trust and inclusion – with the Indian consumer as the reference point throughout.

A clear thread running through the proposals is the push to deepen digital public infrastructure. Automated, rule-based systems in taxation, customs and compliance are meant to reduce day-to-day uncertainty for both businesses and individuals and make the system feel more predictable and transparent.

Support for MSMEs is shaped with a similar eye on everyday realities.

The ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund and deeper liquidity support through platforms like TReDS, backed by credit guarantees and better information flows, are designed to ease long-standing working capital pressures.

The proposal to enable 'Corporate Mitras', para-professionals who can help MSMEs meet compliance requirements at an affordable cost, especially in tier-2 and tier-3 towns, tackles another silent cost of doing business.

SHGs, GIG WORKERS
Women-led self-help groups and farmer producer organisations are among India's most effective yet underused drivers of inclusive growth.

The Budget's focus on strengthening these institutions – through SHE-Marts for women entrepreneurs, support for women-led FPOs and targeted schemes in fisheries, livestock and high-value crops – can deliver both social and economic benefits.

The writer is CEO, Flipkart Group

A transformative Budget



ANISH SHAH

an 11 per cent increase and among the highest in India's history. This investment will modernise transport networks, expand logistical efficiency, and unlock multiplier effects across industries such as construction, auto components, mining, and real estate.

Several flagship initiatives – including seven high-speed rail corridors, 20 new national waterways, and a dedicated freight corridor linking Dankuni and Surat – will enhance inter-city and inter-state connectivity, reduce congestion, and significantly cut freight costs for Indian manufacturers and farmers alike.

The Budget advances Make-in-India with targeted support aimed at deepening India's manufacturing ecosystem.

From semiconductors to biopharma, the introduction of India Semiconductor Mission 2.0 with an enhanced ₹40,000 crore outlay signals a stronger push to locate critical components and nurture cutting-edge technology supply chains.

Similarly, the Biopharma SHAKTI programme – backed by a ₹10,000 crore budget over five years will bolster India's global competitive edge in complex therapeutics and

biosimilars, benefiting both industry and patients.

EASE OF LIVING

A hallmark of this Budget is its emphasis on making India easier to live and do business in. Simplification of tax compliance, extended timelines for filing returns, rationalisation of TCS on overseas education and travel to 2 per cent, and decriminalisation of select compliance defaults will ease burdens on citizens and enterprises alike. An especially forward-looking measure is the tax holiday for global cloud service providers using Indian data centres – a policy designed to make India a strategic hub for artificial intelligence, data storage, and digital services, addressing the future needs of the IT sector and digital economy.

FISCAL DISCIPLINE

Targeting a fiscal deficit of 4.3 per cent of GDP while ramping up capital expenditure shows a commitment to fiscal prudence without stifling growth – a delicate balance crucial for investor confidence and economic stability.

The writer is Group CEO and MD, Mahindra Group

On the supply side, a series of steps on customs modernisation and a single digital window for clearances aim to cut down delays and paperwork.

Along with a more predictable, trust-based

The writer is CEO, Flipkart Group

Building a framework for the future

The Budget drives long-term economic growth through infrastructure expansion and urban transformation



Continued investments in transport networks, logistics corridors and urban infrastructure are expected to improve connectivity both within and between cities REUTERS

The Budget underscores the government's continued focus on long-term economic expansion, infrastructure creation, and capital market deepening. Rather than relying on short-term stimulus, the policy direction reinforces structural drivers that support investment, productivity, and urban transformation. This macro framework is significant not just for individual sectors but also for the broader ecosystem.

A record public capital expenditure outlay of ₹12.2 lakh crore serves as a central pillar of this strategy. Continued investments in transport networks, logistics corridors and urban infrastructure are expected to improve connectivity both within and between cities. Over time, this will support more balanced urbanisation, reduce pressure on core districts, and enable the emergence of new commercial and residential clusters supported by stronger civic infrastructure.

DISTRIBUTED GROWTH

The push toward developing city economic regions further signals a shift towards more distributed growth. By encouraging economic activity beyond traditional central business districts, the policy framework promotes decentralisation and the rise of new business hubs in peripheral and secondary locations. This will help ease congestion in established urban cores and improve access to jobs by bringing workplaces closer to residential catchments. It is also encouraging to see the government leveraging REITs as a vehicle for accelerating economic growth across the country by monetising central government land, strengthening confidence in REITs, their revenue generation potential, and their ability to deliver stable returns.

At the same time, the Budget

continues to strengthen India's appeal as a global services and technology hub. The long-term tax holiday extending until 2047 for foreign cloud service providers leveraging Indian data centres sends a strong signal about India's capability to attract long-duration global capital into digital infrastructure. This supports the broader digital ecosystem spanning technology parks, innovation hubs, and high-value employment clusters.

The emphasis on strategic sectors such as biopharma and semiconductors adds another layer to this structural transformation. By encouraging advanced manufacturing, research, and design-led industries, the government is laying the foundation for more innovation-driven growth. These sectors typically anchor high-skilled jobs, research facilities and specialised ecosystems.

Capital market development is another important thread running through the Budget's approach. Continued policy support for market-linked investment platforms and steps that facilitate broader participation from domestic and foreign investors contribute to deeper,

more liquid financial markets. Over time, this improves capital allocation, enables asset monetisation, and supports the recycling of capital into new infrastructure and development projects.

BOOST TO REAL ESTATE

Building on these structural reforms, a few targeted refinements could have further strengthened real estate and housing outcomes. The affordable housing definition has remained unchanged for years despite rising prices and unit costs, limiting the viability of new supply in urban markets; aligning it across schemes and regulators would improve supply and credit flow. Revisiting the home-loan interest deduction would also better support first-time buyers facing higher ticket sizes.

In commercial real estate, the continued absence of input tax credit on leasing raises occupier costs, while higher investment limits for insurers in REITs and greater pension fund participation could unlock additional long-term domestic capital for income-producing assets.

In contrast, measures aimed at

improving execution capacity and reducing project-level risks strengthen the supply side of the growth equation. Initiatives such as the proposed Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund can enhance confidence in large-scale infrastructure delivery by reducing financing uncertainties. Similarly, schemes designed to enhance construction and infrastructure equipment capacity are expected to support faster, more efficient project execution. Together, these steps help ensure that announced investments translate into on-ground assets in a timely and cost-effective manner.

The Budget presents a coherent long-term framework built on infrastructure expansion, urban transformation, services-led growth, advanced manufacturing, and capital market deepening. By reinforcing these structural pillars, the government is shaping an environment that supports sustained economic momentum, wider geographic participation in growth, and greater integration of India's cities into global value chains.

The writer is Managing Director and CEO of Mindspace REIT

Instilling long-term structural confidence

Expanded connectivity will unlock latent land value, bring inaccessible areas into the development fold



ADITYA VIRWANI

The Budget 2026 has signalled that urban development and infrastructure creation remain at the heart of India's economic strategy. While the Budget stopped short of sweeping tax incentives or redefinitions for affordable housing, it reinforced a sustained commitment to infrastructure expansion, asset monetisation, and the growth of emerging urban centres. These targeted measures directly address critical bottlenecks that have hampered the real estate sector's potential in the past.

The decision to raise capital expenditure to ₹12.2 lakh crore, nearly 9 per cent higher than last year, underscores the government's conviction that infrastructure-led growth drives broader economic transformation. Roads, metro networks, industrial corridors, and freight connectivity, amongst others, directly influence where cities expand, where people choose to live, and where businesses choose to operate. Infrastructure has consistently proven to be one of the largest catalysts for real estate growth. The resurgence of commercial real estate over the past year, especially for Grade A offices, was driven partially by enhanced connectivity, such as the Mumbai Metro.

Tier II and Tier III cities are now experiencing similar momentum, propelled by new airports, expressways and other transit systems. The Budget's emphasis on cities with populations above five lakh recognises that these centres are no longer peripheral markets, but rapidly evolving economic ecosystems supported by burgeoning

manufacturing, services, education, and healthcare infrastructure.

Expanded connectivity will unlock latent land value, bringing previously inaccessible areas into the development fold, while broadening the range of viable residential and commercial projects.

HOUSING DEMAND

Over the past few years, we have already seen robust housing demand and land value appreciation in cities beyond the traditional metros. Continued public investment will make these markets even more investable, enabling balanced regional growth rather than concentrating opportunity in only a handful of large cities. A forward-looking measure in the Budget is the proposal to accelerate monetisation of Central Public Sector Enterprises' (CPSE) real estate assets through dedicated Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) structures. This is a constructive step on two fronts: it unlocks value from underutilised public land and channels it into productive economic use through transparent market mechanisms, as well as deepening India's real estate capital markets.

