

# Economic self-reliance core to govt policy: FM

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Union Budget 2026-27 will strengthen domestic capabilities while leveraging a rare phase of strong economic growth and low inflation, said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, emphasising that “*atmanirbharata*” (self-reliance) remains a core principle of government policy. Speaking in the Rajya Sabha, she called the macroeconomic environment a “Goldilocks moment” that was the result of sustained efforts, planning and timely policy action, not chance.

“The Budget focuses on building domestic manufacturing capacity and ensuring energy security, while also helping citizens become self-reliant in their own lives. Measures aimed at improving ease of living, generating employment, raising agricultural productivity and increasing household purchasing power are all part of this approach.”

According to her, the government’s strategic push is unfolding at a time when key economic indicators are favourable.

“According to the first advance estimates released by the National Statistical Office, India’s real GDP growth is projected at 7.4 per cent for 2025-26, while nominal growth is estimated at around 8 per cent,” said Sitharaman.

“At the same time, consumer price inflation has softened to nearly 2 per cent and has remained under control for a continuous period.”

Rejecting the Opposition’s charge of expenditure curtailment in welfare schemes, Sitharaman said funds have not been denied or curtailed to states under any scheme.

Sitharaman, who was replying to the debate on the Budget, said only Rs 37,000 crore remained unspent in 14 social sector schemes in the last 10 years, as against Rs 94,000 crore when the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) governed India (from 2004 to 2014).



**Speaking in the RS, Sitharaman called the macroeconomic environment a “Goldilocks moment” that was the result of sustained efforts, planning and timely policy action, not chance**

Sitharaman dismissed criticism that her government had announced schemes without allocating funds and accused the UPA of following such a practice when it was in power. Hitting back at concerns about debt, the minister said the Congress sheds crocodile tears on the issue and maintained that the present government does not borrow excessively.

Government funds are not a free pool of cash but the hard-earned money of citizens, and therefore must be used prudently. “High personal income tax collection does not necessarily mean that the middle class is being suppressed or crushed in the country,” she said, addressing concerns over personal income tax collections.

“There is no evidence of any suppression of the middle class in the country, but there is evidence of middle-class expansion,” Sitharaman asserted in the Upper House.

She added that steps taken in the Budget demonstrate the government’s resolve to build a resilient, self-reliant India, and urged Rajya Sabha members to encourage their states to actively participate in schemes announced in the annual financial statement.