Rs 5 lakh cover for 10 cr poor families announced under Ayushman Bharat

New Delhi, Feb 1 (IANS) Terming it as the world's largest government funded healthcare programme, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Thursday announced the National Health Protection Scheme under which Rs 5 lakh cover will be provided a year to 10 crore poor and vulnerable families in the country.

"We are now launching a flagship national health protection scheme to cover 10 crore poor and vulnerable families. This is approximately 50 crore beneficiaries, by providing them up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation," Jaitley said presenting the 2018-19 Union Budget.

Emphasising that the initiative would take healthcare protection to a new aspirational level, Jaitley said the initiative was part of Ayushman Bharat and adequate funds will be provided for its smooth implementation.

"This was aimed at making path breaking interventions to address health holistically, in primary, secondary and tertiary care systems, covering both prevention and health promotion," said Jaitley.

Under the Ayushman Bharat, the government has also decided to fund Rs 1,200 crore for 1.5 lakh health wellness centres across the nation. The decision to convert the Primary Health Centres into wellness centres was taken in last fiscal budget (2017-18). However, the money was not allocated for it.

The healthcare industry termed the government's National Health Protection Scheme as an out of the box idea, saying that it will emerge a boon for the beneficiaries.

BJP president Amit Shah tweeted: "Ayushman Bharat' is an unparalleled initiative to ensure health insurance as well as health assurance. Protecting 10 crore families i.e about 40% of India's population with a health insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family is a global first."

"My heartiest congratulations to this government for investing in creating a swasth bharat by launching the Ayushman Bharat programme. Such ambitious out of the box thinking was a burning need of the hour and the government has not disappointed. The initiative to cover 10 crore families with 5 lakh per family/per year with Insurance Cover for Secondary and Tertiary healthcare will be a game changer," said Prathap Reddy, Chairman of
Apollo Hospitals in a statement.

Jaitley stated that the two schemes will also generate lakhs of jobs, particularly for women.

According to Healthcare Foundation of India (NATHEALTH), a body focused to develop and optimize healthcare infrastructure, the National Health Protection Scheme will go a long way to achieve the goals of Universal Health Coverage.

Vivek Srivastava, CEO and Co-Founder of Healthcare at Home, a growing home healthcare provider, said the National Health Protection Scheme will benefit 40 per cent of the country's population.

"Through this initiative the government has indeed taken concrete steps in reducing India's health burden. Accessibility and affordability can further be improved for the rural population," said Srivastava.

Jaitley as part of the union budget (2018-19) also announced Rs 600 crore for nutritional support of Tuberculosis patients in India.

"The Government also decided to allocate additional Rs 600 crore to provide nutritional support to all TB patients at the rate of Rs 500 per month for the duration of their treatment," said Jaitley.

A total of 24 new government medical colleges have also been announced as part of the new initiative for health by the government.

"To enhance accessibility of quality medical education and health care, 24 new Government Medical Colleges and Hospitals will be set up, by up-grading existing district hospitals in the country," said Jaitley.

According to him, this move would ensure that there is at least one Medical College for every three Parliamentary Constituencies and at least one Government Medical College in each state of the country.

Jaitley said the government has provided affordable medicines through more than 3,000 Jan Aushadhi centres; reduced prices of stents; and provided free dialysis services for the poor.

--IANS

http://www.arkansasindian.com/desi/newsdetail.asp?id=338425
Budget 2018: Ujjwala, Sukanya and other key takeaways for women

According to the Economic Survey female labour force participation rate has declined to 24% in 2015-16 from 36% in 2005-06.

He also noted that the Sukanya Samriddhi Account Scheme that was launched in January 2015 under the "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" initiative has managed to open up 1.26 crore accounts in the name of little girls, amounting to Rs 19,183 crore.

Presenting his fifth straight budget in the Lok Sabha, Jaitley said the government will set up 24 new government medical colleges and hospitals by upgrading existing district hospitals in the country.

The budget, he said, will add to "ease of living" and "ease of doing business". "Adequate funds will be provided for smooth implementation of this programme", the finance...
minister said while presenting the budget for 2018-19. "However, addressing the HR/ talent gap through appropriate and incentivised deployment across multiple levels in healthcare service delivery will be one of the biggest challenges for the government, especially in the context of National Flagship healthcare protection scheme." says Suparna Diwakar, Co-founder, The Indian School of Development Management (ISDM), Mumbai.

As expected, there has been no change in the personal income tax rates for the salaried class even though a marginal benefit has been extended to them - a standard deduction of Rs 40,000 against travel and medical expenses (to reduce paperwork) for all, which as per the finance minister, would entail a loss of Rs 8,000 crore in revenues in the new fiscal.

Joy Rankothge, vice president at Moody's Investors Service, said the budget remained broadly in line with the government's fiscal consolidation path, and reinforced the credit rating agency's rationale for awarding India last November its first rating upgrade in 14 years.

He committed Rs 1,200 crore for the National Health Policy. "I also invite contribution of private sector through CSR and philanthropic institutions in adopting these centres", he said.

Shri Jaitley also announced that NITI Aayog will initiate a national program to direct efforts in the area of artificial intelligence.

"These schemes will also generate lakhs of jobs, particularly for women".

According to Healthcare Foundation of India (NATHEALTH), a body focused to develop and optimize healthcare infrastructure, the National Health Protection Scheme will go a long way to achieve the goals of Universal Health Coverage.

Noting that tuberculosis claims more lives every year than any other infectious disease, he said it affects mainly poor and malnourished people.

In a move to push adoption and development of new digital technologies in the country like machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of things (IoT), the finance minister announced allocation Rs 3,073 crore for the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

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"We are now launching a flagship national health protection scheme to cover 10 crore poor and vulnerable families. This is approximately 50 crore beneficiaries, by providing them up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation," Jaitley said presenting the 2018-19 Union Budget.

Emphasising that the initiative would take healthcare protection to a new aspirational level, Jaitley said the initiative was part of Ayushman Bharat and adequate funds will be provided for its smooth implementation.

"This was aimed at making path breaking interventions to address health holistically, in primary, secondary and tertiary care systems, covering both prevention and health promotion," said Jaitley.

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"My heartiest congratulations to this government for investing in creating a swasth bharat by launching the Ayushman Bharat programme. Such ambitious out of the box thinking was a burning need of the hour and the government has not disappointed. The initiative to cover 10 crore families with 5 lakh per family/per year with Insurance Cover for Secondary and Tertiary healthcare will be a game changer," said Prathap Reddy, Chairman of Apollo Hospitals in a statement.

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"Through this initiative the government has indeed taken concrete steps in reducing India's health burden. Accessibility and affordability can further be improved for the rural population," said Srivastava.

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http://www.bihartimes.in/Newsbihar/2018/Feb/newsbihar01Feb7.html
Govt push for Swasth Bharat welcome, need more: Industry

Healthcare industry today gave a thumbs up to the government's initiatives such as Rs 1,200-crore allocation for Ayushman Bharat programme and providing Rs 5 lakh annual cover to 10 crore families for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. Reacting to Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's proposals in Budget 2018-19, Apollo Hospitals Group Chairman Prathap C Reddy said: "My heartiest congratulations to this government for investing in creating a Swasth Bharat by launching the Ayushman Bharat programme." Such ambitious out-of-the box thinking was a burning need of the hour and the government has not disappointed, he added. "The initiative to cover 10 crore families with Rs 5 lakh per family per year with insurance cover for secondary and tertiary healthcare will be a game changer," Reddy added. Commenting in a similar vein, Healthcare Federation of India (Nathealth) said: "The provision of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for medical reimbursement, under National Health Protection Scheme - 'Aayushman Bharat' will go a long way to achieve the goals of universal health coverage." It also applauded the government's focus on Health Protection Scheme which would be the largest healthcare programme in the world. "FM's Budget clearly focuses on improving healthcare access for the less privileged and on 'preventive and wellness' both of which are very encouraging," Nathealth Secretary General Anjan Bose said. However, there are other critical needs which remain unmet, such as according national priority sector status to healthcare, he added."The Union Budget
2018 has taken a huge step in making healthcare affordable and accessible by launching the world's largest healthcare scheme," Apollo Hospitals MD Suneeta Reddy said. "The government has reiterated its commitment to 'Universal Healthcare' and has announced flagship schemes to provide better healthcare to people at bottom of the pyramid National Health Policy and Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana," Medical Technology Association of India (MTai) Chairman and DG Pavan Choudary said. While access to basic healthcare is an important determinant of universal healthcare, another critical factor is quality of healthcare. The latter requires access to advance healthcare technology for best health management of patients, he added. "The government should have looked at incentivising import of advance medical devices into the country by bringing down the customs duty," Choudary said.

