

Hopes for 'income tax relief' in budget grow among middle class as Modi 3.0 government gets down to brass tacks

Expectations of income tax relief in the forthcoming budget are growing among the middle class as the dust settles on the marathon Lok Sabha elections and the Modi 3.0 government gets down to brass tacks. This middle class has not seen significant tax revisions in recent years, fuelling hopes of a reprieve amid rising living costs. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who took charge on Wednesday, is already engaged in a series of high-priority meetings focused on the budget. Sitharaman on Wednesday assured top finance ministry officials the government remains committed to improving the "ease of living" for its citizens and pledged to continue the reforms initiated since

2014 to bolster macroeconomic stability and growth. "India's growth story is commendable despite global challenges, and we maintain an optimistic economic outlook for the coming years," Sitharaman said. She emphasised that ministries must advance the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government's development agenda with renewed vigour to achieve Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India). Analysts point out that while Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections have surged, inflation continues to squeeze household budgets, making it difficult for citizens to manage rising medical and educational expenses. The government has



not revised income tax slabs and rates since 2020-21. Tax analysts said the government will persist in pushing the new income tax regime. The new system is in default this year, requiring taxpayers to opt in if they prefer the old system. This is a reversal from the previous year, and it signals a

potential phase-out of the old system by fiscal year 2025. Narayan Jain, a tax advocate, stressed the need for reduced tax burdens. "The exemption limit should increase to ₹5 lakh, with revised tax slabs of 10 per cent for incomes from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh, 20 per cent for ₹10 lakh to ₹20 lakh and 25 per cent for incomes above ₹20 lakh. Additionally, the surcharge and cess should be eliminated for simplicity," Jain said. Simplifying the tax structure would facilitate compliance, Jain said, proposing significant revisions to the threshold for tax deduction and collection at source and a reduction of the tax collected at source (TCS) rate on foreign travel to 5 per cent.

Kangana Ranaut says politician's life is as difficult as doctor's: It's harsh



Actor-turned-politician Kangana Ranaut was offered to join politics immediately after she made her Bollywood debut with 'Gangster' in 2006. Kangana, in a new interview, shared that her great-grandfather was an MLA and her father and her sister were also given the offer to join politics. The actor also mentioned how being an actor is easier than being a politician. She compared the life of a politician to that of a doctor. During 'The Himachali Podcast', Kangana shared, "This is not the first time I was approached to join politics. I have received several other offers in the past. After my debut film Gangster, I was offered a ticket." She added, "My great-grandfather was an MLA for at least three terms. So, when you belong to such a family, and taste some success, the local leaders approach you. It is very common. In fact, my father had also received an offer. My sister was offered to join politics after she survived an acid attack. So for us, it is not a big deal to get political offers. If I wasn't interested in this, I didn't have to go through so much trouble."

Kangana won the Mandi seat in the Lok Sabha Elections 2024. She defeated her Congress rival Vikramaditya Singh, scion of Rampur state and the incumbent state public works minister, by a margin of 74,755 votes from the Mandi Lok Sabha constituency. As she assumes her role as a Member of Parliament, Kangana feels working as an actor is much easier. She said, "I am a person who goes with passion. Even in the film industry, I am an actor, writer, director, and producer. Here in my political career, if I have to engage myself with the people here, I will go ahead with it. There is no compulsion. However, I won't deny that the work in the film industry is comparatively easier than in politics." "The latter takes a lot of effort. This is a harsh life, just like doctors, where only troubled people come to see you. When you go to watch a film, you are very relaxed. But, politics is not like that," added Kangana. During the interaction, the 37-year-old maintained that she didn't join politics because of any bitterness after a part of her office in Bandra, Mumbai, was demolished by the BMC. "Contrary to everyone's belief, my idea of doing anything new in life never stemmed from any bitterness, negativity drains me. Even when I said that Amitabh Bachchan if somebody gets immense respect, it is me, I still stand by that," Kangana explained. Kangana, in an earlier interview with Aaj Tak, had said that she would leave acting if she won the Mandi seat. Now, if her film 'Emergency' will be released in the theaters is yet to be known.