The proposed Infra Risk Guarantee Fund is another significant and timely intervention. Large infrastructure, urban development, and real estate projects often face financing obstacles because perceived risks during early construction phases make lenders cautious.

Under this proposal, the government will establish a fund to provide prudently calibrated partial credit guarantees to lenders financing infrastructure and construction projects, especially during the high-risk development and early construction phases. Overall, the Budget 2026 has provided long-term structural confidence.

The writer is Managing Director, Embassy Group

Trillion-dollar investments likely to come into datacentre sector

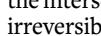


SRIDHAR PINNAPUREDDY

India's data centre industry is on the cusp of a trillion-dollar investment cycle as it sits at the intersection of three irreversible forces: explosive digital demand, geopolitical realignment, and infrastructure-scale policy support. With over a billion people coming online, AI and cloud workloads multiplying exponentially, and data localisation becoming a strategic imperative, compute is no longer a technology asset, it is national infrastructure. Global hyperscalers, sovereign clouds, AI platforms, and enterprises are all converging on India as both a consumption market and a resilience hub. Add to this India's improving power grid, rapid renewable capacity, land availability in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, favourable capex-to-opex economics, and a government that views digital infrastructure as economic backbone, and the math becomes inevitable, making a trillion dollars not ambition, but outcome.

The data centre sector has experienced extraordinary growth, with industry capacity expected to reach 1.8 GW by 2027, after crossing the significant 1 GW threshold in 2024. This phase of expansion reflects not just capital availability, but growing confidence that India can support long-term, large-scale digital infrastructure if policy and execution move in step. Providing support for sovereign AI compute, together with facility incentives, will be essential for hosting advanced, data-heavy workloads domestically.

Leading up to Union Budget 2026, our industry anticipated transformative policy measures that would accelerate India's preparedness for AI-led growth while embedding sustainability at its core. The



KAPIL AGGARWAL

An aspirational Defence Budget



RAJA MANICKAM



KAPIL AGGARWAL

Defence preparedness is the enforcer of the choice of strategic autonomy, the nation has made, as is evident from the worldwide geopolitical tremors which have been witnessed in the last few months. Enhanced operational readiness is also the route to achieving punitive deterrence against the western neighbour and other emerging threats while the nation needs to have credible deterrence with respect to the northern neighbour. Against this backdrop, Defence Budget, this year, had an air of expectation, unlike any earlier Budget.

The ongoing Op Sindoor, had also confirmed the inadequacy of earlier defence budgetary allocations, when emergency procurements from additional fund allocation had to be undertaken. Defence spending is also poised to increase significantly worldwide; in NATO countries, the rise target is 5 per cent of GDP by the year 2035 from the existing average spend of 2 per cent approximately. The defence expenditure in India, as a percentage of GDP has seen a secular decline over the last three decades, reaching a nadir of approx 1.9 per cent of GDP as per budget estimates of last year. Due to the inadequacies in modernization and capability development, as well as international developments, the Parliamentary Standing

Budget estimates

	2025-26	2026-27	% increase
Total allocation	6.81	7.84	15.12
Distribution			
Capital (three services)	1.8	2.19	21.67
*Revenue (less pensions)	3.12	3.65	16.98
Pensions	1.61	1.71	6.20
Balance other heads	0.29	0.29	-

*This includes Salaries and expenditure on Operational Sustenance (Ration, Fuel, Stores and MRO of equipment)

Committee on Defence had recommended that defence budget should be fixed at 3 per cent of GDP while the Defence Secretary had remarked last year that India's defence budget should ideally rise to 2.5 per cent of GDP by the year 2030. As per the Budget 2026-27 presented yesterday, the budgetary allocation for Defence is ₹7.84 lakh crore, compared to ₹6.81 lakh crore last year.

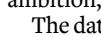
An increase of 15.12 per cent in overall allocation is significant as this is the first time after several years when the defence budget has actually gone up in real terms after discounting

inflation. The defence allocation corresponds to about 1.99 per cent (say 2 per cent) of GDP as per early estimates and is approximately 13.44 per cent of budgeted Central government expenditure of ₹58.31 lakh crore for FY 2027.

The Capital Outlay of the budget, which covers modernisation, procurement of equipment (aircraft, naval platforms, weapons), infrastructure and defence R&D, has seen a more robust growth of 21.67 per cent and is a recognition of the need to plug gaps in capability development. The allocation under the Revenue head has increased approximately 17 per cent and will give a much-needed fillip to the efforts in making up deficiencies in ammunition, stores, MRO and recapitalisation of major weapon platforms. The boost to capital spending underscores emphasis on indigenisation and readiness.

The writer is a retired Lieutenant General

A future-ready healthcare system



VISHAL BALI



AYUSHMAN BHARAT

India recently surpassed Japan to become the 4th largest economy. Yet the contrast in public health spending remains stark – Japan allocates nearly 10-11 per cent of its GDP to healthcare, while India continues to hover between 1.6-1.9 per cent.

The Budget was expected to deliver major reforms for healthcare growth, including a strong push for domestic medical technology manufacturing. Total healthcare allocation rose marginally from ₹99,858 crore in 2025 to ₹1,04,599 crore in 2026, keeping public health spending as a share of GDP well below global levels. However, the ₹10,000 crore commitment to position India as a global biopharma manufacturing

hub over five years is a positive step.

Overall, healthcare allocations still fall short of an inflection point, given widening demand-supply gaps and rising medical technology import costs amid rupee depreciation in recent years.

As India confronts rising incidences of diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular and auto-immune disorders, the healthcare system must evolve from reactive treatment models to preventive, integrated care frameworks. The Budget's emphasis on digital infrastructure, biopharma innovation, and skilled workforce development is significant at a time when medical inflation and out-of-pocket expenditure strain households.

For healthcare institutions – both public and private, the roadmap is clear: capitalise on these reforms to build capacity, improve quality, reduce

out-of-pocket spending, and extend access through digital and insurance-led innovations.

AYUSHMAN BHARAT

Financial protection remains central to improving healthcare access. Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) has extended coverage to millions of families, with state-level variants strengthening last-mile delivery. However, the success of Ayushman Bharat hinges on execution – wider coverage, deeper hospital empanelment, and integration with digital health platforms.

Budget 2026 reinforces this vision by strengthening district hospitals and expanding emergency and trauma care capacity by 50 per cent, particularly in Purvodaya states and the North-East, where medical emergencies push families into catastrophic expenditure.

Digital health remains a cornerstone of system integration. Support for interoperable health records, telemedicine networks, tele-NICU services, and immunisation tracking aligns with the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. Complementing this is the government's AI Mission, ensuring technology adoption benefits all – from farmers and women in STEM to youth seeking upskilling opportunities and Divyangjan accessing assistive technologies.

The ₹10,000 crore Biopharma Shakti scheme over five years signals a push towards research, development, and manufacturing in response to India's evolving disease profile. Budget 2026 signals a decisive shift towards inclusive and globally competitive healthcare.

The writer is Executive Chairman, Asia Healthcare Consultancy

investment sits in equipment. Much of this today is imported, resulting in capital leakage and limited domestic value creation. ISM 2.0's focus on equipment and materials designed around full-stack Indian IP is therefore critical. The government's move to exempt customs duties on critical minerals and to strengthen rare earth mining and processing through dedicated corridors is equally important, as secure access to materials underpins semiconductors, defence, and advanced electronics. Without control over materials, manufacturing scale alone cannot deliver resilience or strategic autonomy.

IP OWNERSHIP Technology choices also matter. India does not need to compete head-on with leading-edge logic to build relevance. Mature-node technologies, particularly power and analogue are a more practical starting point. These segments align well with India's domestic demand in power electronics, mobility, renewables, telecom and industrial systems.

They are also areas where system-level understanding matters as much as transistor scaling. When chip development is aligned to system needs, adoption cycles shorten and local manufacturing becomes viable faster. Case in point, India is installing 50GW plus solar every year for the next 10 years. Indian companies can develop all the chips required to support the solar mission. This creates large wafer demand which in turn creates attention to India by all the ecosystem players.

Advanced packaging, pilot fabs, and product IP creation deserve priority because design ownership determines margins, relevance, and long-term control. Manufacturing without IP simply shifts dependence from one geography to another.

The writer is Founder & CEO, iVIP Semi

A CH-CHE

VIEWS ROOM.

ARUN RASTE,

Managing Director & CEO, NCDEX

Much-desired value reset for agri

Budget 2026 stays the course on growth while signalling fiscal prudence. The measured increase in STT on futures and options reflects a clear intent to curb speculation, fostering a more stable market and encouraging sustainable participation from long-term retail and institutional investors. However, higher trading costs may discourage new participants and could impact market liquidity in the near term.