Khaitan and Co Partner Bhavik Narsana also said the national health scheme of the government is a much needed and great initiative. This is a positive for the healthcare and pharma industry. "By providing Rs 5 lakh per year to poor families for secondary and tertiary care related hospitalisation needs, the government has indeed taken concrete steps in reducing India's health burden," HealthCare at Home CEO and Co-Founder Vivek Srivastava said.

(This story has not been edited by Business Standard staff and is auto-generated from a syndicated feed.)

First Published: Thu, February 01 2018. 15:05 IST

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Protecting 10 crore families i.e about 40% of India's population with a health insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family is a global first."

"My heartiest congratulations to this government for investing in creating a swasth bharat by launching the Ayushman Bharat programme. Such ambitious out of the box thinking was a burning need of the hour and the government has not disappointed. The initiative to cover 10 crore families with 5 lakh per family/per year with Insurance Cover for Secondary and Tertiary healthcare will be a game changer," said Prathap Reddy, Chairman of Apollo Hospitals in a statement.

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--IANS

Union Budget 2018: Will Modi government reduce income tax burden ahead of 2019 elections?

As Finance Minister Arun Jaitley gets ready to deliver his government's last regular union budget ahead of 2019 elections, speculation is rife that the Finance Minister may present a populist Budget 2018 after taking into account the political considerations. The hopes of common man is particularly high as the government is likely to dole out some sops for the middle class.

Here's what we expect Finance Minister Arun Jaitley to announce in his budget speech

Revising tax slabs and exemption limit
A proposal was recently made to the finance ministry calling for expanding the exemption limit from Rs 2.5 lakh per annum to Rs 3 lakh, if not Rs 5 lakh, and many predict that Jaitley will deliver this on February 1. After all, that's what India has clamouring for since the run up to Budget 2017. According to a recent survey conducted by LocalCircles, a citizen engagement platform, 31 per cent of respondents want the tax exemption limit to be increased from the current Rs 2.5 lakh to Rs 3 lakh. The survey, which received 1.25 lakh votes from more than 200 cities across India, also found that 37 per cent want tax slabs to be raised to lower the tax burden on people.

Industry bodies CII and FICCI have both demanded rationalisation of personal income tax slabs in their memoranda submitted to the finance ministry.

Under existing slabs, 20 per cent tax is levied on annual income of Rs 5-10 lakh while 30 per cent tax rate is applicable for personal yearly earning above 10 lakh. In the coming Budget, Jaitley may indeed tinker with tax slabs to give substantial relief to the middle class to help them tide over the impact of retail inflation, which has started inching up. He may announce a cut of 10 per cent tax rate for the Rs 5-10 lakh slab bringing it to 10 per cent. Also, a new tax slab may be introduced for annual income of Rs 10-20 lakh.

According to FICCI, there is a likelihood that demonetisation effects may linger on for some more months and hence there is a need to further boost demand. A revision of income tax slabs, by raising the income level on which peak tax rate would trigger, "would improve purchasing power and create additional demand."

Hiking investment in tax-saving schemes

At present, deduction of a maximum Rs 1.5 lakh is allowed to all individual taxpayers for investing in various tax saving schemes, such as EPF, PPF, life insurance schemes, National Savings Certificates, ELSS, etc. under section 80C. An increase in this limit will allow individuals to save more and channelize long-term savings into capital markets. Section 80C could see an increase in its limit by Rs 50,000, perhaps even higher, in Budget 2018.

Creating more jobs
The projected figure for unemployment in India in 2018, according to a UN Labour report, is 18 million. It’s a worrying picture, especially for a government that came to power promising to create 1 crore jobs after the UPA’s reign of "jobless growth". So the government could finally start delivering on Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s electoral promises by introducing the country’s first National Employment Policy (NEP) in the Budget. The multi-pronged policy will reportedly outline a comprehensive road map for creation of quality jobs across sectors through economic, social and labour policy interventions and introduce reforms to attract enterprises and help medium and small scale industries, which are major job providers.

**Focusing on skill development**

The other big finding by the LocalCircles survey is in the area of skill development and jobs, an issue on which the Opposition has repeatedly targeted the current government. The PM launched his government’s flagship scheme ‘Skill India’ in July 2015, under which the government had set itself a target of providing skill training to 40.02 crore people by 2022. According to the survey, nearly 56 per cent of respondents want Budget 2018 to allocate sizeable funds for skill development aimed at employment. After all, for a growing economy like ours, skill development is a crucial driver of employment.

**Re-introducing standard deduction on salaries**

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley may re-introduce standard deduction for salaried individuals—the industry bodies have suggested a limit of at least Rs 1 lakh on February 1 to ease tax burden and give the salaried class more money in hand to deal with rising inflation. Currently most salaried employees only get a conveyance allowance while businessmen are allowed to claim various deduction for expenses incurred towards their ventures. The concept is not alien to India. Standard deduction on salary had been introduced in India in 1974. But in 2006-07, then finance minister P. Chidambaram scrapped it in light of the recommendations of the Kelkar Committee on direct taxes—especially the increase in the basic exemption limit and the introduction of Section 80CCE. Bringing it back, according to Assocham, will give a boost to consumption demand and boost economic growth.

**Rethinking limits for tax-free reimbursements**

To further help salaried employees, Assocham has asked for re-fixing of monetary limits under HRA/transport allowance and children education. A more pressing need is to revise limits on medical reimbursements, which were capped at Rs 15,000 per annum back in 1999. Given the rising costs of healthcare, the ceiling is widely considered impractical and a revision has been on the common man’s wish list for the past several
In 2013, an Assocham survey revealed that 89 per cent wanted medical reimbursement limit increased to Rs. 50,000. A similar number of respondents raised the same demand in a 2016 survey by the body. It has also suggested for leave encashment exemption limit for tax calculation to be raised to Rs. 10 lakh. "The current limit of Rs. 3 lakh was notified by the CBDT way back in 1998 and needs to be raised substantially," said Assocham president Sunil Kanoria.

**Making housing more affordable**

According to LocalCircles Citizens' Budget 2018 Poll, 33 per cent want the government to give interest subvention, or a subsidy on interest rates, for first time homebuyers. Meanwhile, to incentivise home buyers, realtors' body NAREDCO has suggested an increase in the deduction limit of interest paid on home loan by home buyers—from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 3 lakh—in its pre-budget memorandum to the government. This will see the taxable income of home buyers coming down. The body also wants the Budget to lower the effective GST tax rate for housing under construction houses to 6 per cent.

**Increasing minimum wages**

After the labour ministry raised the minimum wages substantially in 2016, the current floor level monthly income for a family is fixed at Rs 9,100 taking Rs 350 as the daily minimum wage. The labour ministry is said to be in the process of revising the minimum wage. It is, in fact, likely to be doubled in Budget 2018 to Rs 18,000 per month. On the other hand, traders' bodies have demanded that minimum wage for all the labourers across the sectors and states should be fixed at Rs 21,000.

The government is also likely to increase allocations for social security schemes. Noted activists Baba Jadhav and Aruna Roy recently wrote a letter to Modi on the behalf of the Pension Parishad, a body linking over 100 civil society organisations working in the field of social security. The current old age pension scheme provides an assistance of mere Rs 200 to vulnerable senior citizens. The activists have sought to increase it to the level of half of the monthly minimum wage notified by the government.

**Passing the Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill 2017**

At present formal sector workers with five or more years of service are eligible for Rs 10 lakh tax free gratuity after leaving their jobs or at time of superannuation. The Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which is likely to be passed in the forthcoming Budget session, will make formal sector workers eligible for tax free Rs 20 lakh gratuity, at par with central government employees after implementation of the 7th Central Pay Commission. The amendment will also allow the central government to notify the maternity leave period for "female employees as deemed to be in continuous service in
place of existing twelve weeks”. This comes against the backdrop of the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 enhancing the maximum maternity leave period to 26 weeks.

**Reducing GST on insurance products**
Currently, only around 4 per cent of the population in the country has health insurance coverage. Out of pocket healthcare spending constitutes 86 per cent of total healthcare spend in India, according to the Healthcare Federation of India 'NATHEALTH'. The sectoral body, in its pre-budget recommendations, has urged the government to make health insurance coverage mandatory for all citizens in a phased manner, initially covering the organised sector. Cheaper insurance products is a crucial first step in this direction

With agency inputs

NHPS Could Become A Game Changer

The healthcare measures this year are path-breaking for the sheer size, coverage and the amount committed per family.

- Business Opportunities
The healthcare sector has got its required dose in this year’s budget as Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced a slew of measures that may prove to be a ‘game changer’ going forward.

