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Budget Halwa Ceremony

Why In The News?

- Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** Will Present The **Union Budget On February 1**. The **Halwa Ceremony** To Mark The **Final Stage Of The Budget Preparation** Was Held On **January 26** At The **North Block**, Which Houses The Finance Ministry.



What Is The Budget Halwa Ceremony?

- Held Some Days Before The Budget Is To Be Presented, The Halwa Ceremony Involves The **Finance Minister Stirring A Large Pan Of The Halwa**, And The Sweet Then Being **Distributed To Ministry Officials And Staff Members**.
- The Ceremony Marks The Beginning Of The **Budget 'Lock-in' Period**. After The Halwa Is Served, Officials And Support Staff Directly Associated With The Budget Process, Its Preparation, And Printing **Stay In The North Block, Cut Off From Everyone, Including Their Families, Till The Budget Is Presented**.
- This Is Done To **Maintain The Secrecy Of The Union Budget**. The Lock-in Period Ends Only After The Finance Minister Has Given The Budget Speech In Lok Sabha. The **Halwa Is A Gesture Of Appreciation For All Those Who Work To Bring Out The Budget**.
- The **Lock-in Period Has Now Become Shorter**, As The Government Moved To **Paperless Budgets In 2021**, Thus Cutting Down The Time Needed To Print

Budget Copies. **Budget Related Documents** Are Printed At **North Block** On A Dedicated Government Press.

- **Earlier, The Documents Were Printed At Rashtrapati Bhavan, But This Was Shifted To A Press On Minto Road In The National Capital In 1950** After Documents Were Leaked, And In **1980 To North Block**.



Briefcase And Bahi Khata:

- **Till 2018**, Finance Ministers Carried The **Budget Papers** To Parliament In A **Briefcase**, A British-Era Tradition. However, In **2019**, **Sitharaman** Brought The Documents In A **Red Cloth Tied With A String**, With The **National Emblem** Emblazoned On It.
- **Red Clothes** Are Usually Used To **Cover Religious Texts**. Then Chief Economic Advisor **Krishnamurthy Subramanian** Called It A Sign Of “**Departure From Slavery Of Western Slavery**”.
- It Is In **Indian Tradition**. It Symbolizes Our **Departure From The Slavery Of Western Thought**.
- It Is Not A Budget But A ‘**Bahi Khata**’ (Ledger).



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