Agriculture and the rural economy has received strong structural support. The allocation of ₹1.63 lakh crore to agriculture — up 7 per cent over last year's revised estimates — reinforces the government's commitment to farm income resilience. Continued support for PM-Kisan, crop insurance under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and investments in irrigation, storage and post-harvest infrastructure provide a stable foundation for the sector. This is complemented by a sharp rise in rural employment and livelihood spending, with allocations under Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeekika Mission (Gramin) reaching ₹95,692 crore, including ₹30,000 crore for MNREGA.

The policy direction in agriculture is shifting from volume to value. The emphasis on high-value crops, allied sectors and AI-enabled platforms such as Bharat Vistar reflects an intent to enhance productivity, diversify incomes and improve delivery efficiency. Importantly for agri-commodity markets, this approach avoids shocks from sudden MSP or fertilizer subsidy changes, instead prioritising income stability and market-oriented reforms.

POLICY SHIFT

Several commodities stand to benefit from this shift. Maize, India's third-largest agricultural commodity, stands out as poultry, dairy and livestock entrepreneurship receive a boost through credit-linked subsidy programmes. Expansion of integrated livestock value chains is likely to raise institutional feed demand, supporting maize, soybean and oilseed cakes. Similarly, the focus on spices and export-oriented high-value crops should improve export realisations and strengthen price discovery for

farmers. Fisheries also gain momentum. Incentives for fish FPOs, along with investments in cold-chain infrastructure, processing and exports, position fisheries as a strong source of rural employment. Over time, this can also become an important export growth segment.

Women's economic participation gets a policy push. Initiatives such as She-Mart can make it easier for women entrepreneurs to access formal loans and financial products, even without strong collateral or credit history. This would give tremendous boost to women to grow from small businesses to stable enterprises, creating jobs and increasing women's role in the formal economy.

The broader growth strategy remains investment-led. Continued emphasis on capital expenditure, manufacturing, services and infrastructure creates visibility for a revival in private investment. This is particularly important for MSMEs, tourism and export-oriented sectors. Markets generally value this long-term approach more than short-term stimulus. The focus on skills and employability ensures that growth translates into livelihoods, not just higher output numbers.

Commodity markets also gain relevance under this framework. Stable farm incomes and diversified production increase the need for effective price risk management. Clear and consistent taxation and regulatory policies for commodity derivatives will be crucial. This can deepen farmer and FPO participation, improve hedging efficiency and attract long-term institutional capital.

If implemented well, these measures can strengthen commodity markets beyond mere price indicators. They can evolve into effective platforms for risk management and capital allocation.

Temasek, LIC likely to be key sellers in NSE IPO

Bloomberg

Temasek Holdings Pte and Life Insurance Corporation of India are likely to be key sellers in the potential \$2.5 billion initial public offering of the National Stock Exchange of India, according to a person familiar with the matter.

The board is scheduled to meet on February 6 to approve the financial results for the quarter ended December 2025 and is also likely to decide on the formation of the committee.

Spokespeople for NSE, LIC, SBI and SBI Capital Market didn't respond to requests for comment. Temasek declined to comment.

After a sharp sell-off, Sensex, Nifty bounce back on all-round buying



For BSE/NSE live quotes, scan the QR code or click the link
<https://bit.ly/2fposk>

CHENNAI
businessline.
TUESDAY - FEBRUARY 3 - 2026

SENTIMENT SHIFT. Except for Nifty IT, other sectoral indices closed in the green

Anupama Ghosh
Mumbai

The benchmarks staged a sharp recovery on Monday, with the Sensex surging 943.52 points to close at 81,666.46, recouping a significant portion of the previous session's steep Budget-day losses. The Nifty rose 262.95 points to settle at 25,088.40.

"The market witnessed a smart recovery following yesterday's volatile session," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments.

"At the same time, the Budget's policy continuity with a clear emphasis on growth and fiscal prudence has helped reinforce confidence in the medium- to long-term earnings outlook."

The rally on Nifty50 was led



DRIVING FORCE. Shares of Tata Motors (PV) jumped 5.3% after the firm posted a 47.1% increase in its January sales figures

by Power Grid, which surged 7.58 per cent. Tata Motors (Passenger Vehicles) jumped 5.3 per cent, after it posted a 47.1 per cent increase in its January sales figures. Adani Ports climbed 4.3 per cent and Bharat Electronics advanced 3.23 per cent.

However, selling pressure

was visible in select financial and healthcare stocks.

MAJOR LOSERS

Shriram Finance led the decliners, falling 3.56 per cent, followed by Axis Bank, which dropped 2.16 per cent and Max Healthcare declined 1.90 per cent.

Sectoral performance remained largely positive, with all indices ending in the green except Nifty IT, which declined 0.5 per cent.

The Capital Market Index outperformed, rallying about 3 per cent, while Nifty Auto surged 2.1 per cent, backed by strong monthly sales numbers. Nifty Oil & Gas gained 2 per cent, supported by lower crude oil prices. Nifty FMCG, metals, energy, infrastructure and retail indices rose 1-2 per cent.

Market breadth remained slightly weak, with 2,039 stocks advancing against 2,220 declines on the BSE. "Stock-specific action is likely to remain prominent as the Q3 earnings season gathers pace," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Capital market stocks recover from STT shock

Our Bureau
Bengaluru

Shares of brokerage and exchange-linked companies saw sharp moves for the second straight session as investors digested the impact of the government's decision to raise the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on derivatives, with most counters rebounding after steep losses while others remained under pressure.

Nifty Capital Market Index, after plunging over 5 per cent on Sunday, gained 2.89 per cent on Monday.

CAUTIOUS NOTE
Shares of BSE climbed 4.8 per cent to ₹2,701.60 on the NSE

FY27 earnings of Angel One, Groww and BSE to be hit by 13 per cent, 7 per cent and 9 per cent respectively, assuming a 10 per cent impact on orders and volumes versus its current forecasts.

Elara Capital said a higher STT in the derivatives segment could reduce speculative churn and potentially attract long-term investors over time, but added that the Budget was unlikely to immediately arrest foreign portfolio investor outflows.

Emkay said exchanges and broking firms were the primary near-term losers, and warned that lower market depth could eventually weigh on overseas institutional flows.

Motilal Oswal estimates Jefferies described it as a

sentimentally negative development for the sector. Based on discussions with industry participants, it projected a volume impact of up to 5 per cent. It expects a similar decline in average daily turnover or orders for BSE and Groww, which could translate into about a 4 per cent hit to their earnings.

Bernstein focused on the potential fallout for high-frequency trading firms, which form a key client base for Nuvama Wealth.

Kotak Institutional Equities said the sharp STT hike in the F&O segment came as a surprise, particularly in futures, which it termed a bit unreasonable, given the higher level of institutional participation.

Market participants expect the removal of the tax burden to improve India's competitiveness in providing brokerage and related services to foreign investors and reduce friction in cross-border financial transactions.

GST relief to cut costs for FPIs, lift margins for brokers

Akhata Gorde
Mumbai

Domestic brokerage firms and foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) are expected to benefit from lower transaction costs and improved margins after the Finance Bill 2026 proposed removing the 18 per cent GST on brokerage and intermediary services provided to overseas clients.

The change, which zero-rates eligible brokerage services by treating them as exports, is likely to make Indian brokerage services more competitive globally and improve net returns for foreign investors.

Beyond the cost savings, the amendment is expected to unclog years of high-value GST disputes, reduce compliance friction for financial firms and strengthen India's appeal as a destination for global capital at a time when FPIs are reassessing emerging market allocations.

Until now, services rendered by Indian stockbrokers to FPIs were classified as intermediary services, with the place of supply deemed to be India. This resulted in GST being levied even though the recipient was overseas, making brokerages costlier and less competitive globally.

WELCOME CHANGE
The Budget proposal shifts the place of supply to the location of the recipient.

As FPIs are based outside India, brokerage services provided to them will qualify as exports, subject to conditions such as receipt of consideration in foreign exchange or permitted rupee payments, a requirement typically met in such transactions.

"This is a very welcome change and will reduce the

Finance Bill 2026 ends 18% levy on brokerage services to overseas investors, makes claiming export refunds seamless

brokerage cost for the FPIs to the extent of 18 per cent GST on the brokerage as such GST is not available as credit in the respective foreign countries of the FPIs," said Harsh Shah, Partner at Economic Laws Practice.

However, the amendment is prospective and does not resolve tax liabilities relating to past periods, he said.

Tax experts also see the move as bringing clarity to an area that has seen prolonged disputes and aggressive tax positions. Authorities had taken the view that intermediary services were taxable in India if the supplier was located domestically, leading to large demands and litigation across sectors.