Jaitley said that the government will cover 10 crore poor and vulnerable families under the new flagship National Health Protection Scheme – that effectively translates to 50 crore beneficiaries, making it the world’s largest health-protection scheme. Jaitley also said that the government will provide up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year for medical reimbursement – be it in terms of secondary or tertiary care hospitalisation.

According to data from health care fund Quadria Capital, more than 70 percent of India lives in the hinterland—of this 60 percent is poor, 35 percent is middle class and the remaining can be categorised as rich.

“The National Healthcare Protection Scheme (NHPS) announced by our FM… is a welcome move not just to maintain a healthy India but this I believe will also create several lakh new jobs in the country as new healthcare facilities will come up in smaller districts and villages,” said Antony Jacob, CEO, Apollo Munich Health Insurance. “This move will go a long way in empowering India’s poor and underprivileged,” he added.

Echoing the same sentiment, Anjan Bose, Secretary-General, NATHEALTH added that overall Union Budget 2018-19 poses to be progressive one along with some populist measures. “The FM clearly focuses on improving healthcare access for the less privileged and on preventive and wellness both of which are very encouraging,” said Bose.

The healthcare measures this year are path-breaking for the sheer size, coverage and the amount committed per family. Currently, the government provides health insurance to the tune of Rs 30,000 under Rashtriya Swasthya
Bima Yojana (RSBY) for poor families – that is enough to cover all medical needs.

Jaitley also announced the creation of health and wellness centres across the country under Bharat Ayushman Programme – a move that is intended to bring “bring healthcare closer to home”. The government will be allotted Rs 1,200 crore for this. The centres are expected to provide treatment for non-communicable diseases.

Milind Kothari, Managing Partner, Head-Tax and Regulatory services at BDO India, said: “The announcement in the area of healthcare ushers India firmly in the next generation of social security as India moves aggressively towards a progressive developing economy.” He, however, added “We would need to wait to see that we differentiate this initiative from some of the countries such as UK where NHS is failing as an anchor institution on account of lack of adequate funding by the government and also challenges on account of the flight of immigrants due to Brexit.

The measures come as a relief to the healthcare sector that has historically been struggling with a slew of long-standing fundamental issues. According to a report jointly published by KPMG and FICCI in 2016, the doctor-patient ratio in India stands at a dismal 1:1,700.

In the Union Budget 2017, there were no structural announcements made, even as the healthcare sector had got its due significance. Last year, Jaitley had announced initiatives to widen the availability of essential drugs across the country and reduce the cost of life-saving drugs.

Prathap Reddy Calls Health Insurance in Budget a "Game Changer"

DR PRATAP REDDY AND ANJAN BOSE

BS RAWAT
NEW DELHI: Shortly after the budget presentation by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on February 1, 2018, top healthcare Industry leaders reacted to different issues in the budget. Here are the reactions from people from various sectors and fields:

Dr. Prathap Reddy, Chairman, Apollo Hospitals, said, “My heartiest congratulations to this government for investing in creating a Swasth Bharat by launching the Ayushman Bharat programme. Such ambitious out of the box thinking was a burning need of the hour and the government has not disappointed.”

Dr Reddy went on to say, “The initiative to cover 10 crore families with 5 lakh per family/per year with insurance cover for secondary and tertiary healthcare will be a game changer.”

Ms. Suneeta Reddy, Executive Director of Apollo Hospitals said, “It is indeed heartening that 40% of India’s population will be covered under an insurance scheme. The problem demanded urgent attention and the government has paid heed.”

Reacting to the Budget announcements, Anjan Bose, Secretary General, the Healthcare Federation of India (NATHEALTH) has termed the overall Union Budget 2018-19 including Healthcare part as progressive along with some populist measures.

He said, “NATHEALTH applauded the government’s focus on Health Protection Scheme which would be the largest healthcare programme in the world. Announcement of 24 new medical colleges should also have positive impact on health education. With a corpus of Rs 1,200 crore, setting up 1.5 lakh healthcare centers should bring good health closer to every household. These centers will provide free essential drugs and diagnosis,” Bose added.

Arindam Haldar, CEO, SRL Diagnostics, said, “It would be a welcome step if out-patient diagnostics cost is covered under Universal Health Insurance. The absence of coverage for outpatient care and pre-existing diseases is an impediment to a comprehensive and affordable health insurance cover.”
He said, "We welcome the various health initiatives announced by the government in which limelight has been shed on the alarming rise of non-communicable and communicable diseases in India."

Reacting to Union Budget announcements Dr Aashish Chaudhry, of Aakash Healthcare Super Speciality Hospital, said, "Introduction of the world’s largest health protection scheme – Aayushman Bharat -- is a progressive measure for the healthcare sector. Providing nutritional support to TB patients is yet another welcome measure."

Sameer Sah, Associate Partner, Khaitan & Co, said, "Increase in tax allowances for health insurance will increase the opportunity on healthcare services delivery. This is an indirect fillip for not only insurance service providers but also healthcare services providers"

Pavan Choudary, Chairman & DG – Medical Technology Association of India (MTaI) said, "Quality of healthcare requires access to advanced healthcare technology for best health management of patients. The government should have looked at incentivizing import of advanced medical devices into the country by bringing down the customs duty."

He said, "There is also a need to undo the price control imposed by NPPA as the move is leading to unintended consequences on the healthcare ecosystem without any significant reduction in the cost to patient."

Sanjay Agarwal, TASS Advisors LLP said, "Proposal to launch flagship health scheme for poor is a step in the right direction as India needs medical security and steps to improve quality of education is going to help India in the medium term. Overall, the objective of the Government shifts to the poor man and is going to bring a positive outlook for rural India."

Defence gets an outlay of Rs 2.95 lakh crore

01 February 2018

The “Ayushman Bharat” initiative and the National Health Protection Scheme announced by the Finance Minister is a welcome move for the country’s healthcare development, Muttreja added.

“This is approximately 50 crore beneficiaries, by providing them up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation”, Jaitley said presenting the 2018-19 Union Budget.

Jaitley also announced a Rs 1,200-crore package to convert 1.5 lakh primary health care centres and sub-centres into “Health and Wellness” centres. The amount for defence pension was an increase of 25.60 per cent over the allocation of Rs 85,740 crore a year ago.

The scheme will also provide a family health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh per year for diseases that require stay in hospital.

"My heartiest congratulations to this government for investing in creating a "Swasth Bharat" by launching the "Ayushman Bharat" programme”.

The two schemes, he said, would generate "lakhs of jobs", particularly for women.

According to Healthcare Foundation of India (NATHHEALTH), a body focused to develop and optimize healthcare infrastructure, the National Health Protection Scheme will go a long way to achieve the goals of Universal Health Coverage.

Dilip Jose, M D and CEO, Manipal Hospitals, said the proposed national health protection scheme is an important step towards making healthcare accessible for a large section of the population and is a very welcome initiative.

"Also, the proposals aimed at growing the rural economy and income levels, when implemented, would in turn enhance the affordability of quality healthcare services”, Jose said.

The FM has allocated additional Rs 2,100 crore for rural roads under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, while the allocation for the livelihood mission has been doubled to Rs 1,200 crore.
After announcing 12 new All India Institutes of Medical Sciences since 2014, the budget had no mention of it this year; 24 new medical colleges and hospitals will instead be set up by upgrading district hospitals.

He also stressed that a district-wise strategy for improving the quality of education was being prepared.

"This would ensure that there is at least one medical college for every three parliamentary constituencies and at least one government medical college in each state of the country", he said.

Jaitely invited contribution from the corporate sector - through the corporate social responsibility route - and private philanthropic outfits to adopt the "Health and Weiness" centres.

Budget 2018: Eight measures Arun Jaitley should look into to provide relief to taxpayers

With Budget 2018 being the last full Budget before the general elections in 2019, expect Minister of Finance Arun Jaitley to announce a slew of sops and major relief to taxpayers.

Here are a few banking, finance and insurance industries are hoping for:

1) **Exclusive tax exemption on term insurance**: Currently, section 80C allows for a maximum exemption of Rs 1.5 lakh for premium paid towards a life cover. The industry believes that term insurance is a better option as it provides adequate cover at much lower premiums. We expect that the Budget 2018 will provide for an exclusive tax exemption of up to Rs. 20,000 for premiums paid towards a term insurance in addition to the current 1.5 lakh available for life.

