

'Fuel price hike will not hurt middle - class,' says Nitin Gadkari



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Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways and Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, spoke to Anisha Dutta on the centre's proposal to hike fuel prices and provide huge tax rebates on electric vehicles in the union budget 2019-20. Edited excerpts: Don't you think the move to increase Special Additional Excise duty and Road and Infrastructure Cess each by one rupee a litre on petrol and diesel will pinch the middle class? No it won't. Actually the prices in the international markets for oil have reduced and this additional Rs 2 will get accommodated in that. The excise duty and the increase in the road cess will keep current rates the same; only the price which was supposed to reduce won't. It will be compensated by (lower)

international prices and this money will contribute in a big way towards infrastructure development and aid state governments in their budget. There will be a lot of revenue gain for the country and rupee will be at an advantage, so it will not have any negative effect. Infrastructure has been given the highest priority in the budget by the finance minister. Our department's budget was about Rs 78,000 crore in the previous budget and now has gone above Rs 83,000 crore. There has been an aggressive effort to push electric vehicles by the centre in the union budget by reducing GST and providing a tax rebate. Do you think it is feasible given that the automobile industry had criticized the proposal by Niti Aayog to convert all two wheelers and three wheelers to EVs by 2023? When I had imposed BS VI emission norms even then

the automobile industry wasn't happy and that also turned out to be very successful. That is how it is done, to teach someone how to swim you have to throw them in the water. The pace at which we are pushing for electric vehicles transition is 100% normal and the automobile industry has all the potential and capability to do it. It is a gradual process and I am sure we will succeed. We want to create electric highways with electric buses and trucks plying on the road. As the transport minister, I have been saying we need to develop a cost effective, pollution free and indigenous transport system. And I am happy that to reduce our import bill and pollution, GST has been reduced to 5% for electric vehicles whether they are three wheelers, four wheelers or two wheelers. It is a huge thing and will help us become leaders in EV manufacturing. I have been saying that our automobile industry which today is valued at Rs 2.5 lakh crore is one of the world leaders in manufacturing; all big brands come to India to manufacture. I am confident our industry will become a manufacturing hub even in the EV segment and we give tough competition to the world market in terms of quality and cost. MSMEs have suddenly become a key focus areas

for the Centre, especially in terms of job creation. You have said that you aim to increase the sector's contribution to GDP from 29% at present to 50%. How do you plan to do that? About 110 million jobs have been created in the sector so far. In the coming five years, we aim to create 50 million more jobs. For this, first we need technology, research and skill development and we aim to open about 100 centres for the same. We will also allow private industry and give incentives for setting up skill training, research and technology centres. I will give an example of medical devices, where we are about to open 10 centres for manufacturing medical devices, instruments ranging from stents to MRI machines. The cost of an MRI machine is Rs 4.5 crore we will make it for about Rs 10 lakh. We import them from other countries like Germany. If we create medical devices here about Rs 50,000 crore of our import bill will reduce. We have made a list of all goods we are importing and we have drafted a policy on import substitutes in which we aim to reduce our import dependence and increase exports. Even for khadi we are opening 100 clusters through which we will export khadi clothes all across the world. We also plan to open an online marketplace like Alibaba and Amazon, my ministry is working on that. National Highway development has also been a key priority for the government. The union budget also mentions the creation of a national grid network of highways. The pace of road construction has come up to 38km per day from 12km per day in the previous government's regime. We will take it to about 40km per day this year.

Is the British Raj back? asks 82-yr-old, 'stopped' from boarding Shatabdi

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An 82-year-old train passenger draped in 'unstitched cloth' and 'dhoti' was denied entry into Delhi-bound Kanpur-New Delhi Shatabdi Express on Thursday morning, despite having a confirmed ticket. The passenger Ram Awadh Das accused the Government Railways Police (GRP) of not letting him board the train as he was dressed 'differently'. However, he did not mention it (that he was denied entry because of his dress) in the written complaint to North Central Railways (NCR). "I am shocked. It seems as if we are still living in the British era. Though I had the ticket, still the GRP personnel and the coach attendant denied me entry into the train as I was dressed differently. I am aghast and pained at their behaviour," said