"The amendment in provisions relating to determination of Place of Supply for intermediary services is a welcome move as it curtails a long-drawn litigation on the issue," said Manish Mishra, Partner & Head-Indirect Tax at JSA Advocates & Solicitors.

He said that tax authorities had also sought to treat IT, ITeS and BPO services as intermediary services, resulting in significant disputes.

"With the proposed amendment, it seems the matter has attained finality."

Market participants expect the removal of the tax burden to improve India's competitiveness in providing brokerage and related services to foreign investors and reduce friction in cross-border financial transactions.

TODAY'S PICK.

Mahindra Lifespace (₹383.15): BUY

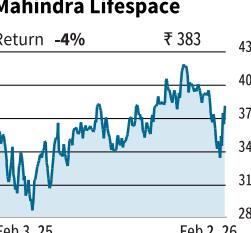
Gurumurthy K
bl research bureau

The short-term outlook is bullish for Mahindra Lifespace Developers. The 4.7 per cent rise on Monday has taken the stock well above ₹375, a key resistance. It also puts the price back into its earlier bull channel. There is a cluster of supports in the ₹375-365 region which can limit the downside for now.

Mahindra Lifespace Developers share price can rise to ₹440 in the coming weeks.

Intermediate resistance is at ₹402. A break above it can trigger a fresh rise. Traders can buy Mahindra Lifespace Developers shares now at ₹383.

Accumulate on dips at ₹377.



Keep the stop-loss at ₹353. Trail the stop-loss up to ₹388 as soon as the stock goes up to ₹396. Revise the stop-loss higher to ₹405 and ₹420 when the price touches ₹415 and ₹428, respectively. Exit the long positions at ₹435.

Note: The recommendations are based on technical analysis. There is a risk of loss in trading

Day trading guide

25149 ➡ Nifty 50 Futures

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
25090	24930	25185	25300	Go long on a break above 25185 with a stop-loss at 25160

₹928 ➡ HDFC Bank

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
920	910	932	940	Go long only above 932. Keep the stop-loss at 929

₹1627 ➡ Infosys

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
1605	1580	1640	1675	Take fresh shorts below 1605 with a stop-loss at 1615

₹315 ➡ ITC

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
307	303	319	324	Go short on a rise at 318. Keep the stop-loss at 320

₹254 ➡ ONGC

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
251	247	258	262	Wait for a rise. Go short at 257 with a stop-loss at 259

₹1387 ➡ Reliance Ind.

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
1370	1335	1406	1440	Go short on a rise at 1402 with a stop-loss at 1415

₹1028 ➡ SBI

S1	S2	R1	R2	COMMENT
1015	995	1050	1060	Go long on dips at 1020. Keep the stop-loss at 1010

₹3167 ➡ TCS

S1	S
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NEWSPAPER PUBLIC NOTICE FOR AUCTION OF GOLD JEWELLERY

BAJAJ FINANCE LIMITED

REGISTERED OFFICE: MUMBAI - PUNE ROAD, AKURDI, PUNE - 411035

IT IS HEREBY NOTIFIED BY BFL TO ALL CONCERNED BORROWERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT GOLD JEWELLERY PLACED AS SECURITY BY BORROWERS WITH AT THE TIME OF AVALING GOLD LOAN, IN THEIR RESPECTIVE LOAN ACCOUNTS AND WHO HAVE DEFAULTED IN REPAYMENT OF LOAN AMOUNT OR HAVE FAILED TO PROVIDE THE REQUIRED MARGIN, DESPITE REPEATED NOTICES, WILL BE AUCTIONED ON AN "AS IS WHERE IS" AND "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS". THE BIDDERS ARE REQUESTED TO ADHERE TO THE BELOW TERMS:

- (a) TO ACCESS THE FULL DETAILS OF THE PUBLIC NOTICE (Loan, Jewellery, Gross weight, Place & date of auction) BY SCANNING THE QR CODE ASIDE.
 - (b) TO READ THE COMPLETE BIDDER TERMS AND CONDITIONS ("T&CS") PERTAINING TO THIS PUBLIC AUCTION, BY ACCESSING THE WEBLINK <http://172.30.1.235:3000/?WOUJB2QG9WU>
 - (c) TO UNDERSTAND THE T&CS AND THEREAFTER DEPOSIT EARNEST MONEY DEPOSIT OF ₹ 25,000/- BY WAY OF FUND TRANSFER (NEFT/RTGS/BAJAJ GOLD AUCTION APP) ON OR BEFORE THE DATE OF AUCTION
 - (d) ATTEND IN PERSON AT THE AUCTION VENUE 10AM; AND
 - (e) TO CARRY THEIR VALID PROOF OF IDENTITY & ADDRESS AT THE AUCTION VENUE.
 - (f) BIDDERS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN AUCTION PROCESS POST 12 NOON ON THE DATE OF AUCTION.
 - (g) BRANCH MANAGER/AUCTIONEER RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ADMIT OR REJECT BIDDERS WHO DO NOT PARTICIPATE WITHIN THE SPECIFIED TIME FRAME EVEN AFTER EARNEST MONEY DEPOSIT (EMD) PAYMENT

CHANGE IN VENUE AND DATE OF AUCTION, IF ANY, WILL BE DISPLAYED AT THE AUCTION CENTRE. YOUR SUBMISSION OF BID IS CONSTRUED AS A DEEMED ACCEPTANCE TO THE ABOVE-MENTIONED TERMS. IN THE EVENT OF SUSPENSION/CANCELLATION OF PUBLIC AUCTION SALE, BFL MAY, AT THE INSTANCE OF THE BORROWER(S) ALSO RESERVES ITS RIGHT TO SELL THE JEWELLERY THROUGH PRIVATE SALE. FOR ANY ENQUIRIES, YOU MAY REACH US ON EMAIL ID – gold.auction@bajajfinserv.in



