

Headline: Budget 2026 sharpens focus on inclusion and regional equity in education

Print Coverage:

Date	Publication	Edition
02 February, 2026	The Education Times	All

Home > Articles > Newsroom > Budget 2026 Sharpens Focus On Inclusion And Regional Equity In Education

Budget 2026 sharpens focus on inclusion and regional equity in education

From university townships, and design education to pharmaceutical research, the measures reflect a push towards industry linkages

Share



TNN | Posted February 02, 2026 12:30 PM



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced a slew of structural and inclusion-led measures for the education sector in Budget 2026, with a strong emphasis on regional balance, digital access and future-ready skills. Key proposals include establishing a new design institute in eastern India, creating five university townships, and building girls' hostels in every district to boost enrolment and retention.

The Budget also pushes Indian-language digital learning and greater investments in AI for schools. A Rs 10,000-crore bio-pharma sectoral development outlay has been earmarked to reinforce pharmaceutical education, clinical training and research ecosystems. As part of this push, the government plans to establish three new National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPERs), taking the total to 10, while upgrading seven existing NIPERs to enhance advanced training, research capacity and industry linkages. The budget also proposes supporting professional institutions such as ICAI and ICSI in developing short-term modular courses for skill enhancement and employability. To promote Astrophysics and Astronomy through immersive experiences, four telescope infrastructure facilities will be set up or upgraded — the National Large Solar Telescope, the National Large Optical-infrared Telescope, the Himalayan Chandra Telescope, and the COSMOS 2 Planetarium.

Dr PR Sodani, president, IIMR University, shares Budget 2026-27 targets from a public health management perspective. "The Rs 10,000 crore allocation for the biopharma sector reflects the government's intent to strengthen India's healthcare innovation and research ecosystem. This policy thrust not only accelerates scientific and technological advancement but also amplifies the need for professionals in pharmaceutical management to align innovation with public health priorities, regulatory frameworks, and equitable access. In addition, Budget 2026's proposal to accredit 1,000 Indian clinical trial sites is a timely and strategic move to strengthen India's life sciences ecosystem, while simultaneously accelerating skill development in clinical research management, regulatory compliance, data analytics, and ethical governance. However, as highlighted in the Economic Survey 2025-26, the National Education Policy's push for deeper industry academia integration in STEM, through curriculum co-creation, industry-led courses, and experiential learning, continues to face execution gaps," he explains.