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FROM REFORM TO
TRANSFORMATION



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***This budget is the
foundation for our
journey towards a
Viksit Bharat by 2047***

श्री नरेंद्र मोदी

Prime Minister
Shri Narendra Modi



My dear countrymen, Namaskar.

Today's budget is historic; it reflects a powerful reflection of the country's Nari Shakti (women power). As a woman Finance Minister, Nirmala Ji has set a new record by presenting the country's budget for the ninth consecutive time. This budget is a highway of immense opportunities. This budget realizes the dreams of the present and strengthens the foundation of India's bright future. This budget is a strong base for our high flight towards a Developed India (Viksit Bharat) of 2047.

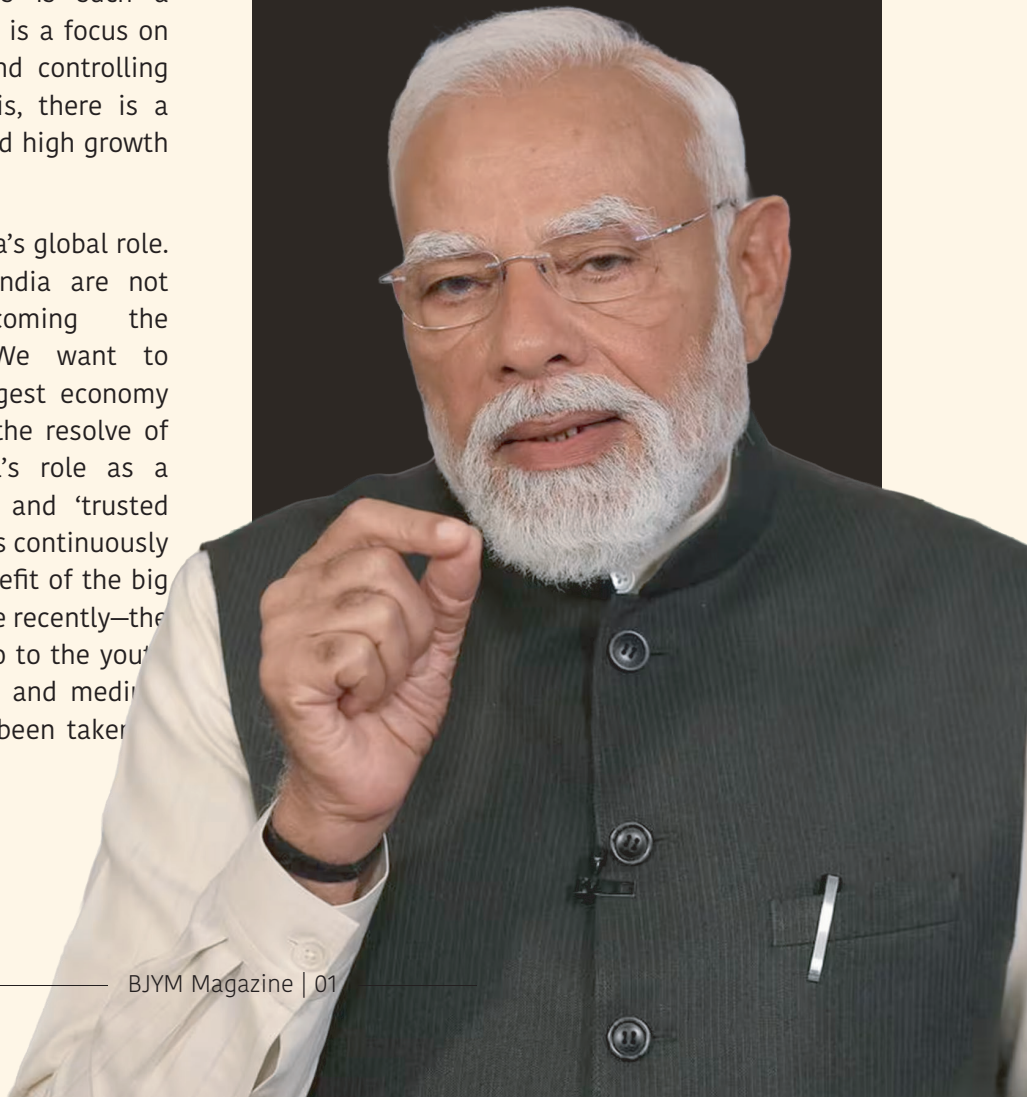
The Reform Express that India is riding today will get new energy and new speed from this budget. The path-breaking reforms that have been made give the open sky to the courageous and talented youth of an aspirational India to fly. This budget realizes the vision of trust-based governance and human-centric economy. This is such a unique budget in which there is a focus on reducing the fiscal deficit and controlling inflation, and along with this, there is a coordination of high capex and high growth in the budget.

This budget re-empowers India's global role. The 140 crore citizens of India are not satisfied just by becoming the fastest-growing economy. We want to become the world's third-largest economy as soon as possible. This is the resolve of crores of countrymen. India's role as a 'trusted democratic partner' and 'trusted quality supplier' of the world is continuously increasing. The maximum benefit of the big trade deals that India has done recently—the mother of all deals—should go to the youth of India and to India's small and medium industries; major steps have been taken in the budget in this direction.



Remarks of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi

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In this budget, an ambitious roadmap has been presented for Make in India and the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan to gain new momentum. The strength with which support has been given to the newly emerging industries, i.e., sunrise sectors, in this budget is unprecedented. Bio-Pharma Shakti Mission, Semiconductor Mission 2.0, Electronic Component Manufacturing Scheme, construction of Rare Earth Corridor, emphasis on critical minerals, new scheme in the textile sector, promotion of high-tech tool manufacturing, creating champion MSMEs—these are futuristic and take care of the current and future needs of the country. The support that MSMEs and our small and cottage industries have received in this budget will give them new strength to become local to global.

Many big steps have been taken in the budget to strengthen infrastructure:

- Dedicated Freight Corridor
- Expansion of waterways across the country
- High-speed rail corridor
- Special attention to the development of Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities and promoting municipal bonds to give cities a strong economic base; all these steps will further accelerate the journey of Developed India.

The biggest capital of any country is its citizens. In the past years, our government has made unprecedented investment in enhancing the potential of the citizens of the country. Our effort has been to continuously give strength to Skill, Scale, and Sustainability. As Nirmala Ji said in Parliament today, this is a Youth Power Budget. It contains the thinking of the youth, the dreams of the youth, the resolve of the youth, and also the speed of the youth. The provisions made in the budget will create leaders, innovators, and creators in different sectors. Through the creation of medical hubs, through allied health professionals, by promoting the Orange Economy (i.e., audio-visuals and gaming), by encouraging tourism, and through the Khelo India Mission, doors of new opportunities will open for the youth. A major tax exemption has also been announced to

make India the world's data center hub. I especially congratulate the youth of India for this budget because it will give a big boost to employment generation. I am very happy that solid steps have also been taken in this budget to promote tourism, especially in the North East. The foundation of balanced development has also been strengthened in this budget by making different states of India powerful.

More than 10 crore women in our country are associated with Self Help Groups, and it has been a very successful campaign. Priority has been given in the budget to creating a modern ecosystem of Self Help Groups manufactured by women and operated by women. The effort is that Goddess Lakshmi arrives in every home. The campaign to build new hostels for female students in every district will also make education accessible.

.....
India's role as a 'trusted democratic partner' and 'trusted quality supplier' of the world is continuously increasing.

Our government has always given top priority to India's agriculture, dairy sector, and fisheries. In this budget too, many important steps have been taken for the farmers associated with the production of coconut, cashew, cocoa, and sandalwood. The 'Bharat Vistar AI' tool will help farmers a lot by providing information in their own language. By promoting entrepreneurship in fisheries and animal husbandry, more opportunities for employment and self-employment will be created in the villages themselves.

This budget is ambitious and it also addresses the aspirations of the country. Once again, I heartily congratulate Nirmala Ji and her team for this futuristic budget, for this sensitive budget, and for the budget that ensures the welfare of the village, the poor, and the farmer.

Source: narendramodi.in



From economic reforms to infrastructure expansion, from youth empowerment to social welfare, this Budget reflects strong intent backed by concrete action. This is a future-ready, growth-oriented Budget for every Indian.

Source: Post on X

Remarks of the BJP President Shri Nitin Nabin



The Union Budget 2026–27 arrives at a pivotal moment in India’s journey toward becoming a developed nation. At a time when the global economy is navigating uncertainty, geopolitical shifts, and technological disruption, India stands out as a beacon of stability, growth, and aspiration. This year’s budget reflects not merely an annual financial exercise but a carefully crafted roadmap aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047. It demonstrates the Government’s unwavering commitment to building a strong, resilient, and self-reliant India while empowering its greatest strength, the youth.

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, India has embraced a governance model that combines fiscal prudence with bold developmental ambition. The Union Budget 2026–27 continues this approach by prioritising capital expenditure, strengthening infrastructure, and investing in future-ready sectors such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, biotechnology, and advanced manufacturing. These investments are not simply about economic expansion; they are about building the foundational capabilities that will define India’s role in the global economy for decades to come.

Message
from the
BJYM National
President
Shri Tejasvi Surya

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For the youth of India, this budget carries a message of opportunity and confidence. India is the world's youngest major nation, and the energy, creativity, and aspirations of our young population are central to the country's development story. Initiatives aimed at strengthening the education-to-employment ecosystem, promoting entrepreneurship, expanding skill development, and supporting emerging sectors such as AVGC (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics) reflect a forward-looking strategy to prepare young Indians for the industries of the future. By nurturing innovation and enterprise, the Government is enabling young citizens not just to seek employment, but to become creators of opportunity and drivers of growth.

Equally significant is the emphasis on inclusive development. The budget reinforces the principle that economic progress must reach every segment of society, farmers, women, small entrepreneurs, and the middle class. From strengthening rural infrastructure and supporting agricultural innovation to expanding social welfare programmes and promoting women-led development, the policy framework seeks to ensure that India's growth story is broad-based and sustainable. This approach reflects the guiding philosophy of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas.

The focus on infrastructure development remains one of the most powerful engines of India's transformation. Record investments in roads, railways, logistics corridors, waterways, and digital connectivity are not merely physical assets; they are instruments of economic empowerment. They reduce costs, improve productivity, create employment, and integrate regions that were previously left behind in the development process. For young entrepreneurs and professionals across Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, these investments open new possibilities for growth and innovation.

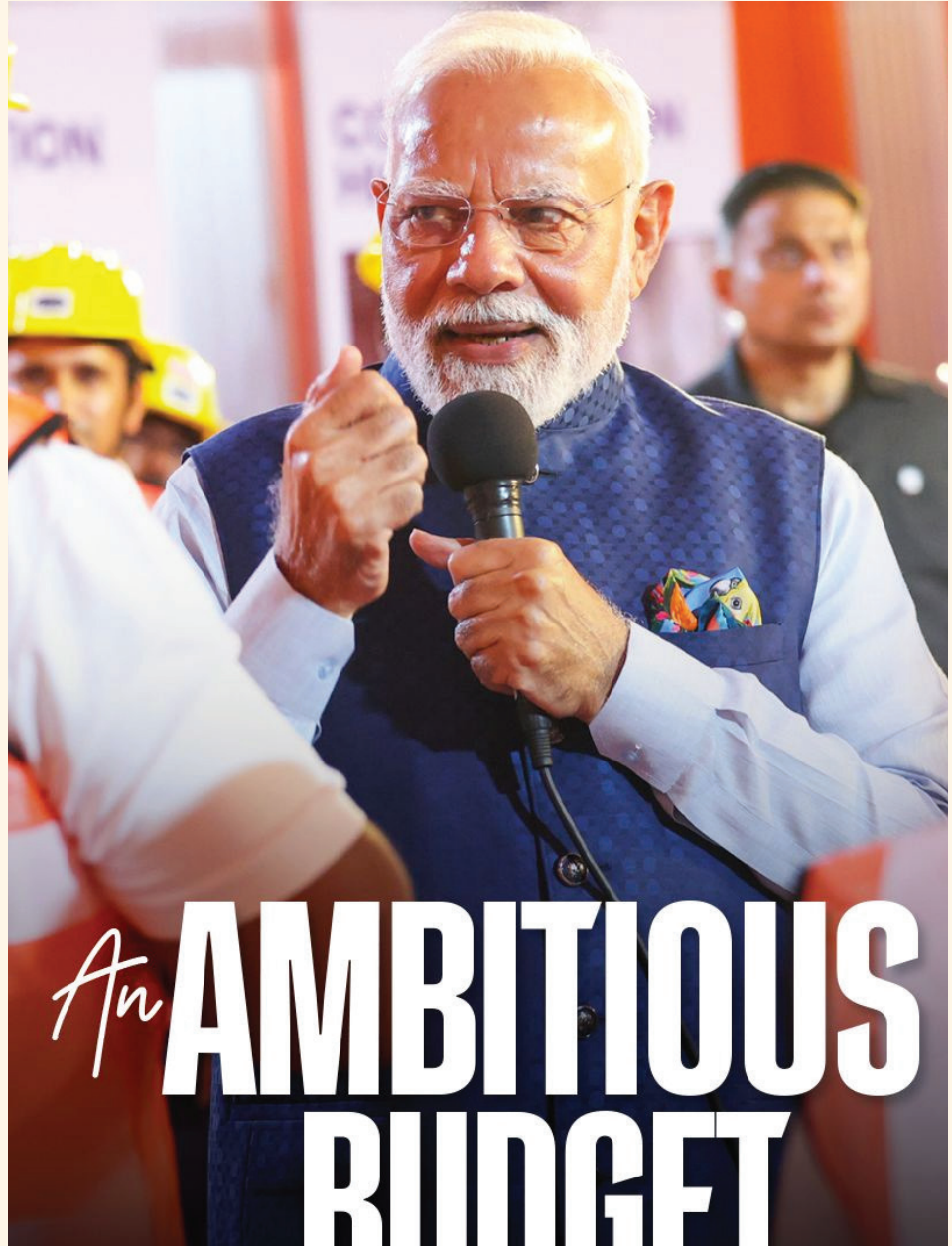
As we move forward in the Kartavya Kaal, the youth of India have a historic responsibility. The vision of Viksit Bharat cannot be achieved by government policy alone; it requires the active participation of millions of young Indians who are willing to

innovate, build, and serve the nation with dedication. The Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha remains committed to mobilising this youthful energy and transforming it into a powerful force for nation-building. Together, with vision, discipline, and collective effort, we will realise the dream of a strong, prosperous, and developed India.

Vande Mataram!

Tejasvi Surya

MP Lok Sabha,
Bengaluru South



The Union Budget 2026-27 must be understood not merely as a financial statement but as a strategic document that reflects India's long-term developmental priorities. In recent years, India's economic policymaking has increasingly moved away from short-termism toward structural transformation. The current budget continues this trajectory by combining fiscal discipline with sustained investment in infrastructure, technology, human capital, and institutional reforms. In doing so, it attempts to position India firmly on the path toward becoming a developed nation by 2047.

The global economic environment today is marked by volatility and uncertainty. Persistent geopolitical tensions, supply-chain disruptions, energy insecurity, and rising protectionism have reshaped the international economic order. In such circumstances, many economies have resorted to reactive policies aimed at short-term relief. India's approach, however, has been different. Instead of abandoning fiscal prudence or relying heavily on consumption-driven stimulus, the government has chosen to strengthen the economy's productive capacity through sustained public investment. The continued emphasis on capital expenditure reflects this strategic choice.

Infrastructure development remains the central pillar of India's growth strategy. Over the past decade, public capital expenditure has expanded significantly, enabling large-scale investments in roads, railways, ports, logistics networks, and digital infrastructure. The Budget 2026-27 sustains this momentum, recognising that durable economic expansion requires strong physical and institutional foundations. Infrastructure does not

merely facilitate mobility; it lowers logistics costs, improves competitiveness, integrates regional markets, and stimulates private investment. In a country as vast and diverse as India, infrastructure also serves as a powerful instrument of economic inclusion, connecting smaller towns and rural regions to national and global markets.

Equally important is the growing emphasis on technological capability. The global economy is undergoing a profound transformation driven by advances in artificial intelligence, semiconductor manufacturing, biotechnology, and digital infrastructure. Recognising this shift, the budget allocates resources to strengthen India's presence in emerging sectors that will shape the future of global production. Initiatives related to semiconductor manufacturing, the IndiaAI Mission, and investments in digital infrastructure are not merely industrial policies; they represent a broader effort to secure technological sovereignty and enhance India's strategic resilience in an increasingly competitive world.



Another notable aspect of the budget is its focus on the country's demographic potential. India's youth population represents a unique opportunity, but it also requires sustained investment in education, skills, and employment generation. The emphasis on strengthening the education-to-employment ecosystem reflects a recognition that traditional academic pathways must be complemented by practical skills, innovation, and entrepreneurship. By promoting emerging sectors such as Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC), as well as encouraging start-ups and digital enterprises, the policy framework seeks to align young talent with the evolving demands of the global economy.

At the same time, the budget underscores the importance of inclusive growth. Economic expansion must translate into improved living standards for all sections of society. Policies supporting farmers, women-led development, rural entrepreneurship, and small enterprises aim to broaden the base of growth. Programmes that enhance rural infrastructure, promote agricultural innovation, and strengthen cooperative institutions are intended to increase productivity and income opportunities in rural India. Similarly, initiatives aimed at expanding women's workforce participation and supporting women entrepreneurs underscore the understanding that sustainable growth requires the full participation of half the population.

The budget also attempts to balance developmental ambition with fiscal responsibility. Fiscal consolidation remains an important objective, as macroeconomic stability is essential for long-term growth. By maintaining a calibrated fiscal deficit path while continuing to invest in productive sectors, the Government seeks to preserve investor confidence and ensure that public finances remain sustainable. Fiscal discipline in this context is not an end in itself but a means to maintain economic credibility and stability in an uncertain global environment.

An equally important dimension of the budget is its effort to improve the ease of doing business and strengthen institutional efficiency. Simplification of tax procedures, rationalisation of compliance requirements, and digitalisation of administrative processes aim to reduce friction within the economic system.

Beyond economic policy, the budget reflects a broader vision of national development. The idea of Viksit Bharat is not limited to higher GDP growth; it encompasses improvements in infrastructure, human development, technological capability, environmental sustainability, and social cohesion. Achieving this vision requires coordinated efforts across sectors and sustained commitment over decades. The policies announced in the budget represent incremental but meaningful steps in that direction.

Ultimately, the significance of this budget lies in its long-term orientation. It reflects a governance philosophy that prioritises capability building over short-term populism and structural reform over symbolic measures. In a world characterised by uncertainty, such an approach offers a measure of stability and direction. The journey toward Viksit Bharat will be long and demanding, but budgets such as this one seek to ensure that the foundations for that journey are steadily and carefully laid.

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For seven decades after Independence, the North East remained on the margins of India's developmental consciousness, relegated to a footnote in planning documents, its eight states viewed through the narrow prism of insurgency rather than opportunity. Today, that paradigm has been fundamentally shattered by the transformative leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, who has replaced long-standing apathy with a vision of holistic prosperity. By operationalising the "Ashta-Lakshmi" framework, the government has transitioned these states from being seen as "troubled borderlands" into becoming the very vanguard of a rising Bharat.

This historic turnaround is powered by unprecedented investments in massive infrastructure networks in roads, rail and air, the establishment of high-tech corridors like Assam's new semiconductor facility, and a series of landmark peace treaties that have traded insurgency for the stability of the ballot. Anchored by a three-fold surge in the DoNER budget and a decisive shift toward people-centric governance, the Northeast is no longer just catching up- it has emerged as the principal growth engine driving India's journey toward 2047.

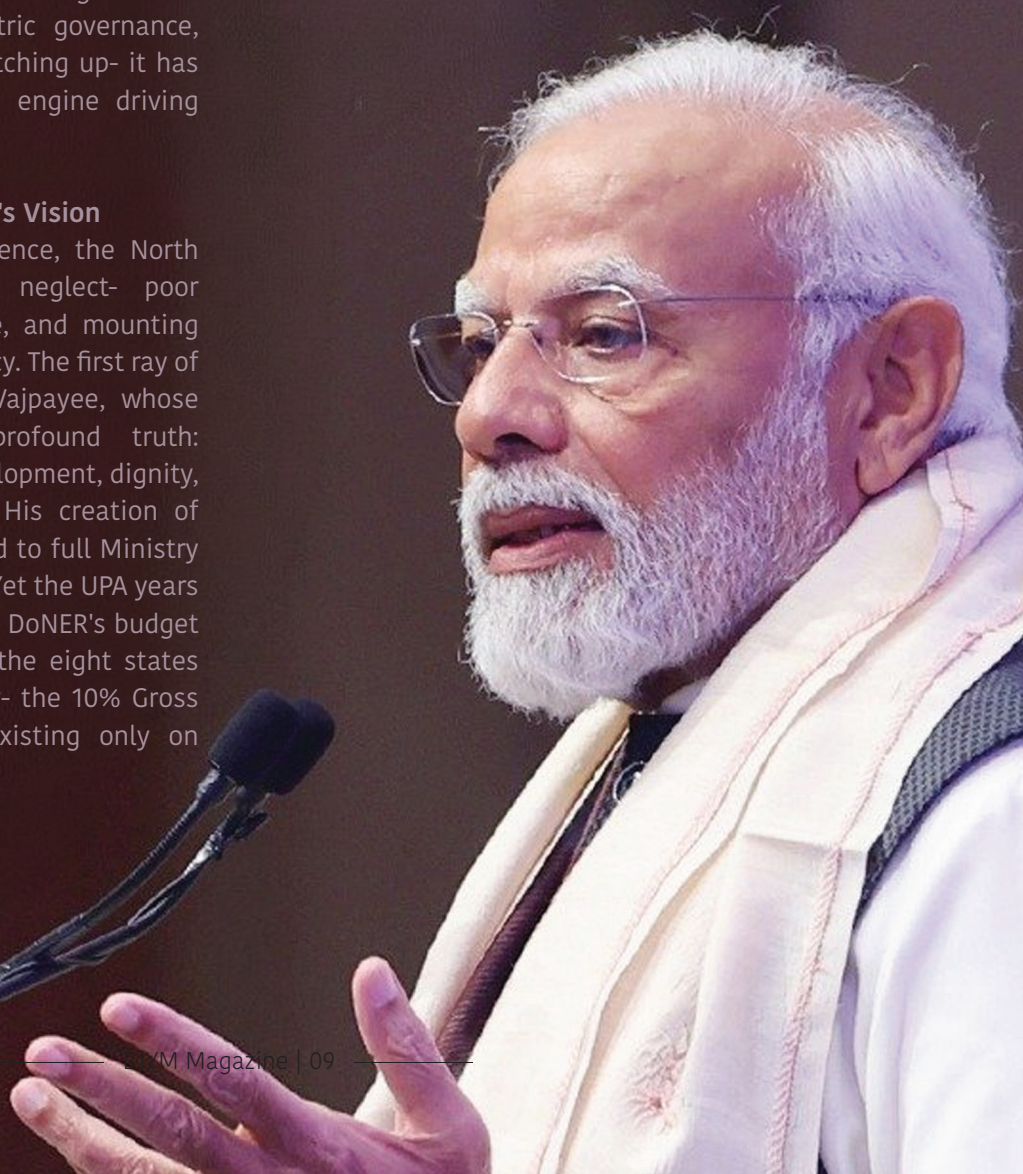
From Nehru's Neglect to Vajpayee's Vision

For seven decades post-Independence, the North East languished in systematic neglect- poor connectivity, absent infrastructure, and mounting disillusionment that bred insurgency. The first ray of hope emerged with Atal Bihari Vajpayee, whose statesmanship recognised a profound truth: national integration demands development, dignity, and dialogue in equal measure. His creation of DoNER in September 2001, elevated to full Ministry status in May 2004, was visionary. Yet the UPA years squandered this legacy. By 2013-14, DoNER's budget stood at a mere ₹2,332 crore for the eight states covering 7.9% of India's geography- the 10% Gross Budgetary Support mechanism existing only on paper, not in practice.

From Frontiers to Forefront The Rise of the Ashta-Lakshmi in the Modi Era

Shri Biplab Kumar Deb

Member of Parliament
(Lok Sabha), Tripura West &
Former Chief Minister of
Tripura



The Modi Revolution: 2014-2026

In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced a fundamentally different vision: he saw the Northeast not as a problem to be managed, but as an opportunity to be unleashed. His comprehensive approach has addressed physical connectivity, digital infrastructure, security, and cultural recognition simultaneously.

This governance transcends mere budgetary allocations; it represents a philosophical commitment to regional dignity. The North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS), with a 2026-27 allocation of ₹ 2,500 crore, anchors transformative projects connecting remote valleys to opportunity. PM-DevINE, allocated ₹2,300 crore, functions as a flexible instrument for region-specific needs- from Tripura's bamboo value chains to Sikkim's organic clusters. For our civilizational core, the tribal communities, the PM Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana ensures development reaches the last mile with a substantial increase in support. The Vibrant Villages Programme (with a ₹300 crore second-phase allocation) revitalises border hamlets, while the North Eastern Council operates with an expanded mandate of ₹825 crore. Each of these schemes is a step ahead in the third Kartavya in this year's Budget- "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas".

Beyond land, Budget 2026-2027 opens frontiers through 20 National Waterways and ₹2,500 crore fisheries push under PMMSY. Most significantly, the ₹27,120 crore Tata semiconductor hub in Assam marks our entry into global high-tech value chains. In December 2025, Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji laid the foundation stone of an ammonia-urea fertiliser project in Namrup, Assam, paving the way for greater investment and development of the region. Since 2014, over ₹5.74 lakh crore has been invested via the 10% GBS framework, and DoNER's budget has grown from ₹2,030.97 crore to ₹6,812.30 crore, a more than three-fold increase. Between 2021 and 2026 alone, the Centre spent over ₹3.46 lakh crore on regional

infrastructure. This architecture, which has become truly tangible under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, respects our uniqueness while mainstreaming our aspirations, proving that India's rise is incomplete without the Northeast rising alongside it

Connecting the Northeast: Breaking Geography's Shackles

The transformation of physical connectivity under Prime Minister Modi ji is unparalleled. The national highway network has expanded by 60%, from 91,287 km in 2014 to over 1.46 lakh km today, turning once-impossible journeys into routine commutes. Air connectivity has undergone a similar revolution in the region, with the number of operational airports nearly doubling from 9 to 17. The UDAN scheme has democratized travel- Guwahati has emerged as the regional hub, while Agartala, Dibrugarh, and Imphal serve as crucial nodes.

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Budget 2026-27 has introduced a revolutionary vision for the Northeast through the "Purvodaya" initiative and the Buddhist Circuit Development Scheme.
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Railway investments have seen a monumental five-fold jump, soaring from an annual average of ₹2,122 crore (2009-14) to ₹11,486 crore in 2026-27. With projects worth ₹72,468 crore underway and 96% electrification achieved, the launch of the country's first Vande Bharat Sleeper between Howrah and Guwahati in January 2026 by the Prime Minister marks a new era of speed and dignity. Strategically, the

Budget 2026-27 announcement of a 40-kilometre underground rail link through the "Chicken's Neck" between Tin Mile Haat and Rangapani secures our vital lifeline against all vulnerabilities. This is nation-building in the Modi era, where connectivity for the North-East is a priority, not a liability, and "Sabka Vikas" is a tangible reality.

Peace: The Foundation of Progress

Development without peace is impossible. Since 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji has fundamentally shifted the counter-insurgency paradigm from mere security operations to a compassionate model of dialogue and development. The results are historic: over 10,000 insurgents have surrendered, and AFSPA has been completely

withdrawn from Tripura and Meghalaya, and removed from 85% of Assam.

The landmark Naga Framework Agreement (2015) and the Bodo Accord (2020)- which saw 4,881 cadres disarm-laid the foundation for this stability. In Tripura, the Bru-Reang Accord (2020) ended a decades-long refugee crisis, settling 37,584 individuals with a support package worth ₹793.65 crore. Peace further deepened with the Karbi Anglong Agreement (2021) and the transformative 2023 ULFA Peace Accord, which is backed by a ₹5,000 crore development fund, including a ₹500 crore instalment in the current 2026-27 Budget.

A moment of personal pride was witnessing the September 2024 NLFT-ATTF Agreement, where 328 cadres joined the mainstream, supported by a ₹250 crore tribal development package. Most recently, on February 5, 2026, the Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah ji presided over the historic tripartite agreement establishing the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA). By granting executive and financial autonomy to six eastern districts in Nagaland, this pact serves as a masterclass in cooperative federalism by the Modi government, bridging developmental divides while maintaining state integrity.

Complementing these milestones is the historic restoration of democratic stability in Manipur. The swearing-in of Shri Yumnam Khemchand Singh as Chief Minister on February 4, 2026, alongside Deputy CMs from the Kuki-Zo and Naga communities, reflects a profound commitment to inclusive governance. These constructive agreements have replaced the “bullet with the ballot”, ensuring the Northeast is no longer a “disturbed” periphery but a vital partner in Bharat’s journey toward a \$5 trillion economy. Under Prime Minister Modi’s resolute leadership, we have proven that when development becomes tangible, insurgency loses its appeal, paving the way for a future defined by dignity and integration.

Tripura's Transformation: A Personal Journey

During my tenure as the Chief Minister of Tripura, I witnessed how Prime Minister Modi’s governance transcends bureaucracy to embrace empathy. A defining challenge was the PMAY-G eligibility in Tripura. A large number of rural families resided in traditional dwellings with bamboo walls and tin roofs- structures necessitated by our high-rainfall climate yet technically disqualified from “kutcha” status under the national criteria. This classification gap left thousands of deserving citizens without support.



Recognising this local reality, we appealed to MoRD for a geo-climatic exception. With characteristic decisiveness, the Hon'ble Prime Minister personally intervened to modify the definition specifically for Tripura and Assam. This historic sensitivity bore fruit on November 14, 2021, when the Prime Minister transferred over ₹709 crore to 1.47 lakh beneficiaries. Before the amendment to the eligibility criteria, only 46,000 beneficiaries were eligible for the scheme. After the amendment, that number rose to a record 4.5 lakh people who now received the dignified and safe housing under PMAY(G) that they truly deserve. Witnessing the hope in their eyes reinforced a vital truth: under Shri Narendra Modi ji, development is achieved, not through a narrow "one-size-fits-all" approach but through a compassionate, adaptive mission that respects regional diversity, ensuring every citizen lives with the dignity they deserve.

The 2026 Vision: Purvodaya and Cultural Renaissance

Budget 2026-27 has introduced a revolutionary vision for the Northeast through the "Purvodaya" initiative and the Buddhist Circuit Development Scheme. Recognising our region as a profound civilizational confluence, this scheme integrates the sacred Theravada and Mahayana traditions across six states: Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim. By prioritizing the preservation of monasteries and upgrading pilgrim amenities, the government, under Modiji's leadership, is actively positioning the Northeast as a global spiritual destination. For Tripura, home to the historic sites of Pillak and Dhamma Dipa, this represents an unprecedented opportunity to turn heritage into a sustainable engine for local employment.

This cultural renaissance is physically anchored by the Purvodaya outlook, which views the eastern flank- from the Northeast to Bihar and West Bengal- as a singular, integrated growth engine. A flagship of this integration is the Varanasi-Siliguri high-speed rail corridor, which was recently confirmed to be extended to Guwahati. This "bullet train" connectivity will dramatically compress travel times, serving as a living pulse of national progress.

It reaffirms that Prime Minister Modi remains resolute in his commitment to safeguarding Bharat's cultural primacy, ensuring our ancient traditions remain the heartbeat of a modern, Viksit Bharat.