SCAN ME

(11-03-26) AASHTI - MAIN ROAD; PJC4GOL15907162, 16118516. ADAMPUR - GRAIN MARKET; PLJ7GOL15606782. ADILABAD - DWARAKA NAGAR; PEK4SGL15894719. ADIPUR - MADANSINGH CHOWK; PES2GOL15570996, 15685208, 15788008, 15929192, 15980540. AGOOCHA; PYB2PFI14826971, 15844652, 15890386. AGRA - SANJAY PLACE; PMP1GOL15721337. AHMEDABAD - GURUKUL; PKB9GOL15756216, 15788046. AHMEDABAD - VASTRAL; POB2GOL15835668. AHMEDABAD - VIRAT NAGAR; PLB3GOL15738111, 15805131, 15798131, 15863101, 15926788, 16034109. AHMEDNAGAR - DELHIGATE; PGE7GOL15865033, 15913036, 16093833, 16122507, 16116035. AHMEDNAGAR - SAVEDI ROAD; PER1GOL15622765, 15827578, 16130212. AJJAMPURA - HOSADURGA ROAD; PKC4SGL15620896, 15696526. AJMER - BEAWAR ROAD; P65HGOL15621298, 15621402, 15696687, 15710642, 15789037, 15801802, 15810282, 15801412, 15819498, 15819080, 15819591, 15823267, 15823754, 15822867, 15847615, 15871027, 15876902, 15871924, 15870935, 15871121, 15873191, 15927788, 15963547, 15962269, 15966052, 15991868, 16005555, 16034516, 16049954, 16053595, 16106241, 16104234. AJMER - INDIA MOTOR CIRCLE; PGU1GOL15617642, 15656999, 15742216, 15784754, 15788211, 15805559, 15833689, 15869730, 15957916, 16028241, 16078161. AKLUJ - SHANKARRAO PLAZA; PCP6GOL15576327, 15801846, 15797912, 16150128. AKOLA - GANDHI ROAD; PJA8GOL15738851, 15747101, 15761503, 15935714, 15968684, 16127582. AKOLA - KHADAN ROAD; PEP7GOL15577354, 15638503, 15663818, 15664482, 15698490, 15810285, 15803394, 15830031, 15848869, 15874975, 16009698, 16038175, 16029136, 16054506, 16078238, 16099251. AKOLA RJ; PYB5PFI15982329. AKOT - YOGIRAJ LAKADGANJ; PGJ6GOL13809468, 15582107, 15699877, 15737106, 15742297, 15805847, 15807002, 15810562, 15891273, 15894298, 15886701, 15909988, 15955666, 15980272, 16056064, 16104691, 16140836. ALANGUDI - MELA RATHAVITHI; PJJ1SGL15825086, 15888185. ALMORA - BGL; P38EGOL13445678, 13543727, 13774734. ALWAR - AGARSEN CIRCLE; PJF4GOL13446412, 13619243, 13745880, 15826719. ALWAR - PALAWAT MARKET; PEI7GOL15680813, 16096338. AMARAVATI - PARATWADA ROAD; P07GOL15627082, 15644664. AMBAJOGAI - MAIN ROAD; PLV8GOL14465942. AMBASAMUDRAM - NORTH CART STREET; PKD4SGL15599259, 15714678. AMBIKAPUR - AMBEDKAR CHOWK; PLI4GOL15796640, 16004937. AMBUR - BYPASS ROAD; PJK1SGL15618475, 16105318. AMRAVATI - BUS STAND ROAD; PEH8GOL14474130, 15712796, 15834118, 16103920, 16140628. AMRELI - STATION ROAD; PEL4GOL15787467, 15803615, 15966511, 15984227, 16062604, 16125511, 16116436. AMRITSAR - CHEHHARTA ROAD; PF89GOL15606107, 15687811, 15691770, 15789746, 15963234, 15956611. ANANTAPUR - KALYANDURG ROAD; PIV9SGL15615245, 16138458. ANANTPUR - SUBHASH ROAD; PGA7SGL15616518, 15688787, 15778558, 15774508, 15800376, 15887111. ANDIPATTI - BGL; PW76SGL16032156. ANGUL - GANDHI ROAD; PJD6SGL15718615. ANJAR - VARSHAMEDI NAKA; P75QGOL15823301, 15876028, 16031699. ANKLESHWAR - ROSHNI PLAZA; PBX3GOL15785971, 15837509, 15891719, 16051826. ANTA - MAIN ROAD; PJF6GOL15625280, 15938621. ANUPGARH - STATION ROAD; PEP4GOL15662515, 15657956, 15863704, 16011907, 16146437. ARMOOR - AMBEDKAR CHOWRSTA; PB56SGL15804558, 15805333, 15915197, 16034596. ASSANDH - KARNAL ROAD; P20IGOL15754900, 15927541, 15957391, 15955457, 16009157. ATHAGAD - BIRAKISHOREPUR; PCQ9SGL15650389, 15693949, 15762973, 15803647, 15803210, 15802269, 15992243, 16053608, 16117539, 16147191. AUSTRANGABAD - BAJRANG CHOWK; PDA1GOL15907846. AURANGABAD - BANSILAL NAGAR; PCP7GOL15693369, 15808982, 16122095, 16144603. BABRA - RAJKOT BHAVNAGAR HIGHWAY; P05VGOL15797703, 15890804, 15915080, 15933639, 16046438, 16142111. BADVEL - FOUR ROAD CIRCLE; PJJU6SGL14354540, 15927362, 16017704, 16037872. BAGALKOT - VIDYAGIRI; PGC8SGL15696385, 15740430, 15765256, 15929177, 15958920, 15998844, 16107090, 16009913, 16107040. BAGHERA; PTB8PFI15799430. BAGRU - MEENA MARKET; PJF9GOL15614305, 15698383, 15889247, 16009397. BAHADURGARH - BGL; P554GOL15717428, 15779165, 15910086. BALASORE - POLICE LINE SQUIRE; PEI4SGL15722717, 15756128, 15804222, 15804984, 15933372, 15967620, 15957118, 16005396, 16047838, 16053308, 16097592, 16103351. BALDA; PF36PFI15936436, 16036217, 16033608. BALLABGARH - AGRASEN CHOWK; PLP6GOL15911739, 16123350. BALOTRA - BGL; PNZ5GOL15582476, 15596748, 15738063, 15872850, 15936933, 16008096, 16102131. BALUGAON - MAIN ROAD; PCQ9SGL15783022, 15896785, 15962534, 16046252. BANGLORE - HSR LAYOUT; PEX2SGL16115851. BANSWADA - BUS STAND; PCV9SGL15604569, 15848835, 15847720, 15919034. BARAN - KOTA ROAD; PCS4GOL15787519. BARARA - RAILWAY ROAD; PBX6GOL15573927, 15666760, 15694287, 15963376, 16097334, 16098419. BARDOLI; PG04GOL15797723. BARGARH - KHAJRATI KALA; PGC3SGL15714427, 15737435, 15761028, 15778701, 15788436, 15802398, 15807577, 15811575, 15811349, 15851403, 15854312, 15888596, 15886231, 15956751, 15965196, 16026279, 16129604, 16117033. BARIPADA - KC CIRCLE; PMZ3SGL15741533, 16124757, 16146296. BARMER - VISHVKARMA CIRCLE; PCZ3GOL15605097, 15663082. BARODA - GENDA CIRCLE; PGI4GOL15788994, 15785943, 16034749. BASAVAKALYAN - HARALAYYA CIRCLE; PER8SGL15603493, 15618070, 15694608, 15763851, 15807201, 15889597, 16033775, 16029869, 16057447. BASSI - BGL; P14QGOL15866503, 15878322, 15934830, 16095920. BASUDEVPUR - AB COLLEGE CHOWK; PJE1SGL15967587, 15990389. BATHINDA - BUS STAND; PB43GOL15775483, 16097774. BAVLA - STATION ROAD; P06VGOL15799518, 15915339. BEAWAR - RAILWAY STATION ROAD; PGH3GOL15636096, 15755042, 15797978, 15808938, 15890745, 15894685, 15965779, 15958642, 16004804, 16136830. BELLARY - RTH; PBY4SGL15759926, 16099677. BETUL - SHARMA COMPLEX; PCA4GOL15808770, 16145814. BHACHAU - RAMVADI; P780GOL15636198, 15637748, 16102585. BHADRACHALLAM - RTC BUS STAND; PEK5SGL15873155, 15889498, 16011079, 16008436, 16030609. BHAWANIGAR - MAIN ROAD; PCR9GOL15867898. BHILAI - GE ROAD; PBX2GOL15807567, 15906814, 16033432, 16054708, 16053725. BHILWARA - BANDARI PLAZA; PGS9GOL15853106, 15911125, 16009677, 16141498. BHILWARA - S K PLAZA; PCS7GOL15623425, 15640761, 15714208, 15758757, 15809377, 15935027, 15958770, 16006883, 16103822, 16100845, 16116226. BHINDER - BGL; PC05GOL15597711, 15806813, 16051457. BHIWADI - SAMTAL CHOWK; PJT6GOL15615058, 15659035, 15752659, 15915262, 15984966. BHODHAN - NANDED MAIN ROAD; PEJ7SGL15915446, 16028940, 16106795, 16100022. BHONGIR - HYDERABAD ROAD; PCW1SGL15579766, 15988211. BHOPAL - IMAMI GATE; PF46GOL15573721, 15875688. BHOPAL - INDRAPURI; PF49GOL15584437, 15897350. BHOPAL - KAROD; PJD2GOL16127439. BHUPALPALLY - MAIN ROAD; PCW2SGL15821772, 15870315, 16055363, 16073460, 16137960. BIDAR - AMBDEKAR CIRCLE; P87QSGL15602146, 15833993, 15938132, 16141842. BIJAPUR - BAGALKOT ROAD; PLE1SGL15759645, 15782144. BIJAPUR - SARAF BAZAR; PBY6SGL15574549, 15577151, 15642857, 15717429, 15735656, 15808601, 15852855, 15852535, 15847079, 15886320, 15992313, 16027286, 16030410, 16049966, 16116844. BOBBILI - PEDA BAZAAR MAIN ROAD; PKI4SGL15879590, 15992225, 16030917, 16048677. CHILAKALURIPET - NRT CENTER; PJU5SGL15688411. CHIRALA - SANTHA BAZAR; PEJ9SGL15803648, 15803253, 15829153, 16142843. CHITTOOR - D I ROAD; PMM5SGL15598017. CUDDAPAH - BHAGYANAGAR COLONY; PGA9SGL15619343, 15620019, 15774992, 15827986, 16151533. GUNTAKAL - VEGETABLE MARKET; PBV9SGL15645226, 15665180, 16046477. NADAUN - BGL; P63FGOL15970796, 16138520, (12-03-26); AGRA - SHASTRIPURAM; PMW3GOL16129164. AUSTRANGABAD - BEED BYPASS ROAD; PHI1GOL15583641, 16028989. AURANGABAD - NIRALA BAZAR; PB50GOL15800753, 16047138. BARAMATI - KACHERI ROAD; PGJ7GOL15784422, 15777117, 15781016, 15773663, 15807713, 15810014, 15828544, 15828541, 15996398, 16016515, 16008578, 16035973, 16106594, 16130252. BARSHI - BGL; P529GOL15578260, 15690340, 15737635, 16108747, 16146039, 16149518. BARWALA - HANSI ROAD; PGP2GOL15844431, 16048750, 16078197. BASMAT - BGL; P6A4GOL15573620, 15758619, 15805503, 15845291, 15964302, 15972342. BAZPUR - GURUDWARA; PCY1GOL15628363, 15663282, 15657193, 15799755, 15798210, 16030935. BEED - BARSHI ROAD; PF48GOL15585769, 15783174, 15810757, 16080064, 16097934, 16105926, 16105574. BERHAMPUR - GOSANI NUAGAM; PMR7SGL15695667, 15694705, 15812583, 15912559, 15929524. BERHAMPUR - KAMAPALLI CHOWK; PB63SGL15645471, 15646325, 15965024, 16049857, 1605101, 16049657, 16049096, 16109805, 16145609. BHADKAD; PAE2PFI15607829, 15627178, 15775567. BHADRAK - DHAMNAGAR; PML4SGL15909903. BHADRAK - SALANDI BYPASS; PCR1SGL15657234, 15779818, 15827363, 15961814. BHANDARA - GANDHI CHOWK; P4WGOL15845219, 16030032. BHANVAD - VERAD NAKA; P04VGOL15636061, 15695547, 15928456, 16048826. BHARUCH - BGL; P46GOL15620862. BHATANE JAVKHEDA; PG40PFI15852506. BHATIYA - BUS STAND; PF41GOL15572919, 15592868, 15836944, 15928099. BHATPURE; PG54PFI15917052, 16015451. BHAVNAGAR - SUBHASH NAGAR; PKQ2GOL15848112, 15895831, 15911031, 15911799, 15912196, 15989912, 15983926, 16051101, 16100709. BHAVNAGAR - VITTHALWADI ROAD; PB52GOL15829644, 15964391, 16096422, 16125775. BHAVNAGAR - WAGHAWADI ROAD; PIT9GOL14918264, 15597026, 15642953, 15869643. BHAWANIPATNA - BGL; PU4SGL13475121, 15575563, 15618296, 15742534, 15961918, 15990798. BHILAI - KRISHNA THEATER ROAD; PMM8GOL15809052. BHILAI - SMRITI NAGAR; PLL2GOL16051549, 16106899. BIHWANDI - KALYAN NAKA; PEM9GOL15763753, 15801626, 15811039. BHOGARAI - THANA CHOWK; PLP3GOL15936149. BHUBANESHWAR - KHANDAGIRI; PER5SGL15583038, 15572688, 15614412, 15810642, 15876807. BHUJ - STATION ROAD; PEL5GOL15688777, 15743298, 15810489, 15891350. BIAORA - OLD AB ROAD; PMN3GOL16150584. BIGOD; PNA2PRN15730791. BIKANER - JASUSIR GATE; PKH9GOL15594159, 15691618, 15627248, 15641293, 15689179, 15714007, 15801799, 15805563, 16051775. BIKANER - KIRTI STAMBH; PB38GOL15605040, 15640153, 15701045, 15688238, 15888788, 16051041. BIKANER - KOTE GATE; PG61GOL15614945, 15645906, 15667130, 15733179, 15808607, 15846922, 15907305. BIKANER - RANI BAZAR; PCS8GOL1573505, 15783423, 15798072, 15812020, 15987146, 16032894, 15602161. BILASPUR - KAPAL MOCHAN ROAD; PNX4GOL15572666, 15828452, 15828901, 15888734, 15992918. BINA - ETAWA STATION ROAD; PCA6GOL15800738, 16025696. BORAJ; PUB9PFI16121613. BOTAD - S T DEPO; P52JGOL15851750, 15931301, 15932995, 15960418, 16140492. BOTAD - TOWER ROAD; PAU3GOL15636731, 15645118, 15712059, 157

