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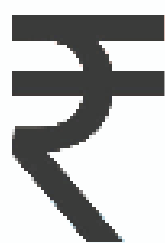
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A Monthly Newsletter by Jammu & Kashmir Policy Institute (JKPI)

Inksight

UNION
BUDGET



SPECIAL ISSUE

SUMMARY OF THE INTERIM UNION BUDGET 2024-25

read INSIDE

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE
INTERIM UNION BUDGET
2024-25**

Page no. 06

**TARGET FOR LAKHPATI DIDI
TO BE ENHANCED FROM
2 CRORE TO 3 CRORE:
FINANCE MINISTER**

Page no. 14

**MOMENTUM FOR
NARI SHAKTI**

Page no. 20





SUMMARY OF THE INTERIM UNION BUDGET 2024-25

- India's real GDP is projected to grow at 7.3 per cent in FY 2023-24
- Capital expenditure outlay for the next year is being increased by 11.1 per cent to Rs. 11,11,111 crore, which would be 3.4 per cent of the GDP
- Fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1 per cent of GDP
- FDI inflow during 2014-23 was USD 596 billion, which is twice the inflow during 2005-14
- Upliftment of 'garib' (poor), 'Mahilayen' (women), 'yuva' (youth) and 'annadata' (farmer) is the highest priority of the government
- A corpus of rupees one lakh crore will be established with a fifty-year interest-free loan for youth
- The scheme of 50-year interest-free loan for capex to states will be continued this year with a total outlay of rs 1.3 lakh crore
- The government is working with an approach to development that is all-round, all-pervasive and all-inclusive (सर्वांगीण, सर्वस्पर्शी और सर्वसमावेशी)
- The budget contains several announcements and strategies indicating directions and development approach for making India Viksit Bharat by 2047
- The government will pay utmost attention to making the eastern region and its people a powerful driver of India's growth
- The government will form a high-powered committee for an extensive consideration of the challenges arising from fast population growth and demographic changes
- No change proposed in tax rates in the interim budget
- About one crore taxpayers are expected to benefit from the withdrawal of certain petty and disputed direct tax demands
- Government to lay white paper on Indian economy now and then

PART-A SUMMARY

The Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, while presenting the Interim Union Budget for 2024-2025 in Parliament announced that the capital expenditure outlay for the next year is being increased by 11.1 per cent to Rs 11,11,111 crore, which would be 3.4 per cent of the GDP.

She said this is in the wake of building on the massive tripling of the capital expenditure outlay in the past 4 years resulting in a huge multiplier impact on economic growth and employment creation.

As per the First Advance Estimates of National Income of FY 2023-24, presented along with the Finance Minister's speech, India's Real GDP is projected to grow at 7.3 per cent. This is also in line with the upward revision in growth projections for FY2023-24 by the RBI (in its December 2023 Monetary Policy Committee meeting) from 6.5 per cent to 7 per cent, prompted by strong growth in Q2 of FY2023-24.

Indian economy has demonstrated resilience and maintained healthy macro-economic fundamentals, despite global economic challenges. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its World Economic Outlook (WEO), October 2023, has revised its growth projection for India for FY2023-24 upwards to 6.3 per cent from 6.1 per cent projected in July 2023. This reflects increasing global confidence in India's economic prowess at a time when global growth projection for 2023 remains unchanged at 3 per cent.

As per the IMF, India is likely to become the third-largest economy in 2027 (in USD at market exchange rate) and it is also estimated that India's contribution to global growth will rise by 200 basis points in 5 years. Moreover, various international agencies such as the World Bank, the IMF, OECD and ADB project India to grow between 6.4 per cent, 6.3 per cent, 6.1 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively in 2024-25.

The Finance Minister stated that strong growth in economic activity has imparted buoyancy to revenue collections and pointed out that GST collection stood at ₹1.65 lakh crore in December 2023. This is the seventh time that gross GST revenues have crossed ₹1.6 lakh crore benchmark.

She said, coming to 2024-25, the total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at Rs 30.80 and 47.66 lakh crore respectively. The tax receipts are estimated at Rs 26.02 lakh crore.

In a major announcement, the Finance Minister said, the scheme of a fifty-year interest-free loan for capital expenditure to states will be continued this year with a total outlay of Rs1.3 lakh crore. A provision of seventy-five thousand crore rupees as a fifty-year interest-free loan is proposed this year to support the milestone-linked reforms of Viksit Bharat by the State Governments.

Referring to the fiscal consolidation, as announced in her Budget Speech for 2021-22, to reduce the fiscal

deficit below 4.5 per cent by 2025-26, Sitharaman said, the fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1 per cent of GDP, adhering to that path.

Similarly, the gross and net market borrowings through dated securities during 2024-25 are estimated at Rs 14.13 and 11.75 lakh crore respectively and both will be less than that in 2023-24.

Pointing out some of the bright spots of the economy, the Finance Minister informed that the Revised Estimate of the total receipts other than borrowings is Rs 27.56 lakh crore, of which the tax receipts are Rs 23.24 lakh crore. The Revised Estimate of the total expenditure is Rs 44.90 lakh crore. The revenue receipts at Rs 30.03 lakh crore are expected to be higher than the Budget Estimate, reflecting strong growth momentum and formalization in the economy.

Sitharaman also stated that the gross and net market borrowings through dated securities during 2024-25 are estimated at Rs 14.13 and 11.75 lakh crore respectively and both will be less than that in 2023-24.

She announced that the FDI inflow during 2014-23 was USD 596 billion marking a golden era and this is twice the inflow during 2005-14. For encouraging sustained foreign investment, we are negotiating bilateral investment treaties with our foreign partners, in the spirit of 'first develop India', the Finance Minister added

Nirmala Sitharaman said, Prime Minister Narendra Modi firmly believes and focuses on four major castes. They are, 'Garib' (Poor), 'Mahilayen' (Women), 'Yuva' (Youth) and 'Annadata' (Farmer).

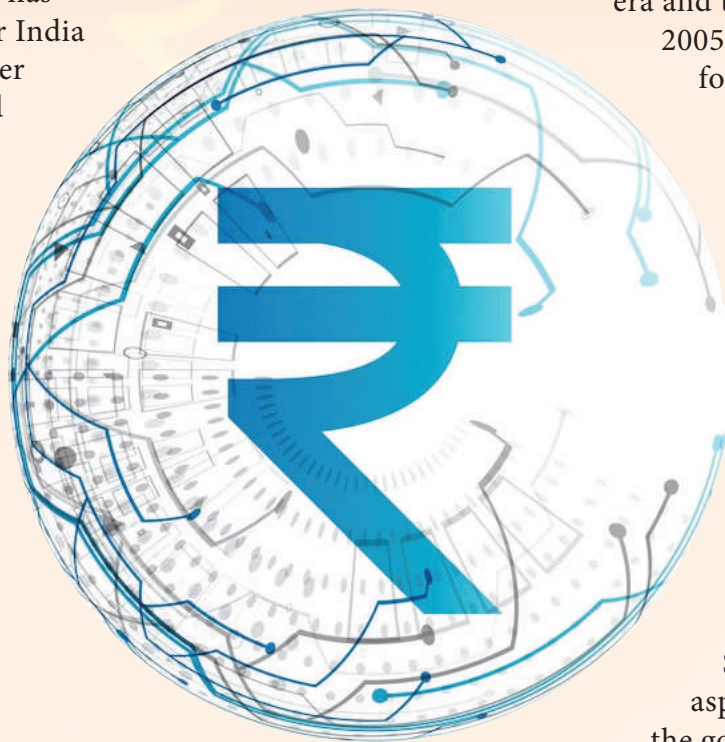
She said, their needs, their aspirations, and their welfare are the government's highest priority because the country progresses when they progress.

Nirmala Sitharaman elaborated that this government's humane and inclusive approach to development is a marked and deliberate departure from the earlier approach of 'provisioning up-to-village level'. Development programmes, in the last ten years, have targeted each and every household and individual, through 'housing for all', 'hargharjal', electricity for all, cooking gas for all, bank accounts and financial services for all, in record time, she added.

The Finance Minister stressed that this Government is working with an approach to development that is all-round, all-pervasive and all-inclusive. It covers all castes and people at all levels. She said, "We are working to make India a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047. To achieve that goal, we need to improve people's capability and empower them."

She also pointed out, "Previously, social justice was mostly a political slogan. For our Government, social justice is an effective and necessary governance model."

The Finance Minister announced amidst thumping of desks that the Indian economy has witnessed a



profound positive transformation in the last ten years and the people of India are looking ahead to the future with hope and optimism. She added, “Conditions were created for more opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. The economy got a new vigour. The fruits of development started reaching the people at scale. The country got a new sense of purpose and hope.”

The Finance Minister informed that with the pursuit of ‘SabkakaSaath’ in these 10 years, the Government has assisted 25 crore people to get freedom from multi-dimensional poverty and the Government’s efforts are now getting synergized with the energy and passion of such empowered people.

She informed that PM Mudra Yojana has sanctioned 43 crore loans aggregating to Rs 22.5 lakh crore for entrepreneurial aspirations. It may be mentioned that thirty crore Mudra Yojana loans have been given to women entrepreneurs.

The Interim Budget contains a number of announcements and strategies indicating directions and development approaches for making India Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Making a slew of announcements, Nirmala Sitharaman said, the Government will pay utmost attention to making the eastern region and its people a powerful driver of India’s growth, PM Awas Yojana (Grameen) is close to achieving the target of three crore houses and two crore more houses will be taken up in the next five years to meet the requirement arising from increase in the number of families. Similarly, through rooftop solarization, one crore households will be enabled to obtain up to 300 units of free electricity every month.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana has benefitted 38 lakh farmers and generated 10 lakh employment. Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Yojana has assisted 2.4 lakh SHGs and sixty thousand individuals with credit linkages.

Nirmala Sitharaman announced that for our tech-savvy youth, this will be a golden era, as a corpus of

rupees one lakh crore will be established with a fifty-year interest-free loan. She said the corpus will provide long-term financing or refinancing with long tenors and low or nil interest rates. This will also encourage the private sector to scale up research and innovation significantly in sunrise domains, she added

For Railways, three major economic railway corridor programmes will be implemented, mineral and cement corridors, port connectivity corridors, and high-traffic density corridors. Moreover, forty thousand normal rail bogies will be converted to the Vande Bharat standards to enhance the safety, convenience and comfort of passengers.

In the Aviation Sector, the number of airports has doubled to 149 and five hundred and seventeen new routes are carrying 1.3 crore passengers. Indian carriers have proactively placed orders for over 1000 new aircraft.

Nirmala Sitharaman announced that the Government will form a high-powered committee for an extensive consideration of the challenges arising from fast population growth and demographic changes and the committee will be mandated to make recommendations for addressing these challenges comprehensively in relation to the goal of ‘Viksit Bharat’.

The Finance Minister pointed out that the Prime Minister in his Independence Day address to the nation, in the 75th year of our Republic said, “We commit ourselves to national development, with new inspirations, new consciousness, new resolutions, as the country opens up immense possibilities and opportunities.” It is our ‘KartavyaKaal’. She said, “Every challenge of the pre-2014 era was overcome through our economic management and our governance and these have placed the country on a resolute path of sustained high growth”.

Nirmala Sitharaman emphasized, “This has been possible through our right policies, true intentions, and appropriate decisions. In the full budget in July, our Government will present a detailed roadmap for our pursuit of ‘Viksit Bharat’.

PART-B SUMMARY

No change relating to taxation has been proposed in the Interim Budget. The same rates for direct taxes and indirect taxes, including import duties, have been retained. However, to provide continuity in taxation, certain tax benefits to Start-Ups and investments made by sovereign wealth or pension funds as also tax exemptions on certain income of some IFC units have been extended by one year up to 31st March 2025.

Withdrawal of Outstanding direct tax demands

Sitharaman announced to improve taxpayer services which is in line with the government’s vision to improve ease of living and ease of doing business. There are a large number of petty, non-verified, non-reconciled or disputed direct tax demands, many of them dating as far back as the year 1962, which continue to remain on the books, causing anxiety to honest taxpayers and hindering refunds of subsequent years. The Interim Budget proposes to withdraw such outstanding direct tax demands up to Rs. 25000/- pertaining to the period

up to financial year 2009-10 and up to Rs. 10,000/- for financial years 2010-11 to 2014-15. This is expected to benefit about a crore taxpayers.

Direct tax collections trebled

Appreciating the taxpayers for their support, Sitharaman said that over the last 10 years, the direct tax collections have more than trebled and the number of return filers swelled to 2.4 times. She highlighted the fact the Government has reduced and rationalised the tax rates due to which under the new tax regime there is no tax liability for taxpayers with income up to Rs. 7 lakh. She also mentioned about increase in the threshold for presumptive taxation for retail businesses as well as professionals. The Minister also mentioned a decrease in corporate tax rates for existing domestic companies from 30% to 22%, and for certain new manufacturing companies to 15%. In her Interim Budget speech, the Minister said that in the last 5 years, the Government’s focus has been on improving tax-payer services which has led to the transformation of an age-old jurisdiction-

based assessment system, and the filing of tax returns has been made simpler and easier. The average processing time of returns has been reduced from 93 days in the year 2013-14 to a mere ten days this year, thereby making refunds faster, she added.

GST reduced compliance burden

On indirect taxes, the Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman said that GST has reduced the compliance burden on trade and industry by unifying the highly fragmented indirect tax regime in India. Mentioning a recent survey conducted by a leading consulting firm, she said that 94% of industry leaders view the transition to GST as largely positive. In her Interim Budget speech, the Minister highlighted the fact that the tax base of GST has more than doubled and the average monthly gross GST collection has almost doubled to Rs 1.66 lakh crore this year. States too have benefited. States' SGST revenue, including compensation released to states, in the post-GST period of 2017-18 to 2022-23, has achieved a buoyancy of 1.22. The Minister said that the biggest beneficiaries are the consumers as reductions in logistics costs and taxes have brought down the prices of most goods and services. Mentioning several steps taken in customs to facilitate international trade, Sitharaman said the import release time declined by 47 per cent to 71 hours at Inland Container Depots, by 28 per cent to 44 hours at air cargo complexes and by 27 per cent to 85 hours at seaports, over the last four years since 2019.



Laying of White Paper

On the status of the Indian economy, the Union Minister said that in 2014 the responsibility to mend the economy step by step and to put the Governance systems in order was enormous, which she said was done by the Government successfully following its strong belief of 'nation-first'. She assured that the crisis of those years has been overcome and the economy has been put firmly on a high sustainable growth path with all-round development. She announced that the Government will come out with a white paper, on 'where we were then till 2014 and where we are now, only to draw lessons from the mismanagement of those years'.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INTERIM UNION BUDGET 2024-25

With the ‘mantra’ of ‘Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, and Sabka Vishwas’ and the whole national approach of “Sabka Prayas”, the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman pre-

sented the Interim Union Budget 2024-25 in Parliament. The key highlights of the Budget are as follows:

Part A

Social Justice

- Prime Minister to focus on the upliftment of four major castes, that is, ‘Garib’ (Poor), ‘Mahilayen’ (Women), ‘Yuva’ (Youth) and ‘Annadata’(Farmer).

