

the hon. Finance Minister as the discussion has concluded. Now, hon. Finance Minister.

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**THE UNION BUDGET, 2023-24 -Contd.**

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE; AND THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): Thank you very much, hon. Chairman, Sir. I share the sense of disappointment that you have expressed in the absence of Members, who would have otherwise participated in the discussions. The Budget was presented, especially, at a time when India's recovery from the pandemic had to be strengthened so that we have a sustained growth which is the only sure way to remove the disparity and also build greater strength for our people. The disparity in income about which several Members spoke can only be bridged if the development goals are achieved. And by better development, we will, certainly, be able to achieve better prosperity, better income generation for people, more jobs for people. Therefore, when I speak of *Amrit Kaal*,-- I said in the Budget that that is the first Budget in the *Amrit Kaal*--we will be able to bring in all those factors which play to create a more robust economy leading to 2047 when we will see a very developed India, which is what the hon. Prime Minister has also dreamt of and spoke of and has also laid the path for achieving it. And that is where the principle, which we hold dear, and most of our policies are framed with that principle in our mind, '*Sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas and sabka prayaas*' and that is where the responsibility of the Governments in the Centre and the States and also the people of India together to build India's economy. So, we have faced several challenges inclusive of the external challenges, the war, the disruption in the supply chains and so on. But, as I mentioned in the Budget, we are aiming at bringing in a greater traction for this growth through the way in which we want to build and empower women's groups, which are spread all over the country--about 80 lakh women's groups spread all over the country--for whom we shall provide professional assistance and also build their strength so that they can also become manufacturers or service providers.

So, the Budget of 2023 balances very delicately the developmental objectives as much as keeping the fiscal prudence. Therefore, this Budget, coming as it does at this time, when we are looking at the *Amrit Kaal*--at the same time facing a lot of external challenges--the Budget has carefully managed to provide for the challenges if they emerge; at the same time, it also brings in more futuristic opportunities for our

youth in terms of skills, in terms of AI centres that we are creating, in terms of providing the industry equal opportunity to use all the labs and facilities for science and so on. We are making opportunities open. The Budget spoke for itself, Sir. So, I don't want to get into details of the Budget although most of the Members, when they speak--whether in this House or in the Lok Sabha--do raise questions about how much of the Central revenues are being shared to the States. So, on that, I would like to take a minute to say that the total resources being transferred to the States and the Central share in taxes that is released under the Centrally-sponsored schemes as well, both put together, under the BE 2023-24, the Budget under consideration now for the forthcoming year is estimated at Rs.17.98 lakh crore. This is higher by Rs.1.55 lakh crore over the current running year, 2022-23, and by Rs. 2.9 lakh crore more than the actual of 2021-22, the year before. So, consistently, we are increasing the devolution in terms of the Central share to the States. So, the worry which comes in the minds of the people is not well founded at all. Actually, the share is going up. The capital expenditure as well for 2023-24 is at Rs.10 lakh crore. Actually, in 2019-20, the year before the Pandemic, it was only Rs.3.39 lakh crore. Within a matter of three years, we have progressively increased it from three to five to seven to ten. So, you can see the growth. Whereas, for a minute, if I go back to the last year of the UPA's ten year rule, 2013-14, this amount was only Rs. 2.91 lakh crore. So, in 2013-14, it was Rs.2.91 lakh crore, for pre-Pandemic period--for 2019-20--it was Rs. 3.39 lakh crore, whereas for this year we have given Rs. 10 lakh crore.

The States will be partners in this massive capital drive. Budget 2023-24 has, from this Rs. 10 lakh crore, given Rs.1.3 lakh crore for the States' exclusive use. So, because, in principle, we believe in capital expenditure, the provision for the capital expenditure has actually given us the traction in growth post-Pandemic and for the year after that as well. So, this year too, we have given that emphasis and that emphasis is being shared with the States where we give them the amount on a 50-year loan with no interest charged on the States. So, other than that, there are obviously the details of the Budget itself; it has come up with a lot of provisions for the middle-class for the employment generation, for MSMEs, for agriculture, for rural population, specific pointed programmes and outlays, for health and for green growth. Now I would rather focus on the issues on which Members spoke and raised questions. I want to clarify a few things which many Members spoke about. Dr. Santanu Sen, who is here in the House representing Bengal spoke and asked quite a lot of questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But he withdrew. He has no <sup>\*</sup>. He said so.

SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN: He said, 'I heard the FM speech in the Lok Sabha, but still I have certain questions to raise.' I want to very clearly say that in the case of West Bengal, amounts pending are not for any other reason, but there are due diligences which have to be followed while submitting the claims for the various schemes under which they are entitled to get money. If they do not submit the relevant documents, whether it is an AG's authorization for the expenditure or questions are raised when you change the name of a scheme which is approved by this Parliament and the money is given to the State, and if the project or the scheme is not carried forward in the very name in which this House has cleared it. It is therefore, the Department's duty to raise the right questions. So, they do raise questions and when answers don't come in time, the money sits with us. I will just highlight two points. GST compensation is a matter on which repeatedly, not just Bengal, but many other States also say. We have not been given. Even now, when Dr. Santanu Sen spoke, 'net of something is being given but gross is being raised', he mixed up a lot of things, eventually indicating that we have not paid the compensation in total for them. Sir, as I said, compensation is something which takes claim with due authorization of the AG. If your AG's certificates don't reach me, I can't really clear the compensation dues. West Bengal's case, -- I can't see Dr. Santanu Sen here; but for the record -- AG certified figures are not received. You know from when, Sir and from that year, every year. In 2017-18, there was no audit certificate from the AG. In 2018-19, there was no audit certificate from the AG. In 2019-20, there was no audit certificate from the AG. In 2020-21, there was no certificate. In 2021-22, there was no certificate. Dues do pile up. I would actually, through you, Sir, suggest that for Bengal, let them please sit with their Finance Department and the authorization, which is very important to be obtained, they should rush it, get it and send it to us. The moment it comes to us, we can, at least, clear it. So, with no authorization, but to repeat that the money is pending is not fair at all. And the AG's certificate is pending not for one year. From 2017, every year, it is pending. I am really astonished that they keep saying that we are not sending it. Similarly, if there is worry about money not going from here, I am more concerned for the money which is not coming from Bengal to me. We provide the Central Armed Reserve Force for any request that they may have. We do send them like many other States also and, if we send to them, there is a payment that they have to make. Bengal has not paid us for the

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\* Not recorded.

Central Armed Reserve Force which was given to them and the amount is Rs. 1,841 crores. Service is provided, but payment not received. AG certificate is not sent. We are sitting with the money. I will be happy to get the money going to the State and, of course, I am glad to hear that he has taken the word back that I have \* for Bengal. No, Sir. Bengal has been the landmark for Renaissance movement in this country. Bengal's intellectuals have paved the way and inspired the entire country during the freedom movement. There are many of them. Bengal, because of direct action, had seen massacre on the streets of Kolkata. Any Indian will cry even today if he just sees the pictures of Bengalis who died during the direct action. Even worse, during British Raj grains were all sent away for the Second World War, the number of people who died of the man-made famine in Bengal can really bring tears to everyone of us, both the way in which they have provided leadership and also how the common people suffered. So, who, in this country worth their salt will ever have anything but only gratitude in their mind about Bengal? So, not even in my dreams will I ever think less of Bengal. It is the land of Aurobindo. I just cannot but go on thinking the way in which his speech came out. So, there are so many reasons that all of us can have great respect for Bengal. But, I am sorry, data and due process will have to be followed. So, that is about one thing.

If I am not picking holes in Shri Jawhar Sircar's speech -- also, because he is from Bengal -- I will come to others. He said, 'No freedom of speech in this country.' And, said, 'dangerous development.' I am not sure if I was undistracted to count the number of times he used the word 'dangerous.' I thought he said 'dangerous' four times and 'disaster' about two time. But, overall time he spoke was only for six minutes! How 'danger' and 'disaster' from a person who represents Bengal from where I just wanted to give a random example of freedom of expression and other things! There was one Professor in a university. I am not sure, whether it is Jadhavpur or some other university. This Professor, who innocuously sent or forwarded whatever he received — it was not to the liking of the administration there — and he ended up in jail! For four years, he was languishing in jail! And, only recently, he came out. I don't know whether it is on bail or the court, in its wisdom, released him. Sir, he used 'dangerous', 'disaster' repeatedly and also says that he is worried, this country is worried that there is no freedom of expression. Bengal, Sir, arrested a Professor for sheer forwarding a cartoon or something and the man was in jail for four years! I honestly request Jawhar Sircarji to go to Bengal and show 'Madam' the speech before delivering. Whether it is Dr. Santanu Sen or he was