VIEWSROOM.

RAJKIRAN RAI G
Managing Director, National Bank for Financing
Infrastructure and Development

Budget for Viksit Bharat
with a push for infra

To achieve its vision of becoming a developed nation (Viksit Bharat) by 2047, India has implemented a strategic framework of policy reforms, targeted sectoral measures, and robust fiscal and monetary support. By adhering the fiscal glide path post Covid, the government has built credibility for prudence, fiscal marksmanship. This multifaceted approach is designed to transition the economy toward a sustainably higher growth trajectory.

A cornerstone of this transition is the unprecedented expansion and modernisation of national infrastructure. The expenditure on infrastructure is estimated to have growth multiplier of three, making it an obvious play for raising potential growth. By prioritising transport, energy, urban infra, and digital networks, India has significantly enhanced connectivity, alleviated long-standing capacity constraints, and optimised logistical efficiency. These advancements have, in turn, generated substantial spillovers for national productivity and economic output. Crucially, this phase of development is defined not only by the accelerated pace of asset creation but also by a paradigm shift toward integrated, end-to-end infrastructure planning.

Budget 2024-25 takes this holistic approach forward by enhancing capital expenditure allocation to ₹12.2 lakh crore, though with a change in sub-sectoral focus to multi-modal connectivity, dedicated freight corridors, high-speed rail corridors, coastal cargo promotion, national waterways, viability gap funding (VGF) for manufacturing seaplanes, tourism infra, among others. The change in emphasis is only expected as economy matures with basic infrastructure in place and aspirational surge for quality over quantity.

NUDGE ON URBAN INFRA

Most satisfying is the nudge on urban infrastructure, empowering urban local bodies (ULBs) in tier-2 and beyond cities with right administrative capabilities, and incentives to augment resources from market-based

financing avenues. The Budget has broadened the incentives eligible for municipal bond issuance to ₹100 crore for issuance sizes of ₹1,000 crore and above. The extant AMRUT scheme

to remain in vogue, creating transitioning structure for ULBs attempting quality infrastructure at scale.

The proposal to set up

'Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund' to mitigate execution risks in projects that deter lenders from infrastructure sector is welcome enabler. With this guarantee fund, the cost of capital for infrastructure is likely to come down further, inviting public-private partnership (PPP) in infrastructure.

Given the long gestation period of infrastructure projects, the conventional source of funds like commercial banks remain a misfit due to inherent asset-liability mismatches. Resultantly, infrastructure lending's share in non-food credit has fallen sharply from 14.4 per cent in FY15 to 7.7 per cent in FY25 and further to 7.2 per cent (₹14.0 lakh crore) by end-November 2025. Although banks' infrastructure credit grew 2.8 per cent during April-November 2025, outpacing last year's 1.3 per cent, it lagged overall non-food credit growth (6.8 per cent). NBFC-IFCs now dominate infrastructure financing, with a ₹19.4 lakh crore loan book growing 24.8 per cent y-o-y as of end-September 2025. Given the changed resource flow, proposal to restructure public sector NBFCs like REC and PFC along with reviewing banking sector for aligning to next phase of growth is indeed an imperative.

Importantly, in FY25, out of the ₹35 lakh crore of household financial savings, more than one third (₹13.3 lakh crore) was allocated to Insurance, Provident and Pension (IPP) funds reflecting growing investor's appetite for non-bank assets.

Further, with the AUM of IPP investors currently at ₹120 lakh crore, and growth rate exceeding India's nominal GDP's growth, they offer a reliable source of patient capital that infra development needs. Therefore, channelling of these funds via capital markets and deepening of bond markets assumes paramount significance.

Going forward, India would require a blend of investment, infusion and innovation to propel its growth story ahead. This budget addresses all the boxes by incentivising investments, both foreign and domestic, technology upgradation for enterprises and cutting-edge innovation.

Duty-free import of inputs will give relief to seafood exporters

V Sajeet Kumar
Kochi

The Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI) has welcomed the Budget's approval to allow duty-free imports of 18 processing inputs used in seafood exports, raising the limit from 1 per cent to 3 per cent of the FOB value.

The eligible items include batter, bread crumbs, citric acid, food additives and other essential processing materials. The move is expected to significantly reduce processing costs and enhance the competitiveness of Indian seafood exports, said KN Raghavan, Secretary General, SEAI.



plychain economics. "Increasing the duty-free import allowance for seafood processing inputs provides material relief to cost structures at a time of significant global trade headwinds," he said.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES He noted that the decision to exempt fish caught in India's Exclusive Economic Zone

Precious metals complex pares losses

BEARS HOLD UPPER HAND. After losing over 10% in early trade, silver cuts losses to 4%; gold also follows suit, trimming losses to 3%

Subramani Ra Mancombu
Chennai

The precious metals complex continued to decline on Monday, but the movements in domestic and global markets were volatile as traders weighed in the latest hike in the CME Group margins for these metals.

Prospects of the US Fed turning hawkish and the dollar recovering, too, drove the complex lower. However, prices sashayed as some traders saw buying opportunities, though the bears seemed to have the upper hand currently.