Looking Forward: From Ashta-Lakshmi to Viksit Bharat

The "Ashta-Lakshmi" framework, championed by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has redefined the Northeast through eight pillars of prosperity: agriculture, commerce, education, health, infrastructure, culture, environment, and governance. This vision manifests the "EAST" mantra- Empower, Act, Strengthen, and Transform- ensuring the region is no longer a "disturbed" frontier but a flourishing front-runner.

The results of this philosophical shift are grounded in record-breaking data. Between 2015 and 2022, the Northeast achieved a robust GSDP CAGR of 8.17%, frequently outpacing the national average and traditional economic hubs. In this new era, smaller states are setting the pace; notably, Sikkim has reached a staggering per capita GDP of ₹7.07 Lakh as of 2025-2026, while states like Mizoram consistently lead in growth percentages. This performance proves that sustained investment and policy support have successfully transitioned the Northeast into being a high-growth economic corridor.

As we march toward Viksit Bharat 2047, the Northeast stands as a driver of national progress, not a passenger. The transition is profound: a region once synonymous with insurgency is now a symbol of innovation and the strategic gateway to Southeast Asia. For me, as a son of Tripura, the true meaning of Ashta-Lakshmi lies in this holistic empowerment- honouring our heritage while securing a future where no citizen or region is left behind. Under the leadership of Shri Narendra Modi ji, our best days are not just ahead; they are already unfolding.

As a country making its way to emerge as a fully developed global economy by 2047, it is of utmost importance for Bharat to strengthen national security and take the necessary steps to ensure that all our progress is protected from the shadows of instability. Keeping this in mind, the recently presented Union Budget for 2026-27 signalled a clear strategy to construct a more technologically advanced and vigilant security architecture. This has been done through various proposed measures to strengthen the Intelligence Bureau (IB), India's premier internal intelligence agency. For long, the IB has been the nation's quiet sentinel monitoring multiple forms of domestic threats, ranging from terrorism to subversion.

Significantly, the budget proposed a dramatic increase in funding for the Intelligence Bureau, particularly for capital investments. This initiative is a deliberate effort to integrate security with India's growth narrative, recognising that national security is foundational to prosperity. Drawing from years of observing global security trends and India's evolving role on the world stage, this budget positions the country to confront a hybrid form of geopolitical turmoil while advancing its developmental goals.

In this budget, the IB's allocation has jumped to Rs 6,782.43 crore, a hefty 63 per cent rise from the revised estimate of Rs 4,159.11 crore for the previous year. Some analyses put the increase at 74 per cent when benchmarked against the original 2025-26 estimate of Rs 3,893 crore. But the real story lies in the capital expenditure, which has skyrocketed from around Rs 230 crore to Rs 2,549.54 crore, marking an eightfold expansion, the largest infrastructure investment in IB's history.

Capital spending focuses on enduring assets such as advanced surveillance tools, cyber defence systems, and data analytics platforms, rather than on day-to-day operations. This shift signals a departure from routine funding toward transformative upgrades, equipping the IB to anticipate and neutralise risks in a world where threats blend physical attacks with digital subversion.

Modernising Internal Security

The Intelligence Push in Budget 2026

**Sanket Oswal and
Sougat Chakraborty**

Authors are Public Policy Professionals

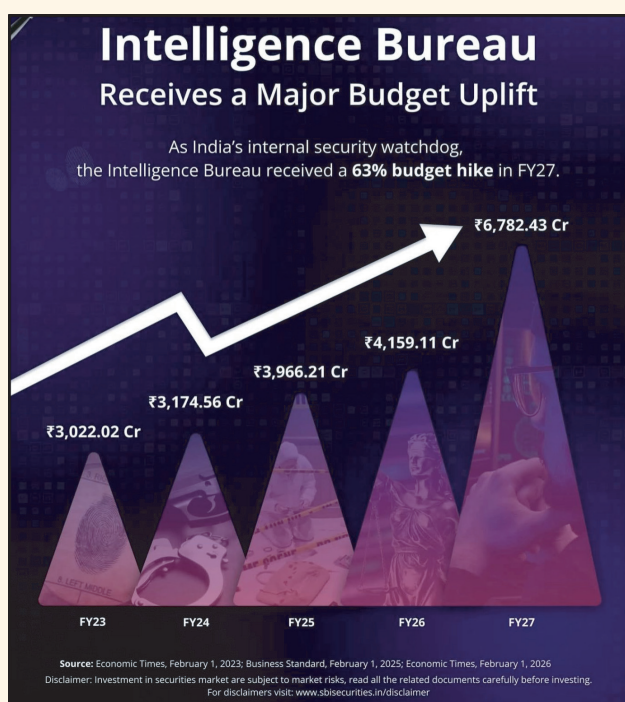


This infusion comes against a backdrop of sobering events that laid bare certain vulnerabilities, notably the terror strike in Pahalgam on 22 April 2025, where militants crossed from Pakistan and unleashed violence in the serene Baisaran meadows of Anantnag. This attack, which claimed 26 lives, including locals and visitors, was a stark reminder of porous borders and the need for sharper real-time intelligence.

Then came the November blast at Delhi's Red Fort, executed by a sophisticated network involving educated professionals, including doctors from Jammu and Kashmir. The National Investigation Agency uncovered a "white-collar" module, arresting figures like Dr. Muzammil Shakeel Ganaie and others linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba offshoots.

These incidents weren't isolated failures; they highlighted gaps in tracking urban radicalisation, cross-border infiltration and terror financing. This year's budget gave a clear response: by channelling funds into capital projects, the government aims to bolster predictive capabilities and financial tracking tools to dismantle terror-financing networks without resorting to physical raids, thereby cutting off the "proxy war" supply lines used by hostile neighbours.

The increase in the budget for IB should not be seen in isolation, but as part of advanced preparation to ensure the nation is fully equipped to handle future internal security threats. The effectiveness of the budget can be assessed by ensuring that the funds are appropriately utilised for the Intelligence Bureau. India is surrounded by difficult neighbours, and the Indo-Pacific region is in turmoil. Hence, the Government must focus on national stability and ensure that bad actors cannot misuse our resources to cause harm, chaos and loss of innocent lives. Increased funding enables better Human Intelligence (HUMINT) networks in border villages and advanced Technical Intelligence (TECHINT) capabilities (e.g., intercepting communications in border areas). A well-funded IB can more efficiently deploy resources to protect the nation's economic assets, such as India's research centres (space, nuclear, pharma), from theft of intellectual property. Intelligence sharing is the biggest currency in the world of intelligence agencies. The more capability India has to monitor the Indian Ocean Region or South Asian terror networks, the more leverage it has in diplomatic negotiations with global powers that rely on that data. With advanced, homegrown technology (funded by this budget), India can trade high-quality intelligence on regional terror groups with partners such as the US, UK, and the G-7 nations. The budget facilitates better integration between the IB (internal) and the Indian Armed Forces. If the IB can guarantee internal stability, the Indian Armed Forces can focus 100% of its resources on the external borders (LAC/LoC) rather than divert troops to internal counter-insurgency operations. Looking back at the end of this decade, one of the biggest turning points in India's internal security architecture will be this shift in the IB Budget.





Strengthening India's Traditional Medicinal Plant Economy

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Introduction

The Union Budget 2026–27, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visionary leadership, marks a transformative moment in India's development where heritage is mobilised as a driver of progress rather than preserved as memory. In a decisive shift, Ayurveda and the broader AYUSH systems have moved from the periphery of cultural discourse to the very centre of national development planning. Traditional medicine is no longer seen merely as a symbol of civilisational continuity or a supplementary healthcare option; it is now a knowledge-driven, resource-based sector with strategic relevance to rural prosperity, agricultural diversification, and India's expanding bio-economy.

At the core of this renewed confidence is India's unparalleled medicinal plant biodiversity, an asset of immense economic and ecological value. The Budget recognises that forests, rain-fed fields, and tribal landscapes are engines of sustainable growth, not "backward" geographies. By integrating cultivation with organised value chains, the Government is enabling farmers, forest dwellers, and primary processors to participate in stable, remunerative production systems, aligning livelihood generation with environmental stewardship.

The proposal to establish three new All India Institutes of Ayurveda exemplifies this structural vision. These institutions will not only expand academic and clinical capacity but also anchor scientific validation, standardisation, and market stability generating predictable demand for herbs, roots, barks, leaves, and extracts, while strengthening the entire supply chain from cultivation to research to formulation.

Complementing this, the Budget's focus on upgrading AYUSH pharmacies and drug-testing laboratories, along with enhanced support for the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine, signals India's commitment to quality, credibility, and global benchmarking. Medicinal plant producers gain incentives for improved cultivation, traceability, and post-harvest management, discouraging overextraction and informal trade while promoting responsible enterprise.

Together, these measures reflect a strategic evolution: traditional medicine is no longer a static inheritance but a dynamic pillar of nation-building. Under the Union Budget 2026-27, India's ancient knowledge systems are being seamlessly integrated with modern institutions, scientific rigour, and global ambition, placing rural India and biodiversity-rich regions at the forefront of a confident, self-reliant, and sustainable growth trajectory.

Quality Infrastructure: Powering a Standards-Driven Medicinal Plant Economy

For years, uneven quality control and inadequate testing facilities confined much of the trade to informal channels, restricting both domestic expansion and global reach. This structural gap is now being firmly corrected. Modernised laboratory networks will enable rigorous assessment of purity, potency, contamination, and standardisation benchmarks essential for scientific credibility and international regulatory acceptance. Medicinal plants are no longer viewed as loosely regulated forest produce; they are recognised as validated bio-resources capable of meeting the standards of organised healthcare systems and global markets. This transition strengthens India's leadership in traditional medicine while boosting consumer confidence.

For cultivators and primary processors especially in rain-fed and tribal regions, the impact is transformative. Strong quality systems reduce dependence on intermediaries, reward compliance, and encourage better cultivation, storage, and processing practices at the grassroots. As value addition shifts closer to production zones, rural communities gain a larger share of economic returns.

Ultimately, the Budget's emphasis on quality is not a technical adjustment but a structural reform. By embedding certification and standards into the growth strategy for traditional medicine, the Government is building a transparent, competitive, and self-reliant medicinal plant economy—where



excellence becomes both a market advantage and a pathway to inclusive development.

Global Anchoring: Jamnagar and India's Leadership in Traditional Medicine

The strengthening of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine at Jamnagar marks a decisive step in India's ascent as a global leader in traditional medicine. Far from symbolic, the Centre serves as a strategic hub for research, capacity-building, and international policy coordination. Its upgradation under the Union Budget 2026–27 reflects the Government's resolve to position India not merely as a guardian of ancient wisdom, but as a rule-shaper in the evolving global framework of integrative healthcare, confidently aligning civilisational knowledge with modern science and regulatory standards.

This global anchoring has transformative implications for the medicinal plant sector. As international markets demand traceability, sustainability, and validated efficacy, Jamnagar's engagement with global research and regulatory networks ensures these benchmarks are incorporated into domestic value chains. Cultivation and processing practices are increasingly aligned with recognised protocols such as Good Agricultural and Collection Practices and biodiversity safeguards, turning quality compliance into a gateway for export growth and enhanced global credibility.

Veterinary Capacity: Strengthening the Foundations of Rural Resilience

The Union Budget 2026–27 reflects a truly integrated vision of rural transformation, recognising that agricultural prosperity rests on interconnected systems. In India's farming landscape, livestock rearing and medicinal plant cultivation are complementary pillars of diversified livelihoods. Small and marginal farmers often combine crops, animal husbandry, and herbal cultivation to spread risk and stabilise incomes. Strengthening veterinary services, therefore, directly reinforces the ecosystem that sustains medicinal plant value

chains.

The proposed loan-linked capital subsidy scheme to expand veterinary professionals, colleges, diagnostic centres, and research facilities is a decisive investment in rural resilience. Improved disease surveillance, preventive care, and livestock productivity translate into steady income streams, providing farmers with the financial stability needed to diversify into medicinal plant cultivation, which typically involves longer gestation periods and specialised practices.

Enhanced veterinary infrastructure also advances agro-ecological sustainability. Healthier livestock systems promote nutrient recycling, improve soil fertility, and reduce dependence on chemical inputs—conditions ideally suited to medicinal plants that thrive under low-input or organic management.

By reinforcing livestock health alongside traditional medicine supply chains, the Union Budget 2026–27 champions a systems-based model of agricultural growth—economically viable, ecologically balanced, and resilient. It underscores the Government's commitment to empowering rural India through reforms that are both sustainable and inclusive.

Institutional Expansion and the Science of Standardisation

The Union Budget 2026–27 signals a decisive push to elevate India's traditional medicine systems to global standards. By expanding institutional capacity, strengthening research ecosystems, and reinforcing regulatory clarity, the Government is transforming Ayurveda and the wider AYUSH framework into a knowledge-driven, standards-based sector. Medicinal plants, the biological and economic backbone of these systems, are central to this transition, supported by institutions that generate scientific evidence, train professionals, and enforce quality compliance.

Enhanced research capacity enables systematic

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The Union Budget 2026–27 signals a decisive push to elevate India's traditional medicine systems to global standards.
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documentation of pharmacological properties, standardisation of active constituents, and the creation of reliable pharmacopeial benchmarks across regions. This addresses long-standing issues of variability and dosage uncertainty, offering cultivators and collectors clearer quality norms, predictable procurement standards, and reduced market risk.

State-led standardisation acts as a bridge between traditional ecological wisdom and modern regulatory frameworks validating heritage while integrating it into organised and globally competitive value chains. As medicinal plants move from informal exchanges to structured markets, export readiness improves and domestic supply chains strengthen, ensuring deeper participation of farmers and forest-dependent communities.

Through science-backed reform, the Union Budget 2026–27 affirms a powerful truth: when cultural legacy is reinforced by strong institutions and rigorous research, it becomes a driver of sustainable growth, global credibility, and national confidence.

Media Narratives and the Rising Visibility of India's Botanical Strength

The Union Budget 2026–27 has not only advanced structural reforms in traditional medicine but also reshaped the national discourse around it. Media focus on the expansion of All India Institutes of Ayurveda and the modernisation of AYUSH laboratories has highlighted India's growing scientific credibility and global preparedness. Crucially, attention has shifted from finished formulations to the botanical foundations that sustain the entire AYUSH ecosystem.

For medicinal plant cultivators, this visibility signals a more organised and predictable demand environment. As institutions, certification systems, and accredited laboratories gain prominence, consistency, traceability, and quality compliance become decisive for market access. Medicinal plants are now valued not merely for their availability, but also for their adherence to defined pharmacological standards.

This alignment between policy direction and public

narrative is reshaping incentives, discouraging unregulated extraction while encouraging organised cultivation, community conservation, and better post-harvest practices.

In effect, the Union Budget 2026–27 has repositioned medicinal plants from marginal forest produce to strategic bio-economic assets anchored in research, regulation, and sustainability, strengthening India's rural transformation and global health leadership.

Invisible Labour, Visible Empowerment: Advancing Local Value Addition

A quiet yet transformative feature of the Union Budget 2026–27 is its recognition of the labour-intensive ecosystem that sustains India's medicinal plant economy beyond cultivation. Drying, cleaning, grading, storage, and careful handling processes crucial to quality and market acceptance have long remained under-recognised in policy and pricing structures.

By strengthening organised AYUSH supply chains and embedding certification and quality-linked standards, the Government is correcting this imbalance. As traceability and compliance become central to market access, post-harvest skills gain measurable economic value. More value addition now occurs closer to production sites, reducing reliance on intermediaries and empowering grassroots participants.

The impact is especially significant for women, elderly workers, and land-poor households who dominate post-harvest activities. Formal recognition of their contributions opens pathways to stable incomes, skill development, and economic dignity.

In aligning quality assurance with community-based value addition, the Union Budget 2026–27 ensures that growth in traditional medicine is inclusive and equitable, bringing long-overlooked labour into the heart of India's expanding bio-economy.

Budget 2026–27: Powering India's AI and Semiconductor Future

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Foundation and Public Policy
Consultant

Semiconductors are no longer just components inside devices; they now form the foundation of modern economic and strategic power. From mobile phones and medical equipment to defence systems, satellites, AI servers and automobiles, chips sit at the core of every critical sector. On 1 February 2026, when Hon'ble Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her ninth consecutive Union Budget, one message was unmistakable: new age technology, from artificial intelligence to semiconductor manufacturing, from research and development to advanced electronics, has moved to the centre of India's development strategy. Budget 2026–27 marks a decisive pivot toward an AI-first and deep-tech-driven growth framework under the Viksit Bharat vision.



Budget 2026–27: A Technology First Growth Framework

At the heart of this shift lies a coordinated national push across semiconductors, AI, data infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, and research ecosystems. The approach is clear. Technology must augment human capability, expand productivity, strengthen national competitiveness, not replace people but empower them.

A major pillar of the Budget is the launch of India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, which expands the focus beyond chip fabrication to the entire value chain. The programme now covers chipmaking equipment, semiconductor materials, and full-stack Indian IP design. The objective is to strengthen supply chains, promote industry-led research and development, and establish specialised training centres to build a skilled semiconductor workforce. This marks a strategic shift from assembly participation to end-to-end semiconductor capability and long-term technological sovereignty.

Complementing this, the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme outlay has been raised to ₹40,000 crore from ₹22,919 crore, signalling scale and continuity. Basic Customs Duty exemptions have been provided for specified parts used in microwave ovens and in the manufacturing of civil aircraft, while electronics toll manufacturing in bonded warehouses receives targeted support. A safe-harbour profit margin of 2 per cent has been set for toll manufacturing operations, resulting in a globally competitive effective tax rate and

improving India's attractiveness as a manufacturing base.

Data Centres and Cloud Infrastructure Push

The Budget makes a decisive push to position India as a global hub for data centres and cloud infrastructure. A tax holiday till 2047 has been announced for foreign companies providing global cloud services using Indian data centre infrastructure. To provide tax certainty, a 15 per cent cost-based safe harbour margin has been introduced for an Indian data centre entity serving a related foreign company.

Together, these measures aim to make India a neutral, trusted global base for cloud computing and digital infrastructure.

Artificial Intelligence as a Productivity Engine

Artificial Intelligence is treated not as a slogan but as a productivity engine. The Budget reiterates support for the AI Mission, National Quantum Mission, Anusandhan National Research Fund, and the Research, Development and Innovation Fund. Startups and researchers will receive subsidised access to GPUs to build homegrown AI models.

A high-powered standing committee will assess the

impact of AI and emerging technologies on jobs and skills, reinforcing a clear policy stance that AI is an enabler, not a job destroyer. The focus is on AI augmented roles, large-scale upskilling, and education employment linkage, especially in the services sector.

AI is also being deployed directly in agriculture through Bharat VISTAAR, a multilingual AI platform integrating AgriStack portals and ICAR packages to deliver crop advisories, climate risk signals, and



decision tools. Farmers will be better equipped to plan sowing and harvesting, respond to floods and heat waves, and choose resilient cropping patterns.

Advanced Manufacturing and Deep Tech Expansion

Advanced manufacturing and deep tech also receive strong backing. Biopharma SHAKTI gets ₹10,000 crore over five years to strengthen biotech and pharmaceutical innovation. Rare Earth Corridors across Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu will integrate mining, processing, research, and manufacturing. Customs duty exemptions extend to capital goods for critical mineral processing, solar glass inputs, and lithium-ion battery equipment.

The AVGC sector is recognised as a major job creator, with Creator Labs to be set up in 15,000 schools and 500 colleges. Science infrastructure is strengthened through new or upgraded national telescopes and astrophysics facilities, reinforcing long-term research capacity.

India's Early Semiconductor Missed Opportunities

To understand why this push matters, one must recall that India's semiconductor journey began with promise and painful delay. From 1960 to 1962, global pioneers such as Fairchild and Intel evaluated India for fabrication facilities, but slow approvals, high duties, and weak incentives pushed investments abroad. In 1962, Bharat Electronics attempted a semiconductor line, yet cheaper imports and the lack of an ecosystem-scale approach stalled progress.

In 1989, SCL Mohali, then India's most advanced chip unit, was crippled by a mysterious fire that destroyed key research and manufacturing capacity. Later, from 2007 to 2011, India offered only 20 to 25 per cent capex support while competing Asian economies offered around 50 per cent, and global fabs stayed away. Opportunity slipped across decades, and the ecosystem remained fragile until recently.

Taiwan's Hsinchu Lesson in Semiconductor Governance

The contrast with Taiwan is instructive. Hsinchu was

not born a chip capital. Four decades ago, it was a small town, known for tea gardens, not chip hubs. Through consistent policy support, talent recall, research institutions, contract manufacturing, and infrastructure planning, it became a global semiconductor hub producing over 90 per cent of the world's most advanced chips and contributing 6 to 8 per cent of Taiwan's GDP and about 12 per cent of exports. It was built through foresight and execution. The lesson is simple. Semiconductor leadership is a governance outcome.

Strategic Reset After 2014 and Mission Mode Execution

India's course correction began after 2014. Make in India prioritised electronics manufacturing. Digital India created a massive domestic demand. The National Policy on Electronics 2019 set the vision for the ESDM hub. In 2020, the Swadeshi Microprocessor Challenge pushed indigenous design.

From 2021 onward, the effort moved to mission mode. Semicon India Programme and ISM 1.0 launched with an outlay of ₹76,000 crore, offering 50 per cent fiscal support for fabs and display units, plus a Design Linked Incentive for startups. Gujarat announced semiconductor policies targeting 14 billion dollars in investments. The Micron ₹22,516 crore ATMP project was approved. DRDO achieved GaN defence chip breakthroughs. The Tata PSMC ₹91,000 crore fab and multiple ATMP plants followed, along with indigenous processors such as Vikram 32 and DHRUV64.

Within a decade, results began moving from policy to plants, from intent to infrastructure. That is what conviction to manufacture can deliver to a nation. Budget 2026-27 consolidates this shift and positions India as a serious AI and semiconductor-powered growth engine for the coming decades.

Budgets are often judged by what they announce. This one should be judged by what it can actually execute. Union Budget 2026-27 is not a fireworks budget. It doesn't try to buy applause with a dramatic tax cut, nor does it shock the system with a new economic doctrine. Instead, it doubles down on a familiar wager, public investment plus gradual fiscal tightening will keep India's growth engine humming and coax private investment to do more of the heavy lifting over time.

The Centre estimates total expenditure at about Rs. 53.5 lakh crore, non-debt receipts at about Rs. 36.5 lakh crore and net tax receipts at about Rs. 28.7 lakh crore. The fiscal deficit is budgeted at 4.3% of GDP, down from the previous year's revised 4.4%, while debt consolidation is reiterated with Debt to GDP estimated around 55.6% in BE 26-27. Financing remains heavily borrowed; gross market borrowings are estimated at Rs. 17.2 lakh crore. This is the essence of the budget: spend enough to keep momentum and borrow enough to fund that spending and promise enough discipline to keep markets from raising an eyebrow.

The big positive, capex remains the anchor, and that's largely correct. If you are looking for the government's strongest policy instinct, you'll find it in one word, e.g., capex. The budget continues to place public capital expenditure at the centre of the growth strategy, with public capex indicated at Rs. 12.2 lakh crore for 2026-27. In an economy where logistics costs, travel time, power reliability, and urban congestion still shave off productivity, high-quality infrastructure is not a luxury; it is a competitiveness policy. India's biggest bottleneck is increasingly not "budgeted money". It is absorptive capacity, the ability to translate allocations into finished, functioning assets.

India's Growth Bet Public Investment and Fiscal Discipline in Budget 2026-27

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The execution: Look at spending patterns flagged by the Parliamentary Research Service (PRS). In the previous year's revised estimates, some crucial programmes saw sharp under-utilisation. BharatNet is spending about 25% of the budgeted amount, and the Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) scheme is spending about 15% of the budgeted amount.

BharatNet connects directly to rural productivity, service delivery and digital inclusion. RDI refers to the long-term ability to innovate rather than merely assemble. When such programmes can't spend, it signals deeper problems, project readiness, procurement delays, coordination failures or unclear ownership. If the state can't spend effectively on broadband and R&D, two areas that should be comparatively easier than, say, building tunnels through mountains, then throwing larger numbers at the problem may not fix it. Urban governance is another recurring weak link. Reports indicate persistent challenges in utilising allocations in the urban domain, which is precisely where India's next wave of prosperity or frustration will be manufactured. A budget can announce a city's mission; it cannot, by itself, improve municipal procurement, build a project pipeline or hire capable engineers and financial managers. That requires a grinding institutional effort. India's macro story now depends on micro capacity tenders, timelines, contracts, measurement, and accountability.

Fiscal posture: On fiscal policy, the government signals continuity, fiscal deficit at 4.3% of GDP, a modest improvement and a longer run debt trajectory. Government can't reliably promise "Viksit Bharat" while treating fiscal math like an afterthought. But fiscal consolidation is not a virtue for its own sake; it matters because it determines how much room the government has to invest in public goods without mortgaging the future, and this is where the budget's underlying constraint becomes clear, interest payments. Interest payments are estimated at about 40% of revenue receipts in 2026-27. That single statistic should sober every debate that expects the budget to do "everything": massive capex, big welfare expansions, large tax cuts, and more, all at once.

When close to half of revenue receipts are eaten up just to service past borrowing, the government's freedom shrinks. It also makes the economy more sensitive to global interest rates and risk sentiment. That doesn't mean the borrowing programme is irresponsible. India is a growing economy and can support public investment. But it does mean the budget's fiscal glide path is not optional. It is the price of keeping future choices open.

The question is whether India can maintain course when external conditions turn rough. One of the most constructive parts of the budget is the strengthening of the Centre-state growth partnership. Transfers to states at ₹26.2 lakh crore for 2026-27 (a notable rise over the previous year's revised estimates), including tax devolution of ₹15.26 lakh crore and budgets ₹1.85 lakh crore as interest-free loans for capex to states.

This matters because the battle for productivity will increasingly be won or lost in states and cities. Industrial corridors, power distribution reforms, urban public transport, local water systems, waste management, policing quality, land records, these are not purely central subjects. Central funding can catalyse, but state capacity executes. The interest-free capex loans mechanism is particularly important because it nudges states toward asset creation rather than short-term consumption. If designed with clear milestones and transparent monitoring, it can be a powerful multiplier. But the recurring risk is administrative capacity. If states lack a project pipeline or face tendering bottlenecks, loans won't translate into assets. Money is necessary, but it isn't sufficient.

Taxes: stability over spectacle, with a few meaningful reductions in friction

On the direct tax front, the budget avoids dramatic changes. No change in income tax slabs for AY 2026-27. Some will call that a missed opportunity. But frequent tinkering can create confusion and compliance fatigue. Predictability has value, especially for the salaried middle class that plans around EMIs, education costs, and savings. Where the budget does make moves is in targeted friction reduction. On the corporate tax architecture, the government proposes adjustments to Minimum

Alternate Tax (MAT), including reducing the rate and reshaping how credits work going forward, aimed at simplification and lowering long-tail credit accumulation. The intent is sensible: reduce complexity, improve certainty and encourage firms toward more predictable regimes.

The missing emotional centre of this tax story is visible middle-class relief. Many households expected a broad-based reduction in burden, and the absence of a dramatic gesture may make the budget feel technocratic rather than empathetic, even if it is fiscally prudent.

The Jobs: The budget implicitly relies on capex-driven growth to support jobs. Infrastructure spending does create employment in construction and supply chains, and it improves the conditions for private-sector hiring. But India's challenge is no longer just "jobs," it is quality jobs, for example, stable, formal, productivity-linked employment with wage growth. That requires deeper enabling reforms: skilling that matches industry needs, apprenticeships at scale, predictable regulation, easier compliance for MSMEs, and faster dispute resolution. The budget does contain measures spread across ministries and schemes, but it lacks a single, coherent "jobs architecture" that people can recognise and trust. In an economy where youth aspirations are rising faster than the quality of entry-level opportunities, the narrative matters. A budget that wants to feel like a bridge to a developed India must speak more directly to the labour market.

Borrowing and markets: The budget's borrowing programme is substantial, ₹17.2 lakh crore in gross market borrowings. India can manage this if growth holds and inflation remains anchored, but it increases sensitivity to global financial conditions. Here, the government's credibility on fiscal consolidation matters. If investors believe the deficit target is realistic and capex yields growth, borrowing costs remain stable. If execution slips and growth underwhelms, borrowing becomes heavier, and interest costs can snowball.

What it gets right:

- It continues to prioritise public investment, which remains a legitimate growth lever in a developing economy with infrastructure gaps.
- It maintains the fiscal consolidation narrative with a 4.3% deficit target and a stated debt path, important for macro credibility and borrowing costs.
- It strengthens the role of states through large transfers and interest-free capex loans, aligning incentives toward asset creation.

What it must fix:

- Under-utilisation in key programmes (digital connectivity and R&D among them) suggests institutional bottlenecks that money alone cannot solve.
- The interest burden (about 40% of revenue receipts) narrows future policy choices and demands ruthless spending quality.
- A clearer plan for quality employment and wage growth.



The Budget 2026–27 Vision Building a Resilient Healthcare for Bharat

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The Union Budget 2026–27 marks a defining moment in India's healthcare trajectory, with public health expenditure crossing ₹1 lakh crore for the first time since Independence. The allocation to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare stands at ₹1,06,530.42 crore nearly 10% higher than the previous year, signalling a clear and unwavering resolve to place health at the core of national development.

While health expenditure as a share of GDP can continue to rise over time, crossing the ₹1 lakh crore threshold marks a decisive structural leap. It enables capacity expansion, institutional strengthening, and improved delivery across both rural and urban India. Budget 2026–27 thus stands as a landmark affirmation that under determined and forward-looking leadership, India's healthcare system is advancing steadily toward greater scale, resilience, and global excellence.

Strengthening Primary Care – The National Health Mission

At the core of India's public health framework stands the National Health Mission, the backbone of service delivery across rural and urban India. Through an extensive grassroots network, it sustains primary health centres, advances maternal and child care, drives nationwide immunisation, and anchors disease prevention and control. It is this last-mile architecture that translates policy into real access, reflecting the Government's



commitment to inclusive and equitable development.

In the Union Budget 2026-27, allocation for the Mission has risen from around ₹37,100 crore to nearly ₹39,390 crore. This steady enhancement underscores a clear priority: reform must begin at the foundation, not remain confined to tertiary hospitals. Strengthening primary healthcare ensures that transformation is broad-based and sustainable.

Preventive care, early diagnosis, and community-level intervention remain the most cost-effective and socially impactful tools in public health. By reinforcing primary care systems, the Government is fortifying the nation's first line of defence against disease—reducing long-term burdens, protecting families from financial distress, and building a healthier India from the ground up.

Expanding Financial Protection - Ayushman Bharat

The reform momentum of Budget 2026-27 is powerfully reflected in the continued strengthening of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), among the world's largest publicly funded health insurance programmes. Designed to shield economically vulnerable families, the scheme provides vital coverage for secondary and tertiary care, ensuring that serious illness does not become a pathway to poverty.

This year's allocation has risen from about ₹8,995 crore to ₹9,500 crore, reaffirming the Government's resolve to deepen financial protection in healthcare. For decades, catastrophic hospital expenses pushed countless families into debt. By reinforcing PM-JAY's funding and outreach, the Government is systematically addressing this structural vulnerability.

By expanding insurance coverage, access to quality treatment is increasingly determined by medical need rather than income. Budget 2026-27 thus

strengthens the foundation of equitable healthcare—ensuring that every citizen can seek timely, dignified care without the shadow of financial distress.