‘Garib Kalyan, Desh ka Kalyan’

- The government assisted 25 crore people out of multi-dimensional poverty in the last 10 years.
- DBT of Rs 34 lakh crore using PM-Jan Dhan accounts led to savings of Rs 2.7 lakh crore for the Government.
- PM-SVANidhi provided credit assistance to 78 lakh street vendors. 2.3 lakh have received credit for the third time.
- PM-JANMAN Yojana to aid the development of particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTG).
- PM-Vishwakarma Yojana provides end-to-end support to artisans and craftspeople engaged in 18 trades.

Welfare of ‘Annadata’

- PM-KISAN SAMMAN Yojana provided financial assistance to 11.8 crore farmers.
- Under PM Fasal BimaYojana, crop insurance is given to 4 crore farmers
- Electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) integrated 1361 mandis, providing services to 1.8 crore farmers with a trading volume of Rs. 3 lakh crore.

Momentum for Nari Shakti

- 30 crore Mudra Yojana loans given to women entrepreneurs.
- Female enrolment in higher education has gone up by 28%.
- In STEM courses, girls and women constitute 43% of enrolment, one of the highest in the world.
- Over 70% of houses under PM Awas Yojana are given to women from rural areas.

PM Awas Yojana (Grameen)

- Despite COVID challenges, the target of three crore houses under PM Awas Yojana (Grameen) will be achieved soon.
- Two crore more houses to be taken up in the next five years.

Rooftop solarization and muft bijli

- 1 crore households to obtain 300 units of free electricity every month through rooftop solarization.
- Each household is expected to save Rs 15000 to Rs 18000 annually.

Ayushman Bharat

- Healthcare coverage under the Ayushman Bharat scheme is to be extended to all ASHA workers, Anganwadi Workers and Helpers.

Agriculture and food processing

- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana has benefited 38 lakh farmers and generated 10 lakh employment.
- Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Yojana has assisted 2.4 lakh SHGs and 60000 individuals with credit linkages.

Research and Innovation for catalyzing growth, employment and development

- A corpus of Rs 1 lakh crore is to be established with a fifty-year interest-free loan to provide long-term financing or refinancing with long tenors and low or nil interest rates.
- A new scheme is to be launched for strengthening deep-tech technologies for defence purposes and expediting ‘atmanirbharta’.

Infrastructure

- Capital expenditure outlay for Infrastructure development and employment generation to be increased by 11.1 per cent to Rs 11,11,111 crore, which will be 3.4 per cent of the GDP.

Railways

- 3 major economic railway corridor programmes identified under PM Gati Shakti are to be implemented to improve logistics efficiency and reduce cost
 - Energy, mineral and cement corridors
 - Port connectivity corridors
 - High-traffic density corridors
- Forty thousand normal rail bogies are to be converted to Vande Bharat standards.

Aviation Sector

- The number of airports in the country doubled to 149.
- Five hundred and seventeen new routes are carrying 1.3 crore passengers.
- Indian carriers have placed orders for over 1000 new aircraft.

Green Energy

- Coal gasification and liquefaction capacity of 100 MT to be set up by 2030.
- Phased mandatory blending of compressed biogas (CBG) in compressed natural gas (CNG) for transport and piped natural gas (PNG) for domestic purposes to be mandated.

Tourism sector

- States are to be encouraged to take up comprehensive development of iconic tourist centres including their branding and marketing at a global scale.
- Framework for rating of the tourist centres based on quality of facilities and services to be established.
- Long-term interest-free loans are to be provided to States for financing such development on a matching basis.

Investments

- FDI inflow during 2014-23 of USD 596 billion was twice the inflow during 2005-14.

Reforms in the States for 'Viksit Bharat'

- A provision of Rs 75,000 crore rupees as a fifty-year interest-free loan is proposed to support milestone-linked reforms by the State Governments.

Revised Estimates (RE) 2023-24

- RE of the total receipts other than borrowings is Rs 27.56 lakh crore, of which the tax receipts are Rs 23.24 lakh crore.
- RE of the total expenditure is Rs 44.90 lakh crore.
- Revenue receipts at Rs 30.03 lakh crore are expected to be higher than the Budget Estimate, reflecting strong growth momentum and formalization in the

economy.

- RE of the fiscal deficit is 5.8 per cent of GDP for 2023-24.

Budget Estimates 2024-25

- Total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at Rs 30.80 and Rs 47.66 lakh crore respectively.
- Tax receipts are estimated at Rs 26.02 lakh crore.
- Scheme of fifty-year interest-free loan for capital expenditure to states to be continued this year with a total outlay of Rs 1.3 lakh crore.
- Fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1 per cent of GDP
- Gross and net market borrowings through dated securities during 2024-25 are estimated at Rs 14.13 and Rs 11.75 lakh crore respectively.

Part B

Direct taxes

- FM proposes to retain the same tax rates for direct taxes
- Direct tax collection tripled, and return filers increased to 2.4 times, in the last 10 years
- Government to improve taxpayer services
 - Outstanding direct tax demands upto Rs 25000 pertaining to the period upto FY 2009-10 withdrawn
 - Outstanding direct tax demands upto Rs 10000 for financial years 2010-11 to 2014-15 withdrawn
 - This will benefit one crore taxpayers
- Tax benefits to Start-Ups, investments made by Sovereign wealth funds or pension funds extended to 31.03.2025
- Tax exemption on certain income of IFSC units extended by a year to 31.03.2025 from 31.03.2024

Indirect taxes

- FM proposes to retain the same tax rates for indirect taxes and import duties
- GST unified the highly fragmented indirect tax regime in India
 - Average monthly gross GST collection doubled to Rs 1.66 lakh crore this year
 - The GST tax base has doubled
 - State SGST revenue buoyancy (including compensation released to states) increased to 1.22 in the post-GST period(2017-18 to 2022-23) from 0.72 in the pre-GST period (2012-13 to 2015-16)
 - 94% of industry leaders view the transition to GST as largely positive
 - GST led to supply chain optimization
 - GST reduced the compliance burden on trade and industry
 - Lower logistics costs and taxes helped reduce the prices of goods and services, benefiting the consumers

Tax rationalization efforts over the years

- No tax liability for income upto Rs 7 lakh, up from Rs 2.2 lakh in FY 2013-14
- The presumptive taxation threshold for retail businesses increased to Rs 3 crore from Rs 2 crore
- The presumptive taxation threshold for professionals increased to Rs 75 lakh from Rs 50 lakh



- Corporate income tax decreased to 22% from 30% for existing domestic companies
- The corporate income tax rate at 15% for new manufacturing companies

Achievements in tax-payer services

- The average processing time of tax returns has reduced to 10 days from 93 days in 2013-14
 - Faceless Assessment and Appeal introduced for greater efficiency
 - Updated income tax returns, new form 26AS and pre-filled tax returns for simplified return filing
 - Reforms in customs leading to reduced Import release time
- Reduction by 47% to 71 hours at Inland Container

Depots

- Reduction by 28% to 44 hours at Air Cargo complexes
- Reduction by 27% to 85 hours at Sea Ports

Economy-then and now

- In 2014 there was a responsibility to mend the economy and put governance systems in order. The need of the hour was to:
 - Attract investments
 - Build support for the much-needed reforms
 - Give hope to the people
- **The government succeeded with a strong belief in 'nation-first'**
 - "It is now appropriate to look at where we were till 2014 and where we are now": FM
- **The Government will lay a White Paper on the table of the house.**



SIGNIFICANT BOOST TO CAPITAL EXPENDITURE; TO BE INCREASED BY 11.1 PER CENT TO ₹ 11,11,111 CRORE; AMOUNTING TO 3.4 PER CENT OF THE GDP

FISCAL DEFICIT IN 2023-24 (RE) TO BE 5.8 PER CENT OF GDP; ESTIMATED TO BE 5.1 PER CENT OF GDP IN 2024-25

While presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament, the Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman outlined the Capital Expenditure Outlay, Revised Estimates 2023-24 and Budget Estimates 2024-25.

Significant boost to Capital Expenditure Outlay

The Union Finance Minister said that the Capital Expenditure outlay for 2024-25 is being increased by 11.1 per cent to eleven lakh, eleven thousand, one hundred and eleven crore rupees (₹11,11,111 crore). This amounts to 3.4 per cent of GDP. In addition, she mentioned that the massive tripling of the CapEx over the last 4 years is resulting in a huge multiplier impact on economic growth and employment creation.

Revised Estimates 2023-24

Union Finance Minister said, “The Revised Estimate of the total receipts other than borrowings is ₹27.56 lakh crore, of which the tax receipts are ₹23.24 lakh crore. The Revised Estimate of the total expenditure is ₹44.90 lakh crore”.

Talking about the revenue receipts, she said that the revenue receipts at ₹30.03 lakh crore are expected to be higher than the Budget Estimate, reflecting strong growth momentum and formalization in the economy.

She further mentioned that notwithstanding moderation in the nominal growth estimates, the Revised Estimate of the fiscal deficit stood at 5.8 per cent of GDP, improving upon the Budget Estimate.

Budget Estimates 2024-25

In 2024-25, the total receipts other than borrowings are estimated to be ₹30.80 lakh crore and the total expenditure is estimated at ₹47.66 lakh crore. The tax receipts are estimated at ₹26.02 lakh crore.

Further, the Union Finance Minister said, “The scheme of fifty-year interest-free loan for capital expenditure to states will be continued this year with a total outlay of ₹1.3 lakh crore.”

Sitharaman said, “The fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1 per cent of GDP”. Adhering to the path of fiscal consolidation as mentioned in her Union Budget speech for 2021-22, she mentioned reducing it below 4.5 per cent by 2025-26.

Market Borrowings

Union Finance Minister said that, during 2024-25, gross and net market borrowings through dated securities are estimated at ₹14.13 lakh crore and ₹11.75 lakh crore respectively. While talking about the increase in private investments, she said, “Lower borrowings by the Central Government will facilitate larger availability of credit for the private sector.”

FINANCE MINISTER PROPOSES A NEW CORPUS OF RUPEES ONE LAKH CRORE TO BOOST PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN SUNRISE TECHNOLOGIES

“THIS WILL MARK A GOLDEN ERA FOR OUR TECH-SAVVY YOUTH,” SAYS NIRMALA SITHARAMAN



The Government proposes to create a corpus of Rupees One Lakh Crore to boost private investment in sunrise technologies.

While presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament, the Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman said that this will mark a golden era for our tech-savvy youth.

The corpus will be established with a fifty-year interest-free loan. It will provide long-term financing or refinancing with long tenors and low or nil interest rates.

“This will encourage the private sector to scale up research and innovation significantly in sunrise domains. We need to have programmes that combine the powers of our youth and technology,” the Finance Minister said.

Sitharaman also proposed a new scheme to be launched for strengthening deep-tech technologies for defence purposes and expediting ‘atmanirbharta’.

Technological Changes

Pointing out that new-age technologies and data are changing the lives of people and businesses, the Finance Minister said that they are also enabling new economic opportunities and facilitating the provision of high-quality services at affordable prices for all, including those at the ‘bottom of the pyramid’.

Stating that opportunities for India at the global level are expanding, Sitharaman said, “India is showing solutions through innovation and entrepreneurship of its people.”

Research & Innovation

Stressing that Research and Innovation will catalyze India’s growth, generate employment and lead to development, Sitharaman said that Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri gave the slogan “Jai Jawan Jai Kisan” and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee made that “Jai Jawan Jai Kisan Jai Vigyan”.

“Prime Minister Modi has furthered that to “Jai Jawan Jai Kisan Jai Vigyan and Jai Anusandhan”, as innovation is the foundation of development,” she said.

UNION MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN LAYS DOWN STRATEGY FOR ‘AMRIT KAAL’

TIMELY AND ADEQUATE FINANCES, RELEVANT TECHNOLOGIES & APPROPRIATE TRAINING FOR MSMES- A POLICY PRIORITY FOR GOVERNMENT

Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman laid down the strategy for ‘Amrit Kaal’. While presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament, the Minister said, “It is an important policy priority for our Government to ensure timely and adequate finances, relevant technologies and appropriate training for the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) to grow and also compete globally. Orienting the regulatory environment to facilitate their growth will be an important element of this policy mix.”

The Minister said, “Aligning with the ‘Panchamrit’ goals, our Government will facilitate sustaining high and more resource-efficient economic growth.” She highlighted that this will work towards energy security in terms of avail-

ability, accessibility and affordability.

Sitharaman noted that guided by the principle ‘Reform, Perform, and Transform’, the Government will take up next-generation reforms, and build consensus with the states and stakeholders for effective implementation.

She said, “Our Government will adopt economic policies that foster and sustain growth, facilitate inclusive and sustainable development, improve productivity, create opportunities for all, help them enhance their capabilities, and contribute to the generation of resources to power investments and fulfil aspirations.”

The Minister further stated that to meet the investment needs, the Government will prepare the financial sector in terms of size, capacity, skills and regulatory framework.

INTERIM BUDGET 2024-25 PROMISES STEPPING UP VALUE ADDITION IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND BOOSTING FARMERS' INCOME

“THIS WILL MARK A GOLDEN ERA FOR OUR TECH-SAVVY YOUTH,” SAYS NIRMALA SITHARAMAN

Farmer's welfare and boosting rural demand is one of the main highlights of the interim budget 2024-25 presented by Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament. Terming Farmers as our 'Annadata', Sitharaman stated that Minimum support prices for the production of 'Annadata' are periodically increased appropriately.

The Finance Minister said that every year, under PM-KISAN SAMMAN Yojana, direct financial assistance is provided to 11.8 crore farmers, including marginal and small farmers, while crop insurance is given to 4 crore farmers under PM Fasal Bima Yojana. She stated that these, besides several other programmes, are assisting 'Annadata' in producing food for the country and the world and added that the worries about food have been eliminated through free rations for 80 crore people.

The interim budget 2024-25 has promised to step up value addition in the agricultural sector and boosting of farmers' income. Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman promised to further promote private and public investment in post-harvest activities including aggregation, modern storage, efficient supply chains, primary and secondary processing and marketing and branding to ensure faster growth of the agriculture and food processing sector.

“The sector is poised for inclusive, balanced, higher growth and productivity. These are facilitated by farm-

er-centric policies, income support, coverage of risks through price and insurance support, promotion of technologies and innovations through start-ups,” the Finance Minister mentioned in her speech.