In the morning, silver fell by over 10 per cent, gold by 7 per cent, platinum by 8 per cent and palladium by over 7 per cent as Friday's hammering of the metals continued. But mid-day, the white pre-

cious metals pared its losses to 4 per cent and the yellow metal to 3.5 per cent. The palladium group metals (PGMs) edged up marginally.

MARGIN HIKE

The CME Group's decision to hike the margins for gold futures on Monday to 8 per cent from 6 per cent and for silver to 15 per cent from 11 per cent unnerved investors. Platinum and palladium too will attract the same margin as silver.

Apurva Sheth, Head of Market Perspective and Research at Samco Securities, said from a price action perspective, the larger trend in gold remains clearly intact. The long-term structure continues to show higher highs and higher lows, and the recent decline looks more like a pause within an



ROOT CAUSE. The CME Group's decision to hike the margins for gold futures on Monday to 8% from 6% and for silver to 15% from 11% unnerved investors REUTERS

ongoing uptrend rather than the start of a reversal. "What seems increasingly likely is a phase of time-wise consolidation. Gold may spend the next few months moving within a broad range, capped near ₹1,80,779 (per 10 g) and supported around ₹1,56,185 and ₹1,32,294," he said.

Such ranges are common after sharp advances, allowing excess optimism to cool

off and positioning to reset, without damaging the underlying trend, said the Samco official.

Traders said investors are switching to bonds and currencies as they feel the new Fed chief Kevin Warsh will likely increase interest rates, which will lead to the strengthening of the dollar. The dollar index was up 0.4 per cent at 97.285.

At 2000 hours IST, gold was lower at ₹4,738 an ounce, down 3 per cent from Friday's close but up from ₹4,546.96 early in the morning. Gold April futures on COMEX recovered to ₹4,788.11 an ounce from ₹4,546.96 earlier in the day.

In the Mumbai spot market, gold closed higher at ₹1,48,748 per g, up from ₹1,42,270 at open and higher a tad from Sunday's close.

On the MCX, gold April futures recovered to ₹1,49,197 per g from ₹1,40,424 in the morning and higher than Sunday's closing prices.

CHINESE PREMIUM

Silver recovered to ₹82.27 an ounce. Silver March futures ruled at ₹81.89 an ounce with the market swinging between ₹71.2 and ₹87.97.

Spot gold prices in Mumbai closed at ₹2,59,500 a kg after

having opened at ₹2,36,496. It was still lower than Sunday's closing price of ₹2,65,751.

On the MCX, silver March futures dropped by recovered to ₹2,54,492 a kg from ₹2,28,002 earlier in the day. On Sunday, they ended at ₹2,65,652. On the Shanghai futures market, silver dropped to 21,255 yuan a kg (\$95.07 an ounce) with prices in China enjoying a premium owing to demand from multiple sectors.

Platinum slipped below \$2,000 earlier in the day, but recovered to \$2,138 an ounce. Palladium also recovered to \$1,735 an ounce after dropping to \$1,587.

Meanwhile, pointing to the COMEX report, traders said US multinational financial services firm JP Morgan closed its short positions in silver on Friday.

Bharat-VISTAAR, an AI tool that will integrate all digital agri infra

bl.explainer

KV Kurmanath
Hyderabad

What is Bharat-VISTAAR?

Bharat-VISTAAR (Virtually integrated system to access agricultural resources) is a multilingual AI tool proposed by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

It is designed to integrate the AgriStack portals and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) package on agricultural practices with AI systems. Its purpose is to enhance farm productivity, enable better decision-making for farmers and reduce risk through customised advisory support.

Why an AI tool?

Right now, a range of ag-

ri-tech experiments are underway across private and public organisations that use information technology and artificial intelligence to develop products and services that drive efficiency in the agri ecosystem.

From seed development to input management, from agri credit services to supply chain management, startups, traditional companies, non-governmental organisations and State and Central agricultural universities/research organisations are working on an array of projects, generating humongous amounts of data. But these efforts are largely operating in silos.

Bharat-VISTAAR aims to integrate these scattered resources to increase visibility.

How does this help farmers?

Right now, a range of ag-



FARMER FRIENDLY. Farmers will get access to verified, contextual and timely advisories rather than generic information

Farmers will get access to verified, contextual and timely advisories rather than generic information. By serving as a bridge, the tool aims to connect farmers directly with validated scientific research (the Indian Council of Agricultural Research package of practices) and digital records. This will help

farmers make informed decisions. Also, since the tool is multilingual, it is available in local languages, ensuring complex scientific data are translated into actionable, localised advice.

What is the role of AgriStack in this initiative?

AgriStack, a Central government initiative, is the foundational infrastructure that enables Bharat-VISTAAR. It is a digital backbone built jointly by the State and Central governments. It will enable the system to generate customised services, including the delivery of government schemes and affordable finance. AgriStack will also provide early warning systems to alert farmers to disasters such as pest attacks, drought and floods.

Will this system be limited to government services only?

No, it is designed to enable a wider ecosystem. The system uses standardised protocols (Unified Farmer Service Interface, or UFSI) that enable private entities to integrate with the platform via APIs (application program-

ming interfaces). Start-ups and private companies can request permission and access the digital architecture to develop innovative services, such as improved market connections and customised crop solutions. The idea is to go beyond isolated attempts and pilot projects to create wider offerings.

Is the farmer's data safe, and who owns it?

The farmer owns the data in the AgriStack system, with the States and Central government acting as fiduciaries. Sharing this information among the Centre, the States and various government departments is governed by laws such as the IT Act and the Aadhaar Act. If a private entity wants to access this data to provide a service, it must obtain the farmer's consent.

High-value crop status a turning point for cashew

AJ Vinayak
Mangaluru

With India's raw cashew nut (RCN) production remaining around 0.7 million tonnes (mt) per annum despite having a processing capacity of 3 mt, the Budget proposal to support high value crops such as cashew in coastal areas brings a ray of hope for stakeholders in the sector.

In her proposal, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, "To diversify farm outputs, increase productivity, enhance farmers' incomes and create new employment opportunities, we will support high value crops such as coconut, sandalwood, cocoa and cashew in our coastal areas."

"Agar trees in the North-East and nuts such as almonds, walnuts and pine nuts in our hilly regions will



also be supported," she added.

POSITIVE SIGNAL

Thanking the government for announcing a dedicated programme to make India self-reliant in raw cashew production, Bola Rahul Kamath, President, All-India Cashew Association, told *businessline* the association was requesting an increase in the grant for cashew cultivation, along with other nuts and dry fruits like almonds and pistachios. It is very much possible to grow other dry fruits and nuts in India.

Gunjan Vijay Jain, President of the Nuts and Dry Fruits Council (India), said the Budget sends a strong and positive signal for the nuts and dry fruits sector by recognising high-value agriculture as a key driver of farm income growth and export competitiveness. For NDFC(I) and stakeholders across the value chain, the focused support for cashew, almonds and walnuts is both timely and impactful.

The dedicated programme for raw cashew is particularly important as it addresses challenges around domestic availability, processing capacity and value addition.

Kalbavi Prakash Rao, Managing Partner of Kalbavi Cashews, Mangaluru, said India now has installed capacity to process 3 mt of RCN against its indigenous production of hardly 0.7 mt.

"Our domestic consumption is growing at 7 per cent

plus and the ingredient segment consumption is at 10 per cent. The government's intention to be self-reliant in raw cashew nuts is the need of the hour, and we will work with the government in making this possible," he said.

J Rajmohan Pillai, Chairman and Managing Director of Beta Group, which owns the NutKing brand, said the Indian cashew industry is witnessing a major revival after a prolonged period of decline and the loss of India's top export position to Vietnam.

Calling the Budget a "turning point for self-reliance and global leadership," Pillai said the elevation of cashew to a high value crop status marks a critical step toward reducing import dependence and positioning India as the global benchmark for premium cashews.

(With inputs from V Sajeet Kumar in Kochi)

Copper prices extended their slide and hit a three-month low on Monday as speculators pulled back from a market that raced to record highs last week, but losses were cushioned by positive factory data from China.

Benchmark three-month copper on the LME tumbled as much as 5.6 per cent during Asian trading to the weakest since January 9, eventually paring the losses to \$13,039 a tonne in official open-outcry trading, a fall of 0.9 per cent. "I'm still fundamentally constructive on copper, but what we saw last week was too much, too fast.

Nevertheless, broadly, lead is trading near a hurdle and the risk-reward ratio favours short position.

TRADE STRATEGY

Short lead futures (January) at ₹191. Target and stop-loss can be ₹185 and ₹198, respectively.

