

Akhilesh budget levies no new tax, gives boost to populist schemes

With an eye on the next Lok Sabha election — which Samajwadi Party (SP) president Mulayam Singh Yadav has already said may be held in September — Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav substantially increased allocation for the populist schemes of his government in the state's annual budget for 2013-14, which was presented in the Assembly on Tuesday.

While splurging money, the Chief Minister, however, proposed no new tax in the Rs 2,21,201.19 crore budget — which has an uncovered deficit of Rs 1,731 crore. The fiscal deficit is Rs 23,913.29 crore, which is 2.94 per cent of the state's gross domestic product.

The budget includes an annual plan of Rs 67,016.53 crore. It includes 219 new projects, having an outlay of Rs 7,787.80 crore.

The Chief Minister, who also holds the finance portfolio, presented the budget after a walkout by the main opposition Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). Leader of Opposition Swami Prasad Maurya said the budget had become a meaningless exercise after the government failure to spend a large part of the funds it had got in the last budget.

Akhilesh, meanwhile, said as much as Rs 26,641 crore in the budget had been earmarked for development of infrastructure facilities, like roads, bridges, energy and irrigation.

On agriculture and related services, the government will spend Rs 17,174 crore, while Rs 10,645 crore will be spent on health and family welfare.

The government proposes to spend Rs 20,292 crore on the welfare of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, backward classes, the handicapped and the minorities. On education, Rs 32,886 will be spent. However, a large chunk of the money on these two heads will be spent on cash transfers under various schemes.

Later, briefing the media, the Chief Minister said he had tried to provide maximum benefit to all sections of society. He also said that this was the first budget in which a hike of 21.5 per cent had been made in capital expenditure as against 9.8 per cent in revenue expenditure.

(Indian Express)