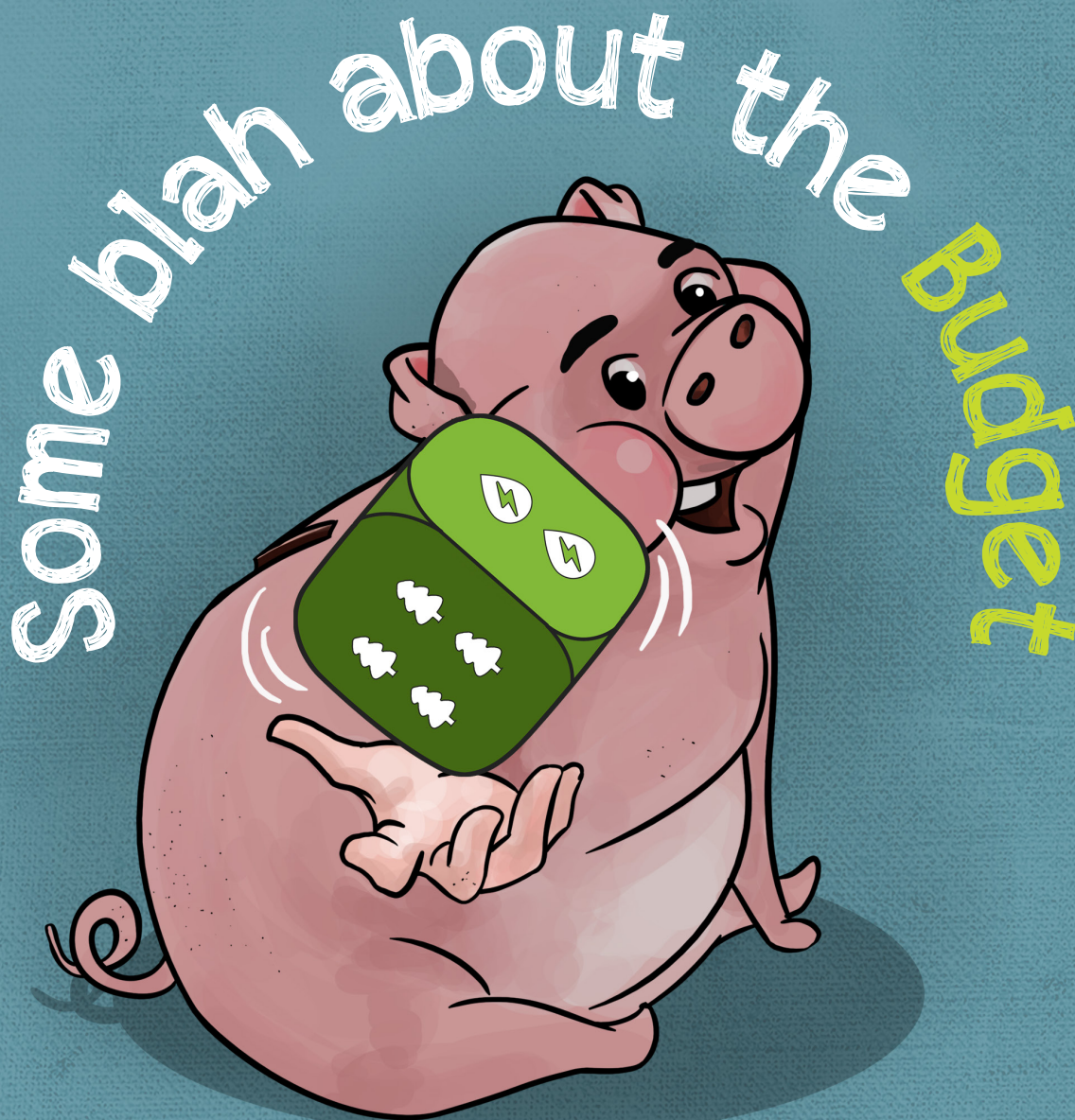


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gobar times

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A DOWN TO EARTH SUPPLEMENT FOR THE YOUNG AND CURIOUS



Persevering a seemingly unexciting and freaking topic—the **Union Budget 2023-24**—to understand why the boring is buzzing and why is it important for our kids and our environment.