Infrastructure Push — Regional Medical Hubs

A standout feature of Budget 2026-27 is its decisive infrastructure thrust through the creation of five regional medical hubs in partnership with private stakeholders. Conceived as integrated healthcare ecosystems, these hubs will combine advanced clinical care, high-quality training, research, and medical education within a coordinated framework—reflecting a pragmatic and forward-looking public-private partnership model.

Their impact is both immediate and transformative. By establishing world-class facilities beyond metropolitan centres, the Government aims to reduce patient migration to big cities and make specialised treatment geographically accessible. These hubs will nurture regional centres of excellence, correct urban imbalances in healthcare access, and elevate standards across states. At the same time, they hold the potential to strengthen India's position in medical tourism, generate skilled employment, and stimulate regional economic growth.

This decentralised strategy aligns seamlessly with the broader vision of balanced development and equitable access. Budget 2026-27, therefore, moves beyond piecemeal expansion and lays the foundation for a distributed, resilient, and globally competitive healthcare architecture across Bharat.

Research, Innovation & Biopharma SHAKTI

A resilient healthcare system rests on scientific depth and innovation. Recognising this, Budget 2026-27 enhances support for the Department of Health Research and the Indian Council of Medical Research, strengthening disease research, expanding clinical trials, upgrading laboratories, and promoting evidence-based medical science rooted in indigenous capability. This renewed thrust

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*Budget 2026-27
strengthens training
infrastructure,
upgrades
educational
standards, and
integrates
physiotherapy with
digital health
platforms*
.....

ensures that healthcare policy is guided by research excellence and national capacity.

A major strategic addition is the launch of the Biopharma SHAKTI initiative, envisioned as a multi-year mission to scale up domestic production of biologics, high-value therapeutics, and biosimilars. By reducing import dependence and building advanced manufacturing strength at home, the initiative deepens pharmaceutical self-reliance while enhancing India's competitiveness in the global biotechnology arena.

Together, these measures fortify the nation's scientific backbone. By investing in research ecosystems and high-end biopharma capacity, Budget 2026-27 not only improves service delivery but also firmly positions India as a rising global hub in health and life sciences, aligned with the larger vision of a self-reliant, technologically advanced Bharat.

Mental Health & Emergency Care Expansion

Budget 2026-27 responds firmly to the changing health needs of a dynamic society by strengthening mental health services and emergency care infrastructure. Recognising that mental wellbeing is central to productivity and social stability, the Government has expanded mental health facilities and reinforced tele-mental health platforms, widening access to counselling and psychiatric support, especially in remote and underserved areas. By integrating digital outreach with institutional capacity, the reform encourages early intervention and helps normalise mental healthcare as an essential public service.

Simultaneously, district hospitals are being upgraded to provide round-the-clock trauma and emergency services. In a rapidly urbanising and mobile nation, a timely emergency response can be the difference between life and death. Strengthening district-level facilities brings critical care closer to communities, reducing avoidable mortality and easing pressure on metropolitan centres.

Through these focused interventions, Budget 2026-27 advances a compassionate and future-ready healthcare framework—one that addresses immediate crises while safeguarding long-term psychological and physical wellbeing, reinforcing the commitment to a healthier and more resilient Bharat.

Digital Transformation — Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

Aligned with the broader vision of Digital India, Budget 2026-27 strengthens the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, a transformative step toward modernising India's healthcare architecture. By digitising records and integrating service platforms, the Mission is redefining how care is accessed, delivered, and monitored—making the system more efficient, transparent, and citizen-centric.

Beyond administrative reform, digital infrastructure is emerging as a powerful tool for preventive care, chronic disease management, and last-mile outreach in remote regions. By harnessing technology to close systemic gaps, Budget 2026-27 advances a modern healthcare ecosystem where



innovation drives inclusion and efficiency strengthens equity.

Duty Exemptions on Life-Saving Drugs

Reflecting a patient-first approach, Budget 2026–27 exempts customs duty on several life-saving medicines, including critical cancer drugs. For families confronting serious illness, the cost of advanced treatment often compounds emotional distress with financial strain. By lowering import duties on essential therapies, the Government has opened the door to meaningful reductions in treatment costs, offering relief at moments of greatest vulnerability.

Traditional Systems – AYUSH Expansion

Budget 2026–27 reinforces India’s commitment to its civilisational heritage by strategically supporting traditional medical systems. New institutes are being established, and existing AYUSH infrastructure is being strengthened to boost institutional capacity, research, and service delivery. This recognises that India’s healthcare legacy is not just historical, it is a living, evolving resource of contemporary relevance.

Structured training programmes are integrating Ayurveda, Yoga, and allied wellness practices with mainstream healthcare, promoting preventive medicine, holistic wellbeing, and lifestyle-based disease management. By combining scientific validation with traditional knowledge, the Government leverages India’s unique strengths to build a culturally rooted and comprehensive healthcare model. Budget 2026–27 exemplifies a confident approach, modern yet anchored in tradition, ensuring India’s journey toward universal healthcare is both globally competitive and authentically Indian.

Allied Health Professionals – Strengthening the Backbone of Healthcare

Budget 2026–27 takes a visionary step by expanding Allied Health Professionals (AHPs)—paramedics, technicians, therapists, and rehabilitative experts—who are essential to the efficiency and reach of modern healthcare. Recognising their critical role, the Government has allocated ₹1,000 crore to a dedicated national scheme to upgrade

existing institutions and establish new training centres across the public and private sectors.

Over the next five years, the plan aims to train around one lakh AHPs across ten disciplines, including optometry, radiology, anaesthesia, and behavioural health, while 1.5 lakh caregivers will be equipped with combined clinical and wellness skills, including assistive device management. This investment addresses India’s current workforce gap, strengthens diagnostics, enhances treatment and rehabilitation services, and expands community-based care. By building a skilled allied health workforce, Budget 2026–27 not only creates meaningful employment for youth but also fortifies a resilient, inclusive, and future-ready healthcare ecosystem across Bharat.

Physiotherapy – Central to India’s Continuum of Care

Within the expanded allied health framework of Union Budget 2026–27, physiotherapy emerges as a crucial pillar of rehabilitation and long-term care. From restoring mobility and managing pain to post-surgical recovery, geriatric support, and chronic disease management—including arthritis and neurological disorders—physiotherapists play a transformative role in enhancing independence and quality of life. While not a separate line item, physiotherapy gains momentum through allied health expansion, targeted training programmes, and caregiver development initiatives.

Budget 2026–27 strengthens training infrastructure, upgrades educational standards, and integrates physiotherapy with digital health platforms and multidisciplinary teams, fostering collaborative care and community-based rehabilitation. By investing in this workforce, the Government is formalising career pathways, generating youth employment, and elevating professional standards nationwide. Rehabilitation is no longer peripheral—it is now an integral pillar of India’s inclusive, modern, and resilient healthcare system.

Three Kartavyas and Budget 2026

Shruuti Surana

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We usually talk about the Union Budget in terms of dry numbers, tax slabs, fiscal deficits, and other technicalities. But as a student sitting in a classroom, you realise it is something much bigger and with a greater purpose: a roadmap for our generation. This year, the Budget Session, held inside the Kartavya Bhawan, was not merely a change of venue; it was a change in the philosophy of governance. This budget came forward as a realisation; the realisation of the government's responsibility, "Kartavya" to build this budget as a foundation stone for a Viksit Bharat. The budget is now framed by the "Three Kartavyas" (Three Duties). It is a bold plan that targets a record capital expenditure of ₹12.2 lakh crore. To put that in perspective, it is the highest investment in India's history, aimed at building the kind of infrastructure we will use for the next 30 years. It balances fiscal discipline with the kind of "big-picture" thinking needed for a Viksit Bharat.



It is easy to overlook "infrastructure" as just roads and rails until you see how it changes the map. Under the "First Kartavya", the budget treats connectivity as a massive economic multiplier. The announcement of seven high-speed rail corridors, including a Mumbai-Pune link that could cut travel to under an hour, is not about speed: it is about turning distant cities into accessible hubs. This works alongside the new Dedicated Freight Corridors and a push for 20 new National Waterways to bring down our sky-high coordination costs. Even at home, the impact is visible. The ₹22,000 crore boost for the PM-Surya Ghar scheme aims to turn 40 lakh households into mini power producers by March. For a middle-class family, that is not just "green energy"; it is a direct way to wipe out monthly electricity bills!!

For those of us in the Amrit Peedhi, the "Second Kartavya" empowering youth is the part that hits closest to home. We have all felt that gap between what we learn in college and what the market wants. To address this, the government is setting up a high-powered "Education to Employment and Enterprise" (EEE) Standing Committee. The goal is massive: securing a 10% global share in services by 2047. But it's not just about policy; it is about the tools we have access to. The budget's plan to put AVGC creator labs in 15,000 schools is a game-changer for anyone interested in gaming or digital art. When you combine that with the India AI Mission, it feels like the government is finally giving us the platform to be innovators, not just employees.

As a student activist, I find the shift in "Nari Shakti" particularly compelling. We are moving past basic welfare and toward actual ownership. The budget's pledge to build a dedicated girls' hostel in every single district addresses one of the biggest hurdles for women in STEM—safety and proximity to labs. On the economic side, the launch of "SHE-Marts" (Self-Help Entrepreneur Marts) is brilliant. These are not just stalls; they are community-owned retail outlets designed to help rural women move from being credit-seekers to business owners. This pairs with Bharat-VISTAAR, an AI platform that gives farmers real-time advisory support in their own languages. It is a tech-heavy approach to making

sure no one, from a startup founder in Delhi to a farmer in a remote village, is left behind.

The final piece of the puzzle is how we pay for it all. The target fiscal deficit of 4.3% shows that India is staying disciplined even as it spends big. For most of us, the headline is the Income Tax Act, 2025. Replacing a 60-year-old law with a "Tax Year" concept and simplified sections is the kind of common-sense reform that makes life easier. Even the tiny things, like cutting TCS to 2% for foreign education, show that the government is listening to the aspirations of global-minded students.

Budget 2026 is not just a list of allocations; it is a challenge to our generation. The government has put the capital and the technology on the table, but the "Third Kartavya"—the duty to build the future—rests with us. As the Amrit Peedhi, we are the ones who will turn these policies into a developed India. Let us carry this sense of responsibility back to our campuses and communities. The future is not just coming; we are manufacturing it right now.

Powering India's Creative Industries under Budget 2026

Dr. Shashi Bhushan

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At the centre of this transformative policy push is a striking projection articulated during the Union Budget 2026–27: India's Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) ecosystem is expected to require nearly two million skilled professionals by 2030. This estimate is not speculative optimism; it reflects the sector's rapid evolution from a specialised creative niche into a formidable engine of employment and economic growth. The surge in demand is being driven by the exponential rise in domestic digital consumption, the proliferation of online and interactive content platforms, and India's deepening integration into global media and digital production value chains. From sophisticated gaming engines and animation studios to advanced visual effects pipelines and immersive digital storytelling platforms, India is steadily positioning itself as a pivotal force in the global content economy.



At the same time, this ambitious workforce projection highlights a substantial skills gap within the existing education and training landscape. Without timely and strategic intervention, there was a real risk that India would remain limited to lower-value, execution-based outsourcing assignments rather than ascending the creative value chain. The Budget responds decisively to this challenge by reorienting policy from routine service delivery to the cultivation of original content creation and intellectual property development. The intent is unmistakable: India will not be content with servicing global creativity, it will shape, define, and lead it.

Institutionalising Creative Skill Formation

Under the visionary framework of the Union Budget 2026–27, the Government has moved decisively to institutionalise creative skill formation in order to meet the scale and urgency of emerging workforce demand in the AVGC sector. At the heart of this structured approach is targeted support for the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT), Mumbai, which is being developed as a national hub for AVGC skill development, curriculum coordination, and institutional capacity-building. By strengthening IICT’s role, the Government aims to bring coherence, standardisation, and quality assurance to creative education across the country, ensuring that training in animation, gaming, visual effects, and digital storytelling is no longer fragmented or driven solely by market forces, but guided by a coordinated national vision.

A transformative pillar of this strategy is the establishment of AVGC Content Creator Labs in nearly 15,000 secondary schools and 500 colleges nationwide. These labs will introduce students to animation software and gaming engines, train them in visual storytelling, and provide hands-on experience with complete digital production workflows. Beyond technical familiarity, they are designed to foster collaborative production practices, cultivate narrative construction skills, and encourage creative thinking from an early stage. For

the first time, professional-grade creative technology infrastructure is being embedded directly into the formal education system, marking a decisive shift away from ad hoc skilling models toward a structured, inclusive ecosystem. Significantly, this intervention begins at the school level, demonstrating the Government’s commitment to anticipatory workforce planning. Instead of reacting to labour shortages after they arise, it is building a sustained talent pipeline aligned with projected industry demand. This forward-looking approach reflects strategic governance at its finest—preparing India’s youth not just for today’s opportunities, but for the creative economy of tomorrow.

Design Capacity, Early Exposure and Democratisation of Opportunity

The transformative AVGC push under the Union Budget 2026–27 is powerfully reinforced by the announcement of a new National Institute of Design in the eastern region of India, a step aimed at strengthening design education and expanding institutional capacity in a part of the country long awaiting such premier infrastructure. This initiative recognises a fundamental truth: creative industries cannot thrive on short-term technical instruction alone. They demand the sustained cultivation

of design thinking, aesthetic judgement, storytelling capacity, and technological proficiency—skills that mature through structured education and continuous practice. By embedding AVGC education within a broader and robust design ecosystem, the Government has elevated creative competencies to the same stature as engineering, management, and other knowledge-intensive disciplines, affirming that creativity is central to India’s future growth narrative.

Equally transformative is the democratising spirit that defines these reforms. For decades, access to professional-grade creative tools, advanced production infrastructure, and mentorship networks remained concentrated in metropolitan centres and elite private institutions, leaving talented students

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The AVGC initiatives unveiled under the Union Budget 2026–27 reflect a far-reaching reform philosophy—one that firmly aligns education with the demands of emerging labour markets.



from smaller towns and rural regions at a structural disadvantage. The nationwide rollout of AVGC Content Creator Labs decisively alters this landscape. By extending high-quality digital creative infrastructure across schools and colleges, the initiative expands opportunity beyond geography, income, and institutional privilege. A student in a district town will now engage with the same animation software, gaming engines, and digital storytelling platforms available in major urban hubs. This is not merely an expansion of the talent pool—it is a bold act of social inclusion, ensuring that India’s creative revolution is powered by youth from every corner of the nation.

The Orange Economy: Creativity as Economic Strategy

One of the most significant intellectual advancements in the Union Budget 2026–27 is its formal recognition of the “Orange Economy” as a strategic framework for national development. By articulating this concept within the policy

architecture, the Government has decisively reframed creativity not as a peripheral cultural pursuit, but as a core economic force. The orange economy encompasses sectors powered by creativity, cultural capital, design, and digital technologies—including animation, visual effects, gaming, comics, and digital content creation—thereby placing India’s dynamic creative industries at the centre of economic strategy.

This marks a profound departure from earlier perceptions that relegated creative sectors to the margins of planning discourse. Under the new framework, creativity is acknowledged as a driver of employment, a catalyst for innovation, a pillar of services-led growth, a generator of exportable intellectual property, and a contributor to India’s soft power and global influence. With a youthful demographic profile, rapidly expanding digital infrastructure, and a rising global appetite for high-quality content, India today possesses ideal conditions to transform cultural capital into a

productive and competitive economic resource. Significantly, the Economic Survey 2025–26 reinforced this perspective by identifying creativity-led industries as multipliers across urban employment, tourism development, service sector expansion, and intellectual property generation. By integrating these insights into concrete policy measures, the Union Budget 2026–27 aligns culture, technology, and innovation as interconnected engines of national transformation—laying the foundation for a confident, creative, and globally influential India.

Aligning Education Reform with Labour Market Demand

The AVGC initiatives unveiled under the Union Budget 2026–27 reflect a far-reaching reform philosophy—one that firmly aligns education with the demands of emerging labour markets. Recognising that traditional informal training models and fragmented private skilling systems are inadequate to meet the projected requirement of nearly two million professionals by 2030, the Government has chosen a structural solution. Creative technology training, digital content creation skills, design thinking, and collaborative production practices are being systematically integrated into formal schooling and higher education, ensuring that skill development is embedded within the mainstream academic framework rather than treated as an afterthought. This marks a decisive transition from reactive skilling to anticipatory human capital planning. Students are no longer being trained merely to operate software tools; they are being prepared for dynamic professions in animation, gaming, digital storytelling, and multimedia production—careers that define the contours of the modern digital economy. By synchronising curriculum design and institutional capacity with industry requirements, the Government is simultaneously enhancing employability and strengthening India’s ability to generate original content and valuable intellectual property. In doing so, India is confidently moving beyond the role of a service provider and positioning itself as a global creative powerhouse, powered by the aspirations and talent of its youth.

Formal Recognition of the Creator Economy

The Union Budget 2026–27 goes beyond the creation of infrastructure and skill frameworks to deliver something equally significant, the formal recognition of the creator economy as a vital component of India’s growth story. Digital creators, animators, game designers, and multimedia producers are now acknowledged as legitimate contributors to GDP, employment generation, and innovation. For years, creative labour functioned largely within informal or loosely structured ecosystems, often lacking institutional recognition. This Budget decisively elevates such work into a policy-recognised domain, affirming that creativity is not peripheral but central to the nation’s economic architecture.

This shift is transformative in both symbolic and practical terms. It reinforces that digital storytelling, gaming, animation, and multimedia production are not fringe pursuits but core economic functions in a digital-first era. Industry associations have highlighted the growing relevance of micro-content, short-form storytelling, and interactive media across entertainment, education, advertising, and digital communication—sectors that increasingly shape public engagement and market dynamics. In this context, the proposed AVGC Content Creator Labs assume even greater importance. They will serve as hands-on spaces where students can develop advanced technical production skills, strengthen narrative expertise, refine audience engagement strategies, and cultivate socially meaningful content-creation practices. By professionalising creative labour and embedding structured pathways into the education system, the Government is expanding career opportunities and equipping India’s youth to thrive in an increasingly competitive and fast-evolving global content marketplace.

Budget 2026

Building the Foundations of Viksit Bharat 2047

Ajay Purushotham Shetty
Entrepreneur & Public Policy Critic

Union Budget 2026 reflects a quieter but more difficult choice, one that accepts that building a developed Bharat by 2047 will require discipline, continuity, and the willingness to resist short-term temptations. In recent years, public expectations from the Budget have increasingly shifted towards immediate gains. Tax reliefs, new schemes, or one-time announcements often dominate the discussion. Budget 2026 asks to be read differently. It invites a judgment not on what it gives at once, but on whether it strengthens the country's ability to grow steadily over the next two decades.



Fiscal Discipline as Strategic Clarity

The fiscal deficit target of around 4.3% of GDP, along with a clearly stated path towards further consolidation, is among the most important signals in Budget 2026. Fiscal discipline preserves freedom of action. High deficits reduce the ability of future governments to respond to shocks, invest meaningfully, or protect the vulnerable during crises. By controlling borrowing while continuing productive spending, the government is choosing long-term credibility over short-term comfort. This discipline also anchors inflation expectations, lowers borrowing costs, and sustains investor confidence, factors that matter quietly but decisively.

Infrastructure and Logistics

Capital expenditure remains the backbone of the Budget, with allocations exceeding ₹11 lakh crore. Roads, railways, ports, airports, urban transport, and logistics corridors remain central priorities. What deserves attention is not merely the scale, but the continuity of this investment. Infrastructure spending has a cumulative impact by lowering logistics costs, improving market integration, and increasing productivity across sectors. These gains compound over time.

Manufacturing, MSMEs, and Enterprise

Manufacturing remains central to employment generation and economic resilience. Budget 2026 sustains support for PLI (Production Linked Incentive) schemes, particularly in electronics, renewables, defence manufacturing, and advanced materials. Equally important is the attention given to MSMEs, which form the backbone of employment. Improved access to credit, simplified compliance, and targeted support for smaller enterprises reflect an understanding that growth cannot be concentrated solely in large corporations. This combination of scale manufacturing and MSME strengthening is essential if Bharat is to build both competitiveness and inclusivity.

Employment, Skills, and Youth Aspirations

Employment generation is spread across multiple sections of the Budget rather than appearing as a standalone promise. Increased allocations for skill development, apprenticeship programmes, and industry-linked training acknowledge a basic reality: jobs are created when skills match demand. Instead of expanding government payrolls unsustainably, Budget 2026 focuses on enabling private sector job creation through manufacturing, services, and entrepreneurship. For a young country, creating conditions for productive employment matters more than symbolic assurances.

Agriculture, Rural Economy, and Farmers

Agriculture remains central to economic stability and social balance. Budget 2026 strengthens investment in irrigation, crop insurance, agri infrastructure, rural credit, and farmer-producer organisations. The shift away from purely input-based support towards productivity, value addition, and market access is significant. Investments in storage, processing, and rural supply chains reduce wastage and improve income stability. This reflects a recognition that rural prosperity must be structural, not seasonal.

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*A credible
fiscal path and
competitive
manufacturing
ecosystem
enhance
resilience against
global volatility.*
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Social Welfare with Sustainability

Budget 2026 continues to support welfare programmes in housing, healthcare, nutrition, sanitation, and social security, while maintaining fiscal sustainability. Technology-enabled delivery and direct benefit transfers stay central. Rather than expanding welfare indiscriminately, the focus is on efficiency, coverage accuracy, and accountability. This balance between compassion and fiscal realism is essential if welfare systems are to retain public trust over time.

Healthcare, Education, and Human Capital

Allocations for healthcare infrastructure, medical education, and preventive health indicate a continued effort to strengthen public health capacity following the lessons of recent years. In

education, emphasis on digital learning, research institutions, and skill-linked higher education reflects the understanding that demographic advantage only converts into economic strength through sustained human capital investment.

Technology, Innovation, and Digital Infrastructure

Budget 2026 gives sustained attention to digital public infrastructure, artificial intelligence, research, and emerging technologies. Support for innovation ecosystems and startups reinforces Bharat's position as a technology-enabled economy rather than a low-value service provider. Digital platforms are being treated as public goods, thereby improving service delivery, financial inclusion, and governance efficiency across sectors.

Green Growth and Energy Security

The Budget continues to integrate renewable energy, green hydrogen, electric mobility, and energy transition into the economic strategy. This is not framed only as an environmental responsibility, but as an opportunity for industrial leadership and energy security. By aligning growth with sustainability, Budget 2026 positions Bharat for competitiveness in a carbon-conscious global economy.

External Sector and Strategic Confidence

Stable macroeconomic management, export support, and infrastructure investment together strengthen Bharat's external position. A credible fiscal path and competitive manufacturing ecosystem enhance resilience against global volatility. Economic strength increasingly requires Strategic autonomy, and this Budget reflects that understanding

Conclusion

Union Budget 2026 chooses endurance. It reflects a coherent, long-term vision aligned with Viksit Bharat 2047 by addressing key sectors such as fiscal management, infrastructure, manufacturing, employment, agriculture, welfare, human capital, technology, and sustainability. Its success will not be judged by immediate reactions, but by whether it quietly strengthens the foundations of a confident, capable, and self-reliant Bharat.



The Philosophical Pivot Nobody is Talking About

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget on February 1, 2026, coinciding with Magha Purnima and Guru Ravidas Jayanti, lending the occasion a symbolic significance. The budget signals a deliberate shift in how the Indian state intends to approach economic development. While commentators focused on fiscal deficits and tax rates, the budget's more consequential message lay in its underlying conviction that sustainable prosperity stems from creating productive capacity rather than redistributing insufficient growth.

The government has prioritised capital expenditure at INR 12.2 lakh crore, an 11.5% increase over the previous year. This figure alone would merit attention, but the philosophy embedded within it is more significant. Revenue expenditure, politically easier to defend as immediate welfare, has been subordinated to asset creation.

The Three Kartavyas: A Coherent Intellectual Framework

The budget explicitly organises itself around three "Kartavyas" (duties):

First Kartavya: Accelerate and sustain economic growth by enhancing productivity and competitiveness, and building resilience to volatile global dynamics.

Second Kartavya: Fulfil aspirations of our people and build their capacity, making them strong partners in India's path to prosperity.

Third Kartavya: Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas (with all, development for all)—ensuring that every family, community, region and sector has access to resources, amenities and opportunities for meaningful participation.

Manufacturing Strategy: Seven Sectors in Focus

The budget identifies seven sectors for concentrated investment and policy support: biopharmaceuticals, semiconductors, rare earth processing, advanced electronics, textiles, chemicals, and capital goods.

Capital, Capacity and Competitiveness Reading Budget 2026

Anarghya Suvin

Chartered Accountant,
KPMG & Volunteer at
Social Impact Initiatives



The Biopharma SHAKTI scheme illustrates that universal manufacturing support disperses impact without generating the scale necessary for global competitiveness. India dominates global pharmaceutical markets through generic medicines but remains dependent on imports for biologics. These patent-protected medicines command substantially higher margins and address the country's shifting disease burden toward chronic and non-communicable disorders. The INR 10,000 crore allocation over five years establishes an integrated ecosystem comprising three new National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education and Research, more than 1,000 accredited clinical trial sites, and a strengthened Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation capable of matching international regulatory timelines.

The Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme demonstrates adaptive policy formulation. Launched with an INR 22,919 crore allocation, the scheme generated investment commitments exceeding twice the original target. Rather than maintaining rigid allocations, the budget increased the outlay to INR 40,000 crore. This decision reflects a principle that deserves greater recognition in Indian policymaking: when markets respond beyond government expectations, policy should expand rather than constrain. The scheme supports the manufacturing of passive and active components, printed circuit boards, connectors, displays, and power electronics.

Rare-earth processing addresses supply chain vulnerabilities for strategically sensitive materials. India possesses mineral deposits but imports the majority of refined rare earth elements, creating dependencies in electronics, renewable energy, and defence technologies. By establishing dedicated rare earth corridors in Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala, the government pursues multiple objectives simultaneously: supply chain resilience, vertical integration of value chains within mineral-rich regions, and employment generation in underdeveloped areas.

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Bharat-VISTAAR, a multilingual artificial intelligence tool, integrates agricultural data platforms with the recommendations of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

MSME Support Through Structural Intervention

The government's approach to small and medium enterprises moves beyond conventional subsidy distribution. A dedicated INR 10,000 crore SME Growth Fund targets enterprises that meet select criteria and demonstrate genuine scaling potential. The Self-Reliant India Fund receives an INR 2,000 crore top-up to maintain access to risk capital for micro enterprises.

More importantly, the budget expands the Trade Receivables Discounting System, which has already mobilised INR 7 lakh crore for MSMEs. Rather than providing additional capital, the government addresses a more fundamental constraint: the conversion of working capital. The budget mandates that all Central Public Sector Enterprise purchases

from MSMEs flow through the TReDS platform, links Government e-Marketplace procurement data to TReDS financiers, and enables invoice discounting with credit guarantees. These measures address a specific bottleneck that often proves fatal to viable businesses: the 90 to 180-day gap between invoice issuance and payment receipt.

The Corporate Mitras initiative similarly addresses genuine obstacles without resorting to subsidies. Small businesses frequently collapse not from capital insufficiency but from compliance burden. The government has tasked professional institutions with developing accredited para-professionals who assist MSMEs in navigating regulatory requirements at affordable costs.

Infrastructure and Regional Development

Public capital expenditure has grown from INR 2 lakh crore in fiscal year 2014-15 to INR 12.2 lakh crore in fiscal year 2026-27. The budget maintains this trajectory while deliberately dispersing investment through City Economic Regions focused on secondary cities.

Seven high-speed rail corridors connect Mumbai and Pune, Pune and Hyderabad, Hyderabad and Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai, Chennai and

Bengaluru, Delhi and Varanasi, and Varanasi and Siliguri. These corridors are framed as growth connectors designed to integrate regional economies and make secondary cities viable as economic nodes.

The operationalisation of 20 national waterways, beginning with National Waterway 5 in Odisha, follows similar logic. These waterways connect mineral-rich areas to ports, reducing logistics costs for bulk commodities. The government plans to establish ship-repair ecosystems in Varanasi and Patna, deliberately positioning secondary cities as service hubs. A Coastal Cargo Promotion Scheme targets increasing the share of inland waterways and coastal shipping from 6% to 12% by 2047.

An Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund addresses a specific financing problem. Lenders frequently retreat during the construction phase of infrastructure projects when risks remain highest. By providing partial credit guarantees, the government removes a barrier that has historically led to project delays or reliance on informal financing channels.

Agricultural Modernisation and Value Addition

Agricultural allocations of INR 1,62,671 crore reflect a reorientation toward value addition rather than input subsidies. The Coconut Promotion Scheme targets India's 30 million coconut-dependent people and aims to increase production by systematically replacing unproductive trees. Dedicated programmes for Indian cashew and Indian cocoa commit to achieving self-reliance in raw production and processing while establishing these products as premium global brands by 2030.

Bharat-VISTAAR, a multilingual artificial intelligence tool, integrates agricultural data platforms with the recommendations of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. The system provides customised guidance on crop selection, pest management, weather forecasting, and market timing. For small farmers historically excluded from expert agricultural knowledge, this technology offers transformative access to decision-making support.

The Har Khet Ko Pani initiative allocates INR 2,600 crore for groundwater irrigation in 96 districts with inadequate irrigation coverage. Self-Help Entrepreneur Markets transition rural women from credit-dependent arrangements to enterprise ownership through community-owned retail outlets.

Services Sector and Employment

A high-powered committee has been established to make the services sector a core driver of development, aiming to reach 10% of global services share by 2047. The budget proposes establishing 100,000 allied health professionals across 10 selected disciplines over 5 years, training 1.5 lakh multiskilled caregivers who combine care provision with wellness and medical device operation, and establishing 5 Regional Medical Hubs integrating medical, educational, research, and Ayurveda facilities.

The animation, visual effects, gaming, and comics sector receives support through content creator labs in 15,000 secondary schools and 500 colleges. The government also proposes establishing a National Institute of Design in India's eastern region, five university townships near major industrial corridors, and developing fifteen archaeological sites into experiential cultural destinations.

Fiscal Assumptions and Long-Term Outlook

The budget's projections rest on nominal GDP growth of 10% annually, comprising real growth of 6.8 to 7.2% and inflation of approximately 3.5%. Under these assumptions, the fiscal deficit declines from 4.4% to 4.3%, and the debt-to-GDP ratio reaches 50% plus or minus 1% by 2030-31.

Budget 2026 represents a coherent articulation of economic philosophy. The government has positioned productive capacity creation as the foundation for sustainable welfare expansion becoming fiscally viable. This approach demands institutional patience for long-term outcomes over electoral cycles. For India's youth, the budget provides infrastructure, institutional capacity, and market opportunities.

Budget 2026–27

Empowering Youth, MSMEs and Tribal India

Kumar Ganesham

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The Union Budget 2026–27 transcends mere numbers on a page. It brings a vision to life, a roadmap where every Indian can dream, create, and prosper. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dynamic leadership, this Budget embodies the BJP government's commitment to Viksit Bharat, extending opportunity to every village, small business, and ambitious young mind.



Across India, millions of youth brim with ideas, energy, and talent, yet they often lack resources or guidance. That's changing now. Expanded credit access, start-up support, and digital infrastructure equip young Indians to turn ideas into thriving businesses. Picture a Jaipur college graduate launching a sustainable packaging start-up that serves Mumbai customers, or an Assam innovator crafting software for global clients. This isn't imagination, it's the government unlocking youth potential. The Budget declares: India's youth aren't just beneficiaries of growth; they're its architects.