2) **Revised GST for insurance**: As a result of GST, the price of insurance has gone up by anywhere between 3 percent to 18 percent. The insurance industry has suggested that the term insurance be treated as an essential and not be taxed under GST. It is currently in the 18 percent bracket and we expect it to move to a lower bracket at least. This is important as only 8 percent of India’s population, according to report released by PolicyBazaar.com, is covered by any insurance at all - health, life or ULIP, and pure life insurance penetration is abysmal. We, as an industry, have been pushing for term insurance to be made mandatory for all citizens in a phased manner to make social security net be available to all. GST exemption will be a step in the right direction.
3) **Increased and deferential exemption under 80D:** According to the statement released by NATHEALTH in the lead up to the Budget, only 4 percent of India’s population has health coverage, and most of it is inadequate to deal with the rapidly escalating medical costs. The low penetration of health insurance results in 86 percent of the healthcare spending being out of pocket and, as per a 2011 paper published by TISS, India, one-sixth of India’s poverty resulting from those unavoidable out-of-pocket expenses. We expect the government to increase the tax exemption limit under section 80D to allow for higher premiums required for adequate coverage today. Further, with the percentage of ageing population on the rise across significant regions of the country, the government has to provide additional help to the senior citizens. In this regard, we expect that the Budget would include increased exemption for senior citizens who are themselves the proposers for health insurance.

4) **Increased subsidies on housing loan:** Recently the government had announced interest rate subsidy for middle income households on home loan. At present, it stands at 4 percent for households earning Rs 8 lakh to Rs 12 lakh on a loan of upto Rs 9 lakh, and 3 percent for Rs 12 lakh to Rs 18 lakh on a loan of upto Rs 12 lakh. We expect that these limits to be increased across the board to make housing more affordable despite the rising inflation.
5) **Higher TDS limit on bank interest:** The current limit for deducting tax at the source on bank interest is set at Rs 10,000. This limit was set way back in 1997. We expect this to be revised in the Budget 2018 as this is long due and will effectively ensure more interests for bank customers.

6) **Promote UPI:** With smartphone penetration already high and increasing across the nation, a switch from the current POS systems to UPI will be effective for all parties involved. We hope that the government will find ways to promote UPI aggressively. At present, the adoption has been low and the government will also have to apportion some funds for the development of the software backbone to handle increased transactions. UPI is not only scalable but also easier to maintain than the current POS.

7) **Push for e-KYC:** Given the government's commitment to go paperless, we expect a greater push for e-KYC and e-Sign across the board. This will not only simplify processes and documentation across industries but will also have cost benefits for all parties involved. This would also have far-reaching consequences for financial inclusion.
allowing the bankers and insurers reach out to the vast majority of Indians who remain excluded from access to loans, insurance and mutual funds for one or the other reason.

8) **Change taxation on FD:** Most Indians prefer to invest in fixed deposits because they are considered safe investments vis-a-vis other instruments. But these do not perform well from a post-tax returns perspective. For someone who is in the 30 percent tax bracket, a 7 percent tax bracket earns under 5 percent interest. We hope that the Minister of Finance would bring the taxation on FD on par with mutual funds. That is, they will only be taxed on redemption and the interest will be treated as long term capital gains if the redemption is at least three years after the purchase. This will significantly reduce the tax outlay for the investor.

Union Budget 2018: Government push for Swasth Bharat welcome, need more, says industry

Union Budget 2018: Healthcare industry today gave a thumbs up to the government's initiatives such Rs 1,200-crore allocation for Ayushman Bharat programme and providing Rs 5 lakh annual cover to 10 crore families for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation.

By: PTI | New Delhi | Published: February 1, 2018 4:32 PM
family/per year with insurance cover for secondary and tertiary healthcare will be a game changer,” Reddy added. (Reuters)

Union Budget 2018: Healthcare industry today gave a thumbs up to the government’s initiatives such Rs 1,200-crore allocation for Ayushman Bharat programme and providing Rs 5 lakh annual cover to 10 crore families for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. Reacting to Finance Minister Arun Jaitley’s proposals in Budget 2018-19, Apollo Hospitals Group Chairman Prathap C Reddy said: “My heartiest congratulations to this government for investing in creating a Swasth Bharat by launching the Ayushman Bharat programme.” Such ambitious out-of-the box thinking was a burning need of the hour and the government has not disappointed, he added. “The initiative to cover 10 crore families with Rs 5 lakh per family/per year with insurance cover for secondary and tertiary healthcare will be a game changer,” Reddy added.

Income tax Calculator: Calculate impact of Arun Jaitley’s Budget 2018 on your tax liability

Commenting in a similar vein, Healthcare Federation of India (Nathealth) said: “The provision of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for medical reimbursement, under National Health Protection Scheme – ‘Aayushman Bharat’ will go a long way to achieve the goals of universal health coverage.” It also applauded the government’s focus on Health Protection Scheme which would be the largest healthcare programme in
the world. “FM’s Union Budget 2018 clearly focuses on improving healthcare access for the less privileged and on ‘preventive and wellness’ both of which are very encouraging,” Nathealth Secretary General Anjan Bose said. However, there are other critical needs which remain unmet, such as according national priority sector status to healthcare, he added.

“The Union Budget 2018 has taken a huge step in making healthcare affordable and accessible by launching the world’s largest healthcare scheme,” Apollo Hospitals MD Suneeta Reddy said. “The government has reiterated its commitment to ‘Universal Healthcare’ and has announced flagship schemes to provide better healthcare to people at bottom of the pyramid – National Health Policy and Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana,” Medical Technology Association of India (MTaI) Chairman and DG Pavan Choudary said. While access to basic healthcare is an important determinant of universal healthcare, another critical factor is quality of healthcare. The latter requires access to advance healthcare technology for best health management of patients, he added. “The government should have looked at incentivising import of advance medical devices into the country by bringing down the customs duty,” Choudary said.
Khaitan and Co Partner Bhavik Narsana also said the national health scheme of the government announced in the Union Budget 2018 is a much needed and great initiative. This is a positive for the healthcare and pharma industry. “By providing Rs 5 lakh per year to poor families for secondary and tertiary care related hospitalisation needs, the government has indeed taken concrete steps in reducing India’s health burden,” HealthCare at Home CEO and Co-Founder Vivek Srivastava said.
Budget 2018: Eight measures Arun Jaitley should look into to provide relief to taxpayers

India Parag Gupta Jan 31, 2018 23:07:09 IST

With Budget 2018 being the last full Budget before the general elections in 2019, expect Minister of Finance Arun Jaitley to announce a slew of sops and major relief to taxpayers.

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*(The writer is Chief Underwriting Officer, Bharti AXA General Insurance)*

Budget 2018: National Health Security Scheme is a game-changer, say Doctors

Mumbai: Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley on Thursday budget announced the ‘National Health Security Scheme’, the world’s largest healthcare scheme. Under the programme, Jaitley announced a new Flagship National Health Protection Scheme, providing health insurance cover of Rupees 5 lakhs per family per year. Most of the doctors claim that health insurance would be a game changer in the future. This would help poor patients to procure treatment that would indirectly help in decreasing the burden of diseases.

“NATHEALTH had recommended making health insurance mandatory and National Health Protection Scheme partly covers the insurance needs of the country.”
However, there are other critical needs which remain unmet,” said Anjan Bose, Secretary General, NATHEALTH.

It is a very welcome step taken by the government of India to provide subsidised healthcare for the poor in the country. “The only challenge here from an infrastructure perspective is to build the essential point of care network to deliver these benefits to the patients. It is a grand move by the government towards strengthening Aarogya Bharat,” said Dr. Sujit Chatterjee, CEO, Hiranandani Hospital.

“Apart from this, there should be some big announcement on Mental Health. The number of patients suffering from mental problems in the country is increasing, in such a situation the government should have given special attention to this in the budget,” said Dr Sagar Mundada, psychiatrist practising at Bhabha Hospital, president IMA, Youth Wing Maharashtra. “The insurance plan is a good initiative, but the government needs to focus more on improving the infrastructure so that poor people can procure better treatment,” said Dr Vishal Beri, CEO, Hinduja Healthcare Surgical, Khar.

Rs 5 lakh cover for 10 cr poor families announced under Ayushman Bharat

IANS

New Delhi, Feb 1 (IANS) Terming it as the world's largest government funded healthcare programme, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Thursday announced the National Health Protection Scheme under which Rs 5 lakh cover will be provided a year to 10 crore poor and vulnerable families in the country.

"We are now launching a flagship national health protection scheme to cover 10 crore poor and vulnerable families. This is approximately 50 crore beneficiaries, by providing them up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation," Jaitley said presenting the 2018-19 Union Budget.

Emphasising that the initiative would take healthcare protection to a new aspirational level, Jaitley said the initiative was part of Ayushman Bharat and adequate funds will be provided for its smooth implementation.