Assam government to provide monthly stipend to girl students to end child marriage

The Assam government will provide a monthly stipend to girl students to end child marriage and increase their gross enrolment in higher education. The stipend will be offered under the Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina scheme to female students pursuing higher studies - from Class XI to post-graduation-level - irrespective of their economic status. The scheme was approved by the state cabinet on Wednesday. Students enrolled in the first year of higher secondary, degree colleges and universities will be getting ₹1,000 a month, ₹12,500 and ₹2,500 a month for 10 months from the next academic session. For the current session, they will get the stipend for only nine months. No stipend will be paid during summer breaks. From the second year onwards, the beneficiaries will not need to submit any application. A cer-

tificate from the head of the institution certifying a female student's continuity in the institution will suffice. After the cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Sarma said: "The Assam government has announced a unique scheme to fight against the early marriage of girl students and also to inspire them to continue their education up to the post-graduate level. Under this scheme, a girl student who joins in the higher secondary, first and second year, that is Class XI and Class XII, will get a monthly stipend of ₹1,000 from the government..." "Through this scheme, we want to prevent child marriage in Assam, we want to take the responsibility of girls' education.... Basically, this amount will be received by the students on the 11th of every month. The burden on the parents will be reduced to a large extent and they will be able



to send their daughters in spite of economic hardship to college and university..." "The scheme will also increase the gross enrolment ratio of girls in higher education and help them become self-dependent. "That is our aim," he said, adding that there will be an outflow of ₹300 to 350 crore a year on the scheme and is expected to benefit 10 lakh female students in the next five years.

Political space to anti-India forces in Canada is main issue: Top Indian diplomat

NEWDELHI: The main issue affecting India's relations with Canada is the "political space" offered by that country to anti-India forces that promote extremism and violence and this has been repeatedly conveyed to the Canadian side, foreign secretary Vinay Kwatra said on Wednesday. Kwatra's remarks came against the backdrop of fresh concerns in India over two recent rallies organised by pro-Khalistan elements in the Canadian cities of Vancouver and Brampton that featured floats depicting the 1984 assassination of former premier Indira Gandhi. Bilateral ties have been at an all-time low since Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged Indian agents were involved in the killing of Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June last year. India dismissed the accusation as "absurd" and said the Canadian side has provided no evidence to back up the claim. "I think the main issue with regard to Canada continues to be the political space that Canada provides to anti-India elements which advocate extremism and violence and we have repeatedly conveyed our deep concerns to them, and we expect them to take strong action," Kwatra told a media briefing. The foreign secretary was responding to a



question on Trudeau's recent remarks about a surge of right-wing forces in democracies around the world. Trudeau made the comments following the gains made by right-wing parties in elections to the European Union's Parliament, though he didn't specifically name any country. Referring to India's just concluded general election, Kwatra added: "I really don't want to say anything on what somebody else thinks how democracy should function but our democracy was in full display with enormous evidence to be seen. He described the Indian election as the largest democratic exercise in the history of humankind, which was joined by 640 million voters. The "vibrancy of India's democracy was truly recognised and appreciated across the world", he said. On Tuesday, Trudeau

said, "We have seen around the world a rise of populist, right-wing forces in just about every democracy... It is of concern to see political parties choosing to instrumentalise anger, fear, division, anxiety." The Canadian PM said his approach had been "to respond to it, to understand it and to look to solve it... I continue to be convinced that Canadians are thoughtful about the challenges we're facing and ready to see them solved rather than just allow themselves to have their anger amplified without any solutions offered". Canada's high commissioner Cameron MacKay and two Canadian ministers - public safety minister Dominic LeBlanc and Anita Anand, president of the Treasury Board - have denounced the floats depicting the assassination of Indira Gandhi. MacKay conveyed Canada's position in a post on X that said: "Canada's position is clear: The promotion of violence is never acceptable in Canada." The external affairs ministry has not yet reacted to these latest protests featuring such provocative floats, though Indian high commissioner Sanjay Verma recently urged the Canadian government to take "exemplary action" against such public displays of violence and hatred.

