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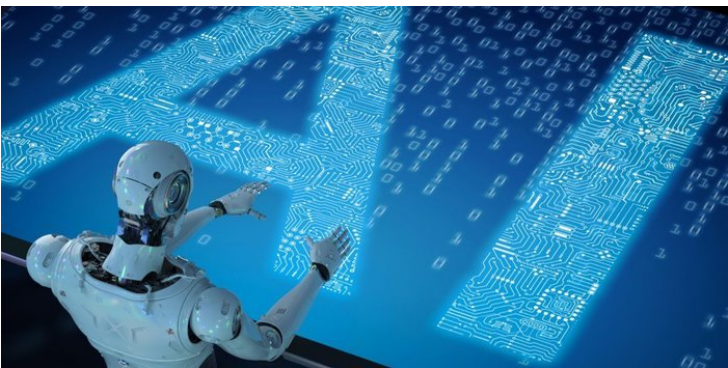
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Industry reacts to Interim Budget 2019-20

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The Finance Minister announced that a National Artificial Intelligence Portal will be developed soon as a part of the National Programme on 'Artificial Intelligence'.



Interim Budget 2019-20 has been presented in the Parliament by the Union Minister for Finance, Corporate Affairs, Railways & Coal, Piyush Goyal.

He said through the world's largest healthcare programme, Ayushman Bharat, to provide medical treatment to nearly 50 crore people in the country, around 10 lakh patients have already benefited through free treatment for medical treatment which would have otherwise cost them Rs. 3,000 crore. Lakhs of poor and middle class people are also benefiting from reduction in the prices of essential medicines, cardiac stents and knee implants, and availability of medicines at affordable prices through Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendras, the Finance Minister added.

Goyal also said that 14 of the 21 AIIMS operating or being established in the country presently have been announced since 2014. He also announced setting up of a new - the 22nd AIIMS in Haryana.

The Finance Minister announced that a National Artificial Intelligence Portal will also be developed soon as a part of the National Programme on 'Artificial Intelligence'.

The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion will now be renamed as the Department for Promotion of Industries and Internal Trade.

Industry reacts to the Interim Budget 2019-

An 'election year' Budget that expectedly has something for everyone, from farmers to traders, workers in unorganized sector to the salaried middle class. The income tax relief will boost urban demand and the assured income support program for small farmers will lead to revival in rural consumption, both of which augur well for overall economic revival. The pension scheme for the unorganized sector workers is a welcome move as it will provide a social security net for nearly 10 crore Indians and will bring them under a registered jobs database.

The government also did well to balance the populist tone of the Budget by signalling its commitment to stick to the road of fiscal discipline. It was however disappointing to see the absence of any additional allocation for healthcare or incentives for Science & Technology. For the startups sector, Angel tax holiday for 10 years was expected but it did not happen.

Kiran Mazumdar- Shaw, CMD, Biocon

The interim budget threw light on the Government's dedication to a healthy India with a distress-free healthcare system. The budget mentioned the Government's aim to bridge the urban rural divide and provide benefits that people in a city have to those staying in villages. Healthcare should be a critical component of these efforts. We must not lose this opportunity to address the urban-rural imbalance in health infrastructure and ensure specific policies to encourage private sector to invest in the same. The announcement of a National Centre on Artificial Intelligence is also a big positive. AI today has great potential in transforming and designing new tools which will equip doctors in the fight against non-communicable diseases. At Apollo, we have already taken the first step with an Intelligent Platform designed to predict cardiovascular disease risk score for Indians.

Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Group

The Union Budget 2019 speech this morning clearly spelled out the Central Government's scale-up in healthcare initiatives over the past few years. This is encouraging as this focus helps augment and strengthen health access across India. While establishing access through healthcare infrastructures like hospitals and medical colleges is great, focused and planned expenditure on improving participation from the public in preventive healthcare at these hospitals through awareness programmes is important. With the announcement of ambitious projects like Ayushman Bharat last year, expectations were high for the 2019 Budgetary recommendations on healthcare. Some inclusions on outpatient care and diagnostics would have been great. We would have liked to see in this Budget a roadmap for healthcare development programmes announced last year to be implemented seamlessly across the country.

Dr Shravan Subramanyam, Managing Director, India and Neighbouring Markets, Roche Diagnostics India

Now that the Interim Budget is announced, people of the country will look forward to how best the policies are implemented. In terms of healthcare, the citizens of India, will look forward to even better facilities and more infrastructural developments in deeper pockets and hinterlands. Upgrading the national health mechanism should always be a primary agenda for any government to come. We can see significant measures to help poor and marginal population of our country in this interim budget.

Dr. Alok Roy, Chairman Medica Group of Hospitals

We welcome the Central Government's announcement to open the 22nd All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Haryana. A world-class medical facility like AIIMS in Haryana will further the cause of providing comprehensive healthcare to all in the state. In November 2018, it was announced that Ayurveda departments will be opened in all the new 19 AIIMS, such initiative will further the government's mission of 'Ayurveda for Public Health'. A few months ago, the Ministry of AYUSH took the pioneering step of publishing the guidelines for insurance coverage to Ayurvedic treatment and settlement of claims on the basis of benchmark rates for various interventions. Following this the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority (IRDA) issued clarifications to general and health insurance companies and Third Party Administrators (TPAs) to provide coverage to Ayurveda and other systems of medicines under AYUSH. We hope in coming years Ayurvedic treatment will also be covered under Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest healthcare programme.

Dr Partap Chauhan, Director, Jiva Ayurveda

While it is good that they were able to find funds for the defense sector, there was nothing pathbreaking for the healthcare. In fact, the gap between the rich and the poor only seems to be getting wider." In fact, not just for healthcare, there should have been more resources for dealing with rising unemployment, quality of education and rural poor. All the three -- health, education and unemployment -- are linked, but instead of creating new opportunities that generate employment, the focus seems to have been on doling out freebies such as those for farmers and on LPG connections.

Dr. BS Ajaikumar, Chairman and CEO, Healthcare Global Enterprises Ltd.

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