The Budget equally empowers tribal communities, long excluded from mainstream progress. In forests and hills, artisans and forest-based entrepreneurs now connect traditional skills to cities, states, and global markets. A Chhattisgarh tribal woman weaving handlooms sells online, earning income, recognition, and dignity. By weaving tribes into the MSME ecosystem with finance, technology, and market access, the government enacts Antyodaya development, reaching society's last person.

Women entrepreneurs, especially in rural and tribal areas, drive this shift. Financing, training, and market linkages help them build enterprises that uplift families and communities. From a Jharkhand woman packaging forest produce to a tribal craftswoman supplying Delhi buyers, each story fuels empowerment, independence, and change. When women succeed, society thrives.

MSMEs, India's economic backbone, finally gain the structural support they deserve. The Budget tackles delayed payments, financing gaps, and scaling

hurdles through reforms, simplified processes, and technology. These businesses evolve into growth engines, fostering jobs and a sustainable ecosystem. Self-reliance shifts from slogan to reality, building domestic strength for global competition.

Technology amplifies this under Prime Minister Modi's vision. Digital platforms, online compliance, and financial services erase geographic barriers. A village youth reaches national markets as easily as a metro start-up. These tools enable tribal artisans, women entrepreneurs, and MSMEs to scale efficiently, transparently, and sustainably.

This Budget weaves a larger narrative of hope, empowerment, and progress. Youth lead with innovation. Tribes join growth while honouring heritage. Women reshape villages. MSMEs power prosperity. Each reflects the BJP's ethos: inclusive, equitable, sustainable development.

For young Indians, this Budget inspires and invites action. It proves the future rewards dreamers and doers. Prime Minister Modi's leadership makes Viksit Bharat inclusive, achievable, and transformative. Every young entrepreneur, tribal artisan, and women-led venture embodies a nation's energy, creativity, and resilience, not just imagining development, but building it together.

Under the BJP government, Viksit Bharat unfolds today, fueled by youth, tribes, women, and MSMEs, and guided by an unwavering vision. The Union Budget 2026-27 isn't just a financial plan, it's India's rise, authored by its people.



The Union Budget 2026–27 comes at a defining stage in India's economic evolution. Over the past decade, policymaking has steadily shifted from short-term corrective measures to a more deliberate, long-range framework for growth. That shift is reflected in the 7.7% increase in estimated expenditure, taking total outlay to ₹53,47,315 crore for 2026–27. The numbers themselves signal scale, but the structure of the allocations tells a deeper story.

This budget does not read like a routine financial statement. It positions youth, technology, and infrastructure at the centre of the national development strategy, with public capital expenditure rising to ₹12.2 lakh crore. For a country defined by its young demographic profile, such emphasis is not incidental. It suggests that governance is consciously aligning policy with the aspirations and energy of a generation that expects opportunity, not mere assistance.

The Journey to Viksit Bharat PM Modi's Economic Vision for 2026–27

Prakhyat Mishra
Advocate



Reform, Continuity, and Fiscal Discipline

At its foundation, Budget 2026–27 maintains a reform-oriented trajectory. Rather than pivoting toward populist, short-lived measures, it sustains an approach built on structural growth and fiscal discipline. Welfare remains relevant, but the orientation has evolved. The objective now is less about immediate distribution and more about enabling participation.

This shift reflects a broader governance philosophy one that encourages citizens and enterprises to see themselves as active contributors to national development. Stability and continuity form the backdrop of this approach. In an economic environment where policy unpredictability can deter investment, the insistence on steady reform carries its own value.

Youth Entrepreneurship and Enterprise-Led Employment

One of the defining features of the budget is its explicit focus on youth-driven enterprise. The SME Growth Fund receives an allocation of ₹10,000 crore, while the Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana receives an allocation of ₹20,083 crore. These figures are not symbolic; they represent a calibrated effort to expand productive capacity and job creation through entrepreneurship.

India's evolution as an innovation hub has been gradual, shaped by investments in digital infrastructure, financial inclusion, and improvements in ease of doing business. Budget 2026–27 builds on that foundation. It promotes manufacturing, expands access to credit for MSMEs, and supports emerging entrepreneurs. The strategy acknowledges a fundamental economic truth: sustainable employment must emerge from enterprise creation and industrial expansion.

Initiatives such as the Tex-Eco Initiative and Samarth 2.0 further reinforce the production-linked approach. For young professionals and first-generation entrepreneurs, this policy direction signals that ambition and risk-taking are

increasingly backed by institutional mechanisms rather than left to chance.

Stability in Tax Policy and Economic Thought

Another noteworthy aspect of Budget 2026–27 is what it does not change. Income tax slabs remain unchanged, preserving continuity for the middle class and maintaining a predictable fiscal environment. Instead of introducing abrupt reversals, the government has chosen refinement over disruption.

The broader narrative of self-reliance appears in a calibrated form. It is not presented as economic isolationism but as confidence in domestic capacity. Encouraging local manufacturing while remaining open to global collaboration attempts to balance national priorities with international engagement.

The result is a framework that seeks resilience without retreat.

Technology as a Strategic Imperative

The emphasis on artificial intelligence, semiconductor development, and digital infrastructure underscores a recognition that future economic power will hinge on technological capability. Investments in these domains extend beyond economics; they carry strategic weight.

India's expanding digital public infrastructure has created fertile

ground for innovation. Budget 2026–27 consolidates this trajectory, reinforcing a long-term vision rather than introducing disconnected experiments. By strengthening domestic technological ecosystems, the policy direction also addresses supply-chain vulnerabilities and global competitiveness.

For young engineers, researchers, and technology entrepreneurs, this focus communicates something essential: the nation's growth strategy is intertwined with scientific progress and technological excellence.

Infrastructure as the Growth Backbone

Infrastructure remains a central pillar. With public capex rising to ₹12.2 lakh crore, continued

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Sustained infrastructure spending in recent years has been a recurring theme, & its reaffirmation in Budget 2026–27 signals consistency rather than experimentation.
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investment in logistics, rail corridors, and urban economic regions reflects confidence in infrastructure's multiplier effect on productivity and employment.

Connectivity does more than move goods. It integrates markets, reduces transaction costs, and expands opportunities to smaller cities and rural areas. Sustained infrastructure spending in recent years has been a recurring theme, and its reaffirmation in Budget 2026–27 signals consistency rather than experimentation.

Rural Enterprise and Cultural Continuity

The budget also focuses on rural youth and traditional industries. By supporting textiles, handloom sectors, and rural entrepreneurship, it seeks to bridge innovation with cultural heritage. Integrating traditional crafts into digital platforms and modern supply chains reflects an effort to harmonise economic advancement with civilisational continuity.

This approach acknowledges that progress need not displace identity. Instead, it can reinforce it through adaptation and market access.

Social Commitment with Measurable Scale

A defining element of this roadmap is its scale of social investment. Allocations for the welfare of women and children have increased by 25%, reaching ₹6,33,176 crore. This expansion reflects a commitment to inclusive growth grounded in measurable financial commitment.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, ensuring that female heads of households are owners or co-owners transforms asset distribution into a tool of empowerment. Meanwhile, the Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj initiative seeks to connect rural development with digital advancement, strengthening the Khadi and handloom sectors while positioning rural youth as leaders, not merely participants, in the Viksit Bharat journey.

Governance Style and Implementation

Beyond its fiscal components, Budget 2026–27 reveals a distinct shift in economic discourse. The vocabulary increasingly revolves around aspiration,

entrepreneurship, partnership, and national confidence. There is a clear attempt to shift from a top-down delivery model to a collaborative developmental framework.

Still, fiscal declarations alone cannot reshape economic reality. The success of the 7.7% expenditure increase, the ₹53,47,315 crore outlay, the ₹12.2 lakh crore infrastructure push, the ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund, the ₹20,083 crore allocation for the Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana, and the ₹6,33,176 crore commitment to women and children will ultimately depend on implementation clarity and institutional efficiency.

Ambition Anchored in Discipline

Budget 2026–27 aims for 10% nominal GDP growth while targeting a fiscal deficit of 4.3%. Balancing expansion with prudence reflects a calibrated confidence, ambitious yet fiscally measured.

With ₹12.2 lakh crore directed toward infrastructure and ₹6.33 lakh crore committed to women and children, alongside structured employment initiatives like the Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana and enterprise support through the ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund, the blueprint seeks to ensure that growth is both broad-based and sustainable.

The document ultimately functions as more than a financial plan. It outlines a structured pathway toward Viksit Bharat—one that ties aspiration to institutional support, national pride to global integration, and demographic potential to economic architecture.

I. Youth-centric policies

The Budget of 2026 is explicitly framed as a “Yuva Shakti-driven” intervention. Investments in education, skilling and healthcare aim to prepare India’s demographic dividend for future industries. Five university townships along major industrial and logistics corridors are planned to strengthen industry-academia linkages and promote applied research. Earlier in 2025 government of India introduced the One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) scheme. The initiative was created to democratise access to research knowledge by consolidating subscriptions to major international journals through a single digital portal, representing a structural reform in research access that supports India’s long-term ambition of becoming a global knowledge leader under Viksit Bharat 2047. The promotion of the creative and digital economy, referred to as the “orange economy” through Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) content creator labs in schools and colleges, reflects a forward-looking approach to youth employment in emerging sectors. This aligns closely with the government’s vision of nurturing future-ready skills in creative and knowledge-based services.

Empowering Youth, Women and Farmers through Budget 2026

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In healthcare, the creation of five regional medical hubs, expansion of allied health professional institutions and the establishment of three All India Institutes of Ayurveda will strengthen healthcare delivery and generate skilled employment. Over the next five years, one lakh allied health professionals are expected to be added to the workforce, supporting both domestic needs and India's growing role in medical tourism. The Budget integrates social welfare with service delivery reforms. Tourism development, heritage site upgradation and the training of 10,000 tourist guides are expected to create local employment while improving visitor experience and regional connectivity. The expansion of sports infrastructure under the Khelo India Mission aims to support youth engagement and community development.

II. Empowerment of women

One of the major criticisms of Article 15(3) of The Indian Constitution is its excessive reliance on protective reasoning, which may reinforce gender stereotypes, encourage paternalism, and justify restrictive policies rather than structural reform. The constitutional challenge lies in ensuring that Article 15(3) promotes substantive equality and autonomy, rather than protectionist control. The 2026 budget, rather than limiting empowerment to welfare transfers, integrates education, employment, entrepreneurship, healthcare, and infrastructure into a broader, inclusive-growth framework. It proposes to establish one girls' hostel in every district, particularly benefiting women pursuing higher education and STEM courses.

This reduces mobility and safety constraints, which are major barriers to female participation in higher education. Second, the Budget promotes economic empowerment by supporting women-intensive sectors such as textiles, handloom, handicrafts, healthcare, and tourism. The integrated textile programme and revival of legacy industrial clusters enhance employment opportunities for women in traditional sectors. The expansion of allied health institutions and medical hubs further creates skilled employment for women.

Third, entrepreneurial and financial inclusion is encouraged through the ₹10,000 crore SME Growth

Fund and credit-linked support for agriculture and animal husbandry, benefiting rural women entrepreneurs and cooperative members. Thus, Budget 2026 shifts from protection-oriented policies for which art. 15(3) is questioned, to participation-oriented empowerment by enhancing women's agency, income security, and institutional inclusion, thereby strengthening their role in India's long-term development trajectory.

III. Farmers, rural livelihoods and agricultural modernisation

Agriculture and allied activities continue to receive policy support aimed at diversification and income stability. Deductions are extended to cooperative members engaged in cotton seed and cattle feed supply, and credit-linked subsidies for animal husbandry are introduced. A coconut promotion scheme is also proposed to enhance productivity and rural income. A notable innovation is the introduction of AI-enabled agricultural platforms that integrate AgriStack portals and ICAR packages, helping farmers access real-time advisory services and best practices. These digital interventions represent a shift towards data-driven, technology-enabled agriculture and reflect the government's longer-term strategy to improve farm resilience and productivity.

Budget 2026 is not merely an annual fiscal statement but a strategic policy instrument aligned with India's long-term aspiration of becoming a developed economy by 2047. By integrating youth and women empowerment, farmer-focused digital and financial support, the Budget reflects a coherent vision of inclusive and resilient development. In this sense, Budget 2026 advances the government's vision of Viksit Bharat by placing farmers, Yuva Shakti and Nari Shakti at the heart of India's development trajectory. It recognises that sustainable growth cannot be achieved merely through macroeconomic expansion, but through the empowerment of those who form the backbone of the nation.

Record Capital Expenditure: Building the Foundations of the Future

At the very core of the Union Budget 2026-27 lies a bold and historic resolve – public capital expenditure will be raised to an unprecedented ₹12.2 lakh crore in FY 2026-27. This landmark allocation is far more than a fiscal headline; it is a powerful affirmation of the Government's strategic vision that nation-building begins with asset creation. Under the decisive leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, capital expenditure has become the central pillar of India's growth architecture, ensuring that development is durable, productive, and future-oriented.

Infrastructure at the Core of Budget 2026-27

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Such sustained public investment acts as a catalytic force across the economy. It fuels demand in core sectors, crowds in private investment by creating reliable infrastructure ecosystems, strengthens domestic manufacturing, and unlocks large-scale employment generation. From highways and rail corridors to ports, logistics hubs, and urban infrastructure, every project creates ripple effects that energise multiple industries simultaneously.

Strengthening Private Participation: Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund

The Union Budget 2026–27 demonstrates remarkable policy maturity by recognising that large-scale infrastructure transformation thrives on robust public-private partnership. In this spirit, the Government has proposed establishing an Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund a forward-looking institutional mechanism designed to strengthen investor confidence at the most vulnerable stages of project development.

Infrastructure projects, by their very nature, involve significant capital commitments and face uncertainties during the development and construction phases – periods that are often the most risk-sensitive. Delays, cost escalations, and regulatory complexities can discourage private participation, especially in long-gestation projects. By introducing a structured risk mitigation framework, the Government is proactively addressing these concerns and reducing barriers to entry for private developers.

The Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund will reassure both domestic and global investors that India provides not only opportunity, but also stability and predictability. It signals that the Government stands as a credible partner – willing to share risk, uphold transparency, and ensure institutional support. This is governance with foresight: the State does not retreat from responsibility, nor does it crowd out enterprise. Instead, it enables, facilitates, and catalyses private investment while maintaining fiscal

prudence.

Unlocking Value through REITs: Efficient Asset Recycling

The Union Budget 2026–27 carries forward the Government’s reform-oriented momentum with a decisive step towards smarter asset management. In a bold and forward-looking initiative, the Government will accelerate the recycling of significant real estate assets of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) through the creation of dedicated Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs). This measure reflects a modern, market-driven approach to public asset utilisation.

Across the country, CPSEs hold valuable real estate assets that, if optimally leveraged, can generate substantial economic value. Rather than allowing such assets to remain underutilised, the Government is unlocking their potential through structured and transparent monetisation. The establishment of dedicated REITs will attract institutional investors, deepen capital markets, and provide a stable investment avenue while ensuring professional management of these properties.

Crucially, this strategy enables the Government to redirect the unlocked capital into new infrastructure creation – highways, rail corridors, ports, logistics hubs, and urban facilities – without imposing additional fiscal burden. It represents fiscal prudence in action: strengthening public finances while expanding development capacity.

Promoting Environmentally Sustainable Cargo Movement

A globally competitive India requires efficient and green logistics. To promote environmentally sustainable movement of cargo, the Union Budget 2026–27 outlines a comprehensive set of measures to reduce logistics costs and carbon intensity.

New Dedicated Freight Corridors: East to West Connectivity

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To ensure that this promising sector achieves operational stability during its formative years, the Government will introduce a Seaplane Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Scheme.

The Union Budget 2026–27 takes India’s logistics revolution to the next level with the announcement of new Dedicated Freight Corridors connecting Dankuni in the East to Surat in the West. This ambitious East–West freight spine represents a decisive step towards building a seamless, high-capacity logistics network that integrates production centres with consumption markets and export gateways.

Stretching across key industrial and commercial zones, these corridors will function as powerful freight arteries of a rapidly expanding economy. By segregating cargo from passenger rail traffic, they will decongest existing railway lines and ensure faster, more predictable, and cost-efficient goods movement. This structural reform in rail logistics will dramatically enhance supply chain reliability – a crucial factor in strengthening India’s position in global value chains.

For manufacturing clusters, industrial parks, and MSMEs, dependable freight connectivity is a game-changer. Reduced turnaround times, lower logistics costs, and improved transit efficiency directly translate into higher productivity and stronger export competitiveness. From textiles and engineering goods to electronics and pharmaceuticals, industries across sectors will benefit from streamlined logistics.

20 New National Waterways: A Water-Led Logistics Revolution

The Union Budget 2026–27 charts a bold and sustainable course for India’s logistics future by announcing the operationalisation of 20 new National Waterways over the next five years. This decisive expansion of inland water transport marks a transformative shift towards cost-effective, environmentally responsible cargo movement. The journey begins with National Waterway-5 (NW-5) in Odisha – a strategically significant corridor poised to unlock the immense economic potential of eastern India.

NW-5 will seamlessly connect the mineral-rich belts of Talcher and Angul with major industrial hubs such as Kalinga Nagar, and further link them to the ports of Paradeep and Dhamra. This

integrated water-based logistics chain – from mines to industries to maritime gateways – will significantly lower transportation costs, reduce dependence on road freight, and cut carbon emissions. It represents a model of efficient resource utilisation aligned with India’s climate commitments.

By strengthening the logistics backbone of eastern India, this initiative fosters balanced regional development and ensures that resource-rich regions are not merely extraction zones but engines of value addition and industrial growth. The development of waterways will also generate employment opportunities, stimulate ancillary industries, and improve connectivity for local communities.

Building Skills and Ecosystems

The Union Budget 2026–27 recognises a fundamental truth: infrastructure development is sustainable only when it is supported by skilled human capital and robust ecosystems. Physical assets alone cannot transform a nation – it is people, expertise, and institutional capacity that convert infrastructure into engines of growth. In this spirit, the Government has announced the establishment of Training Institutes as Regional Centres of Excellence to support the expanding inland water transport ecosystem.

These Centres of Excellence will cultivate specialised capabilities in vessel operations, logistics management, inland navigation systems, port handling, and maritime engineering. By developing a highly trained workforce tailored to the needs of the water transport sector, the Government is ensuring that India’s logistics transformation is both technologically advanced and professionally managed. For young Indians – particularly from riverine and coastal states – this initiative opens pathways to quality employment, technical expertise, and long-term career growth in a rapidly expanding sector.

Further reinforcing this ecosystem, dedicated ship repair infrastructure catering specifically to inland waterways will be established at Varanasi and Patna. These strategically located facilities will

enhance operational reliability, reduce vessel downtime, and strengthen maintenance capabilities within the country. Beyond improving efficiency, they will generate significant local employment, stimulate ancillary industries, and transform these historic cities into key nodes of inland maritime activity.

Coastal Cargo Promotion: A Green Shift by 2047

The Union Budget 2026–27 reinforces India's commitment to sustainable development with the launch of a forward-looking Coastal Cargo Promotion Scheme. At a time when economic expansion must harmonise with environmental responsibility, this initiative marks a strategic shift towards cleaner and more efficient freight transport. By incentivising a modal transition from conventional rail and road transport to inland waterways and coastal shipping, the Government is redefining India's logistics architecture through a green lens.

The objective is both ambitious and visionary: to increase the share of inland waterways and coastal shipping in overall cargo movement from the present 6% to 12% by 2047 – the centenary year of India's independence. This target aligns seamlessly with the larger national aspiration of building a Viksit Bharat that is economically robust and environmentally conscious.

Such a transition carries multiple long-term benefits. Greater reliance on waterways and coastal shipping will substantially lower fuel consumption, ease congestion on highways, reduce wear and tear on road infrastructure, and bring down overall logistics costs. Most importantly, it will significantly curb carbon emissions, contributing meaningfully to India's climate commitments and sustainable growth pathway.

Seaplanes: Connecting the Last Mile and Unlocking Tourism

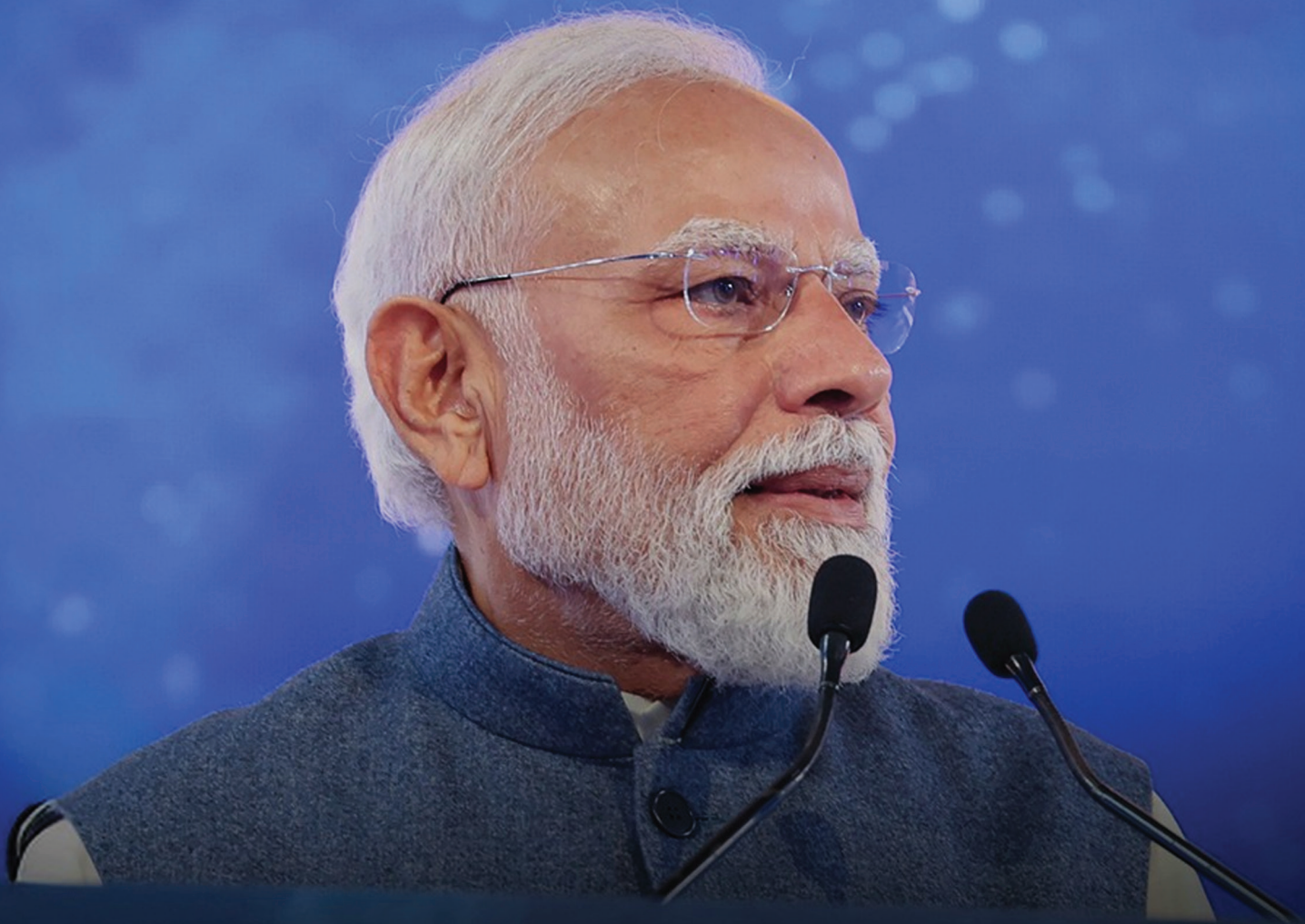
The Union Budget 2026–27 reflects a bold embrace of innovation with its strategic push towards indigenising seaplane manufacturing. In a powerful convergence of technology, connectivity, and self-reliance, the Government has announced incentives to promote the domestic production of seaplanes within the broader Make in India vision.

By strengthening indigenous capabilities in high-technology aviation manufacturing, India moves closer to reducing import dependence while positioning itself as an emerging hub for advanced aerospace innovation.

Seaplanes hold transformative potential for last-mile connectivity across a geographically diverse nation. From island territories and coastal belts to hilly terrains and riverine regions, many parts of India face natural constraints that limit the expansion of conventional airport infrastructure. Seaplanes offer a flexible and efficient alternative, capable of operating from water bodies and significantly reducing travel time. This initiative ensures that even remote and previously underserved areas are integrated into the national growth story.

Beyond connectivity, the tourism sector stands to benefit immensely. By providing access to scenic lakes, coastal destinations, heritage cities, and underexplored natural landscapes, seaplane services can unlock new tourism circuits, generate local employment, and stimulate hospitality and allied industries. This is infrastructure that not only connects places but also creates livelihoods.

To ensure that this promising sector achieves operational stability during its formative years, the Government will introduce a Seaplane Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Scheme. By offering calibrated financial support in the initial phase, the Government is nurturing a sunrise industry until it attains commercial sustainability. This carefully designed support mechanism demonstrates strategic foresight – encouraging innovation, mitigating early-stage risks, and laying the groundwork for long-term viability.



ModiNomics and the Economic Balance of Budget 2026

Pratik Yadav

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Since the emergence of modern economic systems, almost all countries have struggled with a fundamental challenge: balancing unemployment and inflation on one hand, and maintaining fiscal discipline and a stable balance of payments on the other.

Governments across the world often face difficult trade-offs. Should they prioritize economic growth and employment, which may push inflation upward, or should they control inflation at the cost of slower growth? The well-known Phillips Curve suggests that, in the short run, there may be a trade-off between unemployment and inflation.

For decades, policymakers have grappled with this dilemma.

However, ModiNomics has attempted to redefine this balance. The Union Budget 2026 reflects Prime Minister Narendra Modi's broader economic vision—combining growth, fiscal discipline, social welfare, and strategic investment.

The government aims to sustain economic growth of around 7 percent in FY 2026–27 while keeping inflation close to the targeted 4 percent range. Achieving strong growth alongside controlled inflation reflects a calibrated approach to macroeconomic management.

A comparison with the past illustrates this shift. For example, in 2012 the inflation rate stood at nearly 9.5 percent while GDP growth had slowed to about 5.5 percent. The Indian economy then struggled with high inflation and weak growth simultaneously.

The present government seeks to break this pattern by combining growth-oriented policies with fiscal prudence and structural reforms.

A BUDGET WITH A LONG-TERM VISION

The 2026 budget reflects an emphasis on technology, healthcare, national security, and industrial capacity.

One of the major announcements is the Biopharma SHAKTI initiative, under which the government proposes to invest ₹10,000 crore to establish three new institutes and redevelop seven existing institutions.

These institutes will focus on the development of biosimilars, advanced biological medicines used in the treatment of chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and autoimmune disorders. By strengthening domestic research and manufacturing capabilities in biotechnology, India aims to reduce dependence on expensive imports while expanding its global pharmaceutical leadership.

INDIA SEMICONDUCTOR MISSION 2.0

Another important initiative is India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, for which ₹1,000 crore has been allocated in the budget.

Semiconductors form the backbone of modern technology. They are essential components in:

- mobile phones
- computers and laptops
- artificial intelligence systems
- 5G communication infrastructure
- automobiles and electronics

At present, global semiconductor manufacturing is dominated by countries such as Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, China, and the United States. India's efforts to develop its semiconductor ecosystem aim to strengthen technological sovereignty and reduce import dependence. A strong domestic semiconductor industry will also contribute to the manufacturing of chips used in defence, space, telecommunications, and emerging technologies.

In the long run, this can help reduce the cost of electronic devices such as laptops, televisions, and smartphones while strengthening India's position in global supply chains.

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL SECURITY

The budget also reflects the government's emphasis on internal and national security. The Intelligence Bureau (IB) has received an increased allocation. The IB plays a critical role in safeguarding internal security by gathering intelligence related to terrorism, espionage, and cross-border threats.

Though its formal mandate concerns internal security, the intelligence gathered by the IB often has implications for external threats as well, particularly those emerging from hostile neighbours.

Security experts have often argued that intelligence institutions did not receive adequate attention in earlier decades. The present government has placed renewed emphasis on strengthening these institutions in order to better protect national interests.

MODI CARES: RELIEF IN HEALTHCARE

The budget has also provided relief in the healthcare sector. The government has fully exempted customs duty on 17 cancer drugs and

medicines used to treat seven rare diseases, including conditions such as Alpha-Mannosidosis and Primary Hyperoxaluria.

With these additions, medicines used for 58 rare diseases are now exempt from customs duty. This measure will help reduce treatment costs for patients suffering from rare and life-threatening diseases, reflecting the government's commitment to accessible healthcare.

FISCAL DISCIPLINE: MODI'S ECONOMIC APPROACH

Fiscal discipline remains one of the central pillars of the government's economic strategy. Fiscal discipline refers to the government's ability to control expenditure, manage borrowing responsibly, and gradually reduce the fiscal deficit.

Under the current government, India's fiscal deficit has shown a consistent downward trajectory:

- 2021-22: 6.7%
- 2022-23: 6.4%
- 2023-24: 5.6%
- 2024-25: 4.8%
- 2025-26: 4.4%

This represents a reduction of more than two percentage points in five years, demonstrating a sustained effort to restore macroeconomic stability after the pandemic.

Interestingly, even some advanced economies continue to run higher fiscal deficits. For instance, the United States recorded fiscal deficits of over 6 percent in recent years.

India's progress in fiscal consolidation, while maintaining strong growth and expanding welfare spending, highlights a carefully balanced economic strategy.

GROWTH WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE

While maintaining fiscal discipline, the government has simultaneously expanded social sector spending.

In the current budget:

- ₹1.06 lakh crore has been allocated to health, representing about a 10 per cent increase from the previous year.
- ₹1.39 lakh crore has been allocated to education, marking an 8.17 per cent rise.
- More than ₹2 lakh crore has been earmarked for rural development.

Traditionally, economists often suggest reducing social expenditure to control fiscal deficits. However, the government has adopted a different approach—combining fiscal consolidation with increased social investment.

In fact, the compound annual growth rate of social sector spending has been around 15 per cent, rising from approximately ₹14 lakh crore in 2021 to ₹25.7 lakh crore in 2025. If this trajectory continues, social sector spending could reach nearly ₹45 lakh crore by 2029.

The Union Budget 2026 reflects a broader vision of development that combines economic growth, fiscal responsibility, technological advancement, national security, and social welfare. By investing in sectors such as biotechnology, semiconductors, healthcare, and infrastructure while maintaining fiscal discipline, the government seeks to lay the foundations for long-term economic strength.

In many ways, this budget captures the spirit of the government's development philosophy—growth with stability, innovation with welfare, and ambition with responsibility.

Decentralising Growth

The Urban Vision of Budget 2026

Om Krishna

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For decades, India's economic growth has largely depended on the major metropolitan cities of Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, and Chennai. These cities emerged as the primary centres of finance and technology, driving the country's development trajectory. However, this model has also created serious structural limitations, including infrastructure saturation, urban congestion, and widening regional inequality.

It has become clear to many observers that the burden of economic growth should not be placed on the backs of the metropolises. Fortunately, the Union Budget 2026-27 also agrees with that observation by recognising the important role of Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities in driving India's future economic growth as a developed nation, under the 'Viksit Bharat by 2047 vision'.

The budget, supported by a record capital expenditure of ₹ 12.2 lakh crore, presents a clear push towards expanding economic growth beyond metropolitan India. It has taken steps to prioritise job creation, infrastructure expansion, and improved living standards in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. This approach is a focused continuation of the efforts taken to strengthen infrastructure and governance in emerging cities in the past decade through initiatives like the Smart Cities Mission, AMRUT, AMRUT 2.0, and the Aspirational District Programme.



