

## Old wine in new bottle: Industry

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Industry's hopes for some miracle from the second Budget of the Congress government were today dashed to the ground. The industry has termed the Budget presented by Finance Minister Manpreet Badal as merely a replication of the previous budgets of the SAD-BJP governments that had forced 18,000 industrial units to close down in the past six years.

"We strongly oppose the imposition of new tax of Rs 2,400 a year on taxpayers. We will start a protest if the government collects any such tax from the taxpayers," said Badish Jindal, president of the Federation of Punjab Small Industries Association.

Power subsidy useless

Jindal said Rs 1,400-crore power subsidy was useless for the industry as last year, the government had increased the tariff by 9.33% besides an increase of 10% in new reading of meters with KVAH factors. In October, the state government had imposed 2% municipal cess and last week again, it imposed 2% development cess, so the total increase in power charges during last year came to 23.33%.

The government has made a fool of the whole industry and imposed two-part tariff that increased the bills from 10 per cent to 40 per cent.

For skill development in Punjab, the state Budget has a mere allocation of Rs 10 crore.

"In his Budget speech, the Finance Minister talked about Industrial Policy 2017 but forgot to mention that subsidies worth more than Rs 3,000 crore are pending for 2012 and 1998 industrial policies. Looking at all these factors, we strongly condemn this Budget for ignoring the industry," said Jindal.

No package for bicycle industry

Office-bearers of the Federation of Industrial and Commercial Organisation said it was no industry friendly Budget since there is no package for the bicycle industry, which is the mother industry of Punjab. India is the second largest manufacturer of bicycles in the world. There is no special announcement for the MSME sector either, they said.

No mention of pending VAT/GST refunds

Narinder Bhamra, president of the Fasteners Manufacturers Association of India, said once again, the state Budget had disappointed the entire trade and Industry, MSMEs in particular. The major drawback of the Budget is that the debt has gone up to Rs 2,11,523 crore against the existing Rs 1,95,975 crore, which will put more burden on the entire Punjab

"There is no mention of pending VAT refunds or GST refunds. The entire trade and industry is facing a financial crisis on account of non-payment of refunds. The Budget is very disappointing and will further hamper the growth of trade and industry," said Bhamra.

Will encourage multi-tax system

Ashok Kumar Juneja and BR Kaushal, president and secretary-general, respectively, of the Punjab Tax Bar Association, said while nothing had been announced for trade and industry which was reeling under a slump, free electricity worth Rs 6,256 crore would be given to farmers.

Juneja, who is also vice-president of the Chamber of Industry and Commercial Undertakings, said taxpayers are already paying GST at the rate of 18% and income tax at the rate of 5% to 30% besides surcharge. The imposition of development tax will encourage the multi-tax system which is controlled through the GST regime, he added.