"This was aimed at making path breaking interventions to address health holistically, in primary, secondary and tertiary care systems, covering both prevention and health promotion," said Jaitley.
Under the Ayushman Bharat, the government has also decided to fund Rs 1,200 crore for 1.5 lakh health wellness centres across the nation. The decision to convert the Primary Health Centres into wellness centres was taken in last fiscal budget (2017-18). However, the money was not allocated for it.

The healthcare industry termed the government's National Health Protection Scheme as an out of the box idea, saying that it will emerge a boon for the beneficiaries.

BJP president Amit Shah tweeted: "Ayushman Bharat' is an unparalleled initiative to ensure health insurance as well as health assurance. Protecting 10 crore families i.e about 40% of India's population with a health insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family is a global first."

"My heartiest congratulations to this government for investing in creating a swasth bharat by launching the Ayushman Bharat programme. Such ambitious out of the box thinking was a burning need of the hour and the government has not disappointed. The initiative to cover 10 crore families with 5 lakh per family/per year with Insurance Cover for Secondary and Tertiary healthcare will be a game changer," said Prathap Reddy, Chairman of Apollo Hospitals in a statement.

Jaitley stated that the two schemes will also generate lakhs of jobs, particularly for women.

According to Healthcare Foundation of India (NATHEALTH), a body focused to develop and optimize healthcare infrastructure, the National Health Protection Scheme will go a long way to achieve the goals of Universal Health Coverage.

Vivek Srivastava, CEO and Co-Founder of Healthcare at Home, a growing home healthcare provider, said the National Health Protection Scheme will benefit 40 per cent of the country's population.

"Through this initiative the government has indeed taken concrete steps in reducing India's health burden. Accessibility and affordability can further be improved for the rural population," said Srivastava.

Jaitley as part of the union budget (2018-19) also announced Rs 600 crore for nutritional support of Tuberculosis patients in India.

"The Government also decided to allocate additional Rs 600 crore to provide nutritional support to all TB patients at the rate of Rs 500 per month for the duration of their treatment," said Jaitley.

A total of 24 new government medical colleges have also been announced as part of the new initiative for health by the government.
"To enhance accessibility of quality medical education and health care, 24 new Government Medical Colleges and Hospitals will be set up, by up-grading existing district hospitals in the country,” said Jaitley.

According to him, this move would ensure that there is at least one Medical College for every three Parliamentary Constituencies and at least one Government Medical College in each state of the country.

Jaitley said the government has provided affordable medicines through more than 3,000 Jan Aushadhi centres; reduced prices of stents; and provided free dialysis services for the poor.

http://www.ianslive.in/index.php?param=news/Rs_5_lakh_cover_for_10_cr_poor_families_announced_under_Ayushman_Bharat-577845/NATION/1
India: Rs 500,000 cover for 100 million poor families announced under Ayushman Bharat

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New Delhi: Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley presenting the Union Budget 2018-19 at Parliament on Feb. 1, 2018. (Photo: Video Grab/IANS) IANS
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http://www.ibtimes.sg/india-rs-500000-cover-100-million-poor-families-announced-under-ayushman-bharat-24012
बजट 2018: इन चीजों की कीमतों पर पड़ेगा असर..

हर मिडिल क्लास भारतीय के लिए बजट में क्या सस्ता हुआ और क्या महंगा ये बहुत बड़ी बहस और चिंता का विषय होता है, लेकिन इस साल से सस्ता और महंगे के लिस्ट लोगों को मिलेगी नहीं..

इकोनॉमी
| 3-मिनट में पढ़े | 31-01-2018

श्रुति दीक्षित

@SHRUTI.DIXIT.31

यूनियन बजट आने को अब बहुत कम समय रह गया है और एक बार फिर क्या सस्ता होगा और क्या महंगा होगा इस बारे में बहस होने लगी है . लेकिन क्या इस बहस की जरूरत है? हर मिडिल क्लास भारतीय के लिए बजट में क्या
सस्ता हुआ और क्या महंगा ये बहुत बड़ी बहस और चिंता का विषय होता है ,
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कारण?

कारण ये है कि इस बार कस्टम ड्यूटी और एक्साइज ड्यूटी है ही नहीं जो
बदली जाएगी . पेट्रोल और पेट्रोलियम रोडक्रॉस को छोड़कर बाकी सब कुछ
जीएसटी के अंतरगत आ गया है. तो कीमतों में कोई भी बदलाव होगा जो
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और महंगा होने की उम्मीद नहीं दिखती . यही कारण है कि जीएसटी के बाद
बजट में बदलाव होगा.

पर फिर भी कयासों की मानें तो कुछ चीजों पर असर पड़ सकता है
इकोनॉमिक पंडितों के अनुसार स्मार्टफोन्स पर असर पड़ सकता है.

स्मार्टफोन्स...

हर कोई ये उम्मीद जता रहा है कि स्मार्टफोन्स को लेकर कोई भी घोषणा हो
सकती है . ऐसी उम्मीद लगाई जा रही है कि स्मार्टफोन्स सस्ते हो जाएगे .
COMIO स्मार्टफोन्स के सीईओ और डायरेक्टर संजय कांडरोना के अनुसार
जीएसटी को कम कर देना चाहिए जो भारत में मोबाइल इंडस्ट्री को बढ़ावा देगा.
भारत सबसे तेजी से बढ़ने वाला मोबाइल मार्केट है और यहां गैजेट्स के दाम
कम होना बहुत ज्यादा फायदा पहुंचाएगा. इसलिए स्मार्टफोन्स के दाम कम होने
चाहिए.
इसलिए कम या बढ़ सकते हैं दाम...

हमारे देश में भाले ही बाकी आइटम पर जीएसटी लगा हो , लेकिन इम्पोर्ट में अभी भी IGST (इंटरनेशनल जीएसटी) के साथ कस्टम ड्यूटी लगाई जाती है . ऐसा माना जा रहा है कि इस बार बजट खास तौर पर मेक इन इंडिया पर ध्यान दिया जाएगा और इसलिए कस्टम ड्यूटी में बदलाव किए जा सकते हैं . जो भी इम्पोर्टेड स्मार्टफोन्स हैं वो महंगे हो सकते हैं और जो मेक इन इंडिया वाले हैं वो सस्ते हो सकते हैं.

सेहत के मामले में सुधार...

जी यहां लोगों की सेहत नहीं बल्कि हेल्थ सेक्टर की बात हो रही है . सीनियर सिटिजन के लिए स्वास्थ्य सेवाएं सस्ती हो सकती हैं . भारत के हेल्थकेयर फेडरेशन 'NATHEALTH' के मुताबिक सरकार को हेल्थ इंश्योरेंस भारत के सभी नागरिकों के लिए अनिवार्य कर देनी चाहिए जैसे विदेशों में होता है . भारत को भी हेल्थकेयर को सबसे ऊपर रखना चाहिए .

नैटहेल्थ ने कई सारे सुझाव दिए हैं और अगर ये मान लिए जाते हैं तो 75 साल तक हेल्थ इंश्योरेंस अनिवार्य करी जा सकती है जो अभी 65 साल तक के लिए ही है . साथ ही साथ स्वास्थ्य सेवाएं सस्ती हो जाएंगी . गौरतब है कि लाइफ सेविंग ड्रग्स पिछले बजट में भी स स्ते किए गए थे और यही ट्रेंड इस बार भी देखने को मिल सकता है.
बाकी अगर किसी बड़ी घोषणा की बात की जाए तो टैक्स एक्जेम्पशन लिमिट कम हो सकती है और अगर ऐसा हो गया तो नौकरीपेशा लोगों के लिए ये राहत की बात होगी.

Govt push for Swasth Bharat welcome, need more:

Industry

Healthcare industry today gave a thumbs up to the government's initiatives such Rs 1,200-crore allocation for Ayushman Bharat programme and providing Rs 5 lakh annual cover to 10 crore families for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. Reacting to Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's proposals in Budget 2018-19, Apollo Hospitals Group Chairman Prathap C Reddy said: "My heartiest congratulations to this government for investing in creating a Swasth Bharat by launching the Ayushman Bharat programme. "Such ambitious out-of-the box thinking was a burning need of the hour and the government has not disappointed, he added."The initiative to cover 10 crore families with Rs 5 lakh per family/per year with insurance cover for secondary and tertiary healthcare will be a game changer," Reddy added. Commenting in a similar vein, Healthcare Federation of India (Nathealth) said: "The provision of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for medical reimbursement, under National Health Protection Scheme - 'Aayushman Bharat' will go a long way to achieve the goals of universal health coverage." It also applauded the government's focus on Health Protection Scheme which would be the largest healthcare programme in the world."FM's Budget clearly focuses on improving healthcare access for the less privileged and on 'preventive and wellness' both of which are very encouraging," Nathealth Secretary General Anjan Bose said. However, there are other critical needs which remain unmet, such as according national priority sector status to healthcare, he added."The Union Budget 2018 has taken a huge step in making healthcare affordable and accessible by launching the world's largest healthcare scheme," Apollo Hospitals MD Suneeta Reddy.
The government has reiterated its commitment to 'Universal Healthcare' and has announced flagship schemes to provide better healthcare to people at bottom of the pyramid National Health Policy and Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana," Medical Technology Association of India (MTaI) Chairman and DG Pavan Choudary said. While access to basic healthcare is an important determinant of universal healthcare, another critical factor is quality of healthcare.