Vedanshi Chaudhary

It's Not Any Snow

A refreshingly sweet and innocent observation by a child of an otherwise very worrying issue of—river pollution—with a heart-warming appeal for water conservation.

Once upon a time, during the holidays, I was travelling from Delhi to my village nearby. On the way, we guys came across the Yamuna River. Looking at the river, my younger brother instantly commented, “It doesn’t snow in Delhi even during winters. But here, on the river, it seems to have snowed in peak summers!”

Then, I explained to him that the white foam on the river surface is not snow but the chemical effluents emitted by huge factories. He was shocked to know this. Then, he uttered very dishearteningly, “I so wished to play with the snow...” My Mom and Dad chuckled on listening to his crushing desire and so did I.

You all must have noticed that the rivers around us are very dirty. Our rivers give life to

us. But because of their pollution, the fish and other organisms living in them, die. If all of you want our rivers to remain neat and clean then I have an earnest appeal to make. In fact, I appeal to everyone! Please do not dump the toxic effluents of your factories into any rivers so that our environment does not face any threat. In order to clean the rivers, our government must do a lot of work.

Thank you!

The author is a student of Class 4, Birla Vidya Niketan, New Delhi. This article has been translated from Hindi by Anubhuti Sharma.





Girishma Goyal

Nature-friendly Chores

What can you do at home to pump up the oxygen levels in your surroundings? Read this motivating account of some ordinary but nature-friendly activities.

From the past few years, my family has been undertaking certain chores which have helped us in connecting with nature in a better way. For instance, we make compost from raw fruit and vegetable scrapes, using the three-tier pot method.

At first, we gather a lot of green and brown waste from the kitchen. (Green waste means anything organic that can be composted, like domestic or kitchen waste. Brown waste refers to anything biodegradable that is predominantly carbon-based, like dry leaves, paper, etc.) We collect this waste regularly for some days. Then, one day, we put all of it in an earthen pot. After every 3-4 layers of this waste, we spread a layer of soil. To keep all of it a little moist, I sprinkle some water on it. Then, about three months later, as this mixture gradually dries, one can see some dry granules forming inside the composting pot. This is the manure which nourishes and flourishes the plants at my home. It fertilizes our sugarcane, mud apple, guava, lemon, cherry tomato, brinjal, areca palm, amla, tulsi, giloy; and many flowering plants, like rose and mogra.

During the COVID, we gladly lent our giloy to over 150 people or so, when it was assumed that it

is an immunity-booster. We also distributed many of its saplings in our neighbourhood. The giloy plant is beneficial for curing various types of fever, indigestion, stress, and anxiety; it also releases a lot of oxygen. Our areca palm also exhales oxygen 24x7 and is known for cleaning polluted air.

Lately, we began reusing our waste collection drums by turning them into plant pots. We also made flower pots out of discarded coconut shells. To do this, we first cleaned these shells to prevent any ants from feeding on the coconut pulp. We drilled holes at the shells' centre to help drain out water. Then, we tied ropes to these shells so that we could hang them in our garden. Finally, we planted small flowering plants in their coco pits and that's how we attempted to reuse our household waste.

Since the pandemic, we began offering food and water to the birds in our vicinity, and milk and bread to the stray dogs of our colony.

I hope, this protected them from starving then and is still helping them to survive and thrive in our environmentally-challenging times.



The author is a student of Class 10, Shri Ram Centennial School, Indore.



Anjor Bhaskar

WHAAAA? THE BUDGET?...

Summarizing the Union Budget in a cool, simplified, less dreadful, more interesting, nowhere mind-boggling, and in quite a thought-provoking manner.

11 am, 1st February: a moment for which people across the country wait anxiously every year. Why?

That's when our Finance Minister presents the Annual Budget of the Government of India. Err... too many big words...

So, the government is responsible for a lot of things—ensuring that we go to school, we get good learning facilities, we have good greenery, we have good law and order, we have good roads and trains, and so on and so forth. But to do all this, it needs to raise and spend money.