She said Pradhan Mantri's Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Yojana has assisted 2.4 lakh SHGs and sixty thousand individuals with credit linkages. The finance minister added that other schemes are complementing the efforts for reducing post-harvest losses and improving productivity and incomes. Sitharaman mentioned that Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana has benefitted 38 lakh farmers and generated 10 lakh employment. The Finance Minister said the Electronic National Agriculture Market has integrated 1361 mandis, and is providing services to 1.8 crore farmers with a trading volume of Rs. 3 lakh crore.

“These and the provision of basic necessities have enhanced real income in the rural areas. Their economic needs could be addressed, thus spurring growth and generating jobs,” the finance minister asserted.

ATMANIRBHAR OIL SEEDS ABHIYAN

The interim budget 2024-25 was presented by Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman has said a strategy will be formulated to achieve 'atmanirbharta' for oil seeds such as mustard, groundnut, sesame, soybean, and sunflower. The Finance Minister mentioned in her speech that this will cover research for high-yielding varieties, widespread adoption of modern farming techniques, market linkages, procurement, value addition, and crop insurance.

NANO DAP

“After the successful adoption of Nano Urea, application of Nano DAP on various crops will be expanded in all agro-climatic zones,” the Union Finance Minister mentioned in her speech.



GOVERNMENT TO LAUNCH SCHEME TO HELP DESERVING SECTIONS OF MIDDLE CLASS “LIVING IN RENTED HOUSES, OR SLUMS, OR CHAWLS AND UNAUTHORIZED COLONIES” TO BUY OR BUILD THEIR OWN HOUSES

While presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament, Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman announced that the Government will launch a scheme to help deserving sections of the middle class “living in rented houses, or slums, or chawls and unauthorized colonies” to buy or build their own houses

Highlighting the achievement of PM Awas Yojana (Grameen), the Union Finance Minister said that despite the challenges due to COVID, implementation of the scheme continued and the government is close to achieving the target of three crore houses. She said that two crore more houses will be taken up in the next five years to meet the requirement arising from an increase in the num-



ber of families.

Nirmala Sitharaman emphasised that the Government is working with

an approach to development that is all-round, all-pervasive and all-inclusive to make India a ‘Viksit Bharat’ by 2047.

FIVE INTEGRATED AQUAPARKS TO BE SETUP

SEAFOOD EXPORTS DOUBLE SINCE 2013-14

PM MATSYA SAMPADA YOJANA BEING STEPPED UP TO ENHANCE AQUACULTURE PRODUCTIVITY, DOUBLE EXPORTS TO ` 1 LAKH CRORE AND GENERATE 55 LAKH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In a bid to boost Fisheries sector, Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman has said that five integrated aquaparks will be set up. While presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament, the Minister said, “It was our Government which set up a separate Department for Fisheries realizing the importance of assisting fishermen. This has resulted in doubling of both inland and aquaculture production.” The Minister highlighted that Seafood exports since 2013-14 have also doubled.

The Minister announced that the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) will be stepped up to: (i) enhance aquaculture productivity from existing 3 to 5 tons per hectare; (ii) double exports to 1 lakh crore; (iii) generate 55 lakh employment opportunities in the near future.

Blue Economy 2.0

The Minister announced that to promote climate resilient activities for blue Economy 2.0, a scheme for restoration and adaptation measures, and coastal aquaculture and mariculture with an integrated and multi-sectoral approach will be launched.

Dairy Development

The Minister also announced that a comprehensive programme for supporting dairy farmers will be formulated. She stated that efforts are already on to control foot and mouth disease. Sitharaman said, “India is the world’s largest milk producer but with low productivity of milch animals.”

“The programme will be built on the success of existing schemes such as the Rashtriya Gokul Mission, National Livestock Mission, and Infrastructure Development Funds for dairy processing and animal husbandry,” she added.

ROOFTOP SOLARISATION TO ENABLE ONE CRORE HOUSEHOLDS TO OBTAIN UPTO 300 UNITS OF FREE ELECTRICITY EVERY MONTH

- GREATER ADOPTION OF E-BUSES FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT WILL BE ENCOURAGED THROUGH PAYMENT SECURITY MECHANISM: FINANCE MINISTER
- A NEW SCHEME OF BIO-MANUFACTURING & BIO-FOUNDRY TO PROVIDE ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY ALTERNATIVE

While enunciating the approach of the government towards an all-round, all-pervasive and all-inclusive development, the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, announced a slew of measures for the promotion of green growth and renewable energy while tabling the Interim Budget 2024-2025 in Parliament.

Rooftop solarization and muftbijli

Finance Minister said that through rooftop solarization, one crore households will be enabled to obtain up to 300 units of free electricity every month. This scheme follows the resolve of the Prime Minister on the historic day of consecration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. The benefits expected from this are as follows:

- Savings up to fifteen to eighteen thousand rupees annually for households from free solar electricity and selling the surplus to the distribution companies;
- Charging of electric vehicles;
- Entrepreneurship opportunities for a large number of vendors for supply and installation;
- Employment opportunities for the youth with technical skills in manufacturing, installation and maintenance.

Green Energy

With the aim of meeting the commitment of 'net-zero' by 2070, Sitharaman proposed the following measures in the Interim Budget 2024-25:

- Viability gap funding to be provided for harnessing

offshore wind energy potential for the initial capacity of one giga-watt.

- Coal gasification and liquefaction capacity of 100 MT to be set up by 2030. This will also help in reducing imports of natural gas, methanol, and ammonia.
- Phased mandatory blending of Compressed Bio Gas (CBG) in Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) for transport and Piped Natural Gas (PNG) for domestic purposes to be mandated.
- Financial assistance is to be provided for the procurement of biomass aggregation machinery to support collection.

Electric Vehicle Ecosystem

"Our Government will expand and strengthen the e-vehicle ecosystem by supporting manufacturing and charging infrastructure," the Finance Minister said while announcing that greater adoption of e-buses for public transport networks will be encouraged through payment security mechanism.

Bio-manufacturing and Bio-foundry

For promoting green growth, Sitharaman proposed a new scheme of bio-manufacturing and bio-foundry which will provide environment-friendly alternatives such as biodegradable polymers, bio-plastics, bio-pharmaceuticals and bio-agri-inputs. "This scheme will also help in transforming today's consumptive manufacturing paradigm to the one based on regenerative principles," she added.



A FRAMEWORK FOR RATING ICONIC TOURIST CENTRES BASED ON QUALITY OF FACILITIES AND SERVICES TO BE ESTABLISHED: UNION FINANCE MINISTER

- LONG-TERM INTEREST-FREE LOANS TO BE PROVIDED TO STATES FOR FINANCING DEVELOPMENT OF ICONIC TOURIST CENTRES
- PROJECTS FOR PORT CONNECTIVITY, TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE, AND AMENITIES TO BE TAKEN UP ON OUR ISLANDS, INCLUDING LAKSHADWEEP

Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament, laid emphasis on the comprehensive development of tourist centres for achieving the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

Iconic Tourist Centres

Nirmala Sitharaman said that states will be encouraged to take up comprehensive development of iconic tourist centres, branding and marketing them at a global scale. She further added that long-term interest-free loans will be provided to States for financing such development on a matching basis. In order to promote the comprehensive development of the centres, the Union Minister said that a framework for rating of the centres based on the quality of facilities and services will be established.

Domestic Tourism

The Union Finance Minister highlighted the fact that India's middle class also now aspires to travel & explore; and tourism, including spiritual tourism, has tremendous opportunities for local entrepreneurship.

In continuation to this, she said that to address the emerging fervour for domestic tourism, projects for port connectivity, tourism infrastructure, and amenities will be taken up on the islands, including Lakshadweep and this will help generate employment.

In addition to domestic tourism, India's diversity is known to a global audience. In this regard, Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech said that the success of organizing G20 meetings in sixty places presented a diversity of India to a global audience and the economic strength has made the country an attractive destination for business and conference tourism.

TARGET FOR LAKHPATI DIDI TO BE ENHANCED FROM 2 CRORE TO 3 CRORE: FINANCE MINISTER

- NEARLY 1 CRORE WOMEN ASSISTED TO BECOME LAKHPATI DIDI
- 83 LAKH SHGS WITH 9 CRORE WOMEN TRANSFORMING RURAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE WITH EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-RELIANCE

While presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament, Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman announced that it has been decided to enhance the target for Lakhpati Didi from 2 crore to 3 crore.

The Union Minister said that eighty-three lakh SHGs with nine crore women are transforming the rural socio-economic landscape with empowerment and self-reliance. Their success has assisted nearly one crore women to become Lakhpati Didi already. They are an inspiration to others. Their achievements will be recognized by honouring them. The Finance Minister stated that buoyed by the success, the target for Lakhpati Didi had been enhanced.

he Finance Minister stated that our Prime Minister

firmly believes, we need to focus on four major castes. They are, 'Garib' (Poor), 'Mahilayen' (Women), 'Yuva' (Youth) and 'Annadata' (Farmer). "Their needs, their aspirations, and their welfare are our highest priority. The country progresses when they progress". She added that all four require and receive government support in their quest to better their lives and their empowerment and well-being will drive the country forward".

She further emphasized that the Government is working with an approach to development that is all-round, all-pervasive and all-inclusive. It covers all castes and people at all levels. The Government is working to make India a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, she said. "For achieving that goal, we need to improve people's capability and empower them".



EDITION
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GOVERNMENT TO LAY WHITE PAPER ON ECONOMY - THEN AND NOW

While tabling the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament, the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman said, “In 2014 when our Government assumed the reins, the responsibility to mend the economy step by step and to put the governance systems in order was enormous. The need of the hour was to give hope to the people, to attract investments, and to build support for the much-needed reforms. The Government did that successfully following our strong belief of ‘nation-first.’”

Talking about the economy then



and now, the Union Finance Minister said, “The crisis of those years has been overcome, and the economy has been put firmly on a high sustainable growth path with all-round development.” She announced that the Government will lay a White Paper on the

table of the House ‘to look at where we were then till 2014 and where we are now, only for the purpose of drawing lessons from the mismanagement of those years.’

Sitharaman further added, “The exemplary track record of governance, development and performance, effective delivery, and ‘Jan Kalyan’ has given the Government trust, confidence and blessings of the people to realize, whatever it takes, the goal of ‘Viksit Bharat’ with good intentions, true dedication and hard work in the coming years and decades.”

‘NARI SHAKTI’ TAKES CENTER STAGE; UNION FINANCE MINISTER ANNOUNCES VACCINATION TO PREVENT CERVICAL CANCER

Aiming for Viksit Bharat by 2047 and with a sharp focus and providing momentum to Nari Shakti, Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman proposed vaccination to prevent Cervical Cancer and amalgamation of various schemes for maternal and child care, as she presented the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament.

The vaccination programme will be for girls in the age group of 9 to 14 years for the prevention of cervical cancer. The Government will encourage this vaccination among the eligible categories, she added.

To bring synergy in various programmes for mater-

nal and child care, the Union Finance Minister proposed that one comprehensive programme be created. She further added that Anganwadi Centres to be upgraded under ‘Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0’ will be expedited. She expressed that this will improve nutrition delivery, early childhood care and development.

To further the Digital India initiative of the Government, Nirmala Sitharaman proposed that the newly designed U-WIN platform be rolled out expeditiously throughout the country. This platform will be used for managing immunization and furthering the efforts under Mission Indradhanush, she added.



UNION FINANCE MINISTER ANNOUNCES SETTING UP OF MORE MEDICAL COLLEGES

- THE NEW MEDICAL COLLEGES WILL UTILIZE THE EXISTING HOSPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE UNDER VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS
- COMMITTEE TO BE SET UP FOR EXAMINING EXISTING HOSPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND RECOMMEND MEDICAL COLLEGES
- HEALTHCARE COVER FOR ASHA WORKERS, ANGANWADI WORKERS AND HELPERS

With a focus on Yuva Shakti and marching towards the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047, Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman proposed setting up of more medical colleges, as she presented the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament.

The new Medical Colleges will be set up by utilizing the existing hospital infrastructure under various de-

partments. A Committee will be set up for this purpose to examine the issues and make relevant recommendations, the Union Finance Minister stated. She expressed that this initiative will not only create opportunities for youth to become doctors but also improve healthcare services to the people.

Nirmala Sitharaman also proposed that ASHA workers, Angan-



wadi workers and helpers will also be covered under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme



INTERIM BUDGET PROPOSES TO RETAIN TAX RATES FOR DIRECT AND INDIRECT TAXES

RELIEF FOR CERTAIN OUTSTANDING DIRECT TAX DEMANDS TO BENEFIT NEARLY 1 CRORE TAXPAYERS

“Keeping with the convention, I do not propose to make any changes relating to taxation and propose to retain the same tax rates for direct taxes and indirect taxes including import duties,” said the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, while presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in the Parliament.

To ensure continuity in taxation, the Union Finance Minister proposed to extend certain tax benefits to start-ups and investments made by sovereign wealth or pension funds and tax exemption on certain income of some IFSC

units till 31.03.2025.

In line with the Government’s vision to improve ease of living and ease of doing business, and to provide relief to a large number of petty, non-verified, non-reconciled or disputed direct tax demands, many of them dating as far back as the year 1962, Sitharaman proposed to withdraw such outstanding direct tax demands up to ₹25,000 pertaining to the period up to financial year 2009-10 and up to ₹10,000 for financial years 2010-11 to 2014-15. This is expected to benefit about one crore tax-payers.

INDIA-MIDDLE EAST-EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR IS A STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC GAME CHANGER FOR INDIA AND OTHERS

- FDI INFLOW DURING 2014-23 STANDS AT USD 596 BILLION; TWICE THE INFLOW DURING 2005-14
- BILATERAL INVESTMENT TREATIES BEING NEGOTIATED IN SPIRIT OF 'FIRST DEVELOP INDIA'



Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman said that the recently announced India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor is a strategic and economic game changer for India and others. While presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament, the Minister quoted the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi saying that the corridor “will become the basis of world trade for hundreds of years to come, and history will remember that this corridor was initiated on Indian soil”.

Highlighting the global context, Nirmala Sitharaman said that geopolitically, global affairs are becoming more complex and challenging with wars and conflicts. She noted that globalization is being redefined with reshoring and friend-shoring, disruption and fragmentation of supply chains, and competition for critical minerals and technologies. A new world order is emerging after the COVID-19 pandemic, she added.

The Minister stated that India assumed the G20 Presidency during very difficult times for the world. She high-

lighted that the global economy was going through high inflation, high-interest rates, low growth, very high public debt, low trade growth, and climate challenges. She said that the pandemic had led to a crisis of food, fertilizer, fuel and finances for the world, while India successfully navigated its way. Sitharaman said that the country showed the way forward and built consensus on solutions for those global problems.

Promoting Investments

The Minister said that the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow during 2014-23 was USD 596 billion marking a golden era. She highlighted that it was twice the inflow during 2005-14.

While presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25, the Minister further said, “For encouraging sustained foreign investment, we are negotiating bilateral investment treaties with our foreign partners, in the spirit of ‘first develop India.’”

DIRECT TAX COLLECTIONS MORE THAN TREBLED AND RETURN FILERS SWELLED TO 2.4 TIMES IN PAST DECADE: UNION FINANCE MINISTER

AVERAGE PROCESSING TIME OF RETURNS COMES DOWN FROM 93 DAYS IN 2013-14 TO JUST TEN DAYS NOW

“Over the last ten years, the direct tax collections have more than trebled and the return filers swelled to 2.4 times,” the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman said, while presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in the Parliament. The Minister assured taxpayers that their contributions have been used wisely for the development of the country and the welfare of its people. She appreciated the taxpayers for their support.

Sitharaman further added that under the new tax regime, the tax rates have been reduced and rationalised. There is now no tax liability for taxpayers with income up

to ₹ 7 lakh, up from ₹ 2.2 lakh in the financial year 2013-14. The threshold for presumptive taxation for retail businesses was increased from ₹ 2 crore to ₹ 3 crore. Similarly, the threshold for professionals eligible for presumptive taxation was increased from ₹ 50 lakh to ₹ 75 lakh. Also, the corporate tax rate was decreased from 30 per cent to 22 per cent for existing domestic companies and to 15 per cent for certain new manufacturing companies.

The Union Minister highlighted that in the last five years, the government’s focus had been to improve tax-payer services. “The age-old jurisdiction-based assessment system was transformed with the introduction of Faceless Assessment and Appeal, thereby imparting greater efficiency, transparency and accountability,” she said.

Smt. Sitharaman also asserted that the introduction of updated income tax returns, a new Form 26AS and pre-filing of tax returns have made filing of tax returns simpler and easier, reducing the average processing time of returns from 93 days in the year 2013-14 to a mere ten days this year, thereby making refunds faster.

AVERAGE MONTHLY GROSS GST COLLECTION DOUBLES TO ₹1.66 LAKH CRORE

- STATES’ SGST REVENUE ACHIEVES BUOYANCY OF 1.22 IN POST-GST PERIOD
- BIGGEST BENEFICIARIES OF GST ARE CONSUMERS, SAYS FM

The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, while presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament asserted that by unifying the highly fragmented indirect tax regime in India, GST has reduced the compliance burden on trade and industry.

“According to a recent survey conducted by a leading consulting firm, 94 per cent of industry leaders view the transition to GST as largely positive and according to 80 per cent of the respondents, it has led to supply chain optimization” she said. Sitharaman further added that at the same time, the tax base of GST more than doubled and the average monthly gross GST collection has almost doubled to ₹ 1.66 lakh crore this year.

Talking about the increased revenue of States, the Finance Minister said that States’ SGST revenue, including compensation released to states, in the post-GST period of 2017-18 to 2022-23, has achieved a buoyancy of 1.22. In contrast, the tax buoyancy of State revenues from subsumed taxes in the pre-GST four-year period of 2012-13 to 2015-16



was a mere 0.72. The Union Finance Minister asserted that the biggest beneficiaries are the consumers, as reductions in logistics costs and taxes have brought down the prices of most goods and services.

Quoting the National Time Release Studies, the Minister said that the steps taken in Customs to facilitate international trade have resulted in a decline in the import release time by 47 per cent to 71 hours at Inland Container Depots, by 28 per cent to 44 hours at air cargo complexes and by 27 per cent to 85 hours at seaports, over the last four years since 2019.

RISING POPULATION GROWTH AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES POSE CHALLENGES TO GOAL OF ‘VIKSIT BHARAT’

COMMITTEE TO BE SET UP FOR EXAMINING THE CHALLENGES ARISING FROM FAST POPULATION GROWTH AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

With a focus on ‘Viksit Bharat’ and ‘Amrit Kaal’ by 2047, Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman expressed that rising population growth and demographic changes pose challenges to the goals of ‘Viksit Bharat’, as she presented the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament.

Nirmala Sitharaman proposed that a high-power Committee be formed for extensive consideration of the



challenges arising from fast population growth and demographic changes. She further added the Committee will be mandated to make recommendations for overcoming the above challenges.

THE COUNTRY IS PROUD OF OUR YOUTH SCALING NEW HEIGHTS IN SPORTS: UNION FINANCE MINISTER

- BUDGET PROPOSES TO ESTABLISH A CORPUS OF RUPEES ONE LAKH CRORE FOR YOUTH
- FOR OUR TECH SAVVY YOUTH, THIS WILL BE A GOLDEN ERA: NIRMALA SITHARAMAN

Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, highlighting the mantra of ‘Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas’ in the Interim Budget 2024-25 laid in Parliament, said that the country is proud of our youth scaling new heights in sports.

Youth in Sports

Highlighting the achievements of India in the Asian Games, she said “The highest ever medal tally in Asian Games, and Asian Para Games in 2023 reflects a high confidence level.”

In her Budget speech, the Union Minister also said that Chess prodigy and our Number-One ranked player Praggnanandhaa put up a stiff fight against the reigning World Champion Magnus Carlsen in 2023.

Speaking of India’s success in Chess, she said, “Today, India has over 80 chess grandmasters compared to little over 20 in 2010.”



Corpus for Tech Savvy Youth

Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the Budget proposed to establish a corpus of rupees one lakh crore with fifty-year fifty-year free loan. The corpus will provide long-term financing or refinancing with long tenors and low or nil interest rates. She said that for our tech-savvy youth, this will be a golden era and there is a need to have programmes that combine the powers of our youth and technology. Nirmala Sitharaman emphasised that the corpus will encourage the private sector to scale up research and innovation significantly in the sunrise domains.

MOMENTUM FOR NARI SHAKTI

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP, EASE OF LIVING, AND DIGNITY FOR THEM HAS GAINED MOMENTUM: FINANCE MINISTER

- 30 CRORE MUDRA YOJANA LOANS GIVEN TO WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS
- FEMALE ENROLMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION UP BY 28 PER CENT
- STEM COURSES, GIRLS AND WOMEN CONSTITUTE 43 PER CENT OF ENROLMENT - ONE OF THE
- HIGHEST IN THE WORLD
- INCREASING PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN WORKFORCE
- 'TRIPLE TALAQ' MADE ILLEGAL
- OVER 70 PER CENT HOUSES UNDER PM AWAS YOJANA IN RURAL AREAS GIVEN TO WOMEN AS SOLE OR JOINT OWNERS

Talaq' illegal, reservation of one-third of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies, and giving over seventy per cent houses under PM Awas Yojana in rural areas to women as sole or joint owners have enhanced their dignity.

The Finance Minister said that our Prime Minister firmly believes, we need to focus on four major castes. "They are, 'Garib' (Poor), 'Mahilayen' (Women), 'Yuva' (Youth) and 'Annadata' (Farmer). Their needs, their aspirations, and their welfare are our highest priority." The country progresses when they progress, she said. All four require and receive government support in their quest to better their lives. She highlighted that their empowerment and well-being will drive the country forward.

Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament said that the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship, ease of living, and dignity for them has gained momentum in these ten years.

She said that thirty crore Mudra Yojana loans have been given to women entrepreneurs. Female enrolment in higher education has gone up by twenty-eight per cent in ten years. In STEM courses, girls and women constitute forty-three per cent of enrolment - one of the highest in the world. All these measures are reflected in the increasing participation of women in the workforce.

The Finance Minister further stated that making 'Triple



FM presents JK interim budget 2024-25 & revised estimates for current fiscal in Parl



NEW DELHI: The Revised Estimates for 2023-24 and Interim Budget 2024-25 of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir were placed before the Parliament by the Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman.

The two Appropriation Bills on the Supplementary Budget for 2023-24 and the Vote on Account for 2024-25 will be considered by the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in this regard.

The Finance Department of the UT has drafted the Supplementary Budget for the current year and the Interim Budget for the next financial year. For this, the Department assessed the revenue receipts of the UT Government from GST, motor spirit tax, excise, and stamp duty. Further, the non-tax revenue from electricity and water supply, mining royalty, timber sales, annual rent from industrial lands, etc were also examined. The revenue of the UT Government has been estimated at Rs. 20,867 crore. The UT Government also pursued the Government of India to get central financial assistance.

Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha and Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo led the UT's efforts in this direction. Crucial meetings were held in August 2023, October 2023 and January 2024 in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Finance to review these demands of the UT Government.

The Union Home Minister and Union Finance Minister personally reviewed the fiscal management of the UT Government in recent months.

Accordingly, the Central Government has agreed to provide ₹41751.44 Cr to the UT Government in this finan-

cial year and ₹ 37277.74 Cr in the next financial year. These assistance figures have been duly captured in the Revised Estimates of 2023-24 and the Budget Estimates of 2024-25 of the Union Government. This assistance will be provided under the MHA's demand no 58 for assistance to the UT. This assistance includes the normal assistance (resource gap) to the UT Government, equity contribution for hydropower projects at Kiru, Kwar and Rattle, etc. These assistance figures are captured in the Union Budget which is already before the Parliament and the same will be taken up for discussion before the UT's interim budget.

Building on this, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir drafted its Supplementary Budget for 2023-24 and Vote on Account for 2024-25. The Finance Department also drafted the two Appropriation Bills (Supplementary Demands and Vote on Account) for placing before the Parliament.

The revised estimates for 2023-24 is overall lower than the budgeted estimates for 2023-24 as the UT government was successful in streamlining its expenditure. The supplementary demands for 2023-24 of ₹8,712.90 Cr pertain to the four Departments of Finance, Power Development, Hospitality and Protocol and Cooperatives.

The supplementary budget is required by the Finance department in view of the repayment of the debt, while the Power Development department needs to provide for power procurement. The Hospitality and Protocol department intends to develop the new J&K Bhawan at Dwarka, New Delhi for which land will be allotted from DDA.

The Cooperative department requires the funding additionally for its new CSS, Assistance to Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS). These additional demands are proposed to be catered with Supplementary Demands for the current year 2023-24.

The interim budget for 2024-25 makes provisions for the ongoing initiatives for infrastructure development, sustainable agriculture, new industrial estate, PRI level works, employment generation, developing tourism, and social inclusion. During the preparation of the interim budget proposals, consultations were held with all the Departments and various stakeholders to provide for ongoing initiatives and arrive at realistic budgetary numbers. For finalizing expenditure proposals, assessment of financing needs of infrastructure projects, and social and economic measures undertaken by Departments was undertaken.

The budgetary exercise focused on the imperative of advancing the cause of the greater collective good within realistically realizable resources. While the budgetary estimate for the next financial year 2024-25 is about ₹1,18,728 Cr, the UT Government has proposed the Vote on Account for ₹59,364 Cr.

This interim budget for 2024-25 covers revenue expenditure of ₹40,081 Cr and capital expenditure of ₹19,283 Cr.

The interim budget of Jammu and Kashmir for 2024-25 provides for the ongoing measures and schemes as follows”

- 1) ₹2959 Cr provisioned for tap-water connectivity for rural areas under Jal Jeevan Mission with Rs 532 crore as UT Share.
- 2) ₹934 Cr for transforming agriculture and allied sectors of the UT through the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), including provisions for the IF-AD-funded J&K Comprehensive Investment Plan (JKCIP).
- 3) ₹1907 Cr for rejuvenating school education infrastructure and services through funding under Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.
- 4) Provision of improving road connectivity with ₹ 1683 Cr for PMGSY roads, ₹ 300 Cr for CRF roads, and ₹ 1000 Cr NABARD scheme.
- 5) ₹1313 Cr for strengthening decentralized governance by providing for local area works of panchayat and urban local bodies.
- 6) ₹1271 Cr for strengthening infrastructure and services in the health sector under the National Health Mission mechanism.
- 7) ₹1093 Cr for rural housing under the PMAwasYojana-Grameen scheme.
- 8) ₹1000 Cr for comprehensive social security coverage for old aged, widows and disabled pensions by saturation approach.
- 9) ₹ 660 Cr for J&K's equity for in the hydroelectric projects at Ratle, Kwar, and Kiru, which would provide a stable revenue source and cheaper power.
- 10) ₹505Cr for timely procurement of machinery, equipment, prosthetics aids and drugs in the Health sector through the dedicated corporation.
- 11) ₹500 Cr for capitalization of the banks, including Co-operative Banks, Rural Banks, J&K Bank, etc.
- 12) ₹ 450 Cr for the infrastructure of new Colleges and Universities as per NEP vision.
- 13) ₹430 Cr for women empowerment intervention of LadliBeti and Marriage Assistance.



- 14) ₹400 Cr for construction of Transit accommodations for Kashmiri Pandit employees.
- 15) ₹400 Cr for development of Industrial Estates and related infrastructure.
- 16) ₹370 Cr under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Urban) scheme.
- 17) ₹390 Cr for the Flood Management Project of River Jhelum.
- 18) ₹450 Cr for GST reimbursement to ensure timely reimbursement of the claims.
- 19) ₹272Cr for DDC/BDC grants improving local governance at the district and block level.
- 20) ₹ 174 Cr for the development of model schools under the PM-Shri scheme.
- 21) ₹150 Cr for developing rooftop solar and other avenues of new and renewable energy.
- 22) ₹140 Cr for the creation of Sports Infrastructure
- 23) ₹ 100 Cr for the conclusion of the World Bank-funded Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project.
- 24) ₹100 Cr for Mission Youth programmes for education, skilling, and employment.
- 25) ₹100 Cr for heritage preservation,
- 26) ₹91 Cr for new tourism destinations, new circuits, Sufi circuits and identified religious circuits, ropeways, highway resting places and promotion of Golf.
- 27) ₹70 Cr under infrastructure for the welfare of tribals for construction of Tribal Hostels/Milk Villages/Nomad Shelters/Libraries for Gujjars.
- 28) ₹100 Cr for sewerage projects in urban areas, ₹70 Cr for development of new Townships and affordable housing and ₹50 Cr for Dal development.
- 29) ₹40 Cr for Tourism promotion, ₹15 Cr for festival promotion and for promotion of cinema/theatre.
- 30) ₹40 Cr for meeting incentives as per the provisions of the Industrial Policy and Start-ups; ₹15 Cr for trade promotion through J&K TPO; and ₹100 Cr for Youth startup/Job fairs/employment fairs.
- 31) ₹30 Cr for establishment of cold storage and ₹30 Cr for high-density plantation.
- 32) ₹80 Cr for establishment of DDC/BDC/PRI accommodation and offices as well as for security arrangements of DDC/BDC/PRI representatives.
- 33) ₹59 Cr for the construction of a Police Housing colony and relief and rehabilitation
- 34) ₹45Cr for the construction of Bunkers and for digitization and CCTVs in Police Stations
- 35) ₹30 Cr for improving Quality in Schools, School Infrastructure, for Career Counseling and for the introduction of additional Streams in Schools.
- 36) ₹5 Cr for replacement of old fleet in the transport sector.