The latter requires access to advance healthcare technology for best health management of patients, he added. "The government should have looked at incentivising import of advance medical devices into the country by bringing down the customs duty," Choudary said. Khaitan and Co Partner Bhavik Narsana also said the national health scheme of the government is a much needed and great initiative. This is a positive for the healthcare and pharma industry. "By providing Rs 5 lakh per year to poor families for secondary and tertiary care related hospitalisation needs, the government has indeed taken concrete steps in reducing India's health burden," HealthCare at Home CEO and Co-Founder Vivek Srivastava said.

(This story has not been edited by Business Standard staff and is auto-generated from a syndicated feed.)

http://in.shafagna.com/EN/06552912
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Published: February 1, 2018 3:10 PM IST

By PTI Feeds

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Union Budget 2018: Senior citizens expect cheaper healthcare, health insurance, but what does 2018 have in store?

In this year's budget, the top most expectation continues to be income tax benefit. In the current fiscal, the taxpayers are expecting more tax advantage under section 80D.

Reported by: Ruchi Dua, New Delhi [ Updated: January 31, 2018 19:21 IST ]

As Finance Minister Arun Jaitley is all set to present the Union Budget 2018 on February 1, the industry experts and consumers have pinned high hopes for an increase in budget allocation and expenditure for the health sector.

In this year's budget, the top most expectation continues to be income tax benefit. In the current fiscal, the taxpayers are expecting more tax advantage under section 80D. Many in the industry are also expecting a reduction in the cost of term insurance by reducing the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the country's biggest tax reform. As experts feel that since the launch of the GST, the product costs have gone up drastically.

While senior citizens are of the view that the Modi government should try to make health at cheaper cost at private hospitals, the Healthcare Federation of India 'NATHEALTH' opines that the government should make health insurance mandatory
for all people and like foreign countries even India should give healthcare priority sector status.

“Hope that the government starts regulating the health insurance premiums for senior citizens. Of late we have seen extraordinary rise of premiums in higher age categories and believe that if trend was to continue, soon it will become exorbitantly expensive to extend coverage and to sustain it”, says Deepak Mendiratta, Managing Director at HII Insurance Broking Services Private Limited.

“Given an increase in longevity and an increase in incident rate of hospitalisation of elderly, they need protection more than anyone else. The following is what we request the government to consider:

1. Subsidising health insurance cover for seniors in certain categories.
2. Making it mandatory for insurers to offer health insurance compulsorily till age 75 rather than the current 65 years.
3. Regulate to allow ease in medical underwriting of seniors. Whose policy proposals are often declined by insurers based on morbidities which they typically have as common in this age group.
4. Much like social sector obligation/rural obligation, health insurance portfolio should as well be made compulsory. So to say, a minimum percentage of portfolio should comprise of seniors,” says Mendiratta who also runs PlanCover.com.

Meanwhile, recent cases like that of a newborn being declared dead by Delhi's Max hospital and the Fortis Hospital at Gurugram charging as high as 1700 per cent margin on consumables and medicines used for the treatment of seven-year-old dengue patient who subsequently died have already raised question marks on the condition of healthcare in India.
“As these days, lifestyle ailments are on the rise and so are the hospital costs, we are keeping our fingers crossed and expect Modi government to come up with better healthcare plans”, says 72-year-old retired banker, Sudarshan Singh. Even PM Narendra Modi has time and again talked about healthcare in India. In August last year, PM Modi had said that his government was leaving no stone unturned in providing quality healthcare that is accessible and affordable. "On #WorldHealthDay, I pray that you are blessed with wonderful health, which gives you the opportunity to pursue your dreams & excel," the prime minister had tweeted. "When it comes to healthcare, our government is leaving no stone unturned to provide quality healthcare that is accessible & affordable," he added.

If reports are to be believed, in the upcoming budget, the Modi government may allocate Rs 5,000 crore under 'NATHEALTH'. The scheme will be divided into three types -- Kalyan Scheme, Saubhagya Scheme and Sarvodaya scheme -- that will cover people below poverty line, within the range of Rs 2 lakh annual income, and above Rs 2 lakh income respectively. As the budget 2018 inches close, people have started building expectations on slew of likely announcements and reforms, but what actually is in store will be clear only when the finance minister opens his briefcase in barely a week from now.
India Budget 2018

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley began unveiling his 2018/19 federal budget on Thursday aiming for stronger economic growth to win over voters ahead of a national election next year while trying to maintain fiscal restraint.

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PTI@moneycontrolcom

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New Delhi: Terming it as the world’s largest government funded healthcare programme, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Thursday announced the National Health Protection Scheme under which Rs 5 lakh cover will be provided a year to 10 crore poor and vulnerable families in the country.

“We are now launching a flagship national health protection scheme to cover 10 crore poor and vulnerable families. This is approximately 50 crore beneficiaries, by providing them up to Rs 5 lakh per family per
year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation,” Jaitley said presenting the 2018-19 Union Budget.

Emphasising that the initiative would take healthcare protection to a new aspirational level, Jaitley said the initiative was part of Ayushman Bharat and adequate funds will be provided for its smooth implementation.

“This was aimed at making path breaking interventions to address health holistically, in primary, secondary and tertiary care systems, covering both prevention and health promotion,” said Jaitley.

Under the Ayushman Bharat, the government has also decided to fund Rs 1,200 crore for 1.5 lakh health wellness centres across the nation. The decision to convert the Primary Health Centres into wellness centres was taken in last fiscal budget (2017-18). However, the money was not allocated for it.

The healthcare industry termed the government’s National Health Protection Scheme as an out of the box idea, saying that it will emerge a boon for the beneficiaries.

BJP president Amit Shah tweeted: “Ayushman Bharat’ is an unparalleled initiative to ensure health insurance as well as health assurance. Protecting 10 crore families i.e about 40% of India’s population with a health insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family is a global first.”

“My heartiest congratulations to this government for investing in creating a swasth bharat by launching the Ayushman Bharat programme. Such ambitious out of the box thinking was a burning need of the hour
and the government has not disappointed. The initiative to cover 10 crore families with 5 lakh per family/per year with Insurance Cover for Secondary and Tertiary healthcare will be a game changer,” said Prathap Reddy, Chairman of Apollo Hospitals in a statement.

Jaitley stated that the two schemes will also generate lakhs of jobs, particularly for women.

According to Healthcare Foundation of India (NATHEALTH), a body focused to develop and optimize healthcare infrastructure, the National Health Protection Scheme will go a long way to achieve the goals of Universal Health Coverage.

Vivek Srivastava, CEO and Co-Founder of Healthcare at Home, a growing home healthcare provider, said the National Health Protection Scheme will benefit 40 per cent of the country’s population.

“Through this initiative the government has indeed taken concrete steps in reducing India’s health burden. Accessibility and affordability can further be improved for the rural population,” said Srivastava.

Jaitley as part of the union budget (2018-19) also announced Rs 600 crore for nutritional support of Tuberculosis patients in India.

“The Government also decided to allocate additional Rs 600 crore to provide nutritional support to all TB patients at the rate of Rs 500 per month for the duration of their treatment,” said Jaitley.

A total of 24 new government medical colleges have also been announced as part of the new initiative for health by the government.
“To enhance accessibility of quality medical education and health care, 24 new Government Medical Colleges and Hospitals will be set up, by up-grading existing district hospitals in the country,” said Jaitley.

According to him, this move would ensure that there is at least one Medical College for every three Parliamentary Constituencies and at least one Government Medical College in each state of the country.

Jaitley said the government has provided affordable medicines through more than 3,000 Jan Aushadhi centres; reduced prices of stents; and provided free dialysis services for the poor.

http://odishatv.in/nation/ayushman-bharat-worlds-biggest-health-care-scheme-273052
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Healthcare industry welcomes Union Budget 2018

Our Bureau, Mumbai
Thursday, February 1, 2018, 15:40 Hrs [IST]

The healthcare industry in the country has hailed the Union Budget presented in Parliament today by Finance Minister Arun Jaitly.

