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**SOCIAL SECTOR RELATED GROUPS HIGHLIGHT NEED TO PROMOTE  
FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH DURING PRE-  
BUDGET CONSULTATIONS WITH UNION FINANCE MINISTER**

**New Delhi: Pausha 27, 1933  
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The Union Finance Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee said that the country's development strategy focuses on providing good health, education and development of skills of its citizens. He was addressing the representatives of about 30 Social Sector Groups who attended the today's pre-Budget consultations here. While giving a brief account of the present state of the Indian economy, the Finance Minister said that the international crisis of 2008 resulted in lowering of GDP growth and had adverse effect on inflation. However, Indian economy recovered back after the stimulus package was injected by the Government. The basis of the initial projected growth for 2011-12 was also based on the upward trajectory of growth being followed by the Indian economy in previous years. However, the global economy was again hit by the Euro Zone crisis last year which in turn again resulted in lowering of the growth prospects of domestic economy. It was seen that a slow down on the revenue side and increasing expenditure is resulting in more than targeted fiscal deficit. We are making best efforts to keep it near the target. In order to tackle inflation, the Reserve Bank of India had to adjust crucial rates of interest number of times. Thereafter the Finance Minister called for suggestions from various representatives of social sector groups.

Representatives of a large number of social sector related groups attended the today's pre-Budget meeting and gave numerous suggestions largely focusing on the need to address issues of malnutrition, skill development, infrastructure, higher investment on health, education, sanitation, housing and renewable energy among others. They stressed the need for higher transparency and taxation benefits/relief to encourage development sector. Participants suggested that the process of consultation with the social sector groups should be ongoing and should take place on a more regular basis. They said that there was a need to encourage educated professionals to work in rural areas at the cutting edge by providing them suitable incentives and loan waivers. The need to raise the NREGS wages

was also raised by a number of social sector group representatives and it was said that the national minimum wage should be rational enough to give the poor their dues. It was said that there was a need to develop and promote financial inclusion, inclusive growth and leadership among women and girls. It was stated that social audit should be made compulsory for all centrally sponsored schemes. The issue of implementation of sub-plans for scheduled castes and scheduled tribe was also raised and it was said that a dedicated sub-plan unit should be set-up in each Ministry. It was suggested that community based planning and the share of community in development benefits should increase. The need to augment infrastructure available at the Panchayat level was highlighted. It was suggested that community radios should be set-up for better interaction at the grass root level.

Beside the Finance Minister, both the Ministers of State for Finance, Shri S.S. Palanimanickam and Shri Namo Narain Meena, Chief Economic Advisor, Secretary (Financial Services), Secretary (Expenditure), Chairman, CBDT, Chairman, CBEC, Addl. Secretary Budget were present among others. The major representatives from the social sector related groups who attended the meeting were Shri Binju Abraham of PRADAN, Ms. Namrata Bali of SEWA Academy, Shri Swami Tyagarupananda of Ram Krishan Mission, Shri Sandeep Pandey of ASHA, Shri Mohamed Musa of Care India, Shri K. Shrinath Reddy of Public Health Foundation, Shri Kalyan Sundram of DHAN, Dr. Ramesh Bellamkonda of BSS, Ms. Vinatha M. Reddy of GRAMEEN KOTA, Shri Ashok Khosla of Development Alternatives Group, Shri Rajesh Tandon of PRIA, Shri D.R. Mehta of JAIPUR FOOT, Shri Amal Ganguli of HELP AGE, Dr. Rukmani Banerjee of PRATHAM, Ms. Achla Savysaachi of SA-DHAN, Ms. Rohini Nilekani of ARGHYAM, Shri Swami Agnivesh of Bandhua Mukti Morcha (BMM), Shri Ajay Mehta of Sewa Mandir, Ms. Mirai Chatterjee of SEWA Social Security, Shri Ashok Bharti of NACDOR, Shri Sanjay Jain of SANTEK, Shri Pradeep S. Mehta of CUTS, Shri Samit Aich of Greenpeace, Ms. Medha Patkar of Narmada Bachao Andolan and Shri L.V. Saptharishi of CNRI among others.

Among others who attended the meeting included Shri K.M. Acharya, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Shri Anshu Vaish, Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy, Shri Sudhir Kumar, Addl. Secretary, Ministry of Women & Child Development, Shri L.C. Goyal, Addl. Secretary & DG (CGHS), Department of Health and Family Welfare, and Shri Ravi Mathur, Addl. Secretary, Ministry of Labour among others.

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