



# City's healthcare experts express disappointment

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**Pune:** Health experts from the city are disappointed with the budget presented on Friday by the Finance Minister.

Speaking to Sakal Times, Dr Arun Gadre from Alliance of Doctors for Ethical Healthcare (ADEH) said the oration from the Finance Minister regarding budget

**HEALTH BUDGET 2019**



does not have a single word about health.

"We have to assume that the government has no vision for health and healthcare. The absence of any reference to healthcare after tragedies of Gorakhpur and Muzaffarpur is shocking," he said.

The ADEH also highlighted that medical care is left to unregulated private healthcare sector.

"And sadly, the Finance Minister does not even think of health when presenting the highlights in Parliament. So, the sad story of passive privatisation that began thirty years

## MAJOR INITIATIVES NEEDED

Doctors from ADEH underlined following issues:

\* The budget for 1,00,000 fitness and wellness clinics has been increased from Rs 1,200 crore to 1,600 crore. It means for each clinic it is 1,60,000.

That includes human resource and infrastructure. It is very inadequate.

\* For prestigious PMJAY, which gives insurance of Rs 5 lakh for 40 per cent population, experts expect budget of Rs 20,000 crore, Niti Ayog expects Rs 9,000 crore, now budget is Rs 6,400 crore.

\* The budget for upgrading district hospitals has been slashed - not increased - from Rs 3,168 crore to Rs 2,000 crore, and money is

back is continuing, rather with enhanced zeal. Healthcare is left to market forces and, hence, the government is only bent on increasing coverage. Nowhere near the horizon is the concept of Universal Health Care," said doctors from ADEH in an official statement.

Echoing similar views, Swati Deshpande, Director (Operations) at Datar Cancer Genetics Limited, said that surprisingly there was

shunted primarily to increase UG and PG seats in existing medical colleges. We fear that this is in tune of Niti Ayog's recommendation to hand over district hospitals to private companies to run private medical colleges.

\* The percentage of budget for National Rural Health Mission in 2017-2018 was 51 per cent, now it has been lowered to 43 per cent. With so many agrarian suicides in rural India; this trend is disappointing and needs reversal.

\* Limit for Mediclaim is increased but the insurance penetration is too low, and the person needs money to avail it.

no mention of any benefits and plans for healthcare.

"However, certain positives are the proposals to set up the National Research Centre and Annual Global Investors Meet. Both the initiatives will help give an impetus and attract research proposals and funding to India's potential. Easing of Angel tax and relief from IT scrutiny for startups are great encouragement for the sector. While

announcing large scale projects for electric cars, the government has completely ignored the biomedical sector, which has the potential to be a global research hub for fields like genetic research, bioinformatics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare," said Deshpande.

On the other hand, some members of the healthcare industry supported the budget. Amol Naikawadi from Indus Health Plus said that the government's continuous focus on the Ayushman Bharat scheme will further help in providing extensive medical care and reinforce the commitment to universal healthcare for all citizens.

Sharing similar views, Dr H Sudarshan Ballal, President of Nathealth, the apex healthcare industry body, said that the Union Budget 2019 appears to be comprehensive, wide-ranging and balanced with many positives for the economy.

"However, going forward, the government needs to revisit unfinished agenda such as 'Priority Sector' status to healthcare for smooth credit flow, mandatory universal health insurance, tax incentives for capacity building, creation of a dedicated infrastructure and innovation fund," