

# Fiscal prudence top priority: FM

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The Union government has kept fiscal prudence as its top priority without denying funds for welfare activities, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Tuesday.

"We are on the right track when it comes to macroeconomic fundamentals. This is why we are the fastest-growing economy in the world. Our gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the July-September quarter (Q2) of 7.6 per cent is the highest in the world," Sitharaman said in the Lok Sabha, replying to the discussion on the first supplementary demands for grants for this financial year.

The Lok Sabha approved the additional gross spending of ₹1.29 trillion, which includes net cash outgo of ₹58,378 crore. The additional spending demands are primarily for fertiliser (₹13,351 crore) and food (₹10,396 crore) subsidies, the Guarantee Redemption Fund (₹9,014 crore), and defence spending (₹5,626 crore).

With an additional support of ₹20,000 crore towards the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the total budgetary



support for the programme has gone up to ₹80,000 till December, the FM said.

She said the government would come again with the second supplementary if the need arises. "In the past two-three years, we have come with only two supplementary Budgets. It shows how much attention to details we have paid during the Budget exercise," the finance minister said.

In her reply, the finance minister said the government had been trying to balance the interest of farmers and consumers, while remaining equally con-

scious if the price given to farmers is adequate for meeting their requirements. "Most often when we do this, we have situations when prices go up...We need to have supply-side constraints removed, and bring all goods to the market."

On the issue of states complaining about release of funds for centrally sponsored schemes, Sitharaman said several had high unspent balance in the account of single nodal agency and outstanding utilisation certificate. Several states, Sitharaman said, were also in vio-

## Govt defends decision on onion export ban

The government defended its decision to impose export ban on onion, stating that sometimes Indian consumers should get the priority to get essential goods at appropriate prices. India on December 8 banned exports of onion till March next year to increase domestic availability and keep prices in check, which is currently selling at about ₹60 per kg. The finance minister said that the government carefully balances the interests of farmers and consumers. **PTI**

lation of branding and naming guidelines. "If there is balance (amount) left then obviously till that is spent, the next instalment would not come. Due to non-submission of annual action plans by the states we are not able to see that the central schemes are getting executed," Sitharaman said.

Explaining the technical details of the supplementary demand, the FM said it had 79 demands and four appropriations, including Supreme Court, Central Vigilance Commission staff, household and allowances of president, and Union Public Service Commission.