

It's Touched My Core

SUDHA MURTY: I appreciate the stress on infrastructure in today's Budget. It increases the connectivity to rural areas and people, which is of utmost importance to me. But, for the one area that I am really passionate about, the education of rural children, I am a bit disappointed that the Budget does not seem to make any special provisions for it. I am not really bothered with stuff like dividend tax (Ms Murty is, incidentally, one of Infosys' biggest shareholders and the removal of this duty should benefit her immensely). My focus is on the social sector and on improving the fate of below poverty line families.



Grass On The Grey Side



TINA AMBANI: The very fact that this Budget recognised that India will soon have the world's second largest (number of) senior citizens is admirable. Particularly welcome are announcements for the new LIC Varisht Bima Yojana with an assured 9% interest rate, health insurance and reimbursement schemes, the reduced duties on hearing aids, wheelchairs and life-saving drugs, the acceptance of a self-declaration IT return form and the reduction in the age benefit from 65 to 60. Overall, it is a positive step forward with an aim to better the lives of our country's elders.

The Beat Of Folk Music

NEERJA BIRLA: This is a development Budget and should fuel growth because of the emphasis on infrastructure and thrust on international airports, roads and ports. On the social sector front, the special package for health and education, specially the focus on primary education is very good. As a result, over the long haul will help India's human development index. The LIC-driven pension scheme with 9% interest rate is path-breaking. Overall, it is a people-oriented budget with a feel good factor.



A Foreign Float



ROHINI NILEKANI: The Budget is becoming a spectacle rather than a document of financial intentions! Why are we delivering foreign policy initiatives through the FM's speech? Still, I think the moves in healthcare are to be appreciated for their general direction. As for my other area of interest; the Budget is rather silent except for a tax rebate for the education of two children. I wish education would move up the priority ladder as it is as much a key to poverty alleviation as say, micro credit.

Nose Job's In The Air

ANURADHA MAHINDRA: The fact that the FM's thrust was on three areas: health, housing and education shows the priorities are right. This will have a wide spread impact on women, children and elders, who are often omitted. The duty reduction on electric vehicles too is a good step. Though they are mainly in rural areas, their use helps reduce pollution and help our next generation breathe easier.



Moving On Up



SMITA PAREKH: The stress has been on infrastructure and the logistics related to it: airports, roads and ports. Even the cess on diesel and petrol is a good step to raise money for infrastructure. For the first time, a FM has looked closely at textiles, while the healthcare initiatives have been exemplary. The removal of expenditure tax and with states being asked to remove luxury tax, will enhance tourism.

Quite A Squeeze

TANYA GODREJ: The 8% tax on edible oil is ridiculous, specially on packaged goods. It impedes growth and slapping duties on commodities is not logical as it increases the price of health and hygiene. It is not a good tax, well certainly not for us at Godrej. On the other hand, the removal of dividend tax will help high dividend-yielding companies, like ours, as it helps equity growth.

