

## **13. UP the road to India's Growth**

**By Gopal Krishna Agarwal,**

BJP national spokesperson Gopal Krishna Agarwal, who is from NOIDA, a chartered accountant, is an economic thinker, author, political and social activist.

In an interview with Nikhil Vyas. Agarwal talks about the Union Budget 2022-23 and the BJP's prospects in the five poll-bound states.

### **Excerpts:**

**Q. The Union Budget 2022-23 emphasises 'Amrit Kaal'. How is It to be interpreted?**

**A:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her budget speech in Parliament, had said that this budget comes at a point of time when India is completing 75 years of Independence and in 2047 India will complete 100 years of Independence. So, from 75 to 100 years, the next 25 years, we consider them to be an Amrit Kaal' a golden period for India's economy. This budget lays the foundation or the blueprint for that roadmap. India has good potential to become an economic superpower in near future because it is one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

All major macroeconomic parameters, even after pandemic disruptions are on a sound footing. We are receiving huge FDI, our foreign exchange reserves are at an all-time high, our inflation, particularly Consumer price index (CPI), is under control around 4.6 per cent and GDP, -post pandemic, has recovered and is growing at a high

single digit rate and is expected to do so on a sustainable basis. This budget will propel India to a big economic growth path that is the 'Amrit Kaal'.

**Q. What's your take on this Union Budget 2022-23?**

**A:** One of the important aspects of this budget is that the government was constrained for resources and there was pressure to go for an increase in taxes for sustaining government expenditure for social security as well as fiscal stimulus. But the government has abstained from doing so and has also further reduced taxes on the cooperative sector and Farmer producer organisation (FPO).

And if you delve into the past three-four years, we have successively reduced direct taxes for corporates, start-ups, and new industries as well as indirect taxes in the form of GST  
nectivity, through roads, railways, air-ports, waterways metros etc.

This will have a multi-pronged benefit, creating an ecosystem for Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Living, increasing demand in the economy, and putting money into the hands of the people and will further reduce the cost of transportation of raw materials and finished goods. This will help attract private investments and generate employment.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her budget speech, has estimated that only from Gati Shakti, 60 lakh new jobs will be created.

Many important projects like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) have been allocated additional Rs 48,000 crore.

The government has announced 2,500 km-long natural farming corridor along the banks of the River Ganga, which will propel the rural economy. We are expecting the agricultural sector to grow at 3.9 per cent, which is the highest rate since independence.

I would like to underline the focus on urbanisation, building urban infrastructure in the tier-2 and tier-3 cities. Nowhere is the budget as future oriented as when it talks about urbanisation. We all know that our top six cities are bursting at the seams and all additional expenditure being incurred by their governments is to mostly make them liveable for the existing population. Our tier-2 and tier-3 cities and towns can be our future engines of growth only when they are properly planned, inclusive and operate on sustainable principles. The emphasis on new building by-laws, revamped town planning and creating centres of excellence in these areas in leading academic institutions through the grant of Rs 250 crore to five such institutions show the commitment of the Modi government in this area. All these provisions are for the benefit of the common man improving ease of living, generating employment, and attracting private investments.

**Q. What are the BJP's prospects in the five poll-bound states?**

**A:** I have extensively visited parts of Uttar Pradesh, particularly Pashchim and Braj Pradesh. I find that there is a tremendous enthusiasm in the people for BJP. People have recognised that BJP alone can bring law and order in the state. Over the last five years, our government has also created good infrastructure with five new airports, six express-ways, medical colleges, multimodal transportation hub, defence corridor, cluster development, projects like One District One Project (ODOP).

People have understood that the state can have faster growth with a double engine government when the state and the central government work in alignment for the benefit of the people.

Uttar Pradesh has very good potential for growth with its 22-crore population and large land mass. We have seen over these last 5 years that many new industries have come to Uttar Pradesh. Before 2017, we had only two mobile factories, it has increased to two hundred. Microsoft, IBM, Adobe, SAP, Samsung and many international

MNC's have set up shop here. When we think of India becoming an economic superpower, its road goes from Uttar Pradesh.

Our focus on the Northeast is also bringing good results. Our government in Manipur has focussed on organic farming, developing adventure sports, cultural tourism with improved infrastructure and connectivity. Manipur people know the benefits of aligning with the central government, they are sure to elect us again.

As far as Punjab is concerned, people of Punjab are fed up with the Congress rule. In Punjab, drugs are a menace, derailing youth in the state. It is a border state and people are thinking that a strong national party will benefit the state. BJP is contesting on its own for the first time and we hope that our performance will be very good.

In Uttarakhand, our government has started the Char Dharm project. Which is the life and soul for the people of the state and is very important for the development of Uttarakhand. The Prime Minister himself has been going to Kedarnath every year. We are in a good position to retain our government here.

Tourism is the soul of Goa. Our record of good governance is helping us here. We have a young and dynamic leader in Pramod ji (Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant).

**Q. How do you look at the Covid vaccination programme and the charge by Opposition-ruled states that they are being discriminated against?**

**A:** No state has been discriminated against. The Central government has the role of providing vaccines. Sufficient and timely provisioning of vaccines have been undertaken for all the states as per their population and the pace for its administration in their respective states. The states have the responsibility of bringing people to vaccination centres and vaccinating them.

The Centre is providing vaccines to all the states free of cost and in ample quantity, so where is the discrimination? The Cowin and Aarogya setu app have streamlined online vaccination drive without any

subjective discrimination. Our vaccination drive, including both Apps, is being hailed across the globe. Many opposition leaders have tried to derail the process... they are answer- able for their irresponsible behaviour.

**Q.Do you think the farmers' campaign against the three farm laws which have now been repealed will affect the BJP's performance In Uttar Pradesh and Punjab?**

**A:** The farmers' agitation earlier will not impact our performance in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, as the government accepted their demands and repealed the three farm laws. So that issue is now over. We have increased the MSP as well as the quantity procured under MSP. Around Rs 2.30 lakh has been transferred to farmers' accounts directly last year alone.