So, it makes an annual budget. This budget tells us about the total money it is hoping to collect over the coming year, how much it plans to spend in that year, and where it plans to spend it. The people of our country earn about Rs. 3,00,00,000+ crore in total (or over 3 crore crore)!!! This is called our country's GDP. Just try to remember it. (Quiz: *Figure out how many zeroes are there in it.*)

The government taxes this earning to spend on us. From April 2023 to March 2024, our government plans to spend Rs. 45 lakh crore out of all this money earned. The Annual Budget of India explains how this 45 lakh crore will be spent.

Every year, the government spends some of this money on different ministries and departments to get a lot of work done. Like, conducting your board exams in schools following the CBSE and state boards; building your playgrounds and stadiums; or even vaccinating you guys for any new diseases. All this allocation is listed in the budget. How much money the government allocates to a particular

thing, shows its importance for the government. Therefore, in a sense, the budget is a statement of the government's priorities.

Guess where has the government spent the most of its money?... In defense—for protecting us from any danger. The Ministry of Defence receives, by far, the largest allocation—nearly Rs. 6 lakh crore. This is followed by the ministry of road, then railways, then food, and so on.

Do you know there's a

The people of our country earn about Rs. 3 crore crore. In 2023-24, our government will spend Rs. 45 lakh crore from this. Our Annual Budget explains how this money will be spent.

our government is going to spend on a lot of environmental schemes. But how?

Well, the government appoints people—obviously, by paying salaries—to brainstorm upon the rules and regulations regarding pollution. The police and courts then penalise



is to run the government schools and colleges, and to set up the National Digital Libraries, which will provide multilingual books to students from all over India.

The Nature's Budget

We also have a Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). Caring for our environment is one of the main tasks of our government and is even mentioned in our constitution! So, our government plans to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2070. *Find out what's 'net zero,' and also how old you will be by 2070.* Hehe...

Now, the MoEFCC has received Rs. 3,000+ crore this year. It is only a slight increase over the last year's budget but we can see that the government is at least bothered about our flora and fauna. Apart from the regular tree-plantation and river-cleaning projects,



the culprits like, those throwing garbage into rivers or driving cars that emit too much smoke. Our current budget, for instance, has framed rules for protecting our wetlands. *If you guys don't know about wetlands, then quickly check out the Young Environmentalist's MasterClass: Our Vanishing Wetlands.*

The government invests money for telling people about the importance of a green environment. And how does it do so? By educating them through advertisements. It's going to call such a project, 'LIFE,' which stands for Lifestyle for Environment. Speaking about environmental awareness... There's one of your friends who's been doing it for the past 24 years! Who's it??? Yours truly, the *Gobar Times*!



And the influence of *gobar* ('cowdung' in Hindi) is quite widespread as the government is launching a GOBAR-Dhan scheme in this budget. It'll be establishing 500 'waste to wealth' plants for proper management of waste from households, industries, agriculture, etc. Also, incentives will be given for increasing the

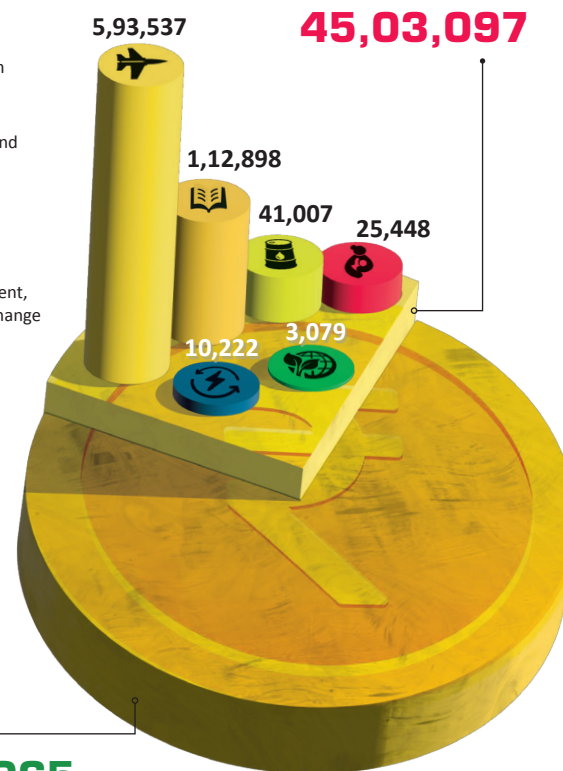
use of biogas produced from this waste. Further, we're going to have an exclusive programme for conserving mangroves. This government has launched something called MISHTI—Mangrove Initiative for... blah... blah... It's basically meant to grow more mangroves along our coasts and saltpans. For those