JKPI Publications

How Smart Cities are transforming urban landscapes – A case study of Srinagar



TARANUM MUZAFFAR LONE

The evolution of smart cities dates back to the 1970s with the advent of urban big data projects, such as Los Angeles' "Cluster Analysis," and accelerated in the early 2000s with initiatives like IBM's "Smarter Cities" program and Cisco's "City Intelligence" platform. The concept gained momentum worldwide, particularly in Europe and North America, before spreading to emerging economies like India.

In 2015, India launched the Smart Cities Mission under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aiming to develop 100 smart cities across the country. This mission focuses on creating inclusive and sustainable cities that enhance the quality of life for citizens by leveraging technology and innovation.

The Srinagar and Jammu Smart Cities Mission is a significant initiative under the larger Smart Cities Mission in India. Srinagar, known for its picturesque landscapes and cultural heritage, and Jammu, a major economic hub in the region, were selected as part of this mission to undergo comprehensive urban development. The mission in these cities aims to enhance liveability, promote economic opportunities, and improve governance through the implementation of smart technologies and innovative urban planning strategies.

Conceptual Framework

Defining smart cities involves a multidimensional approach that draws from various literature sources. Smart cities are municipalities that utilize information and communication technologies (ICT) to increase operational efficiency, share information with the public, and enhance government services and citizen welfare.

Key components of smart cities include infrastructure, governance, and citizenship. Infrastructure encompasses the physical structures and systems that support a city's operations, such as transportation networks, energy grids, and communication systems. Governance refers to the mechanisms through which decisions are made and implemented within a city, including policies, regulations, and citizen engagement strategies. Citizenship emphasizes the role of residents in shaping and benefiting from smart city initiatives, promoting inclusivity and participation in urban development processes.

The conceptual framework of smart cities underscores the importance of integrating technology, data analytics, and connectivity to address urban challenges effectively. By leveraging ICT solutions, smart cities aim to optimize city functions, drive economic growth, and enhance the quality of life for residents. Understanding these foundational principles is essential for evaluating the impact of smart city projects on urban landscapes and communities.

Background

Srinagar and Jammu are two major cities of the Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir. According to the 2011 census, the urban population of the erstwhile state of J&K was 3.4 million, with the Kashmir Valley accounting for 63% of the total urban population. Srinagar city alone accounts for 55% of the urban

population in the valley, with a population of approximately 1.2 million. The Srinagar and Jammu Smart Cities Mission aims to leverage the natural and cultural heritage of these cities to enhance the quality of life for their citizens.

Before the Smart City project, Srinagar and Jammu faced several socioeconomic challenges. The cities needed more infrastructure, including transportation networks, waste management systems, and public services. The urban population faced issues such as unemployment, poverty, and inadequate access to healthcare and education.

SRINAGAR-SCM



- Completed Projects : 66
- Ongoing Projects: 71
- Total Projects:137

Source: SRINAGAR SMART CITY LIMITED – SSCL



JAMMU-SCM

- Completed Projects : 98+
- Ongoing Projects: 40+
- Upcoming Projects: 30+

Source: JAMMU SMART CITY LIMITED – JSCL

However, the Smart City project has brought about significant improvements in these areas. The project has led to the development of smart transportation systems, efficient waste management practices, and improved public service delivery. The focus on sustainability has also led to reduced energy consumption and improved environmental quality. These improvements have contributed to the economic growth of the cities, attracting investments and creating job opportunities in sectors such as information technology, renewable energy, and urban infrastructure development.

From Vision to Reality: Smart Cities Reshaping Srinagar & Jammu

The Srinagar and Jammu Smart City projects have significantly transformed the urban landscape of these cities, leading to substantial improvements in infrastructure development, waste management practices, and public service delivery. As a result, the economic growth of these regions has been bolstered through investment attraction.

- **Improved infrastructure development**

According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), the Smart City mission has led to the construction of new roads, bridges, flyovers, and underpasses across India. In Srinagar and Jammu, the project has focused on developing integrated transport networks, enhancing road connectivity, and upgrading existing infrastructure facilities. For instance, the construction of the Jhelum Riverfront Project and the Tawi Riverfront Development Project in Srinagar and Jammu have created new recreational spaces and improved waterfront accessibility.

- **Efficient waste management practices**

Effective solid waste management is critical for maintaining cleanliness and hygiene in urban environments. The Smart City

project has introduced advanced waste collection and disposal methods in Srinagar and Jammu, reducing pollution levels and improving sanitary conditions. For example, Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs) at different places encourage the scientific disposal of plastic and other non-biodegradable waste products for the protection of the environment. In Jammu, GPS-enabled vehicles for waste collection have been implemented as part of the Smart City project to enhance waste management practices. This initiative aims to improve efficiency in waste collection by utilizing technology to track and optimize waste collection routes, leading to better sanitation and reduced pollution levels in the city.

- **Enhanced public services delivery**

The Smart City project has aimed to deliver high-quality public services to residents, ensuring greater transparency and accountability in governance. For instance, the establishment of e-governance platforms both in Jammu and Srinagar.

In Srinagar

– Implementation of citizen-centric services using ICT interventions.

In Jammu

- Implementation of Grievance Redressal Mechanism.
- Implementation of citizen-centric services using a web-based application.
- Implementation of citizen-centric services using ICT interventions.

Economic Impacts of Smart City Mission in Jammu and Srinagar

By leveraging the principles of the Smart City Mission, both cities have seen a transformation in their economic landscape, attracting investments and fostering development in key sectors such as tourism, trade, and quality of life improvements. Notable projects completed under the Smart City Mission include the construction of multi-level parking facilities, renovation of stadiums, installation of LED street lighting, and the development of emergency healthcare infrastructure. The economic importance of these projects extends beyond immediate gains to long-term sustainability and vibrancy.

The Smart City Mission envisions Jammu as a sustainable and economically vibrant city that leverages its heritage and location to promote tourism, trade, and overall quality of life. Similarly, Srinagar aims to become an eco-friendly, resilient, and socio-economically vibrant city that celebrates its natural and cultural heritage through innovative solutions. These initiatives not only enhance economic opportunities but also contribute to the overall well-being and prosperity of the cities’ residents by creating a conducive environment for growth and development.

Other Benefits

Smart city initiatives like the ones in Jammu and Srinagar offer a range of benefits beyond economic impacts. One significant area of improvement is the enhancement of the quality of life for residents. Through the implementation of smart technologies, these cities have been able to provide better living conditions by improving transportation systems, enhancing public services, and ensuring access to technology-driven amenities. Residents benefit from increased convenience, comfort, and overall well-being as a result of these improvements. Moreover, safety and security have been significantly enhanced in smart cities like Jammu and Srinagar. Innovative technologies such as connected law enforcement facilities, and state-of-the-art emergency call services contribute to creating safer communities.

These advancements improve emergency response times

and help prevent and reduce crime rates, ultimately fostering a sense of security among residents. Smart cities also prioritise environmental sustainability by promoting green initiatives, optimizing energy consumption, and reducing environmental impact. Integrating renewable energy sources, efficient waste management systems, and sustainable urban planning practices contributes to creating environmentally conscious and resilient urban environments.

Localizing SDGs in Srinagar and Jammu through the Smart Cities Mission

Over 70% of projects under the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) are in alignment with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on cities, clean water and sanitation, clean energy and economic growth, according to government data.

By examining Srinagar and Jammu cities that are a part of the SCM, we can analyze how sustainable development is being localized through urban planning initiatives targeted at improving infrastructure, sanitation facilities, community participation and liveability for residents. The localization of SDGs is key for on-ground implementation and measurable progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

By delving into the specifics of these cities within the SCM framework, we can observe how sustainable urban development is being actualized at a local level.

- 1. Construction of Public Toilets: The SCM in Srinagar and Jammu has prioritized the construction of gender-sensitive and universally accessible public toilets to improve sanitation in public spaces, aligning with SDG 6 goals.
- 2. Innovative Sanitation Facilities: Cities like Srinagar have implemented initiatives like “SHE lounges” and “Pink Toilets” exclusively for women, enhancing safe access to improved sanitation facilities, which contributes significantly to achieving SDG 6 targets.
- 3. Smart Urban Planning: The SCM’s people-centric approach, exemplified by neighborhood-led planning challenges like India Cycles for Change and Streets for People, integrates community engagement and infrastructure development, including sanitation facilities, aligning with SDG 6 objectives.
- 4. Infrastructure Development: Projects in both cities focus on enhancing basic infrastructure and services to improve liveability outcomes in urban areas, contributing to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

Challenges

The Smart City missions in Jammu and Srinagar face several challenges that must be addressed to ensure effective implementation and long-lasting outcomes. Some of the primary obstacles encountered include:

Developing infrastructure and implementation: The major challenge lies in developing the necessary infrastructure and implementing projects efficiently. The pace of work often falls short of expectations, leading to delays and frustration among stakeholders.

- 1. Coordination of multiple agencies: The presence of multiple agencies involved in various projects leads to lopsided planning and uncoordinated execution. The absence of clear communication and cooperation among stakeholders creates confusion and hinders progress. Addressing this issue requires establishing strong lines of communication and fostering a culture of collaboration.
- 2. Traffic and road congestion: As urban populations grow,

managing traffic flow becomes increasingly difficult. Road closures and construction sites create additional challenges for commuters and businesses alike.

- 3. Waste management: Solid waste management remains a critical concern in both cities, particularly in densely populated areas. Effectively tackling this problem requires robust waste collection and disposal systems.
- 4. Heritage structure preservation: Preserving historic buildings and monuments is vital to maintaining the unique character of these cities. However, many heritage structures remain neglected without proper management.

The tardy progress in completing key projects, such as the construction of flyovers and heritage conservation initiatives, has raised concerns about meeting project deadlines and achieving desired outcomes within stipulated timelines. The city’s existing infrastructure bottlenecks, traffic congestion, solid waste management issues, and inadequate civic amenities have further compounded the challenges faced by both cities. Addressing these challenges requires a dynamic approach to project management, enhanced coordination among implementing agencies, and a concerted effort to accelerate the pace of work to realise the mission’s objectives effectively.

Aside from current challenges, the Smart City missions in Jammu and Srinagar may pose new challenges related to increasing resource strain, potential displacement of marginalized communities, data privacy concerns, and cybersecurity risks. Carefully considering these potential pitfalls and taking appropriate steps to prevent them is essential for ensuring the long-term viability and success of these initiatives.

An overview:

The Smart City projects in Srinagar and Jammu, offer valuable insights into urban development strategies and best practices. Comparing these projects can shed light on effective approaches to smart city implementation.

Comparison between Srinagar and Jammu Smart City Projects: Both Srinagar and Jammu have been sanctioned in the All India competition of the Smart City Mission by the Government of India, with a focus on leveraging natural and cultural heritage to enhance citizen welfare. The projects aim to transform these cities into sustainable and economically vibrant urban centres by integrating technology and infrastructure improvements. By examining the progress and outcomes of these initiatives, valuable lessons can be learned for future smart city endeavours.

Analysis of Best Practices Adopted: The execution of the Smart City projects in Srinagar and Jammu has faced challenges such as infrastructure development delays and coordination issues. However, efforts are being made to improve urban governance, enhance quality of life, and drive economic growth through innovative solutions. Best practices observed during project execution include a focus on social, physical, institutional, and economic infrastructure improvement. These initiatives aim to create livable, economically viable, and sustainable urban environments that cater to diverse resident needs. By analysing the strategies employed in these projects, valuable insights can be gained for optimizing future smart city implementations.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Smart City Development

The Smart City projects in Srinagar and Jammu offer valuable insights into urban development strategies and best practices that can be applied to other cities or towns. Here are some key lessons learned and recommendations for devising similar initiatives elsewhere:

Lessons Learned:

- 1. Infrastructure Development Challenges: The projects faced delays in infrastructure development, highlighting the importance of efficient project management and timely execution.
- 2. Coordination Issues: Multiple agencies involved in the projects led to planning discrepancies, emphasizing the need for enhanced collaboration and coordination among stakeholders.
- 3. Focus on Governance: Efforts to improve urban governance have been crucial in enhancing quality of life and driving economic growth through innovative solutions.
- 4. Sustainability Initiatives: Emphasizing sustainability through energy efficiency, waste management, and environmental quality improvements has been instrumental in attracting investments and creating job opportunities.

Recommendations:

- 1. Leverage Natural and Cultural Heritage: Focus on leveraging the unique natural and cultural heritage of each city to enhance citizen welfare and promote sustainable development.

- 2. Enhance Infrastructure: Prioritize the integration of technology with social, physical, institutional, and economic infrastructure improvements to create livable and economically vibrant urban centres.
- 3. Improve Urban Governance: Implement measures to enhance transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement in governance processes to drive economic growth and improve quality of life.
- 4. Promote Sustainability: Introduce initiatives that focus on sustainability, energy efficiency, waste management, and environmental quality to attract investments and create job opportunities.
- 5. Citizen-Centric Services: Develop citizen-centric services using ICT interventions to ensure transparency, accessibility, and inclusivity in governance processes.
- 6. Address Socioeconomic Challenges: Target issues such as unemployment, poverty, healthcare access, and education to improve overall well-being and prosperity.

By incorporating these recommendations inspired by the experiences of Srinagar and Jammu Smart City projects, other cities or towns can optimize their urban development strategies, foster economic growth, and create sustainable environments that cater to the diverse needs of their residents.



