

# THE BEACON

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## Union Budget 2021 generates mixed reactions

Vandana Nampoothiri

**KOCHI:** The Union Budget 2021-22 has generated mixed reactions from the public.

While people are happy about the new infrastructure and health measures and budget allocations, they have expressed concern over the fixed petrol prices.

Corporates are happy as the budget has not introduced any new taxes on the sector.

"The Central government is generous in this budget for Kerala with allocations for NH development and the extension of the Metro.

The new line will be useful for those working in the



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, with others, before presenting the Budget. **Press Information Bureau**

InfoPark and for the residents of Kakkanad as it ensures quicker transportation into the city as well as Alwaye and Tripunithara sides," said Josy John, Corporate Safety Head, Tata Consulting

Engineers. "The focus of the new budget is on strengthening the economy, but with an eye on the social fabric. The package for tea-garden workers in Assam and West

Bengal is an example. As far as Kerala is concerned, this is the best budget allocation," said KVS Haridas, senior mediaperson and political analyst, referring to the allocation of Rs 65,000 crore for national highway development and metro rail extension in the state.

"The fact that there are no new taxes either on the corporate sector or on the individuals is a sign that the government recognises the stress and challenge that everybody is going through," said Uday Shankar, president of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI).

### Highlights

- Union Budget presented in paperless form for the first time, with a Made in India tablet replacing the traditional 'bahi khata'.
- Higher Education Commission to be set up by government in nine cities.
- A total spend of around Rs 2 lakh crore on healthcare with Rs 35,000 crore on Covid-19 vaccine development and inoculation.
- "One nation, one ration card" under implementation in 32 states and union territories. Migrant workers in particular to benefit from the scheme.
- Census to go digital for the first time, with an allocation of Rs 3,768 crore.
- A portal to be launched to collect relevant information on gig workers, building and construction workers among others, which will help formulate health, housing, skill, insurance and food schemes for migrant labourers.
- Minimum wages will now apply to all categories of workers and women will be allowed to work in all categories with adequate protection.
- Rs 1.10 lakh crore outlay for railways and to complete 11,000 km of national highway infrastructure this year.
- Urban Swachh Bharat scheme to be implemented with an outlay of over Rs 1.4 lakh crore.
- 217 projects worth over Rs 1 lakh crore to be completed under National Infrastructure Pipeline.
- Custom duty hike to make mobile phones, synthetic gemstones and leather expensive.

Compiled by Akshara DM

## Night shift: Women in two minds

Priyansha

**JHARKHAND:** Women had mixed reactions to the announcement by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman that they would now be allowed to work in night shifts in corporate organisations, but with proper measures for their safety.

Soumya, a 30-year-old HR recruiter at Nokia, said, "Night shifts for women aren't new in the corporate world, but as a woman, there's more to our lives than just work. Most of the girls don't want to go for night shifts because they have other responsibilities, family, and health issues like PCOD, and once you join a shift you



Representational Image.

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can't just leave and go in between."

Raashi Upadhyay, a 24-year-old online reputation management analyst at

Odigma, said: "If adequate protection and security benefits are to be provided, then I think this is a great move by the government

because night shifts are also a way to have better pay."

She added, "There won't be any time constraints on women and they can plan their activities accordingly. Safeguarding women is better than banning them from night shifts."

A 23-year-old petrochemical company employee, who did not want to be named, said: "Having talked about equality, that could only persist in night shifts if the percentage of women in C-shift are near the percentage of women in A-shift. The adequate safety points the finance minister announced are the bare minimum. For people to be comfortable at work, many more restrictions should be applied."

## Twitter withholds handle of Caravan India, others

Nishitha Rachel

Twitter has withheld multiple accounts in the country in response to what it said was a "legal demand." The most prominent account to be withheld was that of the news portal The Caravan.

The decision by Twitter India comes in the aftermath of the Republic Day violence when The Caravan and other accounts reported about the death of a protester.

The police claimed the protester died in an accident,

but some news reports said he was shot dead by the cops.

The other accounts that were withheld on Twitter included those of Indian actor Sushant Singh.

One Twitter user by the name of Shruti Chaturvedi also said, "Accounts posting about the farmers' movement are being withheld by Twitter India. Caravan India, Kisaan Ekta Morcha, Tractor2Twitter and more."

Meanwhile, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor have been booked for making a similar claim on Twitter.

## WB: People unruffled as politicians jump ship

Megha Bhattacharjee

**KOLKATA:** The people of West Bengal aren't surprised to witness fast defectors as former minister Rajib Banerjee quit the Trinamool Congress (TMC) along with four other party members and joined the BJP on Sunday.

This is the second rush of desertion from the TMC, led by Banerjee, after the first rush was led by Suwendu Adhikari.

"Lately the only agenda of Mamata Didi [Chief Minister and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee] has been to make her nephew the chief



Defecting Trinamool Congress politicians pose with BJP leader Smriti Zubin Irani in Howrah, West Bengal, on Sunday, January 31.

**Twitter/Suwendu Adhikari**

minister. The TMC has blocked most of the Central government's welfare

schemes. This was long-expected," said school teacher Samiran Saha.

"I find no difference [in the polity] as the same people are changing sides. What more will they deliver?" asked homemaker Ramila Sen.

Sanjib Kumar Chatterjee, Director of State Cooperative Housing Federation Shibpur, and an eminent TMC member, said "The people shifting parties have no political ideologies. They are of no good. The TMC is about Mamata Banerjee and Mamata Banerjee alone. If she's there, the TMC will keep thriving. Nothing will affect the party."

Assembly elections are due in West Bengal this year.