

FM asks tax officers to address taxpayer concerns

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- **Finance minister Sitharaman said that the Gati Shakti project provide synergies to various investments happening in different areas such as ports, roads, bridges and trains and provide a collective strength.**

NEW DELHI: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday highlighted that the Union Budget 2022-23 provided a tax predictable regime and vision for the next 25 years, in a post Budget interaction with industry in Bengaluru. She said the PM Gati Shakti project will help yje industry by providing logistical convenience.

"This Budget stands more for continuity, to provide a tax predictable regime and also to make sure that we are planning for the next 20 to 25 years. It gives a vision and also some kind of roadmap," Sitharaman said in her address to the industry before taking up questions and grievances.

Getting several questions from the industry on taxation rules, Sitharaman reprimanded the tax officers for not engaging enough with tax assesses and asked them to "keep Saturdays free" to address concerns of taxpayers. "I am curious to know if the CBIC and the CBDT are engaging with your own assesses?...I would now tell the two Board to keep your Saturdays free and engage with assesses and give them all the clarification required... if there is something you think that you cannot do because it's something to do with the Act itself or with the Rules which have been passed, then get the Boards to do it or tell the revenue secretary accordingly," said Sitharaman.

She added that many issues that are being asked are not budget related, but more about the rules. "I am sorry, the Boards will have to do better. Keep yourself available on Saturdays and also over phone and emails."

On Gati Shakti, Sitharaman said the project will provide synergies to various investments happening in different areas like ports, roads, bridges and trains and provide a collective strength. She added that businesses suffer due to lack of adequate logistical convenience.

"All will be brought together because of the synergetic approach which Gati Shakti gives," added Sitharaman explaining that it is an umbrella-like scheme over the several projects that are aimed at mutual benefit for the industry. She was accompanied by the top finance ministry officials including finance secretary TV Somanathan, revenue secretary Tarun Bajaj, and Department of economic affairs secretary Ajay Seth for the interaction. The next round of industry outreach on Budget will be in Guwahati.

The finance minister added that the country was still recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that there was a need to have a support system particularly for health.

Sitharaman also chaired a meeting with startups and representatives from electronics and information technology and semiconductors industry in Bengaluru.