“My heartiest congratulations to this government for investing in creating a Swasth Bharat by launching the Ayushman Bharat programme. Such ambitious out of the box thinking was a burning need of the hour and the government has not disappointed. The initiative to cover 10 crore families with 5 lakh per family/per year with insurance cover for secondary and tertiary healthcare will be a gamechanger,” said Dr Prathap Reddy, chairman, Apollo Hospitals.

Welcoming the budget, former IMA chairman Dr KK Aggarwal said, “The creation of 1.5 lakh centres will bring health care closer to the homes of the people. These will provide comprehensive health care including NCDs and maternal and health services. And also provide free essential drugs and diagnostic tests. 1,200 crore allocated for this flagship project. Flagship ‘National health protection scheme’ launched to cover 10 crore poor and vulnerable families meaning 50 crore beneficiaries by providing 5 lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization. This will be the world’s largest government funded national health program. These two new initiatives under Ayushman Bharat program will build a new India 2022 and ensure or enhance productivity and wellbeing and avert impoverishment. We are progressing towards universal health coverage”.

Rajiv Mathur, Founder, Critical care Unified said, "It is really encouraging to see that the government has laid strong emphasis on healthcare by announcing the World's Largest Health Protection Plan. We are confident that progressively, similar importance will be given to home healthcare which is fast becoming an important element in the health management value chain"

“We welcome the Government’s move of taking note of air pollution being a concern and extending a scheme/subsidy to encourage industries to reduce their pollution footprint. We look forward to receiving the details of the scheme. However, there is more than the crop residue that causes air pollution and we urge the Government to include tax incentives, grants and progressive policies that could bring the growth impetus to the industrial and domestic air filtration market and also look at reducing customs duties on air purifiers/high quality filters to be used for lowering dust levels indoors of homes and commercial
buildings,” said PKSV Sagar, MD, Camfil India.

According to Debayan Ghosh, founder & president of Epygen Biotech, “Fuelled by the 1,200 crore allocation for healthcare, what is exciting is the 1.5 lakh new healthcare centres that are going to be initiated. For a country that presents the highest number of patients in area of breast cancer and head and neck (oral) cancer cases in the world, these centres needs to be equipped with primary Onco scanning and treatment options. An early detection and treatment option would reduce healthcare cost burden on the Indian exchequer by several thousand crores in terms of disability adjusted life years (DALY). But, biotech industry expectations for dedicated research funds in the area of biosimilars development and regulatory ecosystem remains unattended. India definitely requires financial focus to ramp up this area and craft out its position in the world healthcare scene”.

The Healthcare Federation of India (Nathealth) has termed the overall Union Budget 2018-19 including healthcare part as progressive along with some populist measures. “Nathealth had recommended making health insurance mandatory and National Health Protection Scheme partly covers the insurance needs of the country. However, there are other critical needs which remain unmet- eg. according National Priority Sector Status to healthcare,” said Anjan Bose, Secretary General, Nathealth.

Naresh Jain, CEO, Ziqitza Healthcare, said, “We applaud the announcements made by the Government in the Union Budget 2018 which has indeed addressed a lot of issues that will help the economy to prosper. It aims in creating the largest healthcare blanket for the biggest democracy of the world. The Government's initiative of setting up 1.5 lakh health facilities across the country will help bring healthcare closer to homes of the people, and will enable them to receive medical help within the golden hour hence improving the chances of survival. Granting 50 crore beneficiaries and 10 crore families, 5 lakh rupees per year cover secondary and tertiary hospital expenses is a breakthrough move and the world's largest government-funded healthcare programme. This will allow the poor to access world class healthcare facilities which was not affordable or available earlier. Also, the announcement of setting up one medical college for every three parliamentary constituencies is great as this will help in training the emergency medical technicians which will, in turn revolutionize the quality of care of the emergency medical response services in the country.”

According to Arindam Haldar, CEO, SRL Diagnostics, “The announcement of universal health insurance at Rs. 5 lakh medical cover per year for 10 crore poor families across the country, is an appreciable step. Also, the allocation of Rs. 1,200 crore for health and wellness centres clearly indicates that health sector has received utmost priority in this budget. It would be a welcome step if out-patient diagnostics costs/coverage is covered in this limit. The absence of coverage for outpatient care and pre-existing
diseases is an impediment to a comprehensive and affordable health insurance cover. Also, specific focus on the diagnostics sector would have been of great benefit to supplement primary healthcare machinery”.

“We feel that this year’s budget is aimed at touching the lives of the rural folk and bridge the gap between the rural and urban population. We feel that utilizing 1.5 lakh healthcare centres across the country will bring the health benefits to almost all the households. We also welcome the government's move to provide free essential drugs and diagnosis as it will reduce the burden on people seeking treatments for life threatening diseases. It will also help in promote Universal Health Coverage for all under the National Health Policy. The launch of National Health Protection Scheme with an enhanced Rs. 5 lakh medical insurance and over 10 crore families is going to be a game changer in the healthcare industry. We also welcome the government's new initiative to allocate 600 crore to support tuberculosis patients. Overall, we feel that the budget is going to enhance productivity, better access to healthcare facilities for rural and urban population and generate more jobs in the sector especially for women. We also feel that the budget should have covered the areas of palliative care, chronic and critical illnesses,” said Thiyagarajan, MD, India Home Health Care.

Antony Jacob, CEO, Apollo Munich Health Insurance, said, “India the second most populated country in the world with a sizable population (20%) above the age of 60 years. The aging population has typical healthcare requirements and to fund the same they are keen to seek a health insurance cover. However, post retirement they are worried about funding health insurance premiums. Government’s multiple initiatives announced today to enhance the affordability of buying health insurance for seniors is a welcome move and will go a long way in providing them with a financial cushion in medical adversities”.

According to Sanjay Bhutani, managing director, Bausch and Lomb, India, “The Budget 2018 has been presented in the backdrop of economic growth expectations in the region of 8% in near future and a target to reduce fiscal deficit. The Budget has done well on directing the government’s priority to two important sectors for the economy, Agriculture and health. The proposal to provide insurance cover of Rs.5 lacs to about 100m families and establishing 24 new medical colleges is in right direction to provide quality healthcare services to economically weaker sections of society”.

Commending on the Budget, Sameer Sah, Associate Partner, Khaitan & Co, said, “Increase in tax allowances for health insurance will increase the opportunity on healthcare services delivery. This is an indirect fillip for not only insurance service providers but also healthcare services providers. The FM highlighted the availability of low cost medicines and the like. The glorifying tenor should lead to a reasonable presumption that there will be further action on the price control front going forward. The
National Health Protection Scheme will be an interesting initiative – private players, if allowed to participate in the scheme, will have an additional opportunity to service more patients”.

According to Ravi Virmani, CEO & Founder, Credihealth, “The Union Budget 2018 has taken a step towards making health care more accessible with it's flagship National Health Protection Scheme initiative which provides upto Rs 5 lakh per family per year, for hospitalization. However, the devil is in the detail as the million dollar question that prevails is - will these benefits be cascaded to the common man? On the business front, unfortunately, there has been no special mention of health-tech startups in general. Private healthcare sector should have been provided subsidy and exemption from GST to facilitate the greater spread of business and enable government's push to make healthcare accessible to all. Furthermore, on one hand, the government is talking about going digital, however, it has not supplemented the act by connecting it the digital drive with certain sectors such as healthcare and education which serve to be the backbone for the upliftment of well being of the society as a whole.”

Dr Minnie Bodhanwala, CEO, Wadia Hospital said the Healthcare Budget 2018 is ground breaking and will transform the Healthcare industry thus giving it a further boost. The Government has finally focused on what was most essential for Healthcare. Finance Minister Shree Arun Jaitley has announced positive schemes and steps towards improving healthcare in India. Overall this Healthcare budget has provided good reforms in healthcare.

The government’s focus on Agriculture, Health and Education would provide desired impetus to rural economy and for the health of nation Health Protection Scheme could be a game changer.
Given the current rural scenario, it was well expected that the government would pay adequate attention on agriculture and rural development by announcing some popular and positive measures in Union Budget 2018-19, the last full Budget of the current NDA government. One of the most important aspect of the Budget this year is that the Finance Minister has treated Agriculture as an enterprise while announcing the provision for the sector and measures announced are expected to fulfil the goal of doubling income of the farmers by 2022. Overall, focus on agriculture, rural economy, inclusive health, infrastructure and MSMEs is very encouraging.

Minimum Support Price (MSP) for kharif crops at 1.5 times cost of produce along with cluster-model approach for agricultural production would increase farm productivity and enhance farmers’ incomes in the coming times. Doubling the allocation in food processing from Rs. 715 crore to Rs. 1400 crore would boost food processing; specialized agro processing and financial institutions. Cultivation of horticulture crops in clusters will boost production and marketing. Further, Agri-market Development Fund with a corpus of Rs. 20 billion for developing agricultural markets would go a long way to help farmers. The extension of Kisan Credit Cards to fisheries, animal husbandry is appreciable.

