

# India budget pledges record infrastructure and defence boost

New Delhi plans to spend \$133 billion on infrastructure and \$85 billion on defence

● Data centres, artificial intelligence, and the mining and processing of rare earths will also receive government support

● Plans for seven high-speed rail corridors linking some of India's most important cities

● Government targets debt-to-GDP of 55.6%; fiscal deficit of 4.3% in 2026-27

● Tax holiday till 2047 to any foreign company that provides cloud services to customers globally by using data centre services from India

AFP | New Delhi, India

India will spend a record amount on infrastructure and defence, the finance minister said in her national budget speech on Sunday, with plans for high-speed rail, submarines and fighter jets.



India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman (L) poses with ministry officials before leaving to present the annual budget to the parliament at the Kartavya Bhawan in New Delhi

New Delhi plans to spend \$133 billion on infrastructure and \$85 billion on defence, a respective rise of around nine

and 15 percent compared to last year's budget.

Data centres, artificial intelligence, and the mining and processing of rare earths will also receive government support, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told parliament.

She said public spending on infrastructure had increased dramatically from around \$21 billion (2 trillion rupees) in 2014-15 and that it was now at an "all-time high".

#### 'Best interest'

Defence minister Rajnath Singh described the spending as "unprecedented" and said it would help equip India's armed forces with fighter jets, drones, ships, submarines and other critical hardware.

"It is in the best interest of the nation," he added.

New Delhi is in the midst of negotiating defence contracts with domestic and international suppliers, including France, the United States and Germany.

The world's most populous country sees massive infrastructure spending as key to sustaining its high growth rate by boosting domestic manufacturing and creating millions of new jobs.

"India is not content with simply being the fastest-growing economy," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said after the budget.

"India wants to become the world's third-largest economy. This year's budget presents an ambitious roadmap to give new momentum to" domestic manufacturing and self-reliance.

Sectors including textiles, pharmaceuticals, electronics and chemicals are primary targets to boost exports, Sitharaman said.

She promised the development of business parks for textiles and chemicals and said \$5 billion would be spent on boosting domestic electronics manufacturing.

#### 'Confident steps'

It is the first budget since US President Donald Trump imposed 50 percent tariffs on most Indian imports in August.

New Delhi and Washington are in the process of negotiating a long-delayed trade agreement.

But relations have soured over India's purchases of Russian oil, which Washington says is helping bankroll Moscow's war in Ukraine.

New Delhi signed a major trade deal with the European Union last month, with many crediting Trump's tariffs for helping finalise the deal.

"Today, we face an external environment in which trade and multilateralism are imperilled, and access to resources and supply chains are disrupted," Sitharaman said in parliament.

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"India will continue to take confident steps towards 'Vikas Bharat' (developed India) by balancing ambition with inclusion".

The budget touted plans for seven high-speed rail corridors linking some of India's most important cities, including Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, and Chennai.

It also puts forward a scheme to build "rare earth corridors" in four mineral-rich states in southern and eastern India.

"I propose to provide a tax holiday till 2047 to any foreign company that provides cloud services to customers globally by using data centre services from India," Sitharaman said in her speech.



The first Union Budget of independent India was presented on 26 November 1947 by Finance Minister R. K. Shanmukham Chetty – it planned to spend Rs 197.29 crore against expected revenue of Rs 171.15 crore, resulting in a modest deficit to help the newly independent country get started.

## Kareena Kapoor Khan Inaugurates Malabar Gold & Diamonds' New Flagship Showroom in Abu Dhabi at Hamdan Street

Manama

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 5th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 420 showrooms across 14 countries, has unveiled its flagship new concept showroom in Abu Dhabi at Hamdan Street. The showroom was formally inaugurated by Bollywood actress and Brand Ambassador of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Kareena Kapoor Khan, in the presence of Mr. Abdul Salam K.P, Vice Chairman of Malabar Group; Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Mr. Nishad AK, Malabar Group Executive Director; Mr. Faisal AK, Head of Manufacturing at Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Mr. Ameer CMC, Director of Finance & Admin at Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Mr. Sakkeer P, Head of Merchandising & SCM (Gold) at Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Mr. Shaji Kakkodi, Malabar Group Chief Digital Officer, other senior management team members, customers, and well-wishers. Kareena Kapoor Khan's much anticipated appearance drew large crowds to Hamdan Street, reaffirming its stature as one of Abu Dhabi's most strategic and prominent jewellery desti-



nations.

The newly launched outlet marks Malabar Gold & Diamonds' 17th showroom in the Abu Dhabi-Al Ain region and its 3rd showroom on Hamdan Street, further strengthening the brand's footprint in one of the city's most important jewellery hubs. Designed as the brand's flagship showroom in Abu Dhabi, the space reflects Malabar Gold & Diamonds' evolved retail philosophy, offering a refined and immersive jewellery shopping experience through contemporary design, personalized

service, and an extensive portfolio of exquisite collections.

Spanning 4,000+ sq.ft, the new showroom at Hamdan street houses over 30,000 meticulously crafted designs across 18K & 22K gold, diamond, and precious gemstone jewellery, featuring Malabar Gold & Diamonds' exclusive brands including Mine, Era, Viraaz, Precia, Ethmix, and Divine. The collections span bridal, traditional, contemporary, and everyday jewellery, curated to resonate with global design sensibilities while catering to the diverse tastes of Abu

Dhabi's discerning customers.

Commenting on the occasion, Mr. M.P Ahammad, Chairman of Malabar Group, said,

"The launch of our flagship concept showroom on Hamdan Street marks a key milestone in Malabar Gold & Diamonds' growth in Abu Dhabi and the UAE. Guided by trust, transparency, and craftsmanship, each new showroom reflects our vision to elevate jewellery retail through innovation, ethical practices, and customer-first values. Abu Dhabi has been central to our global expansion,

and this flagship reaffirms our commitment to sustainable growth and exceptional value as we progress toward becoming the world's no. 1 jewellery retailer."

Designed to cater to the discerning tastes of jewellery connoisseurs, the new showroom has been thoughtfully equipped with exclusive amenities, including a customised jewellery designing facility that allows customers to bring their dream creations to life, along with an exclusive customer lounge designed for a comfortable and personalised shopping experience.

Mr. Abdul Salam K.P, Vice Chairman of Malabar Group, commented,

"The strong response to our new Hamdan Street flagship is truly encouraging. It reflects the trust customers place in Malabar Gold & Diamonds – for our design excellence as well as our commitment to ethical sourcing, transparent pricing, and sustainable practices. With 17 world-class showrooms, Abu Dhabi remains a vital market for us, and this successful launch reinforces our belief that long-term growth is built on integrity, responsibility, and customer confidence."

Malabar Gold & Diamonds currently operates 17 showrooms across Abu Dhabi and Al Ain. In Abu Dhabi, the showrooms are located at: Al Wahda mall, Mushrif Mall, Mussafah Capital Mall & Shabia, Mazyad Mall, Dalma Mall, Madihat Zayed Shopping Centre, Al Dhannah Mall, Hamdan Street (3 showrooms). In Al Ain, the brand has 3 showrooms.

Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, said, "Malabar Gold & Diamonds began its Abu Dhabi journey in 2010, and the emirate has since become one of our most important international markets. Its diverse customer base and strong preference for quality and trust make it central to our regional strategy. Our new showroom has been designed around evolving customer expectations and having Kareena Kapoor Khan inaugurate it adds to the significance of the occasion. The Hamdan Street opening also marks our 70th showroom in the UAE, a major milestone in our expansion. As our largest market outside India, the UAE offers immense potential, and we remain committed to growing sustainably and responsibly".