Reimagining Urban Growth Via City Economic Regions

A key feature of this decentralised growth approach is the introduction of the City Economic Regions (CER) framework. The CER signals an important shift in how urban expansion is planned in India. Rather than treating cities as isolated administrative units, the CER model encourages integrated regional development by linking cities with their surrounding industrial, commercial, and service ecosystems. This cluster-based approach aims to strengthen economic linkages, improve resource utilisation, and unlock the combined growth potential of interconnected urban regions.

To support this transformation, the government has committed substantial financial backing, with selected regions expected to receive nearly ₹ 5,000 crore over five years through performance-linked funding. This approach encourages cities to strengthen governance systems, digitise land records, and simplify investment processes. More importantly, it aims to help industries, labour markets, and supply chains grow together, enabling these urban clusters to emerge as strong, self-sustaining economic centres rather than operate in isolation.

The CER model is expected to significantly influence growth patterns across emerging urban centres by providing sustained infrastructure support and encouraging planned regional expansion. Such coordinated development is likely to stimulate economic activity across sectors, including housing, commercial development, services, and local enterprise networks, in cities already witnessing steady demographic and investment growth. By strengthening infrastructure and improving connectivity within these regional clusters, the policy is designed to support employment generation closer to population centres while gradually reducing migration pressures on already overburdened metropolitan regions.

Infrastructure Expansion and Regional Connectivity

The Union Budget 2026–27 prioritises multimodal infrastructure to expand investment, labour mobility, and industrial growth beyond metropolitan clusters. This is a reflection of the simple logic that economic activity follows connectivity, thus boosting decentralised growth.

The proposed seven high-speed rail corridors form a central pillar of this strategy. These corridors primarily connect major economic hubs, but their broader impact also strengthens regional growth belts. The high-speed rail connectivity reduces travel barriers between major economic centres and surrounding urban regions. The resulting improvement in mobility enables businesses to operate across multiple cities more efficiently. The

expanded rail networks also encourage industries to establish operations in lower-cost Tier 2 cities while maintaining access to metropolitan markets. The strengthening of rail infrastructure further contributes to lowering India's logistics costs, which have been brought below 8% of GDP.

The continued allocation of nearly ₹550 crore for regional aviation connectivity further strengthens economic access in smaller cities. The expansion of direct air links improves

investor confidence, supports tourism, and enables service sectors to scale in emerging urban centres.

Simultaneously, renewed emphasis on inland waterways, particularly along the Gangetic and Brahmaputra river systems, is projected to create cost-efficient freight transport options for hinterland manufacturing clusters. These logistics reforms are particularly beneficial for MSMEs located in non-metro regions, enabling them to compete in national and export markets.

The Emerging Technology and Startup Shift

Another silent but significant transformation highlighted in the Budget is the growing migration of innovation ecosystems towards Tier 2 cities.

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The long-term vision of Viksit Bharat rests on creating multiple economic power centres rather than concentrating growth within a few metropolitan corridors.
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Recent data shows that over 50% of the DPIIT-recognised startups are based in non-metro regions. By 2026, Tier 2/3 cities are projected to host 20-25% of new GCC expansions, contributing significantly to the targeted \$100 billion GCC economy by 2030, reflecting improved digital infrastructure and cost advantages.

To sustain this trend, the Budget introduces incentives for technology parks and satellite corporate campuses in emerging cities. These incentives are complemented by skill-development initiatives aimed at creating compliance, financial, and digital service professionals within local economies. The programmes, such as the Corporate Mitra initiative, seek to bridge skill gaps by training youth in regulatory and financial compliance support for startups and MSMEs. This policy simultaneously promotes white-collar employment generation and strengthens the ease of doing business for small enterprises.

Temple Tourism and Cultural Economy as Growth Multipliers

The Budget places targeted emphasis on heritage and pilgrimage towns as part of a broader strategy to formalise and scale India's cultural tourism economy. Spiritual tourism accounts for over 60% share of domestic travel in India and sustains large local ecosystems of small traders, transport operators, hospitality providers, and traditional artisans.

The Government's investment in major pilgrimage and heritage towns strengthens crowd regulation, sanitation systems, last-mile connectivity, and core urban services. These upgrades aim to improve visitor experience, increase stay duration, and raise per capita spending. Higher tourist retention supports sustained local employment and strengthens small-business incomes, positioning cultural centres as stable economic drivers.

Improving Quality of Life as a Competitive Advantage

Rather than focusing solely on physical infrastructure expansion, this budget emphasises improving measurable urban quality-of-life standards. The Urban Infrastructure Development

Fund prioritises reliable water supply, scientific waste management, green public transport, and climate-resilient infrastructure in smaller cities. This approach recognises that sustained growth in Tier 2 and Tier 3 centres depends not only on connectivity and capital investment but also on liveability and service delivery outcomes.

These improvements are increasingly becoming critical in attracting skilled professionals, startups, and knowledge-based industries. With metropolitan regions facing severe congestion and environmental stress, Tier 2 cities are emerging as attractive alternatives offering lower operational costs and better urban liveability. The government's investment strategy attempts to institutionalise this advantage and transform smaller cities into balanced economic and residential hubs.

Conclusion: Building New Economic Powerhouses of India

The Union Budget 2026-27 marks a decisive step in India's transition towards balanced and distributed economic development. By prioritising infrastructure connectivity, industrial clustering, innovation ecosystems, cultural tourism, and urban liveability, the government has attempted to reposition Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities as central pillars of India's growth story.

The long-term vision of Viksit Bharat rests on creating multiple economic power centres rather than concentrating growth within a few metropolitan corridors. If implemented effectively, this strategy has the potential to democratise economic opportunity, strengthen regional resilience, and accelerate India's journey towards becoming a leading global economy by 2047.

Reading Budget 2026 Through the Lens of Public Health

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As a final-year MBBS student at a tertiary government hospital in Uttar Pradesh, a few months away from graduation, my days are shaped by clinical postings and ward rounds, textbooks full of etiologies and pathophysiology, and the growing understanding that health does not begin within hospital walls. We are repeatedly taught that disease is not about the hospital building, it is affected more by daily life things- by home, by schools, by nutrition, by sanitation, by employment, and by policy decisions. So, when I read the Union Budget 2026, I read it like a young doctor reading a case sheet of an exceptionally large patient. A patient with some acute chief complaints, many chronic conditions, and a long future ahead.



Critical Care to Prophylaxis for the Nation

In clinics, we are taught that chasing numbers might give way to symptomatic relief, but we need to get to the root cause for long-term cure. Blood pressure, haemoglobin, or blood sugar only matter when we understand the patient's background, habits, and risks. Similarly, a national budget is not only about revenue figures or allocations written in tables. It reflects priorities. My counterparts in countries like the United States or the UK talk about how healthcare is more prevention-based there, and treatment-based here.

For many years, India's economic decision-making felt like emergency care. A problem would arise, and immediate management would follow. Budget 2026 might be a transition from that pattern. Finally, we might be asking why the immunity is low while treating the infection. There is an attempt to think long-term. Infrastructure, capital expenditure, and fiscal discipline are being treated like foundational treatments rather than quick fixes. Roads and railways act like major vessels, digital connectivity like the nervous system. When these systems are weak, the entire body struggles. When they function better, even distant regions start receiving oxygen in the form of opportunity and access.

During case presentations, professors always ask where the patient comes from, so we have mentally noted how patients travel hundreds of kilometres just for basic treatment. Improved infrastructure, thus, directly affects access to healthcare, education, and employment.

Reading the Demographic Pulse

India's young population is often referred to as a demographic dividend. But in medicine, we learn that the pulse rate is important, as are its other parameters, such as volume, character, and rhythm. Budget 2026 emphasises employment generation, skill development, and entrepreneurship. This matters deeply to students like me. As I look forward to graduating, I am excited, but there is also uncertainty. Postgraduate seats are limited, rural service is in demand, and pathways for research and public health careers are unclear.

Policies that strengthen education systems,

encourage research and support innovation shape these pathways. They decide whether young professionals find direction or remain stuck in bottlenecks. The Budget focuses on startups and emerging sectors. This inspires the youth not only to look for jobs but also to be instrumental in creating them. It feels like a primordial level of prevention- building habits and capacity before problems appear.

Looking at Risk Factors

We learn that tuberculosis is linked to overcrowding, anaemia to poor nutrition, and typhoid to unsafe drinking water. These are not hospital problems. They are social problems.

Healthcare spending is often discussed in terms of beds, buildings, and insurance coverage. Those are important. But Budget 2026 encourages a wider view. Support for farmers, women-led development, housing, sanitation, and social security directly influences disease patterns.

Women's economic participation deserves special mention. Improving a woman's education and income improves outcomes for entire families- from nutrition to schooling to healthcare access, the impact multiplies. Only a few interventions are as effective in public health.

Fiscal Discipline

Fiscal discipline may sound technical, but it reminds me of electrolyte balance. It rarely gets attention when normal, but causes serious problems when ignored. Too much stimulation can destabilise the system; too much restriction can slow recovery.

Budget 2026 attempts to keep this balance. Growth-oriented spending continues, but within limits. This could help control inflation, build confidence, and protect the vulnerable populations from sudden economic shocks. No wonder the first step in the management plan of chronic diseases is lifestyle modifications instead of crash diets. The same principle guides this Budget.

Farmers and the Middle Class

In a country like India, farmers, the middle class, and small entrepreneurs form a solid, broad base. Support for agriculture, rural livelihoods and

everyday living conditions goes beyond the political lens. When these groups remain economically stable, harsher variables affect them less. This is like healthier patients with balanced blood parameters recovering faster and developing fewer complications.

India on the Global Stage

The tone of Budget 2026 definitely stands out. There is less emphasis on recovering and more on leading. India might be eyeing a vital role in the global picture through investments in manufacturing, technology, and innovation. As a medical student, I have keenly noted how India now plays a leading role in vaccines and affordable medicines. Economic strength expands this capacity. It allows the country to contribute solutions, not just statistics.

A Practical Prescription

Budget 2026 is like a carefully worked-up case. It does not promise instant cures. Instead, it focuses on long-term stability and prophylaxis. Development, like health, does not improve through isolated interventions. It requires multisectoral coordination.

As someone about to enter the medical profession, this Budget reinforces a familiar lesson. The principles stay the same- whether treating a patient or building a nation. Understand the problem clearly. Address root causes. Prevent where possible. Most importantly, keep people, not numbers, at the centre.



How India Reclaimed Manufacturing Capacity

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"Make in India, make for the world. This is how India should move forward with the Production Linked Incentive scheme to strengthen domestic manufacturing, expand exports, and establish itself as a global manufacturing hub in the years ahead."

PM Shri Narendra Modi



Under the decisive leadership of PM Shri Narendra Modi, India has embarked on a decisive effort to rebuild its manufacturing base following decades of under-scale and fragmented production. The Production Linked Incentive Scheme represents a clear strategic shift toward expanding domestic industrial capacity through focusing on scale, competitiveness, and performance. By anchoring incentives to actual production, the programme ties industrial expansion to job creation while strengthening the foundations of India's long-term economic resilience.

Four years into implementation, official data and independent reporting indicate that this approach has delivered tangible outcomes. PLI-supported manufacturing has already mobilised over ₹2 lakh crore in realised private investment, with large-scale production facilities becoming operational across multiple strategic sectors and more than two dozen states. The experience of the past four years reflects how the scheme has moved India's manufacturing strategy from intent to execution, translating policy design into industrial capacity on the ground.

Scale of Investment and Production Under PLI

As of September 2025, data indicate that PLI schemes across 14 sectors have resulted in over ₹2.0 lakh crore in realised investments, reflecting actual capital expenditure on new plants, production lines, and supporting manufacturing infrastructure. Over the same period, incremental production and sales attributable to PLI exceeded ₹18.7 lakh crore, while exports from PLI-supported sectors crossed ₹8.2 lakh crore. Cumulative incentive disbursements stood at approximately ₹23,946 crore, consistent with the scheme's design under which incentives are released only after production milestones are achieved.

The boost in employment and rise in factory creation under PLI can be seen in the following data: By September 2025, total employment generated was estimated at around 12.6 lakh jobs,

and more than 1,300 manufacturing units had been established across 27 States and Union Territories, indicating broad-based industrialisation rather than concentration in a few locations.

International reports, too, have lauded the sheer scale at which PLI has been able to establish sovereign capacity building in the field of manufacturing in India. Reuters reported in March 2025 that firms participating in the PLI programme had produced goods worth US\$160-165 billion by FY2024-25 and attracted nearly US\$19 billion in investments, figures broadly aligned with official data once reporting timelines are accounted for.

Expansion of Physical Manufacturing Capacity

Manufacturing capacity creation under PLI is visible in the scale and distribution of new and expanded production facilities. By the end of 2024, data recorded more than 1,300 manufacturing units set up or expanded under PLI schemes, including greenfield factories, brownfield expansions, and high-throughput production lines. This expansion spans electronics clusters in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, pharmaceutical hubs in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, solar manufacturing corridors in Rajasthan and Gujarat, and steel and capital-goods clusters in Odisha and Maharashtra. The resulting geographic spread indicates that PLI-driven capacity growth has extended beyond traditional industrial centres, supporting more balanced regional industrialisation and local employment generation.

This expansion in manufacturing capacity has occurred alongside a measurable improvement in India's innovation performance. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization's Global Innovation Index, India's rank improved from 81st in 2015 to 38th in 2025, placing it among the fastest-climbing large economies globally. India also continues to rank first among lower-middle-income countries. The convergence of rising innovation capability with large-scale manufacturing under PLI is strengthening domestic value addition, enabling firms to move beyond assembly toward process engineering, design

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The available data indicate that the Production Linked Incentive Scheme has delivered a measurable expansion of India's domestic manufacturing capacity

integration, and incremental product innovation within India.

Crucially, it is worth noting that the PLI eligibility thresholds favoured large-scale facilities, thereby raising India's installed manufacturing capacity rather than dispersing incentives across sub-scale units.

Electronics Manufacturing: The Largest Capacity Shift

Electronics manufacturing provides the clearest illustration of capacity expansion under PLI. India's mobile phone manufacturing value rose from ₹18,900 crore in FY2014 to approximately ₹5.45 lakh crore in FY2025, representing more than a twenty-fold increase. A substantial share of this expansion occurred after the introduction of PLI.

Total electronics manufacturing output reached approximately ₹11.32 lakh crore in FY2025, with further growth reported in FY2025-26. Annual mobile phone production volumes crossed 325 million units, a scale achievable only through large investments in new factories, automation, and logistics integration. These outcomes reflect installed capacity creation, including surface-mount technology lines, testing facilities, tooling units, and integrated backend infrastructure. Once touted as a mere assembly economy, India has now discarded that image and transformed into a core hardware production hub for the world.

Core Industrial Inputs: Steel and Pharmaceuticals

PLI for specialty steel has driven investment commitments of nearly ₹11,887 crore, with projected capacity additions of approximately 8.7 million tonnes by the early 2030s. These facilities focus on high-grade steel used in automobiles, electrical equipment, and capital goods, expanding domestic capacity in critical intermediate inputs. Similarly, PLI schemes for bulk drugs and APIs have led to the establishment of new manufacturing plants and capacity expansions in pharmaceutical intermediates, strengthening domestic production capability across the value chain.

Employment and Supply-Chain Expansion

By September 2025, total employment generated under PLI, both direct and indirect, was estimated at approximately 12.6 lakh jobs. These jobs are embedded in operational factories and supplier networks rather than temporary or transitional roles. The impact of PLI on employment is likely to strengthen further with the implementation of India's four labour codes, which consolidate 29 central labour laws into 4 unified codes covering wages, industrial relations, social security, and occupational safety.

This consolidation simplifies compliance across over 1,000 fragmented provisions into a single, standardised framework applicable to large manufacturing units. The codes extend formal social security coverage to an estimated 500 million workers, integrate EPFO and ESIC frameworks, and reduce transaction costs associated with multi-law compliance. For PLI-linked factories operating at scale, this regulatory alignment lowers the marginal cost of formal hiring and supports sustained workforce expansion, particularly in multi-shift, labour-intensive manufacturing operations.

Conclusion

The available data indicate that the Production Linked Incentive Scheme has delivered a measurable expansion of India's domestic manufacturing capacity. With over ₹2.0 lakh crore in realised investments, ₹18.7 lakh crore in incremental production, more than 1,300 manufacturing units, and over 12 lakh jobs, the scheme has translated policy intent into tangible industrial outcomes.

As India advances toward the goal of Viksit Bharat@2047, this approach to industrial growth strengthens domestic capabilities and reinforces the foundations of long-term economic resilience. The experience of PLI demonstrates that large-scale manufacturing, when anchored in performance and execution, can serve as a central pillar of India's development trajectory.

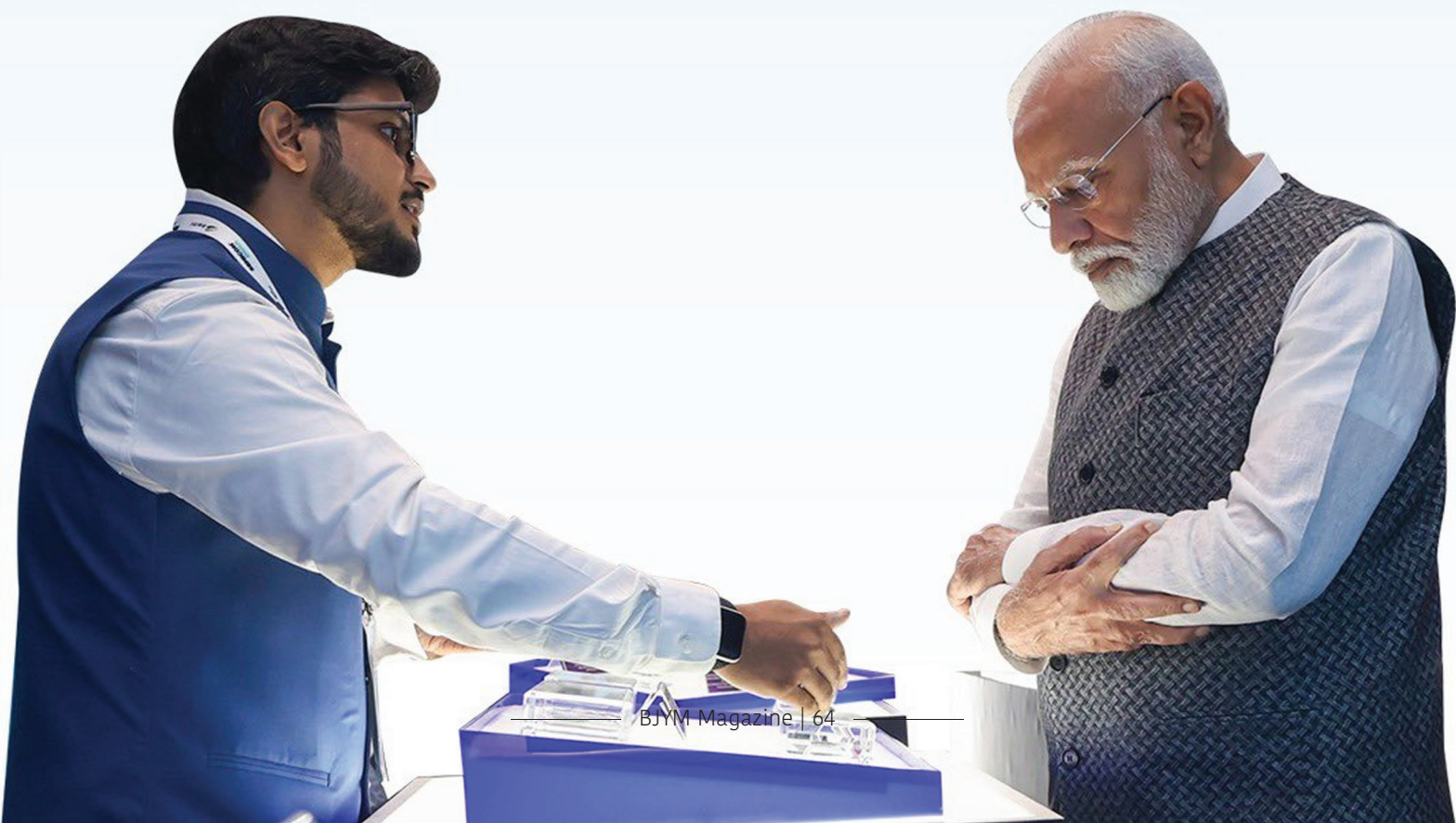
Building a Competitive and Inclusive Economy through Budget 2026

Nihal Sharma

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The Union Budget 2026-27, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1, 2026, stands out as one of the most forward-looking policy documents in India's recent economic history. Positioned not merely as an annual fiscal exercise but as a strategic blueprint for a resilient, inclusive, and globally competitive nation, the Budget reflects the Modi government's long-term vision for a Viksit Bharat, an India that is empowered, equitable, and equipped for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

The theme that underpins Budget 2026 is Yuva Shakti- driven growth, recognising India's demographic dividend as its greatest asset. Through targeted reforms and sustained investment, the Budget seeks to create productive opportunities for India's youth, strengthen social welfare, expand infrastructure, promote innovation, and fortify economic resilience.



A Vision Anchored in Growth, Competitiveness, and Equity

Budget 2026 centres on three fundamental duties

- i. accelerating and sustaining economic growth,
- ii. building human and institutional capacity, and
- iii. advancing inclusive development for all citizens. These pillars aim to transform aspirations into achievements and latent potential into performance.

At a time when global uncertainties and supply chain realignments pose macroeconomic challenges, the Budget underscores India's firm commitment to fiscal prudence, regulatory certainty, and investment-led expansion. It maintains a disciplined fiscal glide path, with a target of reducing the fiscal deficit to 4.3% of GDP and emphasises debt sustainability - crucial steps in building long-term investor confidence.

Youth, Skills, and Employment: Turning Demographic Dividend into Economic Dividends

Recognising that India's youth are central to its future, Budget 2026 places a strong emphasis on education, skills, and employment generation. It spotlights initiatives that will enhance linkages between education and employability, ensuring that young Indians are prepared for jobs in cutting-edge sectors. To achieve this, the Budget proposes establishing an Education to Employment and Enterprise Standing Committee to align academic pathways with industry demand and emerging technologies, such as AI and data analytics.

By investing in skill development, entrepreneurship, and future sectors like digital technology and services exports, the Budget actively encourages innovation and enterprise creation, especially among young professionals and aspirational entrepreneurs.

Infrastructure Expansion: Laying the Foundation for Inclusive Growth

One of the most defining features of the Union Budget 2026 is its massive capital expenditure push. The government has allocated a record ₹12.2 lakh crore for infrastructure in FY 2026 - 27, a nearly double-digit increase from previous years, reaffirming infrastructure as the backbone of India's



economic development strategy.

This investment spans transport corridors, urban development, logistics parks, high-speed rail systems, ports, and inland waterways, thereby enhancing connectivity, reducing logistics costs, and expanding economic opportunities across regions. Plans to develop City Economic Regions in Tier-II and Tier-III cities further support decentralised growth, enabling balanced urbanisation and opening new avenues for jobs, services, and industry across the country.

Manufacturing, MSMEs, and Competitive Advantage Budget 2026 places strong emphasis on strengthening domestic manufacturing and MSMEs as key drivers of investment, employment, and export growth. A strategic push for sectors such as electronics, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and critical minerals aims to build globally competitive industries.

The introduction of dedicated schemes for container manufacturing and the revival of legacy industrial clusters reflect a move toward deeper structural competitiveness rather than short-term incentives alone. For small and medium enterprises, access to credit, technology, and market linkages will help foster sustainable growth and integrate them into global value chains.

Enhancing Ease of Doing Business and Investment Climate

Ease of doing business remains a priority in Budget 2026. The government has expanded regulatory simplification, strengthened access to foreign investment, and introduced tax measures to reduce the compliance burden and attract long-term capital flows. More importantly, tax incentives such as a tax holiday until 2047 for foreign companies offering cloud services via domestic data centres and unified tax categories for the IT sector signal India's ambition to become a global digital and technology hub. These policy steps are designed to draw global investment into the Indian economy's high-growth engines.

Empowering Farmers, Women, and the Middle Class Budget 2026 also champions equitable growth and

social welfare. For farmers, the focus shifts from subsidy dependence to technology-driven agriculture, supported by platforms that provide data, market access, and production insights to improve decision-making and incomes. Women and middle-class families benefit from targeted welfare schemes, skill enhancement programs, and financial inclusion measures, ensuring that prosperity is broad-based and not confined to select segments alone.

Innovation, Services, and the Future of Work

Budget 2026 positions India as a leader in innovation, emphasising sectors such as biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and digital public infrastructure. The Biopharma SHAKTI initiative, with an outlay of ₹10,000 crore over five years, aims to establish India as a global biopharmaceutical hub by bolstering research, regulatory capacity, and clinical trial ecosystems. Further, reforms in services sectors, including medical tourism, creative industries, and technology services, highlight the Budget's understanding that India's future employment growth will be heavily services driven.

Towards a Stronger, More Inclusive India

Budget 2026 is not merely an accounting for the next fiscal year; it is a roadmap for the next decade, guided by a clear philosophy of inclusive, sustainable, and aspirational growth. It aligns investments with national priorities, including economic resilience, ease of living, human capital development, and global competitiveness.

For the youth of India, this Budget is a declaration of opportunity. It reinforces the belief that a Viksit Bharat is achievable when talent meets vision, potential meets policy, and ambition meets opportunity. The 2026 Budget is not just a fiscal plan; it is a manifestation of India's collective ambition to build a nation that is technologically advanced, economically robust, socially just, and inclusive in spirit and practice. It lights the path to a future where every Indian can contribute to and benefit from the country's rise as a global economic leader.

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Technology is not just a sector, it is the foundation of a developed India. Our goal is that every Indian, from the farmer to the start-up founder, must benefit from the digital revolution.”

*- Prime Minister **Shri Narendra Modi***



AI, Semiconductors and Data Sovereignty in Budget 2026

Raj Shekhar & Ayan Mohanty

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When Finance Minister Smt Nirmala Sitharaman rose in Parliament on 1st February 2026, she didn't just present a Budget, she unveiled a declaration of technological sovereignty. The Union Budget 2026-27 positions AI, semiconductors, cloud computing and data centres alongside roads, railways and energy grids as foundational national infrastructure. The message is loud and clear: Bharat is no longer just a consumer of the world's technology, it intends to produce, own and lead.

Guided by three kartavyas - accelerating growth, fulfilling the aspirations of a youthful population, and ensuring that every family, community and region shares in prosperity - this Budget marks a paradigm shift from an adoption mindset to what can only be described as an "Intelligence-First" vision. Bharat's future competitiveness, the Government has wagered, will no longer rest on labour arbitrage alone but on AI-driven efficiencies, domestic intellectual property and a secure, sovereign digital ecosystem.

Owning The Hardware: Chips, Components And Full-Stack IP For Bharat

The centrepiece of the Government's hardware ambitions is India Semiconductor Mission 2.0. Where ISM 1.0 laid the groundwork for a foundational chip industry, ISM 2.0 charges into the high-value segments of the global semiconductor value chain, backed by a targeted Budget 2026-27 allocation of ₹ 1,000 crore to accelerate domestic semiconductor equipment manufacturing, materials ecosystem development and indigenous full-stack chip design capabilities. From designing and manufacturing semiconductor equipment in Bharat to producing raw materials domestically, the Budget has everything covered. These measures are aimed at nurturing a vast design ecosystem and building industry-led research centres that develop both cutting-edge technology and the skilled workforce required to sustain it. Bharat is no longer content with assembling chips; it is aiming to develop full-stack Bharitya IP.

The industry has already responded with thundering confidence. The enhanced budgetary allocation for the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme, now scaled to an outlay of ₹ 40,000 crore,

has received a staggering 149 applications against an expected 50-55, a nearly threefold vote of faith. This strategic investment moves Bharat towards genuine value addition, across sectors, insulating the Artificial Intelligence and data industries from the volatile global supply chain disruptions that have disrupted economies worldwide.

Data Sovereignty And A 21-Year Bet On Cloud Supremacy

Perhaps the Budget's most visionary stroke is an unprecedented tax holiday extending all the way to 2047 for foreign companies providing cloud services to global customers through Bhartiya data centres. Paired with safe harbour provisions allowing cloud providers to earn up to 15% profit over costs without triggering transfer pricing disputes, Bharat has rolled out the red carpet for the world's hyperscalers. As Union Information Technology Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw Ji noted, AI data centres are critical to the infrastructure layer of the AI architecture, with investments of around USD 70 billion already underway and additional announcements of around USD 90 billion.

The long term policy framework positions Bharat among the leading global destinations for AI and cloud infrastructure, creating conditions for what observers describe as an aggressive "Data-in-Bharat" mandate. This strategic move can transform the country into a global data hub, leading to unprecedented growth across the domestic power, real estate, and fibre-optic sectors. For foreign providers, the requirement to route services to Bhartiya customers through Bhartiya entities adds a sovereignty dimension, ensuring local participation at every layer of the blossoming cloud economy.

AI for Every Bhartiya: From Corporate Houses to Farmers and Farmlands

The Rs 10,300 crore IndiaAI Mission refuses to let AI remain an elite, metro-only phenomenon. The NITI Aayog estimates that AI-led sectors could add ₹ 50 lakh crores to Bharat's GDP by 2030. The Budget's strategic genius lies in positioning AI as a cross-sector "force multiplier" rather than a standalone regulated industry, enabling rapid deployment across healthcare, agriculture,

education and governance without any delays due to premature regulation. Under the IndiaAI FutureSkills program, the Government is supporting the training of 500 PhD scholars, 5,000 postgraduates, and 8,000 undergraduates in AI research and development, fostering a robust talent pipeline.

Nothing illustrates this inclusive vision better than Bharat-VISTAAR, a multilingual AI tool that merges AgriStack data with ICAR's agricultural science to deliver real-time, location-specific crop advisories, pest warnings and weather forecasts to farmers in their own languages. This is technology meeting the soil, literally. Combined with the Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana's emphasis on creating IT and Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, and Comics (AVGC) roles for persons with disabilities, the Budget makes a powerful statement.

The Budget makes it clear that AI will not remain confined to corporate boardrooms. From expanding assistive technologies through ALIMCO to deploying AI-led, non-intrusive cargo screening at ports, the intent is to push AI into everyday governance and public service delivery. Whether in agriculture, healthcare, logistics or disability support. Industry response has been broadly positive, with NASSCOM backing the push for farm-focused AI tools, while the expansion of AVGC labs across thousands of schools and colleges is being seen as a serious attempt to build India's next generation of digital and creative workforce.

Bharat's AI Revolution Will Be Inclusive, Not Selectively Urban

But hardware and algorithms mean nothing without the human capital to power them. The Budget backs this conviction with action, establishing AVGC Content Creator Labs in schools and colleges. Backed by global partners including Google, Meta, Adobe, NVIDIA and Microsoft who will provide industry grade tools, curriculum and internship pathways. A High-Powered "Education to Employment and Enterprise" Standing Committee will audit AI's impact on jobs and align training with the digital economy. Bharat's demographic dividend is being deliberately engineered into a digital dividend.

Red Tape to Red Carpet: Tax Reform, SME Power And Smarter Borders

For Bhartiya technology companies, the Budget slashes through complexity. Software development, IT-enabled services and contract R&D are now clubbed under a single "Information Technology Services" category with a unified safe harbour margin of 15.5% and a dramatically enhanced threshold of ₹2,000 crore, up from ₹300 crore. Additionally, with automated approvals valid for 5 years and a fast-tracked Advance Pricing Agreement process targeting a 2-year completion, transfer pricing uncertainty is largely eliminated.