Ram Awadh Das, a seer who hails from Barabanki and was going from Etawah to Ghaziabad. Das said he kept on insisting that he had a confirmed ticket but to no avail. "They said 'Baba tum galat train mein chadh gaye ho (you have boarded into a wrong train). Your train is in Kanpur and will reach Etawah in next couple of hours'," he added. The incident was reported at Etawah station from where Ram Awadh Das, whose PNR no. was 2164371556 and who had a confirmed seat (No 71) in C2 coach, was supposed to board. Das had a reservation from Etawah to Ghaziabad, where he was going to see his followers. "Baba visits our residence in Etawah every rainy season to carry out a religious ceremony and then he was supposed to board Shatabdi to leave for Ghaziabad," said Sujata Dubey,

a staunch follower of Ram Awadh Das. She said Das originally belonged to Barabanki district. In the written complaint, the seer blamed the GRP personnel and an attendant for not letting him board the train. "By the time I reached another coach, the train left," states the seer's complaint filed at Etawah station. Chief public relation officer (PRO) NCR Ajit Kumar Singh said as per the inquiry the elderly passenger had wrongly boarded power car and was told to board another coach. Since the train had just two-minute stoppage at Etawah station, it left by the time he managed to reach another coach. However, Singh said there was need to counsel the staff at the station and to sensitise them towards elderly train passengers. They should have guided him to the right coach.

UP government to file appeal in HC against acquittals

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The state government will file an appeal in the high court against the special CBI court order acquitting gangster turned politician Mukhtar Ansari, his MP brother Afzal Ansari and five other accused in the murder of BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai in Ghazipur in 2005. Principal Secretary, Home, Avnish Awasthi said the chief minister had taken cognizance of the judgement of the Delhi court and the state government would examine the judgement and file an appeal in the high court. Rai was murdered along with six

others when they were returning from Siyari village to Kanuwan after inaugurating a cricket match. The CBI had later charged Mukhtar Ansari, sitting BSP MLA from Mau assembly seat, in the murder. Ansari is lodged in jail since 2005. Rai's brother Ram Narain Rai in the FIR lodged in the case had told the police that the victims had been attacked by a group of gunmen who fired indiscriminately at them when they were returning from Siyari village. Rai, along with the six others, died on the spot. The investigation into the case was transferred from UP police to CBI. The trial too was

transferred from UP to Delhi," said special judge Arun Bhardwaj while delivering the order. "Unfortunately, the case of the prosecution has suffered as all the eyewitnesses and material witnesses turned hostile," said Bhardwaj. The CBI court also held that the investigators had failed to prove the charges by not producing sufficient evidence against Ansari and others. According to CBI Rai and Ansari brothers had been rivals since the former defeated Afzal Ansari from the Mohammadabad assembly in 2002. The latter had remained undefeated since 1982.

A R conducts medical camp at khaikual

IGAR (South) Imphal July 6,

Sajik Battalion of 28 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) organised a medical camp at Khaikual and adjoining villages of Churachandpur district on 03rd July and 04th July 2019 under Assam Rifles Civic Action Programme 2019-2020. Keeping in mind the problems faced by the villagers due to the prevalent socio-economic conditions and remoteness of

the location, the medical camp was organised to cater for basic medical needs of the locals. The absence of a Primary Health Centre (PHC) in the near vicinity and poor condition of roads amplified the requirement of conducting the medical camp. Specialist Medical Officer (SMO), Sajik Battalion with four medical staff provided free medical treatment and distributed free medicine to the people of Khaikual and adjoining villages and a total

of 285 patients (94 males, 89 females and 102 children) were provided treatment. A complete checkup of every individual was carried out during the two day medical camp. Apart from providing necessary medical attention, basic knowledge on health education, hygiene and sanitation was also imparted. The medical team not only utilized the camp to attend to the medical needs of locals but also reinforced the faith of the people in Assam Rifles.

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A R observes van mahotsav with students of Sugnu cum Organised Medical camp

IGAR (S) Imphal July 6,

Kakching Battalion of 28 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (S) celebrated Van Mahotsav with students of various school of Sugnu.



