

## **GAAR to be revisited, need Plan B for land law: Arun Jaitley**

Union finance minister Arun Jaitley said on Wednesday the General Anti Avoidance Rules (GAAR) were being revisited and that a decision would be taken soon. “Whether in the present shape or in another shape, we will take a decision soon,” Jaitley said at the Indian Express’ ‘Adda’ programme, adding that the date of GAAR coming into force would also be looked at afresh.

While commenting on how the government was working on trying to fix the Land Acquisition Act, Jaitley said if the navy wanted to set up a facility, it too would have to spend 5-10 years to acquire the land. “I have no problem increasing the compensation, but the procedure cannot remain so complicated,” he said. One way out, he suggested, was that the set of exemptions must be enlarged. “Affordable housing, defence and infrastructure projects should be exempted,” the minister said. “I am suggesting a Plan B, that is more easily done.”

Commenting on why the Centre had not been more aggressive in hiking limits for, among others, defence, Jaitley said investors didn’t come into a country because of higher limits, they came because of easier business environment.

“To increase production, we just announced an acquisition programme for transport aircraft for defence but said no PSUs will be allowed – this will ensure there will be some more JVs set up,” he said.

Jaitley also said the policy of blacklisting suppliers needed to be relooked at — “there are the interests of probity and there are the interests of making acquisitions which are important”. We can’t be defensive in the defence ministry, the defence minister said, tongue only partly in cheek.

While defending India’s stand at the WTO on subsidies, Jaitley said this should not be confused with what India needs to do on cutting subsidies domestically. “We can’t give an unquantified amount to unidentifiable people,” he said, adding that the expenditure management panel, headed by Bimal Jalan, has indicated that recommendations on subsidies would be among its top priorities.

While several in the audience wanted to know when the “acche din” would come, and why the government wasn’t announcing big bang decisions faster — we expected a T20 blitzkrieg, someone asked — Jaitley said while it was not prudent to talk about cricket these days, one of the most important things in cricket was to keep your wicket and bat the full 50 overs. What comforted the audience, however, was his statement that it was important not to leave everything for the slog overs.

In response to a question on how, given the reservation for women and other groups, it was becoming difficult for single men to do well, Jaitley advised: “Try and become the prime minister!”

On the difference between the Vajpayee and the Modi governments, Jaitley said: “During the Vajpayee government, I would leave the office by 6 pm and go and have coffee at IIC... Nowadays I don’t leave before 11.”

*(Financial Express)*