Meanwhile, the ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund and expanded GENESIS programme are designed to incubate future technology unicorns beyond the metros, supported by an additional ₹2,000 crore for micro enterprises through the Self-Reliant India Fund. The removal of the ₹10 lakh value cap on courier exports is a direct gift to small businesses and artisans eyeing global e-commerce, ensuring that the next breakout brand is as likely to ship from Deoghar as from Bengaluru.

A Budget That Thinks And Lays Groundwork For Decades

The Union Budget 2026-27 is not merely a financial statement; it is a roadmap for technological Aatmanirbharta. By extending policy certainty to 2047, investing simultaneously in silicon and skills, creating pathways from farm fields to data centres, and treating AI as a right rather than a luxury, the Government has laid the digital foundation for Viksit Bharat.

Through this Union Budget, the Government has woven technology into the very fabric of national development. The ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund, the expanded GENESIS programme, and the simplified tax frameworks are each a signal that innovation will no longer be the privilege of metropolitan India. Instead of preparing for the future, Bharat is building it - one chip, one cloud, one AI-powered farm advisory at a time.

Budget 2026

Advancing Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas

Dr. Monika Kumari
Assistant Professor of
Political Science
Magadh University

1. Empowering Farmers

The Union Budget 2026–27 places farmer prosperity at the very heart of national development. Moving decisively beyond subsistence farming, this Budget charts a clear path toward value-driven, technology-enabled, and climate-resilient agriculture. It reflects a Government that understands that the journey to Viksit Bharat 2047 must begin in the fields, with a confident and empowered Annadata.

Integrated Development of 500 Reservoirs and Amrit Sarovars

Water security is the first pillar of agricultural resilience. The integrated development of 500 reservoirs and Amrit Sarovars marks a transformative investment in rural sustainability. By rejuvenating traditional water bodies and strengthening irrigation infrastructure, the Government is ensuring assured water supply, stabilising crop cycles, and reducing vulnerability to erratic monsoons.

This initiative goes far beyond storage capacity. It restores ecological balance, replenishes groundwater, and promotes multi-cropping and allied activities such as fisheries. For farmers, it means reduced input risk and greater income certainty. For rural communities, it means durable livelihoods and climate resilience. In essence, this is infrastructure that nurtures both prosperity and environmental stewardship.



High-Value Agriculture: From Volume to Value

Recognising India's extraordinary agro-climatic diversity, the Government is steering Indian agriculture from a volume-centric approach to a value-driven paradigm. Strategic promotion of high-value crops such as coconut, sandalwood, cocoa, and cashew, especially in coastal and region-specific belts, will enable farmers to diversify, enhance income, and tap into premium domestic and export markets.

A dedicated Coconut Promotion Scheme will further strengthen this transformation. By improving planting material, expanding modern processing infrastructure, and enhancing market linkages, coconut farmers will gain access to higher productivity and global competitiveness. This is a calibrated move toward value addition, export expansion, and rural wealth creation, ensuring that diversification translates into tangible income growth.

Bharat-VISTAAR: AI Empowering the Annadata

In a landmark step toward digital agriculture, the Government will launch Bharat-VISTAAR (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources), a multilingual, AI-powered platform integrating AgriStack portals and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) package of practices with advanced analytics.

This platform will democratise agricultural knowledge like never before. Real-time, localised advisories on soil health, pest management, crop planning, and input optimisation will be delivered to farmers in their own languages. By combining artificial intelligence with grassroots extension networks, Bharat-VISTAAR ensures that cutting-edge technology is not confined to laboratories but reaches the last mile.

2. Empowering Divyangjan: From Inclusion to Leadership

True development is measured not merely by economic growth, but by the dignity it restores and the opportunities it creates for every citizen. Guided by the Third Kartavya, the Union Budget 2026–27 reaffirms a powerful commitment: empowerment of

Divyangjan must move beyond welfare to leadership and active nation-building.

Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana: Ability at the Centre

At the heart of this vision is the proposed Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana, a forward-looking initiative designed to create task-oriented, process-driven roles in high-growth sunrise sectors such as Information Technology, AVGC (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, and Comics), Hospitality, and Food & Beverages.

These are not conventional avenues of employment – they are the engines of the emerging Orange Economy, powered by creativity, innovation, and digital capability. By aligning skill development with rapidly expanding sectors that generate quality employment, the Government is ensuring that Divyangjan are not confined to the margins but are integrated into the most dynamic segments of the economy.

From Welfare to Workforce Participation

This programme marks a decisive shift in policy thinking. It recognises ability over disability, talent over limitation, and aspiration over dependency. Structured training, industry linkages, and outcome-oriented placement support will enable Divyangjan to secure dignified employment and contribute meaningfully to national productivity.

By facilitating entry into technology-driven and service-oriented sectors, the initiative strengthens self-reliance, enhances financial independence, and fosters social confidence. Employment is not merely a source of income it is a pathway to recognition, agency, and leadership.

Building an Inclusive Viksit Bharat

The Union Budget 2026–27 thus transforms the narrative: Divyangjan are not beneficiaries; they are contributors, innovators, and creators of value. In integrating them into emerging industries, the Government is building a workforce that reflects the diversity and strength of Bharat itself.

This is inclusive growth in its truest sense, a model where empowerment replaces exclusion, where dignity replaces dependence, and where every citizen, regardless of physical challenges, has the

opportunity to rise and lead. As India advances toward Viksit Bharat 2047, this commitment ensures that progress is not selective but shared.

3. Commitment to Mental Health and Trauma Care

The Union Budget 2026-27 marks a watershed moment in India's public health journey by placing mental health and trauma care firmly at the centre of national priorities. In a decisive and humane policy shift, mental well-being is no longer treated as peripheral; it is recognised as fundamental to human development, productivity, and social stability. This forward-looking commitment reflects a Government that understands that Viksit Bharat must be strong not only in body, but also in mind.

National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences – Expanding National Leadership

Building on NIMHANS's global reputation and clinical excellence, the Government will establish NIMHANS-2 in North India, thereby decentralising access to advanced psychiatric, neurological, and trauma care. This strategic expansion ensures that world-class mental health services are no longer concentrated in one region but are accessible to millions across northern states.

The new institute will significantly strengthen trauma response systems, expand psychiatric research, and enhance high-quality training for mental health professionals. By broadening

NIMHANS's institutional footprint, the Government is creating a national leadership network in neurosciences and mental health care one that integrates research, treatment, and education under a unified vision.

Strengthening Regional Apex Institutions

In parallel, the upgradation of National Mental Health Institutes in Ranchi and Tezpur into Regional Apex Institutions will establish a robust mental healthcare grid across eastern and northeastern India. These institutions will function as centres of excellence for specialised treatment, research innovation, and capacity-building.

Such a distributed model ensures balanced regional development in healthcare infrastructure. It bridges historical gaps in access, reduces the burden on metropolitan centres, and strengthens district-level referral systems. The emphasis is clear: quality mental health services must reach every region, every community, and every citizen.

Mainstreaming Mental Health for a Productive Nation

This initiative goes far beyond infrastructure creation. It reflects a profound recognition that psychological well-being underpins educational achievement, workplace productivity, family stability, and social harmony. By investing in specialised institutions, skilled manpower, and research ecosystems, the Government is



dismantling stigma and integrating mental healthcare into the mainstream public health framework.

The Union Budget 2026–27 thus demonstrates moral clarity and administrative resolve. In strengthening trauma care and expanding mental health leadership across regions, it affirms a simple yet powerful principle: a resilient nation begins with resilient minds.

4. Purvodaya and the North-East: Powering India's Eastern Rise

The Union Budget 2026–27 powerfully advances the vision of Purvodaya the rise of eastern India as a decisive pillar of national growth. The Third Kartavya makes it unequivocally clear: India's journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047 will be complete only when the eastern states and the North-East emerge as engines of prosperity, innovation, and connectivity.

This is not merely a regional development plan; it is a strategic realignment of national priorities integrating economic dynamism, cultural tourism, and green mobility into a cohesive eastern growth story.

East Coast Industrial Corridor: A New Manufacturing Spine

A major highlight is the development of an integrated East Coast Industrial Corridor, featuring a strategically positioned, well-connected node at Durgapur. This corridor will serve as a transformative backbone for manufacturing and logistics in eastern India.

By seamlessly linking ports, highways, rail networks, and industrial clusters, the corridor will reduce logistics costs, enhance supply chain efficiency, and create a globally competitive industrial ecosystem. Durgapur's emergence as a key node will catalyse investment inflows, stimulate MSMEs, and generate large-scale employment opportunities for the region's youth.

This initiative reflects the Government's long-term strategy of decentralised industrialisation, ensuring that growth is geographically balanced and regionally inclusive.

Tourism and Green Mobility: Sustainable Development in Action

Recognising the unparalleled natural beauty and cultural richness of the Purvodaya states, the Government will develop five major tourism destinations across the five Purvodaya states. This focused intervention will modernise tourism infrastructure, promote local entrepreneurship, and create livelihood opportunities in hospitality, handicrafts, transport, and allied sectors.

Complementing this vision is the provision of 4,000 e-buses, reinforcing the Government's commitment to green and sustainable mobility. These electric buses will strengthen regional connectivity, reduce carbon emissions, and provide clean, affordable transport. The integration of tourism growth with green mobility showcases an environmentally responsible, future-ready development model.

Buddhist Circuits in the North-East: Cultural Diplomacy and Economic Revival

A dedicated scheme for the development of Buddhist Circuits across Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura marks a visionary step in positioning the North-East as a global spiritual destination.

By strengthening pilgrimage infrastructure, enhancing connectivity, and promoting heritage conservation, the Government is unlocking the immense potential of spiritual tourism. This initiative will not only revitalise local economies but also deepen India's cultural diplomacy with Buddhist-majority nations across Asia.

In doing so, the North-East is being integrated into both the national growth framework and the international tourism map, transforming geographical distance into a strategic advantage.

A New Dawn for the East

The Purvodaya thrust in the Union Budget 2026–27 is comprehensive and forward-looking. Industrial corridors, tourism hubs, green transport, and heritage circuits together form a multi-dimensional development architecture.

For the youth of eastern India and the North-East, this Budget signals opportunity, inclusion, and



empowerment. It affirms that the rise of the East is not a peripheral aspiration but a central national mission.

As India advances towards Viksit Bharat 2047, Purvodaya stands as a powerful reminder: when the East rises, Bharat rises stronger.

5. Strengthening Cooperative Federalism: 16th Finance Commission

The Union Budget 2026–27 sends a clear and confident message: India’s development story is strongest when the Centre and States move forward together. In a powerful reaffirmation of cooperative federalism, the Government has provided ₹1.4 lakh crore to the States for FY 2026–27 as Finance Commission Grants, in accordance with the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission.

This substantial fiscal transfer is not merely a routine allocation it is a strategic empowerment of India’s federal structure. By ensuring predictable, rule-based devolution, the Centre has strengthened States’ financial capacity to design and implement policies aligned with their unique socio-economic realities.

Empowering States, Accelerating Development

With enhanced fiscal autonomy and flexibility, States are better positioned to invest in infrastructure, healthcare, education, agriculture,

and social welfare initiatives tailored to local needs. From building rural roads and irrigation systems to upgrading urban services and digital infrastructure, these grants enable States to translate national vision into local action.

This approach recognises the diversity of Bharat where development priorities vary across regions, yet converge toward a shared national goal. The Centre’s role as a facilitator and enabler, rather than a centralised controller, reflects mature governance rooted in trust and partnership.

A Strong Nation Built on Strong States

The allocation of ₹1.4 lakh crore under the 16th Finance Commission framework underscores a fundamental principle: strong States make a stronger nation. By honouring constitutional mechanisms and strengthening fiscal federalism, the Government has reinforced institutional stability and cooperative governance.

In the journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047, this commitment to cooperative federalism ensures that growth is not concentrated but widely distributed; not imposed but collaboratively achieved. The Union Budget 2026–27 thus stands as a testament to a confident Centre that believes in empowering its States and, through them, empowering every citizen of India.

Defence Budget

A Push To Modernisation, R&D & Atmanirbharta

Satyam Mishra

Advocate, Delhi High Court

When the Finance Minister of India presents the Annual Account Statement (Annual Budget) before the Nation in the Lower House, the people of Bharat eagerly await the relief they will receive from the budget, especially the middle-income class. This is natural, as the Budget directly affects household finances and the well-being of citizens. However, this Budget places sharp focus on the expenditure side, which, though indirect, significantly impacts the people as well. The Budget was presented in the aftermath of Operation Sindoor. The budget acknowledges the evolving, complex nature of modern warfare and underscores the urgent need for comprehensive modernisation to safeguard citizens' rights and security. The Valorant operation further emphasised the importance of indigenisation in defence production and strengthening domestic capabilities to safeguard the great motherland.



From Caution To Confidence: New India

With this brief context, attention turns to defence. In 1959, Pt. Nehru reduced defence expenditure despite rising tensions on the Indo-Sino Border. Today, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, defence preparedness is central, with a focus on military strength and indigenous technology through “Make in India.”

The Union Budget of 2026-27 reflects this strategic vision. The defence allocation amounts to ₹7.85 lakh crore, an increase of 15.19% compared to the Budget Estimates for FY 2025-26 (₹6.81 lakh crore). Defence expenditure now makes up 14.67% of the total Union Budget, the largest allocation among all ministries. These figures show a clear prioritisation of military modernisation and indigenisation.

Modernisation

In FY 2026-27, the capital allocation under the defence head exceeds ₹2.19 lakh crore, representing a 21.84% increase over the Budget Estimates of FY 2025-26. This enhanced allocation aims to equip the Armed Forces with next-generation fighter aircraft, advanced weapons systems, modern ships and submarines, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), drones, and other cutting-edge technologies.

The budget also emphasises strategic infrastructure development. The Border Roads Organisation (BRO), which plays a pivotal role in supporting defence operations, continues to undertake critical projects, including the construction of tunnels, bridges, and airfields in border areas. Additionally, the expansion of optical fibre-based communication networks will ensure faster, secure, and reliable connectivity in remote and strategically sensitive regions.

Aatmanirbhar

Since 2014, National Security has remained a key priority under the Modi government. A consistent focus on strengthening domestic production and the industrial base has resulted in a significant rise in defence exports. Indian India has transitioned from a policy of import substitution to one of

strategic manufacturing. Indigenous systems such as Brahmos missiles, Akash Air Defence systems, artillery guns, radars, patrol vessels, loitering munitions, Naval Ships, Tanks, and Drones are now exported to over 85 countries.

Although the formal ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’ initiative was launched in 2020, the emphasis on defence self-reliance has been a continuous process. In the 2026-27 Budget, approximately 75% of the capital acquisition budget has been reserved for domestic defence industries, including the private sector. This move will strengthen indigenous manufacturing, reduce dependency on imports, conserve foreign exchange reserves, and foster growth in MSMEs.

Research & Development (R&D)

With advances in military technology and evolving warfare strategies, investment in research and development has become essential. The Budget enhances allocations for the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), reinforcing indigenous innovation in defence technologies.

Key focus areas include the development of the AMCA stealth aircraft, AI-enabled drone warfare systems, integrated air defence systems such as Sudarshan in combination with Akash and other indigenous missile systems, and advanced surveillance technologies.

Recognising India’s vibrant start-up ecosystem, the Budget also provides special encouragement to defence start-ups, enabling innovation and technological advancement in the sector. Given the changing security landscape in neighbouring regions, maintaining high levels of preparedness remains imperative.

Economic Significance, Sovereignty & Peace

The defence budget is not merely an expenditure; it is a strategic investment in national security and economic resilience. The Budget focuses on a defence investment as a driver of economic growth, industrial resilience and national self-reliance by

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A robust and self-reliant defence ecosystem strengthens economic resilience, makes supply chains more shock-resistant to geopolitical disruptions
.....



focusing on 'Make in India' production and technological innovation. This is not only an investment but also a preparedness to tackle the geopolitical tensions around the globe and to establish peace and harmony for humanity.

Increased defence production contributes to job creation, skill development, industrial growth, and technological advancement. It stimulates ancillary industries, strengthens supply chains, and reduces reliance on imports. Furthermore, it helps conserve foreign exchange and enhances India's bargaining power in international geopolitics. A robust and self-reliant defence ecosystem strengthens economic resilience, makes supply chains more shock-resistant to geopolitical disruptions, and enhances India's credibility as a responsible regional and global power.

Beyond headline allocations, the true value of a budget lies in its ability to create a strong industrial multiplier. Sustained procurement pipelines enable private industry and MSMEs to invest with confidence in skills, technology, and research and development, thereby building long-term industrial capability.

This Union Budget of 2026-27 reflects the confidence of Operation Sindoor, which shows the Government's sustained focus on strengthening National Security through Modernisation, Aatmanirbhar and innovation and a promise to make a secure & resilient Bharat with a long-term Vision of Viksit Bharat@2047. The defence spending, therefore, does not act as spending but rather as an investment in sovereignty, economic development and strategic independence and enables India to emerge as a credible and autonomous power in a volatile global order.

Gender Budget 2026–27

Empowering Women for Inclusive Growth

Sanhita Pandey

Sanhita Pandey is an Advocate of the Supreme Court of India

India's Union Budget 2026-27 marks a pivotal moment in prioritising women's roles in national development, with a historic allocation of ₹5.08 lakh crore to the Gender Budget, the highest on record. This substantial investment signals a deeper commitment to integrating women into the economic mainstream, moving beyond isolated initiatives to a comprehensive strategy. Over the past decade, under consistent governance focused on stability and self-reliance, gender budgeting has transformed, tripling from ₹1.54 lakh crore in 2021-22. This evolution reflects a pragmatic approach that views women's empowerment as essential to sustainable progress, aligning with long-term goals like Viksit Bharat by 2047.

The Gender Budget now accounts for 9.37% of total expenditure, up by ₹51,850 crore from the previous year. Divided into Part A (100% women-specific, 21.49%), Part B (30-99% women-focused, 72.56%), and Part C (under 30%, 5.95%), it emphasises schemes like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)-Gramin, Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM), and Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). This structured allocation demonstrates a shift from fragmented aid to embedded inclusion across sectors, fostering an environment where traditional family structures can thrive alongside modern economic opportunities.



In rural areas, where the majority of Indian women reside, the budget's infrastructure focus brings tangible relief. The JJM's increased funding of ₹12,500 crore ensures reliable tap water, reducing the drudgery of daily chores and allowing more time for productive pursuits. Similarly, PMAY's emphasis on women's home ownership, with over 70% of houses in their names, provides not just shelter but also a foundation for family security and inheritance. The revival of LPG connections, with a ₹9,200 crore allocation under Ujjwala, promotes healthier households, underscoring a policy that values women's well-being as integral to community strength. These measures, rooted in practical needs, subtly reinforce the idea that empowering women strengthens societal bonds, leading to higher productivity and balanced growth. Entrepreneurial initiatives like SHE Marts represent a forward-thinking step, building on programs such as Lakhpati Didi, which has helped 3 crore women achieve annual incomes of ₹1 lakh. These community-owned retail platforms offer market access, branding, and digital credit, enabling women to transition from self-help groups to independent businesses. In sectors like fisheries, enhanced value chains and reservoir development support women-led groups, creating local jobs that respect cultural contexts while promoting self-sufficiency. This approach encourages enterprise without disrupting established social norms, allowing women to contribute economically while upholding family priorities.

Education remains a cornerstone, with the introduction of girls' hostels in every district addressing barriers to higher learning. For fields like STEM, where India leads globally with 43% female enrollment, this infrastructure ensures safety and accessibility, reducing dropouts and nurturing talent. Initiatives in AVGC labs and emerging sectors like tourism and AYUSH prepare women for flexible, creative roles that align with India's diverse heritage. By investing in education that combines ambition with security, the budget paves the way for women to lead in innovation, contributing to a knowledge-driven economy that values both tradition and progress.

The recognition of the care economy marks a

nuanced advancement, acknowledging women's multifaceted responsibilities. Training 1.5 lakh caregivers, expanding allied health facilities, and establishing workplace creches help alleviate the dual burden of work and family. Schemes like Saksham Anganwadi, POSHAN 2.0, and Palna under Mission Shakti focus on nutrition and childcare, enabling mothers to pursue opportunities without compromise. This framework views care not as a constraint but as a skilled sector, generating employment while supporting resilient families, a subtle nod to policies that preserve cultural values amid modernisation.

Health interventions further enhance women's security, including a nationwide cervical cancer vaccination drive and the U-WIN digital platform that tracks immunisations for 2.5 crore pregnant women and children. Modelled on Co-WIN's efficiency, U-WIN ensures preventive care reaches remote areas, linking health to economic participation. When women are healthier, households stabilise, and communities grow stronger, illustrating how targeted policies can yield broad societal benefits.

Financial tools solidify independence, including Direct Benefit Transfers for new women employees and digital loans for SHGs. These, combined with asset ownership, empower women as decision-makers, reduce dependency, and build credit histories. In a rapidly changing economy, such measures promote stability, allowing women to navigate opportunities with confidence.

This budget, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for the ninth time, embodies a governance style that trusts women with resources and leadership. From local bodies to national roles, increased representation has influenced policies that listen to real needs for safety, education and enterprise. While challenges such as scheme convergence and urban childcare persist, the focus on impact rather than mere allocation suggests a maturing framework. By addressing time poverty and structural barriers, it subtly advances a vision in which women's progress drives national resilience, proving that inclusive policies grounded in practical wisdom can propel India forward.

Threads of Transformation

Empowering India's Textile Sector

Sudha Thakur

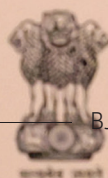
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National Fibre Scheme:

Self-Reliance Woven into Policy

At the very core of India's textile resurgence stands the National Fibre Scheme, an ambitious and forward-looking policy intervention designed to secure self-reliance across the entire fibre value chain. With strategic clarity, the Scheme strengthens natural fibres such as silk, wool, and jute—sectors deeply intertwined with India's agrarian roots and artisanal traditions, while simultaneously accelerating the development of man-made and new-age fibres indispensable for high-performance and emerging industrial applications.



Ministry of Textiles
Government of India

This balanced and future-ready approach reflects the Government's deep understanding of both legacy strengths and global market dynamics. By revitalising traditional fibre ecosystems and fostering innovation in advanced materials, India is reducing dependence on imported raw materials while enhancing competitiveness in cutting-edge segments. The initiative not only protects the livelihoods of farmers, sericulturists, and artisans but also positions India at the forefront of technical textiles and next-generation manufacturing.

Aligned seamlessly with the national vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, the National Fibre Scheme ensures that every stage—from farm to fibre, fibre to fabric, and fabric to fashion remains firmly anchored in Indian capability and enterprise. It strengthens domestic supply chains, boosts value addition within the country, and enhances India's resilience in a rapidly evolving global economy.

For India's youth, the Scheme opens an expansive horizon of opportunity. Research in sustainable and biodegradable fibres, innovation in eco-friendly materials, entrepreneurship in fibre processing, and start-ups in performance textiles are set to redefine the sector's growth trajectory. Designers, engineers, agripreneurs, and technology-driven enterprises are called upon to lead this transformation. The message is unequivocal: India's next phase of economic expansion will be powered by innovation, driven by youth, and rooted firmly in indigenous strength and self-confidence.

Textile Expansion and Employment Scheme: Modernising India's Clusters

The Union Budget 2026-27 takes a decisive step forward with the introduction of the Textile Expansion and Employment Scheme—an initiative designed to modernise India's traditional textile clusters and unlock their full economic potential. By extending capital support for advanced machinery, incentivising technology upgradation, and establishing common testing and certification

centres, the Government has laid down a robust framework to elevate productivity, quality, and global competitiveness across the sector.

For generations, India's textile clusters—whether in silk, wool, handloom, or powerloom have flourished on unmatched skill, cultural depth, and inherited craftsmanship. Yet many of these hubs have operated with ageing infrastructure that limited scale and efficiency. This Scheme corrects that structural imbalance. By enabling access to state-of-the-art machinery and standardised certification systems, the Government is bridging the long-standing gap between artisanal brilliance and international market expectations. The outcome is a synchronised rise in productivity, quality assurance, and profitability, ensuring that tradition evolves alongside technology.

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The Government's approach is both clear and confident: safeguard our rich heritage, accelerate technological progress, and secure India's rightful place on the global textile map.

The establishment of common testing and certification centres represents a transformative reform. These facilities will empower producers to meet global benchmarks, reduce product rejections, improve reliability, and enhance credibility in export markets. For small and medium enterprises, this institutional support is a game-changer. It ensures that they can compete confidently in global value chains while preserving the uniqueness and authenticity that define Indian textiles.

Most importantly, employment generation remains central to this Scheme. Rather than displacing existing ecosystems, the Government's approach strengthens and upgrades them—protecting traditional livelihoods while expanding new avenues of work in rural and semi-urban India. It is a model of development that blends modernisation with inclusion, economic efficiency with social continuity, and growth with dignity. In doing so, the Textile Expansion and Employment Scheme reflects a governance philosophy that values both scale and sensitivity—building a textile sector that is stronger, smarter, and more employment-intensive than ever before.

Mega Textile Parks: Value Addition through Technical Textiles

The Union Budget 2026–27 marks a defining moment with the announcement of Mega Textile Parks in challenge mode—an ambitious reform that places value addition in technical textiles at the centre of India’s industrial strategy. Technical textiles, widely used in infrastructure, defence, healthcare, automotive manufacturing, and other strategic sectors, represent the next frontier of global manufacturing. By recognising their transformative potential, the Government has positioned India to lead in a segment that combines innovation, precision, and high growth.

The emphasis on value addition signals a strategic shift in India’s textile narrative—from exporting raw materials to producing high-value, finished and performance-based products. This approach strengthens domestic manufacturing capabilities, enhances export competitiveness, and integrates India more firmly into global supply chains. It reflects a confident and forward-looking policy direction: India will not remain at the lower end of the value chain but will move decisively toward high-technology, high-margin production.

The challenge mode framework ensures that these Parks are developed through competition, innovation, and performance-driven execution. By encouraging states and industry stakeholders to collaborate dynamically, the model fosters accountability and excellence in implementation. The result will be integrated industrial ecosystems equipped with world-class infrastructure, efficient logistics networks, plug-and-play facilities, and advanced production technologies.

Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Initiative: Strengthening Heritage Industries

In a deeply symbolic yet economically powerful step, the Union Budget 2026–27 announces the Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj initiative to strengthen khadi, handloom, and handicrafts—sectors that embody India’s civilizational wisdom and spirit of self-reliance. Rooted in the principles of rural empowerment and decentralised production championed by Mahatma Gandhi, this initiative reaffirms the Government’s unwavering commitment to transforming India’s villages into vibrant engines of economic growth and cultural pride.

Khadi, handloom, and handicrafts are not relics of a



bygone era; they are living testaments to sustainability, craftsmanship, and national identity. In an age increasingly defined by conscious consumption and eco-friendly production, these heritage industries offer India a natural competitive advantage. Recognising this, the Gram Swaraj initiative provides structured support for global market linkage and strategic branding, ensuring that Indian artisanal products secure premium recognition in international markets rather than being confined to niche segments.

The initiative goes beyond symbolic encouragement. By streamlining processes, expanding training and skilling programmes, improving quality standards, and strengthening branding strategies, it addresses the structural challenges that artisans have long faced. It ensures that craftsmen and craftswomen gain access not only to wider markets but also to modern design inputs, technological tools, professional training, and evolving global consumer trends. In doing so, it bridges the gap between tradition and contemporary demand.

A Textile Vision for New India

India's textile sector is one of the largest employers in the country, sustaining millions of livelihoods while seamlessly connecting farmers, fibre cultivators, artisans, designers, manufacturers, exporters, and innovators within a vast, interdependent ecosystem. It is a sector where rural enterprise meets global commerce, and tradition converges with technology. Through the Integrated Programme for the Textile Sector, the Union Budget 2026-27 masterfully weaves together the pillars of self-reliance, modernisation, value addition, employment generation, skilling, and global competitiveness into a unified and future-ready strategy.

For the youth of India, particularly those inspired by the vision of national resurgence, this moment is historic. The textile revolution unfolding today is not limited to looms and factories; it extends to research laboratories developing new-age fibres, start-ups revitalising traditional clusters, innovators advancing technical textiles, and young entrepreneurs promoting khadi and handicrafts in

international markets. Each of these pathways represents not just economic opportunity, but active participation in nation-building. The sector offers a dynamic platform where creativity, technology, and patriotism converge.

The Government's approach is both clear and confident: safeguard our rich heritage, accelerate technological progress, and secure India's rightful place on the global textile map. The Union Budget 2026-27 does far more than introduce schemes it articulates a comprehensive national vision in which India's looms and laboratories, artisans and engineers, villages and global markets move forward in harmony. It reflects governance that is inclusive yet ambitious, rooted yet forward-looking. Weaving a Legacy of Leadership

The Union Budget 2026-27 has unmistakably demonstrated that India's textile sector is not being treated as a peripheral industry, but as a cornerstone of national resurgence. Through a carefully structured and integrated approach—spanning fibre self-reliance, cluster modernisation, technical textile expansion, and the revitalisation of heritage industries the Government has articulated a coherent and ambitious blueprint for long-term transformation. This is governance that understands scale, respects tradition, and embraces innovation with confidence.

What stands out most powerfully is the seamless blending of continuity and change. The same policy framework that strengthens silk, wool, jute, khadi, and handicrafts also propels India into high-value technical textiles and advanced manufacturing ecosystems. The same Budget that empowers village artisans also creates world-class Mega Textile Parks for next-generation entrepreneurs. This harmony between the rural and the industrial, the traditional and the technological, reflects a mature and self-assured development philosophy.

Budget 2026–27

A Blueprint for a Self-Reliant Bharat

Yatharth Sikka

Research Scholar, Gautam
Buddha University

The Union Budget 2026–27 is not a routine budget. It comes at a time when Bharat stands at a defining crossroads. The global environment is uncertain. Trade wars, tariff barriers and shifting supply chains are testing the strength of emerging economies. At such a time, this Budget presents not a short-term document, but a long-term developmental blueprint.

Prepared at Kartavya Bhawan for the first time, it is inspired by three kartavyas. The first is to accelerate and sustain economic growth by improving productivity and competitiveness. The second is to fulfil the aspirations of the people by building their capacity and making them active partners in development. The third, aligned with the vision of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and to guarantee that every family, region and sector participates meaningfully in India's growth story.



Growth Through Meaningful Infrastructure Investment

A central theme of Budget 2026 is the pronounced rise in capital expenditure (Capex). The government has once again chosen disciplined spending over populist giveaways. Massive investment in infrastructure like roads, railways, logistics corridors, digital connectivity and ports, which form the backbone of this development story.

Capital expenditure creates multiplier effects. Every rupee spent on infrastructure generates employment, increases demand for materials like steel and cement, and improves long-term productivity. Instead of focusing solely on consumption, this Budget strengthens the economy's foundation.

Manufacturing, Technology and Global Value Chains

Budget 2026 amplifies India's ambition to emerge as a global manufacturing destination. The emphasis is not simply on assembling imported components but on deepening technological value chains.

India's semiconductor mission continues to receive strong policy backing. This is important in a setting in which semiconductor supply chains have become strategic assets. By strengthening high-tech manufacturing ecosystems, India strives to position itself in sectors that matter for future competitiveness, such as electronics, advanced manufacturing and defence production. The message is clear: India is thinking beyond short-term benefits.

Defence: Strength with Self-Reliance

The defence sector has received the highest

allocation of Rs 7.85 lakh crore, among all ministries in absolute terms. At a time of international flux and after Operation SINDOOR, strengthening defence preparedness is not optional; it is essential. This allocation supports modernisation, indigenous manufacturing and technological development. It is in line with the broader push for Aatmanirbharta in defence production, ensuring that national security and industrial growth move hand in hand.