Yesterday, Inter School drawing competition was organised by Kakching Battalion in which 98 students of M Ganga Academy, United Public School, Grace English High School, Trinity English School, St Joseph Higher Sec School and Ching Tam English School participated. The theme of the competition was 'Save Environment'. The students from class 1st to 10th made sketches and paintings which not only were beautiful but conveyed an important message of afforestation. A lecture was also delivered by Company Commander of Sugnu post highlighting the importance of trees and motivated the young minds to contribute significantly towards nature preservation and harmful effect of deforestation. Subsequently a tree plantation drive was also undertaken by the students and Assam Rifles personnel. The aim of conducting the completion was to highlight the

importance of forest and ill effects of deforestation which is destroying flora and fauna of Manipur. Chassad Battalion of 10 Sector Assam Rifles under aegis of HQ IGAR (South) conducted a medical camp at Khangpat Centre, Kamjong district on 05 July 2019. The camp was organized under "Assam Rifles Civic Action Programme 2019-2020". A total of 73 patients were examined by a team of doctor and trained Para-medical staff for various ailments and free medicines were provided to all during the camp. The aim of the camp was to provide free medical treatment and consultation to the villagers of Khangpat Centre and nearby villages of

Kamjong district where medical facilities are not available due to its remote location and proximity to the Indo-Myanmar border. Apart from providing medical assistance and medicines, the information on hygiene, sanitation and awareness in life style diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes etc was given to the villagers. The medical camp included lecture and demonstration on measures to ward off any likely-hood of seasonal diseases due to mosquitoes in the monsoon season. The villagers appreciated the efforts made by Assam Rifles and expressed their heartfelt gratitude for bringing much needed medical succour in remote areas.

Union Budget Proposes Strengthening MSMEs to Boost Make in India

PIB Imphal July 6,

"Make in India", with particular emphasis on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, is one of the major focus areas of the Union Budget this year. Delivering her budget speech in Parliament today, Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman announced various proposals aimed at strengthening the sector. For ease of access to credit for MSMEs, Government has introduced scheme for providing of loans upto Rs. 1 crore within 59 minutes through a dedicated online portal. Under the Interest Subvention Scheme, Rs. 350 crore has been allocated for FY 2019-20 for 2% interest subvention for all GST registered MSMEs, on fresh or incremental loans. The Finance Minister also announced the Government's intent to create a payment

platform for MSMEs to enable filing of bills and payment on the platform itself to eliminate delays in government payments. The Finance Minister further informed that the Government has decided to extend pension benefit to about three crore retail traders and small shopkeepers whose annual turnover is less than Rs.1.5 crore under a new scheme named Pradhan Mantri Karam Yogi Maandhan Scheme. Enrolment into the Scheme will be kept simple requiring only Aadhaar and a bank account and rest will be on self-declaration. The Finance Minister also announced that under the Scheme of Fund for Upgradation and Regeneration of Traditional Industries' (SFURTI) 100 new clusters will be set up during 2019-20 enabling 50,000 artisans to join the economic value chain. SFURTI aims to set up Common Facility

Centres (CFCs) to facilitate cluster based development to make traditional industries more productive, profitable and capable for generating sustained employment opportunities. Focused sectors are Bamboo, Honey and Khadi clusters. The Minister further announced that the Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship' (ASPIRE) would be consolidated for setting up of 80 Livelihood Business Incubators (LBIs) and 20 Technology Business Incubators (TBIs) in 2019-20 to develop 75,000 skilled entrepreneurs in agro-rural industry sectors. The Budget says that the Government will support private entrepreneurs in driving value-addition to farmers' produce from the field and for those from allied activities. Dairying through cooperatives will be

encouraged by creating infrastructure for cattle feed manufacturing, mild procurement, processing and marketing. The Union Budget has also made proposals under indirect taxes to promote Make in India, that may also benefit the MSME sector. For example, to provide domestic industry a level playing field, basic Customs Duty is being increased on items such as cashew kernels, PVC, Vinyl flooring, tiles, metal fitting, mountings for furniture, auto parts, certain kind of synthetic rubbers, marble slabs, optical fibre cable, CCTV camera, IP camera, digital and network video recorders etc. Exemptions from Custom Duty on certain electronic items which are now being manufactured in India are being withdrawn. End use based exemptions on palm stearin, fatty oils, are being withdrawn. Exemptions to various kind of papers are being withdrawn.