

# Punjab now a ‘debt-trapped State’, say economists, seek relief from FM

In a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, a forum requested urgent steps for revival of growth momentum

The Hindu Bureau  
CHANDIGARH

Noted economists from Punjab have urged Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to take urgent steps for revival of the growth momentum in its economy as it has transitioned over the years from a “debt-stressed State” to a “debt-trapped State”.

In a joint letter to Ms. Sitharaman, economists associated with the forum ‘Economists for Public In-



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman FILE PHOTO

terest’ said Punjab witnessed a turmoil which disrupted the development process in the 1980s, and both the Central and the State governments had been preoccupied in con-

taining the militant movement and restoration of peace process which happened towards the mid-1990s.

‘Development derailed’ “The disruption was so massive that it destroyed developmental institutions, derailed the process of development despite three decades of peaceful governance by the elected governments, [and] the revival could not happen. Punjab turned from a revenue surplus to revenue def-

icit State during the mid-eighties (a peak period of turmoil) and subsequently, borrowing was substituted for meeting the needs for committed expenditure.

“Over time, Punjab has fallen into a debt trap and consequently, the most dynamic instrument of development, that is, fiscal policy turned dysfunctional,” read the letter.

The signatories to the letter included Lakhwinder Singh, visiting professor, Institute for Human Development, New Delhi; Sukh-

winder Singh, consultant, Punjab Finance Commission, Chandigarh; and Kesar Singh Bhangoo, former professor, Punjabi University, Patiala.

‘Moratorium on debt’ Mr. Lakhwinder said, “It is high time that Punjab should be granted financial package in the Budget (2023-24) of the Union government. As a first step, we suggest that moratorium on debt of Punjab may be granted at least for the next seven years.”

# Shivraj: won’t allow ‘love jihad’, will frame stricter law if needed

Shubhomoy Sikdar  
BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday said that “love jihad” (euphemism for interfaith relationships) will not be allowed in the State and, if need be, a more stringent law against it would be framed.

Mr. Chouhan’s statement, made at an event marking the martyrdom day of tribal icon Tantya Bhil at Indore’s Patalpani, comes days after he announced the formation of a committee to bring the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the State.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan

“Some people from other religions... marry the daughter of a tribal family just to buy land. This is not love, it is ‘jihad’ in the name of love, and I will not allow this game of ‘love jihad’ in Madhya Pradesh. We will not tolerate it if so-

meone cheats our daughters by marrying and then chopping them into 35 pieces. If needed, a stricter law will be made against ‘love jihad’,” said Mr. Chouhan, while referring to the murder of Shraddha Wal- kar in Delhi’s Mehrauli.

The State already has an anti-conversion law, the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 2021, which is often referred to as the “love jihad” law.

Last month, the Madhya Pradesh High Court had restrained the State government from prosecuting adult citizens “if they solemnise the marriage of their own volition”.

# Centre denying Telangana its due devolution of taxes and funds, says KCR

The Hindu Bureau  
MAHABUBNAGAR

Telangana Chief Minister and the president of Telangana Rashttra Samithi (TRS) K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Sunday asked people of the State to accompany him in taking forward the process of the State’s transformation. He cautioned the youth and intellectuals against the attempts being made to divide society by fanning communal passions.

“I will be with you and you be with me in taking forward the transformation for betterment of lives,” he said at a public meeting at Mahabubnagar on Sunday.

He accused the Centre of scuttling the progress of Telangana by denying the State due devolution of funds/taxes and imposing Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) cuts.

He also hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP-led government at the Centre.

The Prime Minister himself had spoken about toppling the TRS government, he said. Mr. Modi had also spoken of 40 MLAs of the Trinamool Congress being in touch with the BJP in West Bengal, the Chief Minister said. He sought to know whether a Prime Minister could speak like that and alleged that to en-

I will be with you [people of Telangana] and you be with me in taking forward the transformation for betterment of lives

K. CHANDRASEKHAR RAO  
Telangana Chief Minister

sure that the Opposition fall in line, the Centre is harassing them with cases and raids.

Instead of waiting for people’s verdict, the BJP is trying to come to power through the back door in some States. Mr. Rao also explained how some “thieves” had come to Telangana recently to poach TRS MLAs. But they were caught red-handed and put behind bars. “Revolt must begin from somewhere and why can’t it be from Telangana,” he asked.

Mr. Rao received a loud response from the gathering when he asked them whether he should go to Delhi with the Bharat Rashttra Samithi (BRS) to influence politics at national level. “I will go to Delhi only if you back me here strongly,” he told the gathering. He announced sanction of ₹15 crore each to the 14 constituencies in combined Mahabubnagar.

# Rajasthan: minor among five nabbed for murder of gangster Raju Theth, bystander

Press Trust of India  
SIKAR

A day after gangster Raju Theth and another man were shot dead in Sikar district of Rajasthan, five people including a minor were nabbed on Sunday for their alleged involvement in the murder, a police officer said.

Two of the accused were injured in a brief encounter with the police on Sunday, the officer added.

Additional Director General (Crime) Ravi Prakash told reporters here that Sikar residents Manish Jat, 25, and Vikram Gurjar, 28, along with Satish Kumawat, 40, Jatin Meghwal, 24, and a minor from Haryana have been detained.

Theth was killed on Saturday in a hail of bullets outside his house here. A man, Tarachand Kadwasara, who had gone to meet his daughter studying in a coaching institute there was also hit by bullets and died. The assailants fired at him, stole his car and fled in it from the spot.

Mr. Prakash said that intense search operations by 15 police teams were launched and the borders were sealed after the shooting.

An officer said that the police learnt that the accused were hiding in the Dabla area of Sikar near Haryana border. On Sunday, a raid was conducted, and Manish and Vikram were nabbed with weapons and live cartridges at around 3 a.m.

During interrogation, the duo revealed that the other accused were hiding in a hilly terrain in Jhunjhunu. The teams reached the spot and caught Satish and Jatin, along with one minor.

The accused had opened fire at the police, who fired in retaliation, resulting in Satish and Jatin received injuries, the officer added.

According to police, Theth, who had over two dozen criminal cases against him, had a rivalry with criminal Anandpal Singh, who had been killed in a police encounter in June 2017.

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