AI’s role in shaping public policy and governance: The path forward

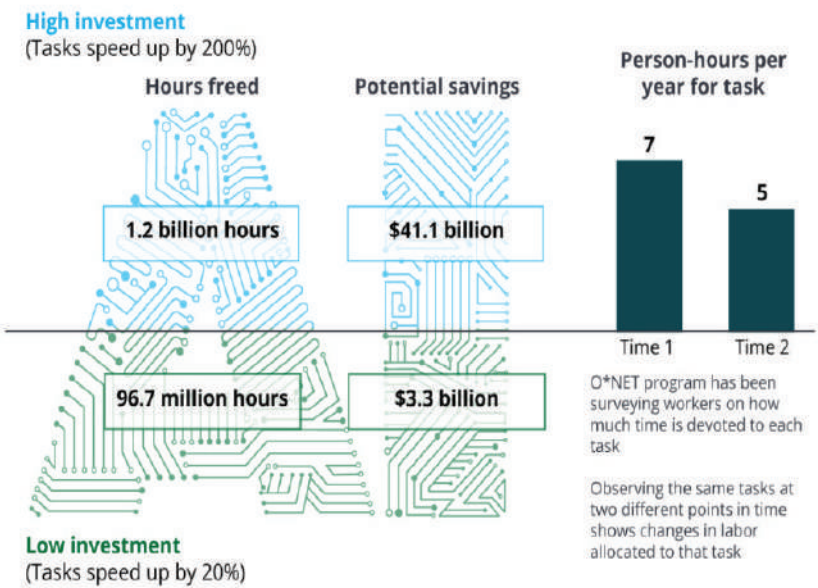


NEHA AGGARWAL

Policy-making is a dynamic field which evolves and orients itself with the changes in society, economy, polity, technology, institutional structure or transnational forces such as globalization. It is a complex process which demands optimum utilization of resources, cooperation and coordination of a diverse set of actors. It is an innovative domain whereby multiple actors are involved in arriving at decisions. Since every policy has to be validated with substantial data and deliberation, the policy largely fails due to the misinterpretation of data. There comes the role of technological interception such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance the level of accuracy, and augmentation in policy making. With the integration of AI technologies into governmental practices and public-sector ecosystems, traditional mechanisms of decision-making and enforcement may quickly shift. Governments may leverage AI technologies to enhance the standard of public services, build citizen trust, and boost service delivery efficiency and effectiveness. There are many opportunities for policymakers globally as a result of the expanding usage of AI in the public policy sector.

Potential of AI in Public Policy and Governance

Figure 1. How much savings can AI in government generate?



Source: Deloitte analysis. Deloitte University Press | dupress.deloitte.com

AI can help decision-makers in a variety of ways. AI can help in quickly discovering recurrent patterns and extracting insights from vast datasets. With the capability to detect anomalies in data and make intelligent predictions, AI can be employed in all areas of public policy from the top down. To reduce financial fraud, the models can be used to spot irregularities in financial records. In addition, performing most tasks and activities by hand would take a long time and be difficult in any area of the public sector. According to a Delloite survey, automating government workers’ jobs might result in labour savings of between 96.7 million and 1.2 billion hours annually, or between 3.3 billion and 41.1 billion.

Many processes are streamlined by AI, which lowers the potential for human error and frees people from tedious work so

they can focus on more important tasks. Government staff might be able to concentrate on more crucial activities as a result, which would speed up the delivery of services to the general public. One of the longer-term benefits of introducing AI into policymaking is the potential to break down the watertight separation between education, health, and labour while framing policies. The separation acts as a wall and prevents the sharing of data from one department to another leading to overlapping programmes. In many countries, layers of social benefit programs generate waste and unintended consequences. For a government struggling with framing proper policies, AI can help put resources where they will deliver the best results, whether that's employment, education, or housing support.

AI has numerous applications. Using facial recognition on border crossings and license plate detection, it can establish local safety and reduce criminal activity. Better security anywhere from schools to the streets and national borders is another great advantage of AI that is partially exercised now. With the advancement in technology such as computer vision, object detection, drone tracking, and camera-based traffic systems, government organizations can easily and effectively analyze crash data and highlight areas with a high likelihood of accidents, thus preventing future mishaps. Moreover, AI allows real-time tracking of patients' health. This involves keeping an eye on things like weight, height, blood sugar, stress levels, and heart rate and feeding that data to AI healthcare systems that can alert clinicians to any potential problems. Governments may use AI to offer citizens efficient health care. For instance, AI had an impact on the pandemic's COVID-19 virus detection and management.


Configuring AI in India

Since governments are already experimenting with and integrating AI into service delivery and operations, the time is to use AI to promote sound policymaking. Keeping the potential of AI in mind, the development, adoption and promotion of AI have been prioritized by the Indian Government. The Union government increased its spending on research, training, and skill development in new technologies like AI by 100% in 2018. Several efforts that are entirely focused on AI have also arisen, even though AI has been included as an important aspect of digital technologies generally. Setting up of Artificial intelligence task force, setting up committees to prepare a roadmap for the national AI programme by the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, and NITI Aayog's National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence are a few such examples. However, the development of AI in India has been largely a fragmented policy process. There is no single regulatory body, ministry or department that works primarily to understand the implications and opportunities arising out of AI. Unfortunately, the efforts have been largely ad hoc.

Challenges

Although AI has significant potential benefits, attaining them is not always easy. Data is the new currency, it is often said. The public sector can benefit from AI's data-driven approach, but the human element is frequently overlooked. Another challenge is preventing bias in data. The AI model is sometimes biased towards certain sects and communities, and the use of public data puts its privacy at risk. Since AI depends on data to improve performance, it sometimes ends up exacerbating real-world sentiments of racism, sexism, and violence. It is difficult to imagine creating a model that doesn't discriminate by gender, race, age, and other characteristics and only concentrates on establishing a fair and well-off society via effective decision-making.

The use of AI in government increases citizens' trust towards governance, but at the same time, it may also reduce citizens' trust in governance. The decrease can be due to a number of reasons: violation of citizens' privacy, or lack of fairness in using AI for governance. Emergence of the public sector fully immersed in AI, people will be "watched" everywhere. No doubt, smart detection systems could track criminal activity efficiently and mitigate it altogether by easily locating criminals but that will come at the cost of the government having access to immense data on residents'



AI holds immense potential for improving government services. With advanced technologies, government agencies can cut labour costs, enhance accuracy and precision, avoid overlapping of programmes, speed up processes, save man-hours and provide smooth and quicker services to the public.

whereabouts. Additional challenges arise from unclear responsibility and accountability.

Ways to address the challenges

As discussed the major concerns include ethical and responsible use of AI, avoiding bias and discrimination, and ensuring transparency and accountability. AI research has received significant attention in recent years due to its remarkable progress.. However, various knowledge gaps still exist. Compared to the private sector, there is less knowledge concerning AI challenges associated particularly with the public sector. Policymakers should encourage innovation and research into the development of AI systems that are designed to promote social good and address pressing societal challenges. This can involve providing funding for research in areas such as healthcare, climate change, and poverty reduction, as well as incentivizing the development of AI systems that prioritize ethical considerations over profit and commercial interests.

Policymakers should prioritize transparency and accountability in AI development and implementation. This can involve requiring AI systems to be explainable and auditable so that their decision-making processes can be scrutinized and understood. Policymakers can also promote the development of tools and techniques for detecting and mitigating bias in AI systems, as well as establishing clear guidelines for the responsible use of AI. It's important that both machine learning and deep learning models be provided with training data before the model can fully function later on to make educated implications from that data.

Another important strategy is to involve a diverse range of stakeholders in policy discussions surrounding AI. This includes engaging with experts in fields such as computer science, ethics, and law, as well as seeking input from members of the public who may be impacted by AI technologies. By bringing together diverse perspectives, policymakers can ensure that their decisions are informed by a wide range of considerations and are more likely to be equitable and effective.

Overall, addressing the challenges posed by AI in policymaking requires a multifaceted approach that prioritizes transparency, accountability, diversity, and social responsibility. By taking these strategies into account, policymakers can help to ensure that AI is developed and used in ways that benefit society as a whole.

Conclusion

AI holds immense potential for improving government services. With advanced technologies, government agencies can cut labour costs, enhance accuracy and precision, avoid overlapping of programmes, speed up processes, save man-hours and provide smooth and quicker services to the public. The need is to realize that AI can enable a comprehensive, faster, and more rigorous approach to policymaking in the short run however, it can not replace policymakers. Its algorithm can reinforce existing discriminatory practices, and can also result in a breach of privacy.

At the moment, the solution to these shortcomings is to use AI responsibly prioritizing accountability, transparency, and fairness. Government need to responsibly embrace AI and other digital technologies to enhance human decision-making. The best path is to harness the potential of AI in public policy but not withdraw human interference from the process entirely to fill in the gaps that AI can miss.

Disaster management strategies in Kashmir amid growing natural calamities



ZAHOOR AHMAD DAR

Around the world, natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and wildfires have wreaked havoc. The necessity of efficient disaster management is underscored by the regularity and severity of these occurrences. According to the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), over 96 million people were affected by 409 natural disasters worldwide in 2020, resulting in over 15,000 fatalities. World Bank estimates indicate that the total economic losses from natural catastrophes between 1998 and 2017 exceeded \$3.5 trillion, both directly and indirectly. The areas affected by these financial losses are permanently hindered, impeding their ability to recover and grow.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the frequency and intensity of natural disasters are increasing due to climate change. Extreme weather occurrences are exacerbated by rising global temperatures, further exposing vulnerable areas. The IPCC's 2021 report categorically emphasizes the importance of addressing climate change to mitigate the occurrence of catastrophic events.

Natural disasters frequently cause large-scale displacement as well as humanitarian issues. In 2020, 40.5 million people were displaced due to natural disasters, with climate-related occurrences being the main cause, according to the Internal Displacement

Monitoring Centre (IDMC). Effective disaster management is especially important since displaced populations face difficulties in finding housing, food, water, and medical care.

The necessity of international cooperation in disaster response and preparedness was emphasized in the 2015 United Nations adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Building resilience and reducing the impact of disasters worldwide are the goals of several organizations, such as the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).

Winter Disaster Management Strategies

Winter disaster management strategies encompass early warning systems, infrastructure resilience, community preparedness, search and rescue operations, and international cooperation. To effectively prepare for disasters, the implementation of an early warning system is essential. Global meteorological agencies utilize cutting-edge technologies to forecast extreme weather events, enabling the implementation of preventative measures. Leading the world in the creation and application of early warning systems for hurricanes, tornadoes, and winter storms is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the United States.

Infrastructure must be designed and maintained with resilience to withstand the effects of winter disasters. This encompasses bridges and roads that are well-maintained, avalanche barriers, and reinforced buildings. Infrastructure designs in Switzerland and Austria, whose alpine regions face similar challenges, consider the potential risks associated with significant snowfall and avalanches.

It is crucial to inform and prepare communities for winter calamities. Drills, training courses, and community involvement projects enhance response and awareness. Nordic nations, such as Sweden and Norway, routinely involve their communities in winter readiness exercises, equipping locals with the necessary tools to deal

with harsh winter weather.

During winter disasters, effective search and rescue activities are crucial. Well-equipped teams with specialized equipment and technology play a vital role in minimizing casualties and saving lives. The Himalayan region of India has demonstrated the value of qualified individuals and adequate resources by efficiently implementing search and rescue operations during winter calamities.

Furthermore, international cooperation is necessary to address the issues caused by winter calamities. Nations often collaborate to enhance their disaster management capabilities by sharing resources, knowledge, and technological advancements. The European Union facilitates cooperation among its member states during emergencies, particularly winter disasters, through its Civil Protection Mechanism.

Contextualizing Kashmir

In the last few decades, the frequency and intensity of natural disasters have increased manifold worldwide. The primary reason attributed to this rising phenomenon is climate change induced by anthropogenic factors. India, too, is facing the ramifications of climate change, including the prolongation of heatwaves, erratic monsoons, and disaster-related losses. In the region of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), various kinds of disasters have been a recurring phenomenon, ranging from earthquakes, destructive floods, snow blizzards, avalanches, and landslides, to wind storms. These occurrences are due to the region's peculiar topography, rugged terrain, extreme weather conditions, and unique geographical and geo-climatic settings.

The changing climate has already manifested in extreme weather conditions, which have been further aggravated by many detrimental practices leading to deforestation and environmental degradation. The Kolahoi glacier, the largest glacier in J&K, has been experiencing a drastic recession over time.

In the Union Territory, winter begins in late October and lasts until the beginning of March. The average temperature in Jammu ranges between 6 and 20 degrees Celsius, while in Kashmir, it ranges between -2 and 12 degrees Celsius.

The impact of natural calamities worldwide has heightened the importance of preparedness and response in regions vulnerable to winter disasters. The Himalayan ecosystem, such as J&K, is an eco-fragile zone fraught with environmental aberrations such as global warming, unplanned urbanization, deforestation, and encroachment of water bodies. Nestled in the Himalayan region, the Kashmir valley faces severe winter challenges that necessitate robust disaster management strategies. This article delves into the winter disaster management scenario in Kashmir, juxtaposing it with global occurrences of natural calamities.

Challenges in Kashmir during Winters:

Major challenges during winter generally arise from heavy snowfall, avalanches, and extreme cold temperatures. These challenges disrupt the everyday lives of people and throw them out of gear. However, disaster preparedness is equally important. On February 18, 2005, a snow blizzard occurred in villages namely Waltengu Nad, Pachgam, and Nigeenpora of Kulgam district. During the incident, 175 lives were lost (54 men, 48 women, and 73 children). In many cases, entire families died due to this blizzard. Additionally, 183 sheep/goats, 308 cows, 54 buffaloes, and 5 horses also perished. Lack of disaster preparedness was one of the major reasons why the rescue and relief operations took so many days to reach the spot. However, it also exposed the inadequacies in disaster preparedness in the Kashmir valley during winters.

Kashmir witnesses heavy snowfall during the winter months, which affects transportation, communication, and daily life. According to meteorological data, the region experiences an annual snowfall of 3 to 5 feet, with some areas receiving even higher accumulations. Heavy snow accumulation blocks roads, causes property damage, and poses potential casualties. Power disruptions

are also significant. Structural damages, disrupting both urban and rural infrastructure, are frequent occurrences.

Every year, heavy snowfall damages horticulture, especially orchards. Trees break down due to the overloading of snow, severely affecting production. In November 2019, snowfall unleashed havoc, with 35% of the orchards reportedly being affected according to the preliminary estimates of Horticulture Kashmir, with the ones in Kupwara, Baramulla, and Shopian being the worst hit. Agriculture also suffers due to snowfall. A preliminary assessment carried out on November 7, 2019, found that the snowstorm had an impact on 70% of Kashmir's saffron crop.

The mountainous terrain of Kashmir makes it prone to avalanches, posing a significant threat to human settlements and infrastructure. In January 2017, the Gulmarg area of Jammu and Kashmir experienced avalanches following heavy snowfall, causing the death of 24 people, including 20 Indian Army jawans. In 2019, the area recorded another avalanche, resulting in the death of two individuals. While weather forecasting by the meteorological department of J&K has improved, disaster prevention remains an area of concern. The root causes of avalanches have not been seriously addressed in policy circles. The High Altitude Warfare School (HAWS) in Gulmarg plays a crucial role in avalanche forecasting and mitigation.

Furthermore, sub-zero temperatures during winter contribute to freezing conditions, impacting health, agriculture, and daily life. The region often experiences temperatures dropping below -10 degrees Celsius, exacerbating the challenges faced by the population. Cold temperatures increase the risk of hypothermia, frostbite, and other health-related issues.