Chiranjeevi Gets Emotional After PM Narendra Modi Hugs Pawan Kalyan in Swearing-In Ceremony

During the swearing-in ceremony where TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan took their oaths as Chief Minister and State Minister respectively, an endearing moment stole the spotlight. As PM Narendra Modi was preparing to leave, Pawan Kalyan asked if he could meet his brother Chiranjeevi, who was attending as a state guest and seated in the VIP gallery. PM Modi quickly agreed and went over to where Chiranjeevi and Rajinikanth were seated. Pawan introduced his brother to the Prime Minister. The three exchanged pleasantries and posed for a memorable photograph. Fans of Pawan Kalyan described the moment as both historic and emotional, flooding social media with photos and videos of the encounter. Netizens praised the strong bond between Pawan and Chiranjeevi, highlighting the love and affection the brothers share. Many commented that the sibling bond between Pawan and Chiranjeevi was a touching highlight of the event. One of the users wrote, "MEGASTAR #Chiranjeevi garu about @PawanKalyan garu, Feeling proud and Happy for Deputy CM #PawanKalyan Hardwork Never fails?". Another wrote, "Superstar Rajinikanth and his wife also attended the swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected government in Andhra Pradesh. The veteran actor shares a close friendship with the family members of Telugu superstar Chiranjeevi. Pawan Kalyan secured a spectacular victory in the concluded Lok Sabha Elections 2024 in alliance with the TDP and the BJP. The members of the ruling NDA alliance came together for the event to show their strength.

Maharashtra: BJP Likely to Break Off Alliance with Ajit Pawar's NCP amid RSS Criticism



The Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, or the RSS had targeted Ajit Pawar's NCP as its mouthpiece organiser and stated that their inclusion in the BJP-Shinde Sena government was an ill-advised move. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had recently addressed the lack of political decorum during the Lok Sabha elections. The Organiser article further talked about Maharashtra's case of "unnecessary politicking and avoidable manipulations", questioning the rationale behind adding NCP Ajit Pawar faction when the Mahayuti had a comfortable majority. Sources say that these criticisms are likely to impact BJP's decision-making for assembly elections and there is a possibility of Mahayuti parting ways with Ajit Pawar. The RSS-BJP workers were critical of Pawar owing to his association with Maharashtra Co-operative Bank and irrigation scams. The Organiser article also mentions how "BJP workers were hurt because they had fought against the Congress ideology for years and were persecuted. In a single stroke, the BJP reduced its brand value. After years of struggle to become numero uno in Maharashtra, it became just another political party without any difference". During the Lok Sabha elections, it was observed that BJP workers were not enthusiastic about campaigning for Ajit Pawar's candidates. BJP's won 9 seats in this Lok Sabha elections, compared to 23 seats in 2019. The Ajit Pawar faction was quick to respond to the Organiser article stating that it does not represent official position of the RSS. On the other hand, it is speculated that the higher-ups at BJP are making moves to cut ties with Ajit Pawar. However, the party finds itself in a precarious situation as dropping Pawar would reinforce BJP's 'use-and-throw' policy and affect public opinion whereas keeping Pawar in the Mahayuti is not likely to be advantageous for them and the factional politics already showed its impact in Lok Sabha elections.

Farmers Protest Against Shivraj Singh Chouhan's Appointment As Agriculture Minister

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Wednesday protested against the NDA government's decision to allocate the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare to Shivraj Singh Chouhan and held him responsible for the killing of six farmers in Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur in June 2017. In a statement issued on Wednesday, the SKM said the farmers were "murdered" while participating in the massive struggle for MSP at the C2 plus 50 per cent formula given by the Swaminathan Commission, comprehensive loan waiver and against the growing trend of farmers' suicide. The SKM also announced that a meeting of its general body will be held in Delhi on July 10 which will be attended by the leaders of the constituent farmer organisations from all over India. "The decision symbolizes arrogance and insensitivity exhibited by the former regimes of 2014 and 2019 with an absolute majority to the BJP. It has aroused wrath among the farmers and the rural people across the country," the SKM said. Six farmers were killed in June 2017 in Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur after a group of farmers was fired at by the

policemen and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawans. The SKM, which led the protests against the now scrapped farm laws, said the NDA government did not take any decision to address the acute agrarian crisis and the farmers' suicide in the first Cabinet meeting or on the long pending demands on MSP, among other things. "The hype being created in the name of releasing Rs 20,000 crore of arrear in the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, which is an existing scheme with grossly inadequate sum of average Rs 500 per month per farmers' household will not satisfy farmers since it camouflage the unwillingness of the state to provide remunerative MSP and the policies of corporate takeover of agricultural sector," the SKM said. "There is no illusion among the farmers of a change in the corporate policies on agriculture. Farmers have to prepare for another stint of vibrant and massive struggles by joining hands with workers, small traders and petty producers and extending across India," they said, adding the SKM is determined to build greater unity of the people and put pressure on the NDA