“The budget is on expected lines and provides support to sections of the society, where it was needed the most. The agri and rural landscape were in some kind of distress and provision of over Rs 14.34 lakh crore to be spent on rural infrastructure should also add to the employment generation especially in the farm sector,” says Sandeep Jajodia, President, Assocham.

The measures announced in Union Budget 2018 aims to further supplement government’s aim to double farmers income by 2022. One of the key demands of the farming community was an increase in Minimum Support Price (MSP) which has been enhanced on all Kharif crops to 1.5 times of the cost of production. This would help in ensuring that farmers get more realistic prices for their produce and would enhance their incomes.

“A strong message to treat agriculture as an enterprise has been announced. The cluster approach for Horticulture crops would help in linking production to markets and ensuring farmer’s profitability. Setting up an Agriculture Market Infrastructure Fund with an outlay of Rs 2000 crore along with measures to establish mega food parks will go a long way in enhancing the export competitiveness of agriculture sector,” feels KC Ravi, Vice President, Public Policy, South Asia Syngenta.
“The tax incentive to Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) would help in enhancing the effectiveness of organized farming community. The agricultural growth which has been suppressed in recent times would hopefully pick up with these measures and the government would bring a sharper focus on integration of technology, R&D, hybridization, and enabling public private partnerships. The other welcome features include, “Operation Greens”, increasing institutional credit for agriculture to INR 11 trillion and the further strengthening the e-NAM,” he adds.

Initiatives like Operation Green to stabilize prices of highly political and consumer sensitive onion and potato would help ease the retail inflation and would help the RBI in keeping interest rates on lower side. The rise in allocation of Rs. 1.38 lakh crore in FY19 from Rs. 1.22 lakh crore for government health and education programmes will facilitate socio-economic development in the country.

“While we see a clear focus on the infrastructure sector development in the rural areas, the plans for such development in the urban areas including wider connectivity across the length and breadth of the country have also got the needed attention in the budget,” according to Rashesh Shah, President, FICCI.

The provision of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for medical reimbursement, under National Health Protection Scheme- “Aayushman Bharat” will go a long way to achieve the goals of Universal Health Coverage, according to NATHEALTH. “NATHEALTH had recommended making health insurance mandatory and National Health Protection Scheme partly covers the insurance needs of the country. However, there are other critical needs which remain unmet- eg. according National Priority Sector Status to healthcare,” says Anjan Bose, Secretary General, NATHEALTH.

NATHEALTH applauded the government’s focus on Health Protection Scheme which would be the largest healthcare programme in the world. The government has announced an unprecedented Rs 5 lakh medical insurance cover per year for 10 crore families or 50 crore beneficiaries across the country.

Union Budget 2018-19 clearly focuses on growth by boosting rural economy and overall, it appears progressive along with some populist measures.

Rs 5 lakh cover for 10 crore poor families announced under Ayushman Bharat

Source: IANS
Last Updated: Thu, Feb 01, 2018 15:43 hrs

New Delhi: Terming it as the world’s largest government funded healthcare programme, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Thursday announced the National Health Protection Scheme under which Rs 5 lakh cover will be provided a year to 10 crore poor and vulnerable families in the country.
"We are now launching a flagship national health protection scheme to cover 10 crore poor and vulnerable families. This is approximately 50 crore beneficiaries, by providing them up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation," Jaitley said presenting the 2018-19 Union Budget.

Emphasising that the initiative would take healthcare protection to a new aspirational level, Jaitley said the initiative was part of Ayushman Bharat and adequate funds will be provided for its smooth implementation.

"This was aimed at making path breaking interventions to address health holistically, in primary, secondary and tertiary care systems, covering both prevention and health promotion," said Jaitley.

Under the Ayushman Bharat, the government has also decided to fund Rs 1,200 crore for 1.5 lakh health wellness centres across the nation. The decision to convert the Primary Health Centres into wellness centres was taken in last fiscal budget (2017-18). However, the money was not allocated for it.

The healthcare industry termed the government's National Health Protection Scheme as an out of the box idea, saying that it will emerge a boon for the beneficiaries.

BJP president Amit Shah tweeted: "Ayushman Bharat' is an unparalleled initiative to ensure health insurance as well as health assurance. Protecting 10 crore families i.e about 40% of India's population with a health insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family is a global first."

"My heartiest congratulations to this government for investing in creating a swasth bharat by launching the Ayushman Bharat programme. Such ambitious out of the box thinking was a burning need of the hour and the government has not disappointed. The initiative to cover 10 crore families with 5 lakh per family/per year with Insurance Cover for Secondary and Tertiary healthcare will be a game changer," said Prathap Reddy, Chairman of Apollo Hospitals in a statement.

Jaitley stated that the two schemes will also generate lakhs of jobs, particularly for women.
According to Healthcare Foundation of India (NATHEALTH), a body focused to develop and optimize healthcare infrastructure, the National Health Protection Scheme will go a long way to achieve the goals of Universal Health Coverage.

Vivek Srivastava, CEO and Co-Founder of Healthcare at Home, a growing home healthcare provider, said the National Health Protection Scheme will benefit 40 per cent of the country’s population.

"Through this initiative the government has indeed taken concrete steps in reducing India’s health burden. Accessibility and affordability can further be improved for the rural population," said Srivastava.

Jaitley as part of the union budget (2018-19) also announced Rs 600 crore for nutritional support of Tuberculosis patients in India.

"The Government also decided to allocate additional Rs 600 crore to provide nutritional support to all TB patients at the rate of Rs 500 per month for the duration of their treatment," said Jaitley.

A total of 24 new government medical colleges have also been announced as part of the new initiative for health by the government.

"To enhance accessibility of quality medical education and health care, 24 new Government Medical Colleges and Hospitals will be set up, by up-grading existing district hospitals in the country," said Jaitley.

According to him, this move would ensure that there is at least one Medical College for every three Parliamentary Constituencies and at least one Government Medical College in each state of the country.

Jaitley said the government has provided affordable medicines through more than 3,000 Jan Aushadhi centres; reduced prices of stents; and provided free dialysis services for the poor.

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http://thefirstmail.in/news/news-details/202948-rs_5_lakh_cover_for_10_cr_poor_families_announced_under_ayushman_bharat#sthash.MlaN5uyO.E0a37Db8.dpbo
Govt expects Rs 48661.42 crore from telecom sector in FY19

The "Ayushman Bharat" initiative and the National Health Protection Scheme announced by the Finance Minister is a welcome move for the country's healthcare development, Muttreja added.

The government aims to spend Rs 14.34 lakh crore for creation of livelihood and infrastructure in rural India, aiming to create employment of 321 crore man-days, build more than 3 lakh km of rural roads, 51 lakh new rural houses, 1.88 crore toilets and provide 1.75 crore new household electric connections, besides boosting agricultural growth.

While a set of experts termed the announcement of the new health protection scheme a "gamechanger", others opined the step will make healthcare accessible to the poorest, provided it reaches them.

Rs 10,000 Crore allocated to Fisheries and Animal Husbandry. "The initiative to cover 10 crore families with 5 lakh per family/per year with Insurance Cover for Secondary and Tertiary healthcare will be a game changer", said Prathap Reddy, Chairman of Apollo Hospitals in a statement. Such ambitious out-of-
the-box thinking was a burning need of the hour and the government has not disappointed. In his Budget speech, Jaitley also purposed to set up two new full-fledged Schools of Planning and Architecture along with 18 new Schools of Planning and Architecture in IITs and NITs.

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"Through this initiative the government has indeed taken concrete steps in reducing India's health burden".

"Also, the proposals aimed at growing the rural economy and income levels, when implemented, would in turn enhance the affordability of quality healthcare services", Jose said. The plan to introduce 24 new medical colleges will address the glaring lack of talent.

For people being treated for tuberculosis, which infects an estimated 27.9 lakh and kills 4.23 lakh people each year, the finance minister allocated Rs 600 crore for nutritional support at Rs 500 per month for the duration of treatment.

The Finance Minister underlined that a district-wise strategy for improving the quality of education is also being prepared.

"This would ensure that there is at least one medical college for every three parliamentary constituencies and at least one government medical college in each state of the country", he said. "I also invite contribution of private sector through CSR and philanthropic institutions in adopting these centres", he said.
Rs 5 lakh cover for 10 cr poor families announced under Ayushman Bharat (Second Lead)

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level Jaitley said the initiative was part of Ayushman Bharat and adequate funds will be provided for its smooth implementation.

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