Rural Empowerment

One of the most notable reforms can be seen in the rural employment framework, the new Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar & Ajeevika (Gramin), or VB-G RAM G. With an allocation of Rs 95,692.31 crore and additional programme expenses taking the total beyond Rs 1.51 lakh crore, this scheme constitutes a shift in approach. Instead of focusing solely on wage allocation, the emphasis is on asset creation, such as rural haats, work sheds, training centres, and infrastructure that can sustain livelihoods.

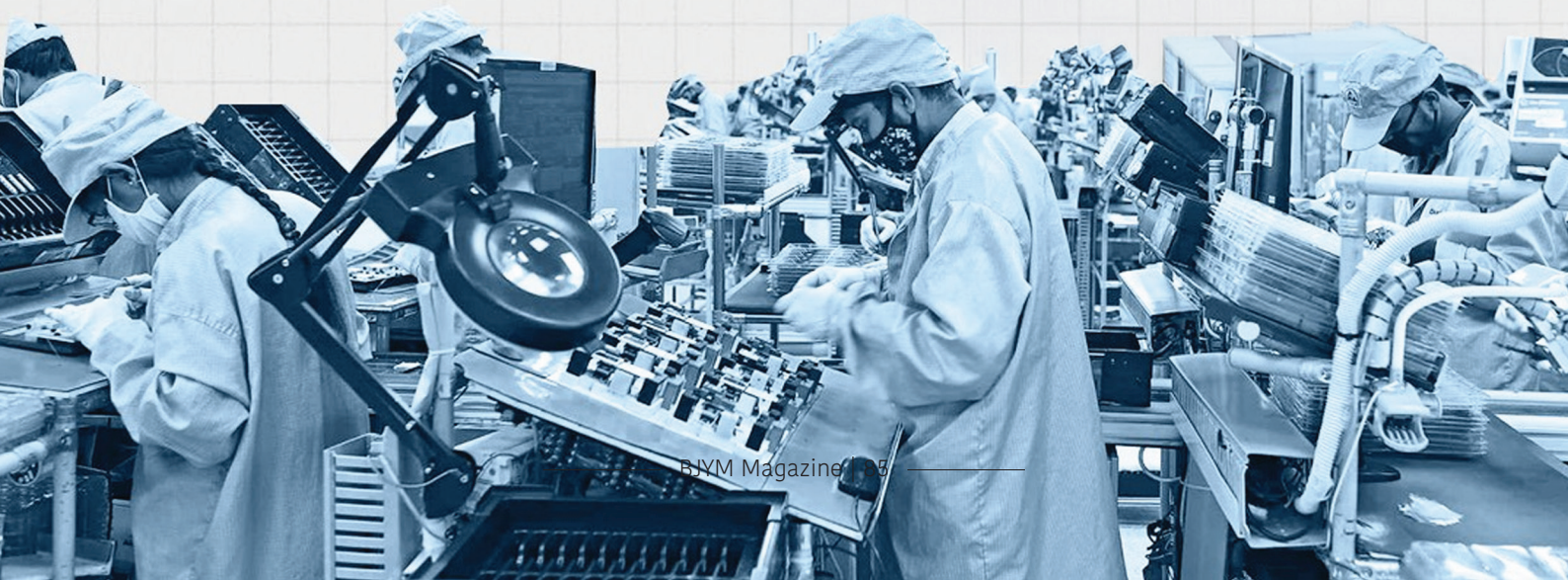
Notably, the scheme places special emphasis on empowering women and ensuring that rural development is inclusive and transformative.

Healthcare and Social Welfare: Building Human Capital

Economic growth without strong human capital is hollow. Recognising this, the healthcare sector has been allocated Rs 1.06 lakh crore, around 1.96 per cent of the total budget.

In this, district hospitals will see their emergency and trauma care capacity expanded by 50 per cent. This is a critical step in improving access to life-saving treatment in smaller towns and rural areas.

The government also aims to add one lakh allied



health professionals over five years and train 1.5 lakh caregivers. Further, customs duties on 17 critical drugs, including oncology medicines, have been reduced to zero. By making life-saving drugs more affordable, the Budget directly eases the strain on families battling serious illnesses.

Education and Agricultural Research: Investing in Knowledge

Budget 2026 continues support for the National Education Policy 2020, focusing on infrastructure, teacher training and systemic reform. Education is not treated as a routine expenditure but as a long-term investment in national capability.

In the agricultural sector, Rs 9,967 crore has been allocated for agricultural education and research. Innovation in farming practices, crop science and technology will be key for ensuring food security and raising farmer incomes.

Alongside this, the fertiliser subsidy of Rs 1,70,944 crore provides stability to farmers during uncertain global price conditions. The approach harmonises reform with protection.

Citizen-Centric Reforms

Beyond large infrastructure and industrial initiatives, the Budget introduces reforms to strengthen households and individual

contributors to the economy. Changes in the income tax regime aim to ease compliance processes, extend timelines and rationalise TDS and TCS provisions.

In an era when many governments across the world resort to short-term benefits, Budget 2026-27 stands apart. It is not a “freebie” budget designed for immediate applause. It is a structured, disciplined and long-term vision document.

By prioritising capital formation, manufacturing ecosystems, rural infrastructure, defence preparedness, healthcare and education reform, the Budget aims to build resilience amid volatile global dynamics.

The Road Ahead

Budget 2026 sends a clear message: India will grow through capability, not complacency; through infrastructure, not improvisation; through empowerment, not entitlement.

Anchored in the three kartavyas- growth, aspiration and inclusion, this Budget seeks to prepare Bharat not just for the next financial year, but for the next decade. If implemented with the same discipline with which it has been designed, Budget 2026-27 could well become a defining milestone on the road toward a resilient, competitive and truly Viksit Bharat.



Union Budget 2026–27

Building a New Tax Architecture for Viksit Bharat

Rajni Kant

President, National Executive
Committee, Paryavaran Shodh Evam
Gramin Vikas Sansthan, Patna



Beginning April 2026, the New Income Tax Act, 2025, will come into force, signalling the start of a modernised and streamlined direct tax regime. Decades of layered provisions and procedural complexities are being replaced by a cleaner, more accessible framework. Income Tax Rules and forms are being redesigned with the ordinary taxpayer in mind, ensuring that compliance becomes intuitive rather than technical.

The Budget introduces a series of humane and rational measures designed to make tax compliance simpler and fairer for ordinary citizens. Interest awarded by the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal to individuals will now be fully exempt from income tax, and the requirement of TDS on such interest will be removed, offering direct relief to accident victims and their families. Tax Collected at Source (TCS) has been rationalised significantly: the rate on overseas tour packages has been reduced to a uniform 2 per cent from the earlier 2–20 per cent slab, while remittances under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) for education and medical purposes will attract a reduced TCS of

2 per cent instead of 5 per cent.

Simplified TDS provisions for manpower supply are expected to particularly benefit labour-intensive industries. Small taxpayers will gain from a rule-based automated system for obtaining lower or nil TDS certificates, eliminating the need to approach the assessing officer. A single-window filing mechanism with depositories will be introduced for the submission of Forms 15G and 15H for TDS on dividends and interest. The timeline for revising income tax returns will be extended from 31 December to 31 March upon payment of a nominal fee, and filing deadlines will be staggered to reduce system pressure and enhance efficiency. In property transactions involving Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), the requirement of obtaining a separate TAN will be replaced with a PAN-based challan system for resident buyers. Further, a one-time six-month foreign asset disclosure scheme will allow small taxpayers to voluntarily declare overseas income or assets. Collectively, these measures reflect a trust-based governance model that prioritises facilitation over

enforcement.

Rationalising Penalty and Prosecution

Continuing its reform-oriented approach, the Government has proposed significant rationalisation of penalty and prosecution provisions. Assessment and penalty proceedings will be integrated into a single consolidated order, reducing duplication and procedural delays. Taxpayers will be allowed to update their returns even after reassessment proceedings have commenced, subject to payment of an additional 10 per cent tax over the applicable rate, thereby reducing litigation. Immunity from penalty for misreporting of income will also be available upon payment of additional tax.

The prosecution framework under the Income Tax Act will be rationalised, and certain procedural defaults will be decriminalised. These include non-production of books of account and cases involving TDS payment where transactions are made in kind. Importantly, immunity from prosecution will be granted retrospectively from 1 October 2024 for non-disclosure of foreign movable assets where the aggregate value is below ₹20 lakh. These steps demonstrate reform with compassion, ensuring compliance without harassment.

Strengthening Cooperatives

In line with the Government's sustained focus on the cooperative movement, the Budget extends deduction benefits to primary cooperative societies engaged in supplying cattle feed and cotton seed, in addition to milk, oilseeds, fruits and vegetables grown by their members. Inter-cooperative dividend income will be allowed as a deduction under the new tax regime to the extent that such income is further distributed to members. Moreover, a three-year exemption will be granted to dividend income received by notified national cooperative federations on investments made in companies up to 31 January 2026, provided the dividends are distributed to member cooperatives. These measures reinforce the broader vision of

cooperative empowerment and rural economic strengthening.

Supporting IT: India's Growth Engine

Recognising the central role of the technology sector in India's growth story, the Budget consolidates software development services, IT-enabled services, knowledge process outsourcing and contract R&D related to software under a single category termed "Information Technology Services," with a uniform safe harbour margin of 15.5 percent. The turnover threshold for availing safe harbour has been substantially increased from ₹300 crore to ₹2,000 crore, expanding its applicability. Approval under the safe harbour regime will now follow an automated, rule-driven process and may continue uninterrupted for five years.

Additionally, the unilateral Advance Pricing Agreement (APA) process for IT services will be fast-tracked with an endeavour to conclude it within two years, extendable by six months at the taxpayer's request. The facility of filing modified returns, currently available to entities entering into an APA, will be extended to their associated entities

as well. These initiatives enhance predictability and reinforce India's reputation as a trusted global technology partner.

Attracting Global Investment

The Budget takes bold steps to position India as a long-term global investment destination. Foreign companies providing cloud services to global customers using Indian data centres will be granted a tax holiday until 2047, offering exceptional policy stability. Where such data centre services are provided by related entities, a 15 per cent cost-based safe harbour will apply. A separate safe harbour at a profit margin of 2 per cent of invoice value will be available for non-residents engaged in component warehousing in bonded warehouses, resulting in an effective tax rate significantly lower than many competing jurisdictions.

Further, non-residents supplying capital goods,

.....
*The Union Budget
2026-27
strengthens
India's
manufacturing
and export
competitiveness
through calibrated
reforms in indirect
taxation.*
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equipment or tooling to toll manufacturers in bonded zones will receive a five-year income tax exemption. Non-resident experts operating under notified schemes will be granted an exemption on their global income for five years. Additionally, non-residents paying tax on a presumptive basis will be exempt from Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT). These provisions clearly signal India's commitment to long-term policy stability and investment friendliness.

Modern Tax Administration

To streamline accounting compliance, a Joint Committee of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and the Central Board of Direct Taxes will be constituted to integrate the requirements of Income Computation and Disclosure Standards (ICDS) directly into Indian Accounting Standards (IndAS). As a result, separate accounting requirements based on ICDS will be eliminated from the tax year 2027–28 onwards. In addition, the definition of “accountant” for the purposes of Safe Harbour Rules will be rationalised, ensuring clarity and consistency in compliance.

Other Key Tax Measures

Several additional tax measures aim to enhance fairness and certainty. Share buybacks will now be taxed as capital gains for all shareholders, while promoters will be subject to an additional buyback tax, leading to an effective rate of 22 percent for corporate promoters and 30 percent for non-corporate promoters. The TCS rate on alcoholic liquor, scrap and minerals will be rationalised to 2 percent, and the rate on tendu leaves will be reduced from 5 percent to 2 percent. Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on futures will be increased to 0.05 percent, and on options premium and exercise of options to 0.15 percent.

Comprehensive MAT reforms are also proposed. Set-off of brought-forward MAT credit will be permitted only under the new regime, up to one-fourth of the tax liability. MAT will become a final tax from 1 April 2026, with no further credit accumulation thereafter. The MAT rate will be reduced from 15 percent to 14 percent, while accumulated MAT credit up to 31 March 2026 will remain available for set-off as specified. Together,

these measures provide greater certainty and encourage a smooth transition to the new tax regime.

Indirect Taxes: Powering Production and Exports

The Union Budget 2026–27 strengthens India's manufacturing and export competitiveness through calibrated reforms in indirect taxation. Under tariff simplification measures for the marine, leather and textile sectors, the duty-free input import limit for seafood exports has been enhanced from 1 per cent to 3 per cent of the FOB value, providing greater flexibility to exporters. Additionally, duty-free import of specified inputs, currently available for certain export categories, has now been extended to leather and synthetic footwear exports, giving a strong boost to labour-intensive industries and global market expansion.

Energy Transition & Security

In line with India's clean energy transition and energy security goals, the basic customs duty exemption on capital goods used for manufacturing Lithium-Ion Cells for batteries has been extended, reinforcing domestic battery manufacturing capacity. Further, sodium antimonate used in the manufacture of solar glass has been exempted from basic customs duty, lowering input costs and supporting the solar energy ecosystem. The Government has also extended the existing basic customs duty exemption on imports of goods required for Nuclear Power Projects until 2035, ensuring long-term stability for strategic energy infrastructure.

To secure supply chains in emerging sectors, capital goods used for processing critical minerals will now be exempt from basic customs duty, strengthening India's resilience in the processing of essential minerals. Promoting green fuels, the entire value of biogas will be excluded while calculating Central Excise duty on biogas-blended CNG, thereby encouraging clean mobility and sustainable fuel adoption.

Civil & Defence Aviation

The civil and defence aviation sectors receive a

significant push, with customs duty exemptions on components and parts required for the manufacture of civilian, training and other aircraft. Additionally, raw materials imported for manufacturing aircraft parts used in maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) requirements by defence sector units will also be exempted from basic customs duty, strengthening domestic aerospace manufacturing capabilities. In electronics manufacturing, specified parts used in the production of microwave ovens will be exempted from basic customs duty, encouraging domestic value addition and reducing import dependence.

Special Economic Zones

For Special Economic Zones (SEZs), a special one-time concessional duty measure has been proposed to facilitate limited sales by eligible manufacturing units in SEZs to the Domestic Tariff Area (DTA), subject to a prescribed proportion of their exports. This balanced approach supports export promotion while addressing domestic supply needs.

Ease of Living Through Customs Reforms

Customs reforms under the Ease of Living framework provide tangible relief to citizens. The tariff rate on all dutiable goods imported for personal use will be reduced from 20 per cent to 10 per cent. Basic customs duty will be exempted on 17 drugs and medicines, and duty-free personal import of drugs, medicines and food will be allowed for seven additional rare diseases. Provisions governing baggage clearance during international travel will be revised to enhance duty-free allowances in line with contemporary travel patterns. Moreover, honest taxpayers willing to settle disputes will be able to close cases by paying an additional amount in lieu of a penalty, reflecting a conciliatory and trust-based approach. Customs Process Simplification & Trust-Based Systems

Customs process simplification is being advanced through minimal-intervention systems designed to enable the smoother, faster movement of goods. The duty deferral period for Tier 2 and Tier 3 Authorised Economic Operators (AEOs) will be

extended from 15 days to 30 days, and this facility will also be available to eligible manufacturer-importers. The validity period of advance rulings binding on Customs authorities will be increased from 3 years to 5 years. Government agencies will be encouraged to leverage AEO accreditation for preferential cargo clearance. For trusted importers, filing of the bill of entry and arrival of goods will automatically notify Customs for clearance formalities where no compliance requirements exist. The customs warehousing framework will be transformed into an operator-centric system based on self-declarations, electronic tracking and risk-based audits.

Digital Customs & Ease of Doing Business

Digital transformation will further strengthen the ease of doing business. Cargo clearance approvals from multiple Government agencies will be seamlessly processed through a single interconnected digital window by the end of the financial year. Processes related to food, drugs, plant, animal and wildlife products—accounting for around 70 per cent of interdicted cargo will be operationalised on this system by April 2026. Goods that do not require compliance will be cleared immediately upon the importer's online registration. The Customs Integrated System (CIS) will be rolled out within two years as a unified, scalable platform for all customs processes. Non-intrusive scanning using advanced imaging and AI-based risk assessment will be expanded in phases with the objective of scanning every container across all major ports.

New Export Opportunities

Finally, new export opportunities are being unlocked. Fish caught by Indian fishing vessels in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) or on the High Seas will be made duty-free, and landing of such fish at foreign ports will be treated as export of goods, enhancing maritime trade potential. The removal of the existing ₹10 lakh per consignment value cap on courier exports will empower MSMEs, artisans and start-ups to access global markets through e-commerce platforms, accelerating India's integration into global value chains.



Budget 2026

Stability and Assurance in a Turbulent World

Ankit Srivastav
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Across the globe, the socio-economic landscape is being significantly influenced by several complex factors, including geopolitical conflicts, fragmented supply chains, volatile energy prices, and persistent inflation. This has created a situation that has unsettled industries and households across continents. Thus, it is imperative for governments worldwide to offer reassurance, direction, and stability to citizens navigating an unpredictable world, besides ensuring economic growth.

It is against this backdrop that the Union Budget 2026 must be read. Rather than responding to global uncertainties with abrupt policy shifts or short-term populism, this year's Budget has decided to focus on long-term priorities and institutional confidence. This aspect is clearly evident in the Budget's approach to public finances.

Fiscal Prudence as a Confidence Signal

At a time when many countries resorted to unchecked borrowing to address immediate economic pressures, Budget 2026 reinforces Bharat's commitment to fiscal responsibility. By prioritising discipline even amid global headwinds, the Government underscores that economic credibility is a strategic asset. In line with the new fiscal prudence path, the fiscal deficit in Budget 2026 is estimated at 4.3% of GDP, fulfilling the commitment made in 2021 to reduce it below 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26.

It should be noted that the government has not ignored growth in favour of fiscal discipline. The Budget balances deficit management with sustained capital expenditure, recognising that long-term resilience requires productive investment rather than consumption-driven expansion; thus, today's economic momentum will not translate into tomorrow's burden.

By maintaining this balance, Budget 2026 avoids the false choice between growth and stability, instead promoting the idea that the two are mutually reinforcing. It reflects a governance ethos that views fiscal responsibility as an inter-generational obligation, central to ensuring that our path to Viksit Bharat remains sustainable and resilient.

Capex-Led Stability: Building Resilience Through Investment

The Budget 2026 doubles down on capital expenditure as a stabilising engine of the economy, strengthening its productive backbone. This is an important step in today's world of geopolitical shocks, where growth that merely sustains consumption risks fragility. The Union Budget for 2026-27 sets capital expenditure at about ₹12.2 lakh crore (Budget Estimate, BE henceforth), an increase over the ₹11.2 lakh crore allocated in the current year, reinforcing an infrastructure-led growth strategy. This represents a 4.2x increase in the capital outlay since 2018.

Public investment has risen steadily over the past decade as a share of GDP, underscoring the government's long-term commitment to asset creation and productivity gains. Budget 2026 would also comprise the highest-ever Capex share as a percentage of the GDP (4.4%, BE). This sustained capex push serves multiple strategic purposes. Large-scale investment in roads, railways, logistics networks, energy systems and digital infrastructure enhances efficiency and reduces structural bottlenecks that have historically raised costs and slowed competitiveness.

In choosing sustained investment over short-lived stimulus, the Budget reinforces the idea that resilience is built not on reaction, but on purposeful capacity building: a choice that reassures markets, businesses and citizens alike. As the capital outlays illustrate, the emphasis is on strengthening multiple pillars of economic resilience simultaneously.

Social Assurance Without Recklessness: Protecting the Vulnerable and Preserving Stability

A commendable aspect of Budget 2026 is the sustaining of social welfare commitments while firmly avoiding fiscally unsustainable expansion, thus preserving macroeconomic stability. In times of global uncertainty, economic reassurance needs to go hand in hand with social welfare, as it helps those most exposed to volatility.

Sector/Initiative	Allocation	Why It Matters
Total Capital Expenditure	₹12.2 lakh crore (Highest ever)	Signals sustained commitment.
Capital Outlay Growth (long term)	4.2x increase since 2018	Boosts infrastructure and asset creation.
Railways	₹2.77 lakh crore (Record capex)	Enhances mobility and logistics.
Electronics Manufacturing	₹40,000 crore	Inculcates supply-chain resilience.
Semiconductor Mission Phase-II	₹76,000 crore over the mission period	Positions Bharat as a global technology hub.

Table 1- CAPEX Snapshot: Key capital expenditure allocations in Budget 2026, highlighting infrastructure-led resilience and long-term economic stability.

Bharat's welfare architecture today operates at an unprecedented scale. Direct Benefit Transfer mechanisms now support over 1,000 schemes, with cumulative transfers exceeding ₹3 lakh crore annually, significantly reducing leakages and improving efficiency. Budget 2026 builds on this foundation rather than reinventing it, reinforcing the idea that assurance comes from reliability, not constant policy churn. For vulnerable households, predictability of support is often as important as the quantum itself.

The Budget's calibrated approach is also evident in food security and basic welfare. The continuation of targeted food and nutritional support programmes, such as PM POSHAN and the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, ensures coverage for around eighty crore beneficiaries, offering protection against global inflationary pressures and supply disruptions. At the same time, investments in housing under flagship initiatives such as the PM Awas Yojana, with over five crore homes sanctioned, underscore a commitment to asset creation rather than transient relief.

In any period of economic uncertainty, the confidence of the middle class plays a decisive role in anchoring both economic stability and social cohesion. Budget 2026 recognises this quiet but critical role by prioritising predictability, ease, and long-term opportunity. Measures focused on simplifying compliance, rationalising penalties, and reducing litigation are likely to yield tangible gains for salaried employees, professionals, and small businesses. For the middle class, often constrained by complex regulatory requirements and procedural uncertainty, such reforms offer more substantive relief than modest tax reductions that have been comprehensively addressed through last year's income tax rationalisation exercise.

Welfare spending is increasingly aligned with outcomes, whether through improved health indicators, higher school retention, or enhanced employability. This reflects a broader shift from welfare as consumption support to welfare as capacity building.

Bharat's Global Message

Beyond domestic reassurance, Budget 2026 also communicates a clear message to the world. In a global environment marked by fiscal stress, policy volatility, and slowing growth, Bharat presents itself as a steady and credible economic partner. This credibility has found concrete expression in Bharat's recent trade engagements with major economies, including the United Kingdom, the European Union and the United States. These agreements reflect growing international confidence in Bharat's economic stability, regulatory predictability and long-term growth prospects. At a time when globalisation is being reshaped by geopolitical fragmentation, Bharat's ability to forge such partnerships underscores its emergence as a critical node in global supply chains.

Raising the individual non-resident investment limits from 5% to 10% and overall limits to 24% signals the Government's readiness for enhanced foreign investment. Tax holidays granted under the Budget 2026 complement these external commitments. Foreign companies supplying capital goods, equipment, etc., have been declared tax-exempt at least until 2031. This is in addition to the tax holiday granted to foreign companies procuring data centre services until 31 March 2047.

By reinforcing stability at home while expanding engagement abroad, Budget 2026 positions Bharat as a reliable force in the global economy. Stability, in this context, becomes strategic capital. After all, the World needs its largest democracy to hold the line.

Assurance as Governance

Budget 2026 demonstrates how to respond to global uncertainty with composure while strengthening foundations, preserving trust, and maintaining momentum. As Bharat advances towards the goal of Viksit Bharat@2047, Budget 2026 stands as a reminder that calm, consistent policymaking is not merely prudent; it is powerful. In today's uncertain world, the reassurance found in Budget 2026 pays homage to a Buddhist phrase loosely translated as "Avoiding the two extremes, the Tathāgata has discovered the Middle Way".



Geopolitics, Technology and the Strategic Vision of Budget 2026

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Every year, the lead-up to the Union Budget feels like a fever dream of populist expectations, usually centred on a singular demand: personal income tax cuts. When the 2026 Budget arrived without these "gifts," the mainstream media was quick to slap the "boring" label on it. But let's be clear that expecting an income tax cut every single year is fiscally outlandish. This wasn't a budget designed to win the next 24-hour news cycle; it was a budget designed to win the next twenty years. The government has effectively stepped on the accelerator for long-term nation-building while keeping its foot off the pedal of populist revenue expenditure. By ignoring the "tax-break theatre," the 2026 Budget signals a strategic pivot from short-term pleasing to deep structural transformation. It is an intellectual bet on economic sovereignty over immediate gratification.

Critics love to mock India for missing the "2-nanometer bus," obsessed with the bleeding-edge chips TSMC produces for the latest iPhones. They are missing the forest for the trees. The 2026 Budget doubles down on a pragmatic, high-volume reality: the focus on semiconductors greater than 28 nanometers. While the 2nm to 5nm range captures the headlines, the 28nm+ category is the actual nervous system of the global industrial base. Your washing machine, your car's control systems, and your televisions don't need sub-5nm chips; they need the reliability of the 28nm+ "utility" segment. By specialising here, India is securing its place in the global supply chain through the "Workhorse Economy." It is a realistic entry point that builds a sustainable manufacturing foundation where demand volume and the potential for domestic substitution are most consistent.

The recent "Indigo crisis," where a single private airline commanded nearly 70% of the market, exposed a dangerous dependency in India's domestic travel ecosystem. This budget frames the expansion of High-Speed Rail (HSR) corridors as a direct geopolitical and economic countermove. The planned routes aren't just about convenience; they cover critical corridors in UP and Bihar, the strategically vulnerable "Chicken Neck" in the Northeast, and a massive Southern zone connecting Maharashtra to Tamil Nadu. To compete with the

airline monopoly, these trains are targeting speeds of 320 kmph. Interestingly, the budget specifically mentions the procurement of Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs), a detail that "reads between the lines" of the Chinese context. As China tests 600 km/h maglevs, India is making a massive capital commitment to HSR as a hedge against volatility in private aviation. The Chinese aimed for 240 to 320 kmph when they started the HSR around 2008; if India can achieve this even by 2040, it will be a huge, huge win.

The media often recoils at the figure of 100 lakh crore spent on Capex over 11 years, labelling it excessive. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of our economic history. Much of this spending is "catch-up infrastructure", i.e. the highways, ports, and power grids we failed to build over the last 70 years. We aren't just building for the future; we are paying off a seven-decade-old debt of neglect. Consider the agricultural sector: even today, a tiny country like the Netherlands exports more farm goods than the entire country of India. This is our weakness. We have too many people in agriculture and too little infrastructure to support high-value exports. The current Capex surge is designed to finish this "catch-up" phase by the 2030s so that the next century of investment can finally be proactive rather than reactive.

One of the most strategic moves in this budget is the focus on rare earth elements and critical minerals. We are currently "negative zero" in this space, a vulnerability China recently weaponised when a Chinese partner backed out of a battery cell tie-up with Reliance, citing "critical technology" concerns. India cannot afford to trade its historical oil dependency on the Middle East for a new mineral dependency on the "Middle Kingdom." This effort faces massive hurdles, including an "NGT/NGO" complex and a dependency on a judicial system that often fails to grasp the global stakes of mineral security. To bolster this digital and physical autonomy, the budget also provides tax incentives

for data centres until 2047. This ensures that as we move toward EVs and drones, we aren't just importing the "guts" of our technology from a geopolitical rival.

The government is willing to accept a "blood-sucking" reputation in the short term to ensure long-term fiscal health. A prime example is the shift in Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGB). SGBs have become one of the government's most expensive borrowings because gold prices unexpectedly spiked from 3,000 to 15,000 rupees. By clawing back costs through trading taxes, the government is choosing fiscal consolidation over being "too clever by half" with naked products it can no longer afford to subsidise. Similarly, the conservative GST estimates reflect a move away from "budget-day theatre." Rather than projecting unscientific, massive increases to please analysts, the government is providing realistic guidance based on actual consumption patterns. It is a transition toward "Fiscal Realism," where the goal is a sensible cost of capital rather than a pat on the back from New York rating agencies; as the government has decisively and consistently chosen action over ambivalence, reform over rhetoric, and people over populism.

The 2026 Budget introduces a 1 trillion rupee "fund of funds" for deep tech, a massive move to seed innovation through venture equity. This is the cornerstone of a "civil-military fusion" strategy. Just as the US military gave us the Internet and GPS, India's investments in space and defence indigenisation are designed to have civilian spillovers that transform the domestic ecosystem. Ultimately, we have to ask: do we want a budget that gives us a minor tax break to spend on imported electronics, or a budget that secures our technological sovereignty for the next two decades? By choosing the latter, the 2026 Budget prioritises the citizens of 2040 over today's voters. It is a high-stakes bet that "boring" fiscal discipline is the only true path to becoming the world's third-largest economy.

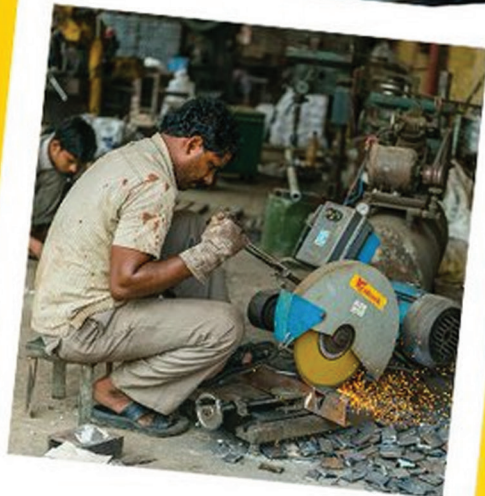
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The 2026 Budget introduces a 1 trillion rupee "fund of funds" for deep tech, a massive move to seed innovation through venture equity.
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Solving the Missing Middle

MSME Reforms in Budget 2026

Ankit Jakhar
Public Policy Analyst

In the lexicon of development economics, there exists a persistent structural flaw known as the "Missing Middle." It describes an economy dominated by a vast number of micro-enterprises that remain dwarfed by regulatory friction and capital scarcity, and a few large conglomerates that monopolise scale, leaving a vacuum where robust, mid-sized firms should anchor the supply chain. For decades, Indian budgets treated the MSME sector as a welfare recipient - a segment to be protected rather than empowered. However, as I parse the fine print of Union Budget 2026-27, it becomes evident that we are witnessing a decisive paradigm shift. This is not merely a fiscal exercise; it is an attempt to solve the "Missing Middle" by pivoting from incremental support to ecosystem-led empowerment.



The narrative framed by the Finance Minister's prioritisation of "reform over rhetoric" is economically significant. By anchoring the strategy in a six-step process, the government has acknowledged that the path to Viksit Bharat 2047 cannot be paved by the public sector alone; it requires the "animal spirits" of the private enterprise, specifically the 63.4 million MSMEs that contribute nearly a third of our GDP.

The Capital Conundrum: From Debt to Equity

Perhaps the most intellectually satisfying announcement in this Budget is the creation of the ₹10,000 Crore SME Growth Fund. For too long, policy has conflated "access to finance" with "access to debt." While debt is necessary for working capital, it is a poor instrument for innovation. Debt demands immediate servicing; innovation requires patience.

By introducing a dedicated fund for equity and quasi-equity support, the government is addressing a classic market failure: the asymmetry of risk appetite. First-generation entrepreneurs often possess high-scale potential but lack the collateral to satisfy risk-averse banks. This forces them to remain small to survive. The SME Growth Fund, alongside the ₹2,000 crore top-up to the Self-Reliant India Fund, signals the entry of "patient capital" into the MSME sector. This allows firms to prioritise integration into strategic value chains over short-term interest servicing. Economically, this is the catalyst needed to transform "survivalist" enterprises into "opportunity" enterprises, specifically targeting those with export orientation and manufacturing depth.

