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JAITLEY SLAMS BUDGET IN RAJYA SABHA

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NEW DELHI: The BJP on Monday picked holes in the General Budget, calling it an "unimaginative exercise" that merely effected a percentage change in the allocations to various departments and schemes.

Resuming his critical analysis of the Budget in Rajya Sabha, Leader of Opposition Arun Jaitley trashed the notion that the Budget would trigger growth. "If you have excise duty hikes, high taxes, poor infrastructure, dependence on nature for agriculture, how much growth is triggered by this Budget?"

Jaitley said the Budget promised tax relief to the salaried class but the relief would be offset by the fringe benefit tax. Slamming the performance of government schemes, Jaitley said the Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana had achieved a 67.6 per cent target, while only 15.67 lakh houses had been constructed out of 40.53 lakh houses under the rural housing scheme.

On one rank, one pension (OROP) for soldiers, Jaitley said minor corrections had been made in the pensions of 12 lakh soldiers but their core grievance had not been addressed.

CPI leader D. Raja dubbed the Budget anti-poor and pro-rich. Rajeve Chandrasekhar, an independent MP, said the Budget had not addressed the inflationary bias in the economy.

Congress MP Rajeve Shukla said the Budget was a balanced one with thrust on increasing farm productivity.