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\* Not recorded.

worried that I took the hon. Chief Minister's name. So, using four times 'dangerous', two times 'disaster'; come on, Sir, I would appeal to the hon. Member that there are important things that all of us can speak about. And, he is also worried on borrowings. Let me assure you that India wouldn't be borrowing if there is a wider tax base. When did we borrow? It was at a time when pandemic happened and States needed money. I remember the role of West Bengal which is rightly reminding me that money should go to the States. I fully appreciate that sense. So, I just wanted to highlight that it cannot be a one-way street.

Sir, I am extremely thankful to hon. Sujeet Kumar for having spoken about the importance of sports in this Budget. We have made a good beginning. I hope the trend continues. I also appreciate Odisha and its emphasis on sports and for conducting the Men's Hockey World Cup. It was a very good thing, although India did not win. I felt very unhappy.

I am going back to another speaker. But, I want this to be on the record, not wrongly. It was about NPAs. This was replied to by my colleague in the Lok Sabha. But, I thought there was a bit of — if the House allows me to say — distortion. There was a distortion the way in which numbers were read. So, I wanted to put it on record. I would just put it on record to say that we have received inputs from the RBI, which say, that scheduled commercial banks wrote off an amount of Rs. 10,09,511 crores in the last five years. And, write off is not waive off and every account, which has a write off, is being legally pursued to get the moneys back and also auction their properties, if they do not pay up. So, write off is Rs. 10,09,511 crores in the last five years and the borrowers of the written off loans continue to be liable for repayment. The process of recovery of dues from these borrowers in written off loan accounts always continues till we get all. So, the figure and the reference to the NPA may need to be placed on record.

Sir, a reference was made to Oxfam Report. I do not want to give credibility to Oxfam Report whose methodology is thoroughly questionable. In that Report, they have mentioned in the footnote that they have done only on some items, and not on all. However, the conclusion about the GST is for everything! Methodologically, that is completely unacceptable. It was totally wrong. It is only true for GST revenue contributed by the goods that they studied, that's what they say, but not all goods that are covered by the GST. So, its methodology itself is wrong. And, that is being quoted in this House. I do not want to give credibility to the Oxfam Report. I am sorry, that is absolutely unacceptable.

Coming to poverty alleviation, both the UNDP and the IMF have spoken elaborately on how the free food under the PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana has actually

saved people from getting into poverty and die of poverty and, but for that Scheme, India would have really been badly off. The relative reduction from 2015 to 2016 is also referred to here. '2021 was faster', says the UNDP Report, at 11.9, compared to only 8.1 from 2005 to 2006. So, India's well-tailored programme, carried out over the past two years, to support people and ensure that they do not run the risk of slipping into poverty, seems to have made an impact on the ground. This is a quote from the UNDP Report. And, so does the IMF Report say. It says, "Extreme poverty was maintained well below one per cent in 2020 due to Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana". This is what the IMF paper says. And, then, it also says that the expansion of India's food subsidy programme absorbed the major part of the pandemic shock. It also says that extreme poverty was as low as one per cent in 2019, a level substantially below the poverty rates of 2011. So, that reference and using the Oxfam Report itself is not really appropriate. Here are two Reports by the UNDP and the IMF, which clearly say the opposite of what hon. Member, Jawhar Sircarji, is trying to say.

There are others who had spoken and had spent too much of time. It is important to put the record straight. My friend, new Member, Mohamed Abdullaji, representing the DMK ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI M. MOHAMED ABDULLA: Brother also. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN: Yes, brother also. I am happy to hear that. I will share that happiness. Representing the DMK, he has spoken quite a lot on many, many things. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, we will continue with the debate till the conclusion of hon. Finance Minister's reply. Do I have leave of the House for this?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The House will sit till conclusion of the reply of the hon. Finance Minister.

