

What women are expecting from the 2019 union budget (India) ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

This being the last budget of the Narendra Modi government, citizens have high expectations. Women, on their part, are looking for measures — be it through any policy or incentive — that would leverage them at work. Shethepeople.Tv talked to two companies — Reboot and JobsForHer — which especially look after and employ women employees. Here are some of the excerpts of the discussion.

The top thing govt should address for women in the budget

“There is a dearth of top-level women managers due to lack of policies that aid in widening the talent pool and lack of measures to retain and promote women at the higher level. We would like to see Government intervention that mandates a wide variety of measures like compulsory annual diversity reports, leadership training for women, diversity training programs for corporates, mentor networks and programs and reconstruction of internal hiring operations, etc. Only when women are adequately represented at the top will we see real change,” said Vinutha Menon, PR and Communications Strategist of JobsForHer.

Reboot is more inclined towards the issue of women’s safety and said it’s a critical concern that needs to be addressed in the budget.

“Stringent measures need to be implemented for school staff and transport to ensure the safety of girls. Health facilities should also be taken into account in both rural and urban areas. Also, gender-related concerns should be looked upon both inside and outside government offices,” said Anupama Kapoor, the founder of Reboot.

The job market for women

“Women do not take up work and take career breaks due to maternity and childcare. Thus, the govt needs to step in and launch national awareness campaigns around the importance of paid work for women and care work (both paid and unpaid) for men. The government must ensure that companies have to mandatorily provide maternity insurance, maternity and paternity leave, childcare facilities before getting the licenses to operate,” said Kapoor.

“The conversation needs to move to ‘Parental Leave’ policies. Equal time off should be given to both parents and called family-friendly policies. The Government needs to be committed to reducing the burden on working parents, particularly in the first 12 months, when it is difficult to secure quality childcare as seen in an online survey we conducted for women re-starters, where 38% cited childcare as one of the biggest challenges to restarting their careers,” said Vinutha Menon.

“The Government has to mandate ‘Parental Leave’ as opposed to just maternity leave to balance the scales which will definitely enable women to engage and remain in paid employment and progress in their careers,” – Vinutha Menon

She also added that “tax-free maternity allowance would be a great incentive for women. Additionally, complementary tax benefits to SMEs and start-ups will help”.

Raising the income tax ceiling

“Raising income tax ceiling would be a small incentive. But is this enough of an incentive for women leaving the workplace by the millions? We need to see a stronger focus on getting and retaining more women in the workforce. We need impactful women specific employment policies that can absorb and support women in the Indian workplace,” said Vinutha on raising the income tax ceiling from the current amount for women.

Kapoor too agreed that this will be of great help.

Expectations from the earlier budget v/s 2019 budget

“According to the Sixth Economic Census released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, women constitute a meagre 14% of the total entrepreneurs in India, i.e. 8.05 million out of 58.5 million entrepreneurs. This indicates the dearth of women entrepreneurs which could be due to many reasons like, lack of role models and resources, the many ecosystem biases and women’s own mindsets,” said Vinutha.

"A major shift in mindsets is needed to create suitable conditions to facilitate and encourage women entrepreneurs. The Government needs to create greater accessibility to financial services and nurture supportive entrepreneurial conditions for women," Vinutha added.

Region: Asia ^[3]

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