Assam budget promises rice at Re 1, 10 gm gold to brides

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IN THE annual state budget presented on Wednesday, the BJP-led government in Assam announced rice at the subsidised rate of Re 1 for 53 lakh households, around 10 gm of gold to brides, free rice and sugar to 4 lakh families of tea garden workers and scholarship funds for girls belonging to minority communities.

Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma presented a Rs 1,193.04-crore deficit budget for 2019-20.

He announced the Affordable Nutrition and Nourishment Assistance (ANNA) Yojana under which rice, currently available at Rs 3/kg, will be further subsidised to Re 1/kg for the benefit of at least 53 lakh households. A pilot implementation project of this scheme is scheduled to start from March this year, and to identify challenges and rectify them during the full implementation in the next financial year.

On the scheme to give gold to brides, Sarma said it is a practice in large sections of Assamese society "to gift a set of gold ornaments to one's daughter as a blessing as she leaves her father's home".

Meant for economically weaker sections — families with a yearly income of less than Rs 5 lakh — the scheme can be availed after formally registering a marriage under Special Marriage (Assam) Rules, 1954.

"I am happy to announce that we shall give 'one tola gold', costing around Rs 38,000 as on today, to brides belonging to all such communities of our state where it is customary to provide gold at the time of wedding," Sarma said.

Among education schemes, Sarma announced free textbooks till graduation for students whose family income is less than Rs 2 lakh per year. He also announced that Rs 200 crore has been earmarked for scholarship schemes of girl students from minority communities.