**8.00P.M.**

SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN: Thank you, Sir. Like all of us have been at one point in time or the other, he is also new in this House. All of us would, of course,

work together with him and so on, but a few things which I thought I should, in this context, put forth. The IFSC does not get any privilege which commercial and other places get; it cannot. Commercial places, commercial centres are all there; the IFSC is not, in that sense, a commercial centre. It is a financial Special Economic Zone. It is an SEZ for financial things. So, the rules and the regulations which are being relaxed or provided for in their favour are given because India should also have a global standard SEZ, which deals with financial matters. So, there are no other such centres in the country as yet. Nothing stops any State which wants to set it up. But, as of now, an SEZ, financial SEZ is in GIFT City. So, if there are other centres, the same thing will apply to them. Actually, the Act which is providing for the GIFT City does not say it in singular; it says in plural - International Financial Services Centres. If you start one in Tamil Nadu, I am sure that will also get the benefit. But, it is not any commercial centre in that sense; it is specific SEZ for creating a global-standard SEZ, which is required specifically for the financial sector.

Sir, another thing is GST rates on which there was this comment made -- oh! It is all too high. GST rate is not fixed or determined by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, it is determined by the GST Council in which the Finance Minister of Tamil Nadu is also a member. So, if rates are not happy, rates for hon. Member, he should, actually, tell the Finance Minister of Tamil Nadu to say, 'I am sorry, all this has got to be changed.' And, if other Members concur, we are quite okay to change it.

Corporate paymasters — I am not sure any Government in any State or the Union Government can be referred to as doing things at the bidding of the corporate paymasters. I would humbly request the hon. Member to himself withdraw that comment because I can, then, say data centres are coming up in Tamil Nadu, petroleum refineries are coming up in Tamil Nadu, massive solar parks are coming up in Tamil Nadu. Are they doing it in response to corporate paymasters? Surely not. So, I think we should be a bit careful about those sort of things. And, on a lighter note, if the hon. Member would take it -- he comes from DMK, Sir, which I know from my childhood is a party which strongly believes in atheism -- it does not propagate any religion of any kind. Very well. But I was very impressed by the hon. Member referring to *rahukaalam*, *yamagandam*, *kuligai* — all these are Hindu panchang.

SHRI M. MOHAMED ABDULLA: I said what people say.

SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN: Never mind. ..(*Interruptions*).. These are expressions which are so typical to Hindu panchaang. In Tamil Nadu, people refer to

*rahu kaala*. When it is yammaganda, we don't want to do anything good during that time. But DMK Member referring to this! Ah! music to my ears. With that, Sir, I want to just say, thank you for all the Members who have spoken. It is a good day when a DMK Member speaks from a *panchaang*. Sir, the one bit I have missed out is, in passing, I think, Amar Patnaikji, who is not here, said, 'we are neglected by the Centre.'

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is Dr. Amar Patnaik. Am I right?

SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN: Yes, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have been extremely careful. Hon. Finance Minister, after my wife got a doctorate, I don't make any mistake on that. If any Member is a doctor, I say 'Doctor'.

SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN: Sure, sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because no one can go against the supreme mandate. Now, hon. Finance Minister. ...*(Interruptions)*..

AN HON. MEMBER: It is your generosity, Sir.

SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN: Dr. Amar Patnaik mentioned that Odisha is being neglected by the Centre. Not at all, Sir. He came up with a list of things, saying on all these, it is so. No, we don't neglect any State. In fact, hon. Prime Minister's one line which is repeated, "If India has to be developed, every State has to develop." That is why he goes on talking about North-East. He says, even if one State lags behind, that will pull down our growth possibilities, and, therefore, he is of the view that all States should be given all the attention and every State should grow equally. So, no, we are not neglecting Odisha, and, personally, I have a great admiration for that State. Within my own capacity, I will never allow that to happen.