government to replace its "corporate driven policies" with farmer and worker centric policies for the development of people. The SKM said their further course of action will be decided at the July 10 meeting. Commenting on the incident of actor and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut being slapped by a CISF personnel, they said, "SKM while not justifying slapping of Kangana Ranaut MP by a women security personal flays her arrogant and malicious utterances against the historic farmers' struggle." A delegation of the SKM will also visit the families of Lakhimpur Kheri martyrs on June 13 and will ensure continuation of legal assistance to the farmers, who were wrongly implicated in the case by the BJP led state government after the incident.

Odisha's new BJP govt opens all 4 gates of Puri's Jagannath temple: Why were they closed?



Just hours after assuming office, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Manjhi got into work mode on Thursday and his first order of business was to open all four gates of Puri's Jagannath Temple for devotees. The doors of the temple opened in the hours of Wednesday with Manjhi, some of his cabinet ministers as well as the BJP MP from Puri, Sambit Patra, present to witness the event. "We had proposed to open all the four gates of Jagannath Temple in yesterday's cabinet meeting. The proposal was passed and today at 6:30 am, I along with my MLAs and Puri MP (Sambit Patra) attended the

'Mangala aarti,'" Manjhi said after the gates were opened. By opening all gates of the temple for devotees the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has fulfilled its poll promise. The party won 78 out of 147 assembly seats in the state, putting an end to Biju Janata Dal's 24-year-long rule.

Why were the temple doors closed?

The doors of Jagannath Temple were closed for devotees for the first time in view of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The four doors of the temple are Simhadwara (Lion Gate), Ashwadwara (Horse Gate), Vyaghradwara (Tiger Gate), and Hastidwara (Elephant Gate). However, only one door was opened to the public in December 2020. While everything else got back to normal four years later, the three doors of the temple continued to remain shut. Another reason why the doors were kept closed was to facilitate the various beautification schemes inside the temple under the

Heritage Corridor Plan.

Other schemes announced by state govt

The Mohan Charan Manjhi government has also announced a slew of projects to keep the 12th-century shrine's development afloat. "During the elections, we had said that we would reopen all 4 gates... All four gates of the temple are going to be opened today. All members of the Council Ministers are present here. The CM is also present... A corpus fund worth Rs. 500 crores has also been announced for development projects... We took the oath yesterday and we are opening the gates today," Odisha minister Suryabanshi Suraj said. Apart from this, the government will also set a minimum support price (MSP) for paddy at Rs 3,100 per quintal. The scheme will be implemented within the first 100 days of governance. Meanwhile, women will receive Rs 50,000 cash vouchers under the Subhadra Yojana.

Kathua Terror Attack: Karma Hits Hard As Terrorists Die Without Water

In Jammu and Kashmir's ongoing security operations, Before the encounter of the two terrorist involved in terror attacks, the terrorists were seen in the Saida Sukhal village of Hiranagar, going door-to-door asking for water. Alert villagers, suspecting foul play, shut their doors and raised alarms, prompting the terrorists to open fire randomly in the air and at a passing villager. This chaotic situation led to a rapid response from security forces. Anand Jain, Additional Director General of Police for the Jammu zone, who is supervising the anti-terror operations, shared details of the incident. "The terrorists panicked and fired randomly when villagers grew suspicious and raised a hue and cry. One terrorist was killed overnight while trying to throw a gre-

nade at the police, and the second terrorist was eliminated this morning," he said. During the encounter, a paramilitary soldier was killed in action. Additionally, Omkar Nath, a civilian injured in the firing, and his wife were evacuated to the hospital. Officials have denied reports of additional casualties. Meanwhile, another encounter took place in Doda, where terrorists attacked an army base in the Chattargala area late last night. Five soldiers and a special police officer (SPO) were injured during the attack. Security forces have cordoned off the area and are engaged in an ongoing operation to neutralize the terrorists. These incidents follow closely on the heels of a recent terrorist attack in Reasi, where a bus carrying pilgrims was attacked, re-



sulting in nine deaths and 33 injuries. The attack was reportedly orchestrated by Lashkar-e-Taiba commander Abu Hamza. The swift response and successful operations by security forces underscore their commitment to combating terrorism and maintaining peace in Jammu and Kashmir.