Copper prices extended their slide and hit a three-month low on Monday as speculators pulled back from a market that raced to record highs last week, but losses were cushioned by positive factory data from China.

India eyes self-sufficiency in cocoa production

AJ Vinayak
Mangaluru

At a time when India depends more on imports to meet its domestic demand, the government has come out with a proposal in Budget 2024-25 to make India self-reliant in cocoa production.

While presenting the Budget on Sunday, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a dedicated programme to make India self-reliant in raw cashew and cocoa production and enhance export competitiveness and transform Indian cashew and cocoa into premium global brands by 2030.

BV Satyanarayana, Managing Director, Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (Campco) Ltd, told *businessline* that cocoa production in India is estimated to be around 25,000-30,000 tonnes, where the demand is around 1.5 lakh tonnes (lt).

SR Satishchandra, Campco President, said there was an urgent need for an initiative like this as the country's demands were not met by domestic production.

ANDHRA'S SUPPORT Stating that Campco had been supplying quality saplings to farmers for the last 25 years, he said the government's move would help it expand cultivation of the crop further.

To expand cocoa cultivation, the Andhra Pradesh government is extending support price for the crop, he said.

Durga Prasad, Managing Director of the Hyderabad-based DP Cocoa Products Pvt Ltd, said, "I understand there will be some encouragement for cocoa farmers to produce more. Due to the EU FTA, chocolates can be imported free of duty into India. However, the customs duty is levied at 16.5 per cent on raw material cocoa beans import. It means that value

addition is happening outside India."

Chirag Jain, Partner, Agri & Allied offering leader, Food Processing Industry leader, Grant Thornton Bharat, said several key plantation crops were struggling with low productivity, limited area under cultivation, and high import dependency.

The renewed focus on crops such as cocoa, coconut and cashew will help the government reduce the import bill while enhancing

QUICKLY.

Lupin, TB Alliance in deal to develop Telacebec

Mumbai: Drugmaker Lupin is partnering with TB Alliance, a non-profit drug developer, for the clinical development and commercialisation of investigational drug Telacebec (Q203) for the treatment of multiple mycobacterial diseases including tuberculosis (TB), leprosy and buruli ulcer. TB Alliance will continue to lead the development process, while Lupin will support global manufacturing, regulatory affairs and supply chain to ensure global access to Telacebec, Lupin said. Ramesh Swaminathan, Lupin Executive Director, said, "By leveraging our manufacturing scale and global distribution capabilities alongside TB Alliance's deep expertise in drug development, we aim to enable timely and equitable access to Telacebec and contribute meaningfully to the global fight against tuberculosis, leprosy and Buruli ulcer." OUR BUREAU

Jet fuel consumption hits record high in January

SOARING DEMAND. ATF use rose by 5 per cent on a monthly and annual basis to hit 8,21,000 tonnes; international travel and new airport add to the surge

Rishi Ranjan Kala
New Delhi



SIGNIFICANT JUMP. The previous high was recorded in March 2025, when jet fuel usage hit 8,01,000 tonnes

JET FUEL USAGE

The previous high was recorded in March 2025, when jet fuel usage hit 8,01,000 tonnes.

Analysts attributed the surge to a spurt in international travel, particularly

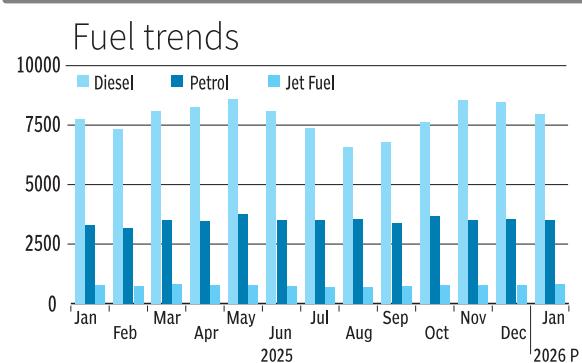
with airlines such as IndiGo, offering more flights to foreign locations. Besides, domestic travel is also appreciating, aided by a higher number of people preferring air travel. The opening of the Navi Mumbai International

Airport has also pushed up travel, consequently boosting demand for jet fuel, one of the analysts added.

Analysts and refiners express strong optimism about the continued growth in the demand for transport fuels

going ahead led by an expanding industrial and commercial base as well as growing affluence.

For instance, monthly average consumption of ATF rose by 2.71 per cent y-o-y to 737,000 tonnes in the 2025



calendar year. On the other hand, diesel consumption fell by almost 6 per cent m-o-m to around 7.98 million tonnes (mt).

However, it was higher by more than 3 per cent on an annual basis.

An analyst explained that November and December last year were sort of outlier months in terms of diesel usage. October-December normally is high on mining and

interest rate cuts. Petrol consumption last month fell by almost 2 per cent m-o-m to 3.50 mt. However, on an annual basis the key consumption fuel of the personal vehicles category rose by roughly 6 per cent.

Rising affluence in rural and semi urban areas, which is pushing up demand for two and four wheelers, is also supporting petrol usage.

Puneet Kumar, Partner Energy sector at EY Parthenon recently said that over the last three years (ending 2025), India's refined products production (3.3 per cent CAGR) and consumption (3.5 per cent CAGR) has increased across most major fuels.

These trends have been shaped by discounted crude inflows, record refinery utilisation (over 105 per cent) and rising refined product exports, he noted.

PE-VC investments plunge in January as deal volumes stay flat

Rohan Das
Chennai

Despite almost similar number of deals, private equity-venture capital (PE-VC) investments dropped nearly 3x year-on-year in terms of value in January 2026.

The value of PE-VC investments in January 2026 stood at \$1.49 billion across 104 deals as against \$3.99 billion investments across 105 deals in January of 2025, as per data from Venture Intelligence.

SHARP DECLINE
The drop in investments is driven by a sharp decrease in the mega deals (over \$100 million) with only three such deals this month compared

The investment dip is driven by decrease in mega deals to just three this month compared with 11 deals in the same month last year

to 11 in the same month last year. On a sequential basis, however, the value of investments were down marginally from \$1.8 billion in December 2025 across 78 deals.

Arun Natarajan, Founder, Venture Intelligence, said that the fact that highly experienced international investors like Warburg Pincus have chosen to strike two deals in a month are indicative of the increasingly competitive nature of the Indian market. The largest deal in the month was the \$133 million that Avance Financial Services raised through a rights issue from Warburg Pincus, Kedaara Capital and Mubadala Investment. Fleur Hotels' \$106 million raise from hospitality major Lemon Tree Hotels, and agri logistics firm Arya Collateral raising \$80 million, were other major deals.

As for the timeline of investments, investments in early-stage companies stood at \$341 million in investments across 57 deals while growth stage investments went down to \$234 million. Late stage investments also went down to \$747 million from \$1.4 billion.

PROFIT SURGE
The staffing major reported a 29 per cent year-on-year increase in consolidated net profit at ₹62 crore for Q3FY26, even as total revenue declined 2 per cent to ₹3,930 crore.

The divergence, Bhatia

noted, reflects a deliberate move towards a capital-light, return-on-equity-driven workforce platform.

Queso Corp's Q3 performance points to a structural reset rather than a cyclical slowdown, with profitability increasingly delinked from pure headcount growth.

Even as the company added 4,000 associates in its general staffing business during the quarter, CEO Lohit Bhatia said the focus has decisively shifted towards cash efficiency and value-led growth.

HIGHER MARGIN
In contrast, the IT professional staffing business, with around 7,000 contractors in India, now contributes nearly 30 per cent of Queso's EBITDA at a significantly higher margin of 12.5 per cent.

The international business, spanning the Middle East, Singapore, Malaysia,

the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam has scaled steadily over the past six to seven years and employs about 6,000 contractors. This segment contributes around 20 per cent of profits, with EBITDA margins of 7 per cent.

GENERAL STAFFING
Operationaly, Q3 was impacted by a combination of seasonality and regulatory disruption. October saw a

The labour codes announcement led to a broad-based pause in hiring across sectors, including consumer durables, banking, retail and telecom

"When such a large regulatory change happens, customers first stop to understand the implications, rework payroll structures, and assess cost changes. Only after that do they resume hiring," Bhatia said.

As a result, several growth conversations were deferred from Q3 to Q4.

"As we move through January and February, we are seeing momentum pick up and expect this to accelerate in the fourth quarter," he said.

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February 07, 2026

Time : 09.00 am Onwards

Venue : St. Teresa's College, Kochi, Park Avenue, Marine Drive, Ernakulam, Kerala 682011.

Regional Finale - Bengaluru

February 08, 2026

Time : 09.00 am Onwards

Venue : Kristu Jayanti University, K.Narayananapura, Kothanur, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560077.

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