Sir, there was a brief reference made about the oil bonds and also about the -- this is my last point, Sir; I won't take more time -- special bonds with which we do capital-infusion into the banks. Sir, first of all, under oil bonds, we have already paid Rs. 2.34 lakh, inclusive of interest. The amount mobilized under oil bond during UPA-times was, inclusive of, probably, a small amount earlier, Rs. 1.71 lakhs. But we have already paid Rs. 2.34 lakhs, inclusive of interest, and we are yet to pay Rs. 1.07

lakh. The last payment will be made between 2025-26. Regarding capital-infusion in public sector, the special bonds that the hon. Member was referring to, again Member from Tamil Nadu, Mohamed Abdullaji, for five years, different amounts were raised for bringing in the capital-infusion for the public sector banks. It will, as he rightly pointed out, end in 2037. But these are very different from oil bond, and I will tell you for a minute as to why it is different. The oil bonds, first of all -- and he did rightly recalled that word which I used; and I use it even now 'trickery' -- was a 'trickery', a trickery because you want to give a subsidy to relieve the burden today. Like we reduce the excise duty, they could have reduced something or given some incentive or a subsidy. They didn't do that. They claimed that they are giving the subsidy, but instead of paying the subsidy, they deferred the cash payment by putting it -- the Petroleum Minister is here -- onto the oil-marketing companies' accounts. This is what constitutes a revenue-expenditure. The revenue expenditure does not create assets. It is a subsidy. You give it; finish it. But you gave it apparently. But the burden has been shifted to the oil-marketing companies, and that is getting repaid by us now, by any Government which follows, whereas, the capital-infusion, which we are undertaking since 2017-18, and to say that you have also taken this huge amount, it is going to be paid till 2037, yes it will be paid till 2037. But why is it used? It is given as a capital to the bank to promote greater credit-availability for *aam aadmi*, common man, to do his business at whatever applicable rate so that people can build businesses, earn out of it, take care of their families, save money or pay wages of people who work with them. So, that is one.

Second, it also helps the banks to have correct capital adequacy ratio. Otherwise, the banks will be in a precarious condition like the way they became fragile and have a twin balance-sheet problem because the phone-calls were made to banks during UPA-time saying, 'Give this loan to my cousin, give the loan to my Jijaji and so on.' At the end of day, the bank had no money to lend anymore and they were all in bad balance-sheet position. Now, in order to restore them to health -- and today they are restored; I am very happy to say so -- I had to keep giving them capital, year-by-year, infuse capital, so that their balance-sheets improve. Why did the balance sheet come to that level because during UPA, you went about calling people and say, 'Give it to this man, give it to that man?' But whether that man, the customer, may be worthy or not, you paid it all up. Now, I have to take care of filling those '*gaddas*'. Increased capital adequacy ratio enhances lending capacity of banks and, as a result, after the four 'R's with which we restored the health of the bank -- Prime Minister monitored it almost on a monthly basis -- today, our banks' health is all back again. They are today standing on their own. They can go and raise whatever

amount they want, and this capital infusion is also, if I may be permitted to use the word, the *paap* created by them. उसका प्रायश्चित हम कर रहे हैं। ऑयल बांड भी वही है, बैंक भी वही है। पाप उनका और प्रायश्चित हम कर रहे हैं। So, Mr. Abdulla, it is good that you brought up this point because it gave me an opportunity to explain ऑयल बांड भी हैं, सफाई इधर हम कर रहे हैं और झाड़ू-पोछा भी हम ही कर रहे हैं।

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Minister will have to find some other word for '*paap*'.

**श्रीमती निर्मला सीतारमण :** क्या पाप ठीक नहीं है सर? भाई या भतीजा को बिना सिक्युरिटी देना पाप नहीं है? ठीक है सर, आप ही कोई वर्ड मुझे बता देना।

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will take care of it.

SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN: Okay, Sir.

So, I thought it was just the oil bonds, but thank you for having reminded me of the recapitalization monies that I had to give. That is also because the entire balance sheet on one side had been scraped out. Now, I have to refill them, which I have successfully done and with the guidance of the hon. Prime Minister, banks are today on their own, making profit, giving dividend and also doing the best banking for the common people.

With this, Sir, I would thank you for giving me the opportunity.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS; THE MINISTER OF COAL; AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI PRALHAD JOSHI): Sir, '*paap*' is not unparliamentary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. Parliamentary Affairs Minister knows, I recall an incident, when I became the Parliamentary Affairs Minister in 1990, a prominent magazine carried my quote and what I said was this -- 'Not even my Post Graduate wife knows what is meant by parliamentary affairs'.

The House stands adjourned to meet at 1100 hours on Monday, the 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2023.

*The House then adjourned at twelve minutes past eight of the clock till eleven of the clock on Monday, the 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2023.*