Budget Allocation in Rs. (Crore)

- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
- Ministry of Women and Child Development
- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Budgeted Expenditure of the Government of India
45,03,097



Projected Nominal GDP of India
3,01,75,065

of you who don't know: mangroves serve as a buffer zone between the land and the sea. Cyclones approaching from seaside can slow down and cause less damage if we have a healthy mangrove belt.

However, this budget has reduced the money meant for the National Mission for Green India, which aimed at spreading our forest cover. Our forests are anyway dwindling because of our economic activities. But these activities give us money, though, we want greenery too. So, how are we going to balance our development with the environment?

Green Growth

Green growth is an attempt to achieve economic growth while minimising environmental damage. Green growth is, therefore, one of the top-seven priorities of this year's budget.

We all know that it is highly polluting to burn fossil fuels for generating energy. Doing so emits almost 70 per cent of the global greenhouse gases. But

energy—electricity, transport fuel, etc.—is a key requirement for economic growth. That's why the government will be spending Rs. 10,000+ crore on the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. This is nearly 50 per cent higher than the previous budget but it is much less than what the government will be investing on fossil fuels this year. As pointed out in our *Down To Earth* (DTE), the allocation for the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas is as high as Rs. 41,000+ crore.

Nonetheless, funds will be invested in 'clean' energy technologies through initiatives like the National

Green growth is an attempt to achieve economic growth while minimising environmental damage. It is, therefore, one of the top-seven priorities of this year's budget.

Green Hydrogen Mission. *Find out if and why hydrogen is 'cleaner'.* A Green Credit Programme will also be started to help businesses working on sustainable practices.

Similarly, bio-fertilizers and pesticides—i.e. non-chemical fertilizers—will also be promoted. Farmers will be encouraged to adopt 'natural farming'. Further, more funds will be given to the Indian Institute of Millet Research for helping us increase millet production. And why millets...? *Quickly read the Jan'23 edition of Gobar Times.*

Now, What's Missing?

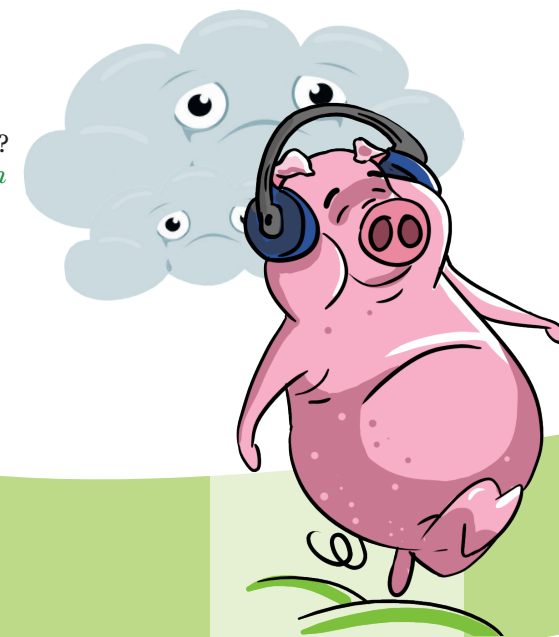
Air pollution is one of the biggest problems choking our

country today. The DTE reports that outdoor air pollution causes nearly 10 lakh deaths a year in India. One would expect the government to

focus upon this matter, right?? However, it hasn't prioritised this in the present budget.

Government bodies face huge resource crunch while implementing their pollution-control policies. Don't believe me? The next time you see someone burning garbage (illegal as per law) or chopping off a tree without permission (again illegal), try filing a complaint and getting it stopped. You'll know what a nightmare it is. Unfortunately, the budget doesn't seem to indicate that this situation would change as the government hasn't given it much concern.

Do you think that the government is doing all that it can to protect the environment? Do you think it has put money in the right places? In the right amounts? Think now.



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ALL THE BEST FOR YOUR EXAMS