Winter Disaster Management in Kashmir

The erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was among the first states of the Union of India to enact legislation for natural calamities. The Jammu & Kashmir Natural Calamities Destroyed Areas Improvement Act of 1955 was passed to improve the towns, villages, and other areas of the State devastated by natural disasters. However, not much was accomplished despite the availability of the Act. Following the National Disaster Management Act of 2005, the State has implemented numerous measures aimed at reducing the loss of life and property caused by natural catastrophes. The State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), the State Executive Committee (SEC), and the District Disaster Management Authorities have already been declared and established by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir following the requirements of the Disaster Management Act, 2005. Despite their existence, the gap in assessing, monitoring, and minimizing the damages caused by disasters has raised questions about the preparedness and credibility of the concerned departments.

To keep important roads open during periods of severe snowfall, the Jammu and Kashmir government invests in snow removal apparatus and equipment. To improve readiness, the area's Snow and Avalanche Study Establishment (SASE) closely monitors and evaluates snowfall trends. Avalanche forecasting and monitoring, snow removal and road maintenance, emergency shelter and relief distribution, public awareness and communication campaigns, search and rescue operations, and cooperation with disaster response organizations are a few instances of winter disaster management strategies used in Kashmir. Temporary shelters are established in vulnerable areas to provide refuge for individuals affected by severe weather conditions. Additionally, relief supplies such as food, blankets, and medical aid are distributed to affected communities during emergencies.

Communication channels such as radio, television, and social media are utilized to disseminate important information and updates. Initiatives to educate the public about winter safety and disaster preparedness are crucial. Training programs, workshops, and leveraging local media for awareness campaigns are essential components of public education. Learning from the experiences of countries like Canada, where winter preparedness is ingrained in the culture, Kashmir emphasizes the importance of public education.

Trained rescue teams equipped with specialized gear and equipment are deployed to conduct search and rescue operations in the event of avalanches or other winter-related emergencies. These teams work tirelessly to locate and evacuate individuals trapped under snow. Government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international partners collaborate closely to coordinate disaster response efforts during winter emergencies. This ensures a comprehensive and effective response to mitigate the impact of winter disasters in Kashmir. The Indian Army, in collaboration with local authorities, employs sophisticated technology for avalanche forecasting and mitigation measures. The High Altitude Warfare School (HAWS) in Gulmarg is a training institution for the armed forces, specializing in winter warfare and avalanche rescue.

LG Manoj Sinha has prioritized disaster preparedness. The Mechanical Engineering Department (MED) claims that the snow-clearing equipment is maintained in working order so that surface communication and transportation can resume as soon as possible, ensuring accessibility to necessities. There is no doubt that the MED department has been leading from the front in all weather seasons.

Conclusion:

Winter disaster management in Kashmir requires a comprehensive and integrated approach, drawing lessons from global best practices and considering the unique challenges posed by heavy snowfall, avalanches, and extreme cold temperatures. By adopting strategies from successful global models and tailoring them to the specific needs of the region, authorities can enhance preparedness and response capabilities. Through a combination of technology, infrastructure development, community engagement, and international collaboration, Kashmir can mitigate the impact of winter disasters and safeguard the well-being of its population. The incorporation of facts, figures, and graphs emphasizes the urgency of proactive measures to address the evolving landscape of natural calamities worldwide.



In Kashmir, harsh winters pose serious challenges. From transportation issues to agricultural losses, winter disasters affect various sectors. However, proactive steps such as establishing disaster management authorities, enacting legislation and initiatives like snow removal and avalanche forecasting, along with community engagement highlight efforts to enhance winter disaster preparedness.



Kashmir's inland waterways: A path to economic and touristic transformation



MUKHTAR DAR

In 1949, Jawaharlal Nehru visited the United States and received the kind of reception that suits a national hero. However, his welcome in the United States paled in comparison to what he received two weeks ago in Srinagar, regardless of how loud the sirens of the motorcyclists sounded. The two-and-a-half-hour ride on a boat along with Sheikh Abdullah on the Jhelum was the ultimate reception befitting a country's leader. Nehru glided on its muddy stream in triumph. It was pulled by white-uniformed rowers wearing red turbans. On a podium resembling a throne where Nehru sat. A trip on a waterway is the perfect way to get a taste of any place, and Nehru experienced the ultimate one on the Jhelum. The reception depicts the importance of the Jhelum waterway in Kashmir's culture.

In the past, Kashmir, particularly Srinagar city, was the centre of inland water routes, and these were always used to give aesthetic pleasure and an artistic view of nature and culture to tourists. These routes connected it to different parts of the city, which earned it the title 'Venice of the East'. Inland water transport has been a jugular vein and a vital tourist attraction since ancient times in Kashmir. In the last decade of the 15th century, Jahangir, along with his favourite wife Noor Jehan, travelled the Jhelum in a flotilla of royal dungas, immersing

themselves in the romance of the ride, compelling Jahangir to visit Kashmir frequently.

Similarly, in the 17th century, Aurangzeb and Bernier travelled the same inland water route, and Baron Charles Hügel, the irascible German, did the same in 1840. With advancements in road traffic, inland water transport went out of sight, and no one cared for it. Thus, huge potential for waterways remains unutilized, and these routes shrink and few vanish as no one looks after them.

As time passes, making the Jhelum navigable today becomes a little complicated but not impossible. Pertinently, the central government has taken numerous initiatives to unlock the potential of waterways through Sangarmala and other projects in India. Through these initiatives, four major rivers of J&K, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, and Indus, were identified as national waterways, outlining the vast potential for inland water transport. The Jammu and Kashmir government should also realize its potential and future benefits through timely investment in this sector so it will adorn the beauty of UT, particularly Srinagar city, and will also be a source of traffic and revenue.

Initiatives taken to restore and develop Inland Water Transport in J&K

Jammu and Kashmir is endowed with a variety of navigable waterways comprising river systems and some famed lakes. However, the navigable waterways remain confined to limited locations with traditional technology. Inland Water Transport (IWT) is functionally important in Kashmir, which is bisected by the river Jhelum and its city is crowned with vast Dal and Nigeen Lakes. Similarly, in north Kashmir, lies the Wular and Manasbal lakes where IWT offers natural advantages. IWT is crucial for

J&K since it provides a cost-effective, energy-efficient, highly employable, and nearly pollution-free form of transportation. Despite the benefits of IWT, a number of known and unknown issues limit its use, and the government did not pay heed to developing navigation water transport in the valley.

Pertinently, in 2018, four major rivers, including the Jhelum, Chenab, Indus, and Ravi in Jammu and Kashmir, were declared “national waterways” by the Union government, with a motive to boost water transport and tourism in Kashmir. A delegation from the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) held a meeting with the government of J&K in 2018 to discuss the inland water transport capabilities of J&K. Pertinently, IWAI has carried out hydrographic surveys and formulated a feasibility report for a portion of the River Jhelum with a length of 110 km, i.e., from Sangam to Banyari (Wullar Entry).

The J&K Government has also identified its extended scope for navigation routes in Wullar Lake, from Sopore to Baramulla, from Sumbal to Manasbal Lake, and from Shadipora to Duderhama (Qamar Sahib Shrine). However, due to political instability, no concrete steps were taken. Five years have passed, and the fate of inland water transport service remains uncertain. In 2021, bus boats were brought from New Zealand, and they were supposed to ply from Lasjan to Downtown Srinagar. However, due to some reason, they could not sustain long. Recently, the Municipality Commission Srinagar vowed to start water transport in 2024 in the city. However, the governor’s administration should think beyond Srinagar city and formulate strategies and planning to make the Jhelum navigable from Anantnag to Baramulla along with other rivers. It will help in agriculture, horticulture, and other products transportation along the river.

Historically, the Jhelum River has served as the backbone of Kashmir’s transport system. The remains of Ghats along the banks of the Jhelum in Srinagar indicate the city formerly had an inland water transportation network. The city’s water transportation system needs to be revitalized to support its road-based transportation network. Simultaneously, it will serve as a major draw for tourists to experience the beauty and historical significance of this city. With an estimated length of 165 KM in India up to the existing ceasefire line, the Jhelum can form the backbone of water connectivity in Kashmir. It can be to Kashmir what the Grand Canal is to Venice. The width of the Jhelum is around 300 m, but in Srinagar city, it is reduced to 200 m, indicating that it still has vast potential for water transport. Like the Grand Canal of Venice, the Jhelum waterway, with minimal capital investment, will become such a desirable destination that it will offer stunning views of agriculture fields, Chinars, beautiful mountains, and city architecture. Thus, it can attract more tourists to the valley.

As research suggests, in Srinagar city, taking advantage of these natural water transport routes, from Raj Bagh to Chhatabal (along the Jhelum River), Dalgate to Hazratbal/NIT 3, Dalgate to Soura via Nallah Amir Khan and Khushalsar, Dalgate to Hazratbal via Nishat, Shalimar, and Pampore to Raj Bagh, can be developed with minimum capital investment in initiation. It doesn’t require huge capital investment in construction except for prior research, planning, and assessment. Similarly, in other districts, such vital routes can be utilized for transport and tourism, from Shadipora to Duderhama (Qamar Sahib Shrine), from Sumbal to Mansbal Lake, and from Sopore to Baramulla, and on the outer lakes and tributaries. Introducing a variety of water transport options, including ferries, canal buses, boat cruises, water taxis, canal bikes, and boat rentals, could enhance the charm of the area while simultaneously stimulating the economy and alleviating strain on surface transportation.

Recommendations

It is difficult to keep the Jhelum navigable all year round. As it stands, the river can only be navigated during the summer months when the water is high, which restricts the effectiveness of the transport system to certain areas. A system of weirs or



With proper planning and minimal funding, these inland waterways can provide employment and generate significant revenue in the future. Take, for example, the Gulmarg Gondola, installed in 1993 for 30 crores, now earning revenue of 600 crores annually. Similarly, timely investment in this sector can prove to be an important feature in the tourism and transport of Kashmir.

barriers across the river would be necessary to achieve year-round navigability, raising water levels during low seasons. However, these installations may present issues during flooding. Controlled opening might be possible during the rainy season with a contemporary approach that incorporates technology. Currently, the single weir at Chattabal, constructed in 1905 by the Dogra king Hari Singh, elevates the Jhelum’s level from Chattabal to Pampore.

The absence of a dedicated government authority to administer the various aspects of the Jhelum poses challenges, with water, bunds, and bridges falling under separate departments. A suggested solution is the establishment of a new department solely focused on managing inland water transportation. Examples from Bengal, Kerala, and other states of the country that have dedicated separate departments for running water transport can be taken into consideration.

In the late 1990s, proposals surfaced to launch an inland water transport system to ease road congestion. A trial occurred in 2012, leading to a pilot project. State-run motorboats operated until 2014 when floods damaged them. Today, only a few wooden boats remain, owned by locals, ferrying passengers near Lal Chowk. In 2016, 2018, and so on, the government aimed to revive water transport for cargo and passengers, but they remained unsuccessful. Experts suggested that these projects failed as the administration did not bother to conduct pre-feasibility assessments to evaluate the long-term viability and repercussions of the policies. Thus, there is a need for pre-assessment and research so that such projects can run successfully in the long term.

Conclusion

The inland water routes are in the perfect position in the valley, adding glamour to Kashmir. The journey from Anantnag to Baramulla through Srinagar city can be the ultimate trip for tourists. Transportation on these waterways can beautify the valley further, along with providing other economic and environmental benefits. This water route will also enable the transportation of agriculture and horticulture products from orchards and fields lying along the river. It is the target of the central government to modernize and develop the inland water transport system throughout the country. The UT administration should also initiate long-term projects on these water bodies. Inland Water Transport (IWT) will play a larger role in attracting tourists and alleviating pressure on roads, and particularly, it can play a crucial role in adorning Srinagar city. With proper planning and minimal funding, these inland waterways can provide employment and generate significant revenue in the future. Take, for example, the Gulmarg Gondola, installed in 1993 for 30 crores, now earning revenue of 600 crores annually. Similarly, timely investment in this sector can prove to be an important feature in the tourism and transport of Kashmir.

India’s approach towards the National Action Plan on Climate Change



ANAMITRA BANERJEE

Introduction:

Around 1980, India started implementing governmental plans to preserve resources and ecosystems and promote social growth. The early 2000s era witnessed the National Communication (NATCOM) study coming into action to execute climate change strategies. The evaluation acknowledged its susceptibility to warming temperatures and emphasised the demand for resilience. India has accomplished tremendous achievements when developing and implementing environmental strategies, with environmental organisations formed at multiple tiers.

During the Climate Conference 2007 at Bali, emerging economies committed to Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA). Observing the same, India launched its National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008.

Climate Action Tracker (CAT) evaluates India’s existing strategies and actions as “insufficient” not relation to its full commitment. The “Insufficient” assessment implies that India’s environmental measures and initiatives in 2030 require substantial enhancements to be compatible with its 1.5°C warming goals. If nations worldwide adopted India’s strategy, temperatures would rise past 2°C and perhaps surpass 3°C. Delhi requires global support to execute every single measure required for 1.5°C compliance. The CAT anticipated that India’s emissions would be 4.0-4.3 GtCO₂e by 2030 assuming the existing policy. This projection is more

modest, owing to a relative fall in conventional power output and a decline of various energy-related CO₂ emissions through manufacturing and transit.

Body:

Several significant energy-related proposals and norms came to light in 2023, such as the National Green Hydrogen Mission, the National Electricity Plan 2023, and the freshly revised Energy Conservation Act. These regulations and policies serve a significant part in determining the power sector. Delhi has yet to agree on cutting away coal-generated electricity or transitioning to a fossil-free future. Its most recent power programme involves an extra 25.5GW of coal output throughout the latter part of the decade, in addition to its 25.6GW existing proposed output.

Introductory Part:

The CAT repeatedly stressed that natural gas does not qualify as bridge energy, and India’s present LNG growth may jeopardise the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal. To meet the 1.5°C target, emissions from fossil fuels must be transitioned out of India’s power sector by 2040. In 2023, India experienced an exceptionally hot summer, resulting in unpredictable power consumption. Considering a nine per cent rise in power consumption between April to October, progress remained uneven. Previously predicted to reach a maximum of 230 GW, the season’s high in June touched roughly 220 GW and subsequently decreased to 209 GW throughout July, owing to a warmer summer, particularly in India’s northern regions. Yet, consumption soared, hitting 240 GW in October, exceeding the record of 201 GW in 2022. Electricity usage increased by sixteen per cent during August and September of 2023, against the same time in 2022. Inadequate monsoon precipitation limited the supply of hydropower, growing more dependence on fossil fuel-based electricity, causing unprecedented national coal output and a spike in imports.

Descriptive Part:

During the G20 declaration under India’s presidency, global

leaders pledged to triple green energy output by 2030 and reaffirmed their aspiration to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050. Although an additional renewable objective represents a significant move, the G20 has been chastised for failing to establish targets for cutting away conventional energy sources. Given its status as a worldwide advocate of the green cause, India remains hesitant about dedicating itself to phasing away coal. The country's stance at COP26 which opposed a coal phase-out was reiterated within the G20 assertion, which highlighted the "phasedown" of unrestrained coal, although the word "phasedown" signifies an ambiguous aim that fails to identify the scope or timeline.