Liquidity as a Structural Reform

If equity fuels growth, liquidity ensures survival. The specific reforms surrounding the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) represent a masterclass in financial engineering. In my analysis of industrial clusters across Tier-2 cities, the mortality of small firms is rarely due to a lack of orders; it is due to the Cash Conversion Cycle - the time lag between delivering goods and receiving

payment.

The Budget's move to mandate Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) to settle dues via TReDS is a direct injection of velocity into the money market. Furthermore, integrating the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) with TReDS creates a seamless digital handshake between procurement and payments. But the true gamechanger, which may have flown under the radar of general commentary, is the development of a secondary market for TReDS receivables. By allowing these receivables to be packaged as Asset-Backed Securities (ABS), the government is essentially financializing the working capital of the MSME sector. This deepens financial markets and attracts institutional investors to MSME debt, driving down the cost of capital through market forces rather than subsidies alone. This is what modern financial inclusion looks like - moving from "cash-flow stress" to "institutionalised liquidity."

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We are moving away from the era where MSMEs were viewed merely as a "social safety net" for employment.

Reducing Friction: The Coasean Perspective

Nobel laureate Ronald Coase famously posited that firms exist to reduce transaction costs. When the cost of compliance, enforcement, and information gathering is too high outside the firm, businesses stagnate. The introduction of "Corporate Mitras" addresses these high transaction costs that disproportionately hurt small firms.

By deploying professional institutions to train a cadre of experts for affordable compliance assistance in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, the Budget attacks the "regulatory tax" that inhibits formalisation. A small manufacturer in a district town often fears the bureaucratic labyrinth of GST, labour, and environmental filings more than market competition. The Corporate Mitra scheme serves as a bridge, lowering the barrier to formalisation. This is crucial because formalisation is the gateway to credit, export markets, and government incentives. It aligns perfectly with the "Scale-Up" philosophy, ensuring that an entrepreneur's energy is spent on product quality rather than paperwork.

Future-Proofing: Manufacturing and the Green Transition

The allocation of ₹40,000 crore for Electronic Components Manufacturing and ₹20,000 crore for the Carbon Capture Mission places Indian MSMEs squarely in the middle of global geopolitical and ecological realignments. We are currently seeing a reorganisation of Global Value Chains (GVCs) where "efficiency" is being balanced with "resilience."

The focus on electronic components is a strategic manoeuvre to reduce import dependence, a vulnerability exposed during recent global supply chain shocks. However, the Carbon Capture Mission is even more forward-looking. With mechanisms like the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) looming, the "greenness" of a product will soon be a determinant of market access. By incentivising cleaner production processes now, the Budget is preventing the obsolescence of Indian MSME exports in the coming decade. It signals that sustainability is no longer a luxury for large corporations but a competitive necessity for the industrial base.

The Multiplier Effect

The underlying logic of Budget 2026-27 is the "Multiplier Effect." Every rupee spent on untying the regulatory knots or providing guarantee-backed liquidity to an MSME circulates multiple times in the local economy, creating jobs, boosting consumption, and expanding the tax base.

As we look toward the centenary of independence, the shift in tone is palpable. We are moving away from the era where MSMEs were viewed merely as a "social safety net" for employment. This Budget treats them as the "engines of productivity." By solving the liquidity trap through TReDS, addressing the equity gap through the Growth Fund, and lowering transaction costs through Corporate Mitras, the finance minister has laid out a comprehensive, well-thought-out, and actionable roadmap.

For the young entrepreneurs of India, this is not just a budget; it is a manifesto of opportunity. It challenges them to stop looking for crutches and start building champions. The government has provided the runway; it is now up to India's industrial base to take flight. As an economist, I remain cautiously optimistic that this system-level intervention is exactly the structural reform required to graduate our economy from the "middle-income" trap to a high-income, industrialised powerhouse.



बजट 2026

विकसित भारत की नई ऊर्जा

आदर्श तिवारी

संपादकीय बोर्ड सदस्य,
BJYM मैगज़ीन

राष्ट्र निर्माण के महायज्ञ में हर वर्ष का बजट एक नई आहुति के समान होता है, परंतु केंद्रीय बजट 2026-27 केवल एक वित्तीय दस्तावेज मात्र नहीं है, अपितु यह प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में विकसित भारत की ओर बढ़ते अविराम कदमों का एक व्यापक रोडमैप है। यह बजट उस समय आया है जब भारत वैश्विक पटल पर एक नई आर्थिक महाशक्ति के रूप में अपनी धाक जमा चुका है। इस वर्ष के बजट प्रावधानों ने एक बार फिर यह सिद्ध कर दिया है कि सरकार का मूल मंत्र जन-जन की आकांक्षाओं को पूर्ण करना और देश की आंतरिक क्षमता का अभूतपूर्व विस्तार देना है। यह बजट समावेशी विकास, मजबूत अर्थव्यवस्था और सुशासन के प्रति सरकार के उस अटूट संकल्प का प्रतिबिंब है, जो समाज के अंतिम पायदान पर खड़े व्यक्ति को सशक्त बनाने की अटूट प्रतिबद्धता को दोहराता है। युवा शक्ति और “तीन कर्तव्यों” की धुरी पर टिका यह बजट एक ऐसे भविष्यगामी भारत की तस्वीर दिखाता है, जहाँ आधुनिक तकनीक और आत्मनिर्भरता का संगम स्पष्ट दिखाई देता है।



इस बजट की सबसे बड़ी विशेषता इसका युवा केंद्रित होना है। भारत विश्व का सबसे युवा देश है और इस युवा उर्जा का उपयोग राष्ट्र निर्माण में करना सरकार की सर्वोच्च प्राथमिकता रही है। शिक्षा से लेकर रोजगार तक के अवसरों को और सुगम बनाने के लिए जिस शिक्षा से रोजगार और उद्यम की परिकल्पना की गई है, वह मील का पत्थर साबित होगी। सरकार द्वारा इस हेतु एक उच्च-स्तरीय स्थायी समिति का गठन यह दर्शाता है कि नीतियों का केंद्र अब अकादमिक डिग्री के साथ-साथ युवाओं को व्यावहारिक कौशल और वैश्विक प्रतिस्पर्धा के लिए पूर्णतः तैयार करना है। एनिमेशन, विजुअल इफेक्ट्स, गेमिंग और कॉमिक्स जैसे उभरते क्षेत्रों में देशभर के शिक्षण संस्थानों में लैब की स्थापना यह दर्शाती है कि सरकार बदलती दुनिया की जरूरतों को लेकर कितनी सजग है। यह पहल न केवल युवाओं को नए जमाने के कौशल से लैस करेगी, साथ ही उन्हें वैश्विक बाजार में एक प्रतिस्पर्धी कंटेंट क्रिएटर के रूप में भी स्थापित करेगी। यह निवेश आने वाले दशकों में भारत की सॉफ्ट पावर को नई ऊंचाइयों पर ले जाएगा। समाज की रीढ़ माने जाने वाले मध्यम वर्ग के लिए यह बजट ईज ऑफ लिविंग का एक नया अध्याय है। सरकार ने अपनी कर नीतियों के माध्यम से यह संदेश दिया है कि वह ईमानदारी से कर चुकाने वाले नागरिकों का सम्मान करती है। नया आयकर अधिनियम 2025 इसी दिशा में उठाया गया एक साहसिक कदम है। प्रशासनिक सुधारों के जरिए कर प्रणाली को इतना सरल और सुगम बनाया गया है कि एक सामान्य नागरिक बिना किसी बाहरी जटिलता के अपना दायित्व निभा सके। इसके अतिरिक्त, विदेश में शिक्षा और चिकित्सा के लिए जाने वाले नागरिकों के लिए टीसीएस की दरों में की गई कटौती सीधे तौर पर मध्यम वर्ग की जेब को राहत पहुँचाने वाली है। छोटे निवेशकों के लिए विदेशी संपत्ति प्रकटीकरण में दी गई छूट सरकार के जनविश्वास आधारित शासन के दर्शन को पुष्ट करती है।

महात्मा गांधी के ग्राम स्वराज के सपने को आधुनिक संदर्भों में ढालते हुए महात्मा गांधी ग्राम स्वराज योजना की घोषणा एक दूरदर्शी कदम है। यह योजना ग्रामीण भारत के पारंपरिक कौशल, जैसे खादी और हथकरघा, को आधुनिक तकनीक और वैश्विक ई-कॉमर्स बाजारों से जोड़ने का काम करेगी। जब गांव का एक कारीगर अपने उत्पाद को सीधे वैश्विक मंच पर ले जाएगा, तो न केवल ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था और अधिक मजबूत होगी, अपितु शहरों की ओर होने वाला पलायन भी रुकेगा। यह बजट 'वोकल फॉर लोकल' के मंत्र को धरातल पर उतारते हुए ग्रामीण उद्यमिता को एक नया स्वाभिमान प्रदान करता है। सरकार का यह कदम अंत्योदय के प्रति उसकी अटूट प्रतिबद्धता का प्रमाण है।

कनेक्टिविटी किसी भी राष्ट्र की प्रगति की जीवनरेखा होती है। 7 नए हाई-स्पीड रेल कॉरिडोर और 20 नए राष्ट्रीय जलमार्गों का नेटवर्क केवल यात्रा को सुगम नहीं बनाएगा, यह नए आर्थिक गलियारे तैयार करेगा। शहरों के बीच की दूरियां कम होने से व्यापार और निवेश के नए अवसर खुलेंगे। लॉजिस्टिक्स की लागत कम करने के लिए जलमार्गों पर दिया गया जोर भारत के निर्यात को वैश्विक स्तर पर प्रतिस्पर्धी बनाएगा। वंदे भारत की सफलता के बाद हाई-स्पीड रेल का यह विस्तार प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के उस विजन का विस्तार है,

जहाँ वह भारत को बुनियादी ढांचे के क्षेत्र में विश्व के शीर्ष देशों की श्रेणी में अग्रणी देखना चाहते हैं। यह गति और शक्ति का वह समन्वय है जो भारत को विकसित बनाने का मार्ग प्रशस्त करेगा।

दवाओं और सेमीकंडक्टर जैसे रणनीतिक क्षेत्रों में आत्मनिर्भरता आज की वैश्विक परिस्थितियों में अनिवार्य है। बायोफार्मा शक्ति और 'सेमीकंडक्टर मिशन 2.0' के माध्यम से भारत अपनी महत्वपूर्ण आपूर्ति श्रृंखला के लिए दूसरों पर निर्भरता कम कर रहा है। यह न केवल आर्थिक सुरक्षा का विषय है, बल्कि राष्ट्रीय संप्रभुता से भी जुड़ा है। स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र में डिजिटल क्रांति और नेक्स्ट-जेन हेल्थकेयर प्रणालियों का विकास यह सुनिश्चित करेगा कि आधुनिक चिकित्सा सुविधाएं देश के सुदूर क्षेत्रों तक बिना कागजी बाधाओं के पहुँच सकें।

अगर व्यापक दृष्टि से देखा जाए तो बजट 2026-27 एक संतुलित और सुविचारित दस्तावेज है जो विकास और अनुशासन के बीच अद्भुत संतुलन बिठाता है। इसमें न केवल वर्तमान की चुनौतियों का समाधान है, बल्कि भविष्य के अवसरों को भुनाने की स्पष्ट रणनीति भी है। सरकार ने ठोस और टिकाऊ विकास के साथ-साथ व्यापक ढांचागत सुधारों को प्राथमिकता देकर अपनी परिपक्वता का परिचय दिया है। यह बजट एक ऐसे भारत का आह्वान करता है जो अपने युवाओं पर गर्व करता है, अपने मध्यम वर्ग का सम्मान करता है, अपने गांवों को सशक्त बनाता है और वैश्विक पटल पर एक आत्मनिर्भर शक्ति के रूप में उभरता है। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के दूरदर्शी नेतृत्व में कर्तव्य काल का यह बजट आने वाली पीढ़ियों के लिए एक समृद्ध और समर्थ भारत के स्वर्णिम भविष्य का मार्ग प्रशस्त करता है।

जेंडर बजट

भारत की महिला-केंद्रित नीतियाँ एवं देश का समग्र विकास

प्रिया झा

पॉलिसी कंसल्टेंट, नेशन फर्स्ट पॉलिसी रिसर्च सेंटर

आज का भारत तेजी से बदलते सामाजिक-आर्थिक परिदृश्य में खड़ा है, जहाँ महिलाओं को अब केवल कोरे आश्वासन या खोखली स्त्रीवादी कवायदें नहीं, बल्कि परिणाम-उन्मुख और मापनीय नीतियाँ वास्तविक सामर्थ्य प्रदान कर रही हैं। 2026-27 के लिए केंद्र सरकार ने जेंडर बजट के रूप में लगभग ₹ 5 लाख करोड़ का प्रावधान किया है, जो कुल केंद्रीय बजट का लगभग 9.4% है और 2025-26 की तुलना में 11-12% की वृद्धि को दर्शाता है। यह अब पूरी तरह स्पष्ट हो चुका है कि महिलाओं के उत्थान को केंद्र में रखे बिना न तो समावेशी विकास संभव है और न ही टिकाऊ राष्ट्रनिर्माण। महिला-केंद्रित नीतियाँ आज किसी भावनात्मक या प्रतीकात्मक विमर्श तक सीमित नहीं रहीं हैं। वे राष्ट्रीय विकास रणनीति का अभिन्न अंग बन चुकी हैं। जब नीतियाँ आर्थिक, सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक स्तर पर ठोस परिणाम देने लगती हैं, तभी उनका वास्तविक मूल्यांकन संभव होता है, और यही वर्तमान सरकार की कार्यप्रणाली की प्रमुख विशेषता के रूप में उभर कर सामने आई है।

आज आवश्यकता केवल नीति-निर्माण तक सीमित रहने की नहीं, बल्कि उसके प्रभाव को समझने, मापने और ज़मीनी स्तर पर प्रभावी क्रियान्वयन की भी है, ताकि भारत अपनी आधी आबादी के साथ कदम-से-कदम मिलाकर आगे बढ़ सके। यह विडंबना भी कम नहीं कि आज भी स्त्री विमर्श को मार्क्सवाद और वामपंथ से जोड़कर देखा

जाता है, माना जाता है कि पारंपरिक होना, संस्कृति का संरक्षण और जड़ों से जुड़ा होना पिछड़ापन है। परन्तु भारत की बेटियाँ लगातार इस अवधारणा को तोड़कर महिला सशक्तिकरण का नया अध्याय लिख रही हैं, और इन प्रयासों को वित्तीय समावेशन, सुरक्षा और उद्यमिता समर्थन जैसी नीतियों के जरिए वर्तमान भाजपा नेतृत्व वाली सरकार संरचनात्मक सहारा दे रही है।

जेंडर बजट क्या है और यह क्यों महत्वपूर्ण है?

सामान्य नागरिकों के लिए यह समझना आवश्यक है कि जेंडर बजट कोई अलग “महिला योजना” नहीं, बल्कि सरकारी बजट में वह व्यवस्था है जिसके माध्यम से यह आकलन किया जाता है कि सार्वजनिक व्यय का कितना हिस्सा महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण, सुरक्षा और भागीदारी पर केंद्रित है। भारत में जेंडर बजट की औपचारिक शुरुआत 2005-06 में हुई थी, लेकिन लंबे समय तक यह केवल एक लेखा-अभ्यास बनकर रह गया, जिसका असर नीति-निर्माण या क्रियान्वयन के स्तर पर सीमित था।

परिवर्तनकारी मोड़ तब आया जब वर्तमान सरकार ने जेंडर बजट को घोषणाओं से निकालकर स्पष्ट लक्ष्य, आउटपुट और आउटकम संकेतकों से जोड़ा। 2013-14 में जहाँ जेंडर बजट लगभग ₹ 1 लाख करोड़ के आसपास था, वहीं 2026-27 तक यह बढ़कर लगभग ₹ 5 लाख करोड़ हो गया है, यानी लगभग पाँच गुना विस्तार, जो महिलाओं को विकास की “लाभार्थी” नहीं, बल्कि “भागीदार” मानने की सोच को दर्शाता है। जन-धन, उज्वला, स्वच्छ भारत, मुद्रा, स्टैंड-अप इंडिया, पीएम आवास और डिजिटल इंडिया जैसी योजनाओं के माध्यम से महिलाओं को बैंक खाते, गैस कनेक्शन, शौचालय, आवास, ऋण और डिजिटल पहचान उपलब्ध कराकर उन्हें औपचारिक अर्थव्यवस्था में संस्थागत स्थान दिया गया है।

1. आर्थिक हिस्सेदारी: केवल खर्च नहीं, रणनीतिक निवेश

यदि सरकार द्वारा महिलाओं के लिए किए गए व्यय को समग्र अर्थव्यवस्था के संदर्भ में देखा जाए, तो यह स्पष्ट होता है कि महिला-केंद्रित नीतियाँ अब किसी सीमित सामाजिक कार्यक्रम तक सिमटी नहीं रहीं। महिलाओं पर लक्षित सार्वजनिक व्यय को यदि व्यापक आर्थिक परिप्रेक्ष्य में देखें, तो 2024-25 तक जेंडर बजट का आकार भारत के अनुमानित सकल घरेलू उत्पाद के लगभग 1% के स्तर तक पहुँच चुका है।



2026-27 में कुल बजट व्यय लगभग ₹ 53.5 लाख करोड़ आंका गया है, जिसमें से लगभग ₹ 5 लाख करोड़ महिलाओं और बालिकाओं के लिए निर्धारित हैं; यह दर्शाता है कि हर 100 रुपये में लगभग 9-10 रुपये सीधे जेंडर-संवेदनशील कार्यक्रमों पर व्यय किए जा रहे हैं।

यह मात्र खर्च नहीं, बल्कि दीर्घकालिक आर्थिक निवेश है। यह वही आधारभूमि है जिस पर लाखों महिलाएँ आज बैंकिंग, ऋण, डिजिटल भुगतान और वित्तीय निवेश की मुख्यधारा में प्रवेश कर चुकी हैं। प्रधानमंत्री जन-धन योजना के अंतर्गत बैंकिंग व्यवस्था से बाहर रही महिलाओं को औपचारिक वित्तीय तंत्र से जोड़ा गया है। परिणामस्वरूप, महिलाओं के बैंक खातों में लगभग 55% की वृद्धि दर्ज की गई है। आज करोड़ों महिलाएँ पूँजी, बीमा सुरक्षा और ऋणक्षम वित्तीय उत्पादों से जुड़कर न केवल अपनी आर्थिक सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित कर रही हैं, बल्कि घरेलू और व्यावसायिक निर्णयों में भी सशक्त भूमिका निभा रही हैं।

2. शिक्षा और डिजिटल सशक्तिकरण: घर से वैश्विक मंच तक

शिक्षा सशक्तिकरण की बुनियाद है, और डिजिटल शिक्षा ने इस बुनियाद को नई ऊँचाई दी है। इंटरनेट कनेक्टिविटी, ऑनलाइन कौशल-विकास और डिजिटल प्लेटफॉर्म के माध्यम से महिलाओं ने घर बैठे सीखने, व्यापार करने और रोजगार खोजने के नए मार्ग खोले हैं। यह परिवर्तन केवल तकनीकी नहीं, बल्कि सामाजिक मानदंडों में बदलाव का संकेत है। ग्रामीण और वंचित क्षेत्रों की महिलाएँ आज डिजिटल माध्यमों से अपने उत्पादों और सेवाओं को राष्ट्रीय और अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजारों तक पहुँचा रही हैं। जब एक महिला शिक्षा, डिजिटल कौशल और आर्थिक संसाधनों को जोड़ती है, तो उसका प्रभाव केवल व्यक्तिगत नहीं रहता वह पूरे परिवार, समुदाय और राष्ट्र को सशक्त करता है।

3. उद्यमिता: नीति से आत्मनिर्भरता तक

भारत में महिला उद्यमियों की संख्या में आई उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि के पीछे लक्षित सरकारी हस्तक्षेप की भूमिका रही है। स्टैंड-अप इंडिया और मुद्रा योजना जैसी पहलों ने महिलाओं को पूँजी, ऋण और संस्थागत समर्थन उपलब्ध कराया। हालाँकि वास्तविक परिवर्तन केवल ऋण उपलब्ध कराने से नहीं आता, बल्कि तब आता है जब महिलाएँ उन संसाधनों का उपयोग कर टिकाऊ, उत्तरदायी और लाभदायक उद्यम खड़े करती हैं। यह प्रक्रिया महिलाओं की निर्णय-क्षमता, सृजनशीलता और आत्मनिर्भरता को मज़बूत करती है। यह केवल आर्थिक आँकड़ा नहीं, बल्कि सामाजिक समानता और नैतिक विकास का संकेतक है।

(क) SHE Mart: स्वयं सहायता समूह से संगठित बाजारों तक

महिला उद्यमिता को केवल ऋण उपलब्ध कराने तक सीमित न रखते हुए उसे संगठित बाजार से जोड़ना ही वास्तविक आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण की कसौटी है। हिंदी की प्रसिद्ध लेखिका महादेवी वर्मा ने अपनी रचना “शृंखला की कड़ियाँ” में स्पष्ट किया है कि स्त्री की वास्तविक मुक्ति और सशक्तता तभी संभव है, जब वह आर्थिक रूप से आत्मनिर्भर बने। उनके अनुसार आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता ही महिला की आत्मगौरव, निर्णय-क्षमता और सामाजिक सम्मान की आधारशिला

है। इसी दृष्टि से केंद्रीय बजट 2026-27 में “Self-Help Entrepreneur (SHE) Marts” की घोषणा एक दूरदर्शी पहल है। यह सामुदायिक-स्वामित्व वाले रिटेल आउटलेट्स होंगे, जहाँ महिला स्वयं सहायता समूहों द्वारा निर्मित उत्पादों को स्थायी और ब्रांडेड बाजार उपलब्ध कराया जाएगा। लंबे समय तक ग्रामीण और अर्ध-शहरी क्षेत्रों की महिलाएँ उत्पादन तो करती थीं, परंतु उनके श्रम को कभी न तो उचित मूल्य मिला, न स्थिर आय और न समाज में सम्मान। यह SHE Mart केंद्र केवल बिक्री का केंद्र भर नहीं होंगे, यह सम्मान केंद्र होंगे जहाँ महिला-नेतृत्व वाले उद्यमों के लिए ब्रांड निर्माण और बाजार विस्तार का मंच उन्हें प्राप्त होगा। यह पहल लखपति दीदी जैसे कार्यक्रमों के अगले चरण के रूप में देखी जा सकती है, जहाँ पहले महिलाओं को वित्तीय संसाधन, कौशल और उत्पादन समर्थन दिया गया, और अब उन्हें संगठित रिटेल नेटवर्क से जोड़ा जा रहा है। इससे आय में स्थिरता, गुणवत्ता मानक और व्यवसाय विस्तार तीनों को बल मिलेगा।

4. स्वास्थ्य और सामाजिक सुरक्षा: सुविधा नहीं, गरिमा का प्रश्न

महिलाओं के लिए स्वास्थ्य-अनुकूल कार्य परिवेश को मान्यता देने वाली नीतियाँ केवल प्रशासनिक प्रावधान नहीं, बल्कि मानवीय गरिमा की स्वीकृति हैं। कुछ राज्यों द्वारा मासिक स्वास्थ्य अवकाश जैसी पहलें यह दर्शाती हैं कि महिला-स्वास्थ्य अब हाशिये का विषय नहीं रहा। यह केवल अवकाश का प्रश्न नहीं, बल्कि कार्यस्थल पर सम्मान, उत्पादकता और मानसिक संतुलन से जुड़ा मुद्दा है। जब महिलाएँ अपने स्वास्थ्य पर निर्णय लेने में सक्षम होती हैं, तो उसका सकारात्मक प्रभाव कार्यक्षमता और सामाजिक सहभागिता दोनों पर पड़ता है।

5. चुनौतियाँ: जिन पर सरकार जिनपर निरन्तर प्रयासरत हैं

स्पष्ट उपलब्धियों के बावजूद कुछ चुनौतियाँ हैं, जिनपर सरकार लगतार कर रही है, महिलाओं की कार्यबल सहभागिता अपेक्षाकृत कम है, कॉर्पोरेट और उच्च प्रशासनिक स्तरों पर महिला नेतृत्व सीमित है, ग्रामीण और दूरदराज क्षेत्रों में डिजिटल पहुँच शहरों की तुलना में कम है, ये केवल आँकड़े नहीं, बल्कि वे वास्तविकताएँ हैं जिन पर नीति-स्तर और सामाजिक-स्तर, दोनों पर निरंतर कार्य आवश्यक है।

निष्कर्ष: नीतियाँ लक्ष्य नहीं, परिवर्तन हैं

आज की महिला-केंद्रित नीतियाँ मात्र योजनाएँ नहीं रहीं वे परिणाम-उन्मुख परिवर्तन का माध्यम बन चुकी हैं। शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, वित्तीय संसाधन और निर्णय-निर्माण तक महिलाओं की पहुँच सुनिश्चित कर हम न केवल महिला सशक्तिकरण, बल्कि भारत की आर्थिक मजबूती और सामाजिक नैतिकता को सुदृढ़ करते हैं। यह कोई नियमित सरकारी व्यय नहीं, बल्कि इस तथ्य का प्रमाण है कि जब महिला आगे बढ़ती है, तो पूरा राष्ट्र साथ चलता है।

बजट 2026

आत्मनिर्भर और सशक्त भारत की दिशा में निर्णायक कदम

अमृता राय, शिक्षिका अर्थशास्त्र

भारत के विकास यात्रा में केंद्रीय बजट केवल आय-व्यय का लेखा-जोखा नहीं होता, बल्कि यह देश की आर्थिक, सामाजिक और विकासात्मक दिशा को निर्धारित करने वाला महत्वपूर्ण दस्तावेज होता है। केंद्रीय बजट 2026-27 भी इसी दृष्टि से अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है, जो एक विकसित, आत्मनिर्भर और समावेशी भारत की परिकल्पना को साकार करने की दिशा में ठोस कदम प्रस्तुत करता है। यह बजट प्रधानमंत्री के नेतृत्व में देश को नई आर्थिक ऊंचाइयों तक पहुंचाने की प्रतिबद्धता को दर्शाता है।

यह बजट विशेष रूप से युवा शक्ति, नवाचार और उद्यमिता को केंद्र में रखकर तैयार किया गया है। भारत विश्व की सबसे युवा आबादी वाला देश है और यही युवा ऊर्जा भारत की सबसे बड़ी ताकत है। सरकार ने शिक्षा, कौशल विकास और रोजगार सृजन के क्षेत्र में कई महत्वपूर्ण पहल की हैं, जिनका उद्देश्य युवाओं को वैश्विक प्रतिस्पर्धा के लिए तैयार करना है। नई तकनीकों, डिजिटल नवाचार और स्टार्टअप संस्कृति को बढ़ावा देने के लिए किए गए प्रावधान युवाओं के लिए नए अवसरों के द्वार खोलेंगे।

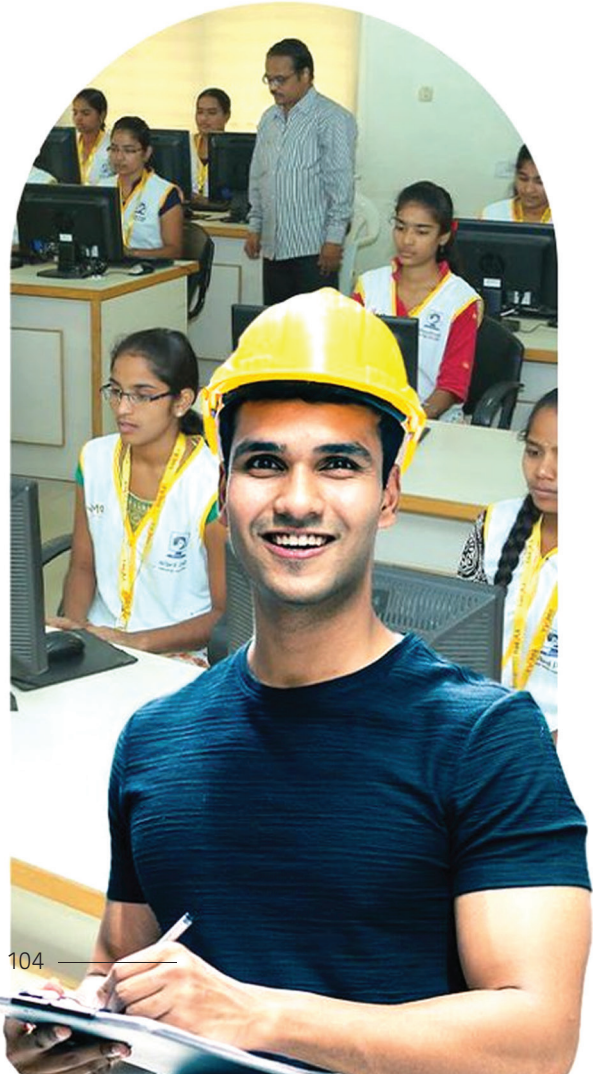
इसके साथ ही बजट में शिक्षा और कौशल विकास के क्षेत्र को भी नई दिशा देने का प्रयास किया गया है। बदलते वैश्विक परिदृश्य में पारंपरिक शिक्षा के साथ-साथ तकनीकी और व्यावहारिक कौशल की आवश्यकता को ध्यान में रखते हुए सरकार ने नई पहलों की हैं। आधुनिक तकनीक, डिजिटल शिक्षा और उभरते क्षेत्रों जैसे आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस, एनीमेशन और गेमिंग के क्षेत्र में निवेश यह दर्शाता है कि भारत भविष्य की अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए स्वयं को तैयार कर रहा है।

मध्यम वर्ग और आम नागरिकों के लिए भी यह बजट राहत और अवसर दोनों लेकर आया है। कर प्रणाली को सरल बनाने, जीवन स्तर को बेहतर बनाने और आर्थिक गतिविधियों को बढ़ावा देने के लिए कई महत्वपूर्ण निर्णय लिए गए हैं। इससे न केवल उपभोग क्षमता बढ़ेगी बल्कि आर्थिक विकास को भी नई गति मिलेगी। सरकार की नीतियां स्पष्ट रूप से यह संकेत देती हैं कि विकास का लाभ समाज के हर वर्ग तक पहुंचे।

ग्रामीण भारत और किसानों के सशक्तिकरण पर भी इस बजट में विशेष ध्यान दिया गया है। कृषि क्षेत्र में तकनीकी नवाचार, सिंचाई सुविधाओं के विस्तार और किसानों की आय बढ़ाने के लिए किए गए

प्रावधान ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था को मजबूत करेंगे। इसके साथ ही बुनियादी ढांचे के विकास पर दिया गया जोर देश के औद्योगिक और आर्थिक विकास को गति प्रदान करेगा।

समग्र रूप से देखा जाए तो बजट 2026-27 एक दूरदर्शी और भविष्य उन्मुख बजट है, जो विकसित भारत के लक्ष्य को साकार करने की दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण आधार प्रदान करता है। यह बजट केवल आर्थिक वृद्धि का दस्तावेज नहीं, बल्कि देश के हर नागरिक के सपनों और आकांक्षाओं को साकार करने का एक मजबूत संकल्प भी है। आने वाले वर्षों में यही नीतियां भारत को वैश्विक मंच पर और अधिक मजबूत तथा प्रभावशाली राष्ट्र के रूप में स्थापित करने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाएंगी।



BHARATIYA JANATA YUVA MORCHA



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