Under G20, India squandered a chance to press for an international energy source transition-out pledge as a weight for additional funding and regional cooperation at COP28 by not explicitly declaring its willingness to slowly phase out coal. Setting a timetable for cutting out fossil fuels might provide significant impetus for COP28 including the worldwide inventories. The G20's climate action pledge is not sufficient, emphasising the requirement for significant pledges to be made at the future COP29.

In 2022, the Indian government revised its Energy Conservation Act, paving the way for a prospective indigenous carbon trade. The Amendment Act provides mechanisms for the creation of an emissions trading system via the adoption of a 'Carbon Credit Trading Scheme' (CCTS). The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), in partnership with the Ministries of Forests, Power, Environment and Climate Change, was appointed and tasked with developing the Indian Carbon Exchange. The proposed architecture for the planned emissions trading scheme's governing body is now being consulted on by stakeholders. The prototype carbon sector, which would inevitably comprise petroleum products, steel and iron manufacturing, concrete, and paper and pulp products, is predicted to start being active in 2025.

Numerous sector-specific efforts in Glasgow have been initiated to expedite tackling climate change. At best, such actions might eliminate the 2030 pollution imbalance by roughly 9%, or 2.2 GtCO₂e, but determining which is novel and what has been addressed by current NDC commitments is difficult. Participants pledged to reduce greenhouse gases in every sector by thirty per cent internationally during the following decade. The fossil fuel exit strategy aims to phase out the unrestrained coal fire through the 2030s or 2040s and also to stop developing additional coal-powered power plants. Participants who signed the 100% EVs statement declared that EV transport ought to be responsible for 100% of all fresh automobile and wagon registrations in 2040, with 2035 being the target year for the biggest economies. Governments decided "to put an end to deforestation and soil deterioration by 2030" in terms of trees. The Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance (BOGA) aims to help promote a controlled gradual elimination of the extraction of oil and gas. If such industrial activities have yet to be included in current NDC objectives, they must be included. As with any aim, implementing the relevant policies and actions is crucial to ensure specific particular objectives are met.

Delhi serves the top few major methane polluters, besides the Russians and Chinese who are not a member of the Global Methane Commitment. Worldwide, the power industry must take the initiative in emission abatement by 2030, phasing out the use of fossil fuels in the future. India's goals for growing its coal sector are incompatible with that endeavour. India accepted the complete EV assertion, focusing on one and three-wheeler automobiles. The nation's leadership is currently collaborating on measures to make all motorcycles electrified by 2026, significantly earlier compared to the COP26 deadline.

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implementing the relevant policies and actions is crucial to ensure specific particular objectives are met.

The majority of such foreign coal-based thermal energy facilities were closed owing to elevated global prices for coal as well as inadequate power purchase deals to cover rising production expenses. As global warming keeps influencing the climate throughout the Indian subcontinent, a strong power industry demand-satisfaction strategy utilises analytical information. This must be built on a shift to clean energy to satisfy high demand, aided by storage facilities. In the lack of infrastructure assistance for moving heavy usage to alternative energies, coal will continue to be used to meet summertime consumption.

India boasts the globe's second-largest manufacturer of coal behind the Chinese mainland, although it remains an importer by default owing to its high consumption. The administration is currently pursuing initiatives to increase local output in hopes that it may become an international supplier of thermal energy within a few years. Coal is regarded notably an essential part of the nation's energy strategy due to its local availability, as opposed to natural gas and oil, that the country does not generate in substantial quantities. As stated by the Indian Coal Minister, India has set a course to transition from being a net buyer to a net seller of heating coal until 2026, mostly to neighbours such as Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

India routinely incentivises traditional fuels and clean energy sources in the manner of individual aid, tax rebates, price controls, and additional government support, although net benefits for conventional energies are at least nine times greater than those offered for alternatives. Although mining expenditures remain virtually stable throughout 2017, these continue to be around 35% greater than green grants. Coal India Ltd, the planet's oldest publicly traded fossil fuels manufacturer, obtains a two-billion-dollar US subsidy yearly. Delhi is contemplating CCUS as a potential environmentally friendly approach to accomplish significant carbon reduction across hard-to-abate fields while allowing the government to maintain using its coal reserves. Yet, Delhi has stated in its LT-LEDS that CCUS was never a feasible technological choice for upgrading current steam energy plants since it's not economically feasible in Delhi. Delhi is searching for longer-term LNG agreements. Petronet LNG Ltd., the nation's biggest gas buyer, wants lengthy agreements to acquire an extra twelve million metric tonnes of LNG, which accounts for 60% of its present imports. Energy authorities are additionally pushing for gas pipeline construction to capitalise on fluctuations in prices. It is worth noting that the nation has no significant petroleum resources. The federal government has implemented substantial measures to encourage the planned export boom by expanding LNG port facilities and re-gasification ability, as well as enhancing the infra to allow LNG shipping.

Conclusion:

The Indian government adopted a complex strategy to promote photovoltaic component production. To expand the supply of locally made solar modules, government officials authorised a two billion dollar production-linked incentive (PLI) plan in the year 2022, having the goal of attracting an additional USD 11 billion from individuals. Yet, the solar cell production industry has significant hurdles because of excessive dependence on foreign downstream supplies, making it hard to remain affordable.

To boost consumer interest in locally made solar cells, the authorities doubled the GST for green energy technology and levied a 40% import tariff on international photovoltaic cells including 25% for photovoltaic cells. Yet, because of a lack of local supplies, authorities are additionally contemplating lowering the tariff charge.

The upcoming National Budget offers regulations over 4 GWh of battery backup via the Viability Gap Funding (VGF), which aims to encourage power production initiatives that are rational but tumble within the range of commercial sustainability and are currently being authorised by the government. However, this is insufficient to satisfy the nation's long-term energy storage demand envisaged according to the newly established national power plan.

Kashmir’s snow drought: Climate change crisis and its far-reaching consequences



PARVAIZ YOUSUF

Something strange has recently occurred in the Kashmir Valley – the prolonged absence of snowfall. The dry spell was finally broken by recent snowfall in February. Even during the 40-day period known as “Chilai Kalan,” Kashmir did not receive any snow. “Chilai Kalan” refers to the harshest winter period in the Kashmir region, a traditional name given to the 40-day winter cold spell that typically starts on December 21 and concludes on January 31 each year. During Chilai Kalan, temperatures in Kashmir often drop significantly, and the region experiences heavy snowfall. This is followed by a 20-day-long ‘Chillai-Khurd’ (small cold) and a 10-day-long ‘Chillai-Bachha’ (baby cold) period, leading into spring.

This year, the prolonged absence of snow, which typically blankets the tall mountains in pure white, has set off alarms in Kashmir. The lack of snow has effects that extend far beyond our imagination. Such incidents have not occurred in a very long time, prompting people to seek answers from experts. The absence of snowfall in Kashmir is undoubtedly going to have significant consequences for all sectors. From agriculture to tourism, everything will be affected. Moreover, the valley’s economy heavily relies on tourism, which, in turn, depends on the natural beauty of the valley.

Is the absence of snowfall this year unusual?

It is evident that the amount of snowfall Kashmir used to receive has significantly decreased over the last few decades. Shivangi Vashista, an Environmental Economist at the Indian Institute of

Corporate Affairs, says, “According to research, in recent years, there has been a notable 43% decrease in the mean frequency of strong and extreme Western disturbances, which undoubtedly cause rainfall or snowfall. In fact, Jammu & Kashmir has experienced comparatively dry winters with very little snowfall in several years over the past ten years, including 2022, 2018, and 2015.” Vashista emphasizes the role of global warming and climate change, altering precipitation patterns in the Kashmir Valley. “The lack of snowfall in a specific region, such as the Kashmir Valley, can be influenced by various climate change indicators and data points,” she continues.

Many other published studies indicate a similar pattern. Simultaneously, experts also attribute the reduced snowfall in the Western Himalayas, including the Kashmir Valley, to the El Niño effect. El Niño is a weather event where the sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean periodically rise. This heat alters the normal flow patterns of air and water in the oceans and atmosphere, causing significant changes in the climate worldwide. El Niño events don’t occur very often—every two to seven years, on average—and can last for several months. When the Pacific Ocean warms up, it alters weather trends, affecting variables such as temperature, rainfall, and the strength of storms. El Niño can have effects globally, leading to droughts in some places and increased rain and floods in others. La Niña is the opposite of El Niño and is part of the broader El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomenon. La Niña causes the sea surface temperatures to drop in the same area. Meteorologists and climate experts closely monitor El Niño events because of their significant impact on weather worldwide.

The head of India Meteorological Department’s (IMD) Srinagar office, Mukhtar Ahmad, told Indian Express in an interview that “El Nino would make things worse this winter. El Niño has been stable for three months now, and it will likely stay that way for the next few months as well. This changes the way the air moves around the world and may also be a reason for the lack of rain in the area, though El Nino is not the only cause”. “It hasn’t snowed much in the past few years, even when El Nino hasn’t been around”, he continues

The role of climate change

Kashmir’s lack of snow isn’t just a peculiar weather event; it’s a complex problem linked to signs of climate change. Changing weather patterns are caused by factors such as rising temperatures, alterations in air flow, changing ocean conditions, and trends in snowfall. “Crucial indicators, such as rising temperatures, are associated with reduced snowfall,” says Vashista.

According to a study, by the end of the century, the area, including Ladakh, could reach “catastrophic levels” of heat; the temperature could rise by 3.98 to 6.93C. A lot of other experts in the field agree that climate change is to blame for Kashmir not having had any snow for so long.

In an article published on BBC India, Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, a researcher from the University of Kashmir says “Our per capita greenhouse gas emissions are very less compared to other states. People in Kashmir have a very modest lifestyle. We are the victims of global climate change.” Thus, the absence of snowfall in Kashmir is part of a larger problem that we need to address.

The effect on glaciers

The dry spells can significantly impact the glaciers of the Kashmir Valley. The snow and ice originating from these beautiful glaciers sustain the local economy of the valley, playing a vital role in agriculture, horticulture, tourism, and more. The absence of snowfall would mean the inability of glaciers to rejuvenate. Each year, these glaciers rely on the snowfall during winter for rejuvenation.

“Glaciers are not only critical for the Kashmir Valley but also for the entire northern region of India,” emphasizes Vashista. Glaciers serve as natural reserves that store water as snow in winter and gradually release it during spring and summer, supporting farmers in Kashmir. The entire summer crops depend on water from the glaciers. Imagine having no water for the paddy fields during summer. The absence of water in summer would impact everything from drinking water supply to irrigation. This would directly threaten the agriculture and food security of the Kashmir Valley. Additionally, glaciers are vital for hydropower, a key source of clean, green energy in the area. The absence of glaciers, and thus water supply during summers, could lead to a disaster in the Kashmir Valley.

The impact on livelihoods and tourism

People living in Kashmir are grappling with unexpected effects in many areas of their lives. Muneer Ahmad, a concerned Kashmiri from Pampore working in the tourism industry, talked about how this could affect business and tourism. “A lot of bookings were made in December, which later got cancelled due to the absence of snow,” laments Muneer. “Kashmir is known for its snowfall, attracting many tourists. If Gulmarg doesn’t receive its normal amount of snow, we will not only face issues in tourism but also in many other sectors,” he said.

“This winter was unlike any other. It had ruined the much-anticipated winter games and made the lives of people dependent on the tourism industry difficult,” continues Muneer. When weather patterns change and there is less snow, the essence of winter diminishes. Winter sports and events that people look forward to are usually canceled when it doesn’t snow on time. Activities like skiing, snowboarding, and other winter sports lose their charm when there isn’t enough snow. This is what happened this year, as many winter sports activities were canceled, disappointing both tourists and businesses.

Concerned farmers

Having said that, the majority of agricultural activities are dependent on snowfall. The absence of snowfall is detrimental to agriculture in two ways. First, new saplings are under stress

when the soil lacks significant moisture during those months, hindering their growth and reproduction. Secondly, more ground and surface water sources are being used because of insufficient water, placing additional stress on the already limited water supplies in the area.

Dr. Rashid emphasizes the importance of snowfall for agricultural activities in the same article by stating, “The dry winters would mean a higher mass loss of glaciers in this hydrological year if the weather conditions do not improve, and it might impact hydropower generation, irrigation, agriculture, and other dependent sectors.”

The water that Kashmir receives during the summers mainly comes from rivers and tributaries fed by glaciers. This year, Kashmir witnessed a significant decrease in the water levels of the Jhelum, causing concern among farmers. The apple industry heavily relies on precipitation in the form of snow. The same holds true for saffron, as its corms require snow during winter to flourish.

This is because when there isn’t much snow, the normal water cycle is disturbed. As snow melts over time, it helps rivers and streams maintain their steady flow. Ensuring that farming always has clean water is crucial. Farmers cannot plant their crops or take good care of them when they don’t know how much water will be available due to this natural phenomenon. The unexpected weather has also disrupted the normal life cycles of many plant species. This year, Kashmir witnessed the flowering of many angiosperms in January, which would normally occur post-February. This both surprised and saddened the local community, indicating the seriousness of the issue.

What needs to be done?

It is clear that strong measures need to be taken to combat such climatic changes in the Kashmir Valley and elsewhere. First of all, we need to conserve our natural resources, including forests, glaciers, and meadows, as they are all vital for maintaining the ecosystem and climate. Development should not come at the cost of nature. Simultaneously, we need to educate our population about the vitality of nature and its processes, such as snowfall.

Vatishtha also stressed how important it is to take a broad and multifaceted approach to deal with the changing trends of climate. She summed up her ideas by saying, “The current situation in the Kashmir Valley needs a multi-pronged strategy that includes climate-resilient agriculture, decarbonization, afforestation, sustainable tourism, and good water resource management.” Thus, at both the local and international levels, people must work together to put these measures into action and ensure that the area can adapt to changing climate conditions. We must remember that a change in one part of the world will affect another part because the whole earth is interconnected. All governments need to take proper steps at their levels to reduce greenhouse emissions. It is the responsibility of global leaders to ensure that proper laws are framed to combat global change.

Conclusion

The weather events that Kashmir faced this year are not going to be the last. This was just a warning pointing towards a bigger issue of global warming and climate change. Oftentimes, the countries responsible for climate change are not the first to face the consequences. In places like Kashmir, people are living modest lives compared to high-tech cities around the world.

However, that does not save a place like Kashmir from getting impacted. The higher fluctuations in temperatures in Kashmir can have far-reaching consequences for people living in the Kashmir Valley. So, it’s never too late to start taking small steps to conserve nature. At the same time, we must be prepared for such incidents and focus on integrating technology in the wake of climate change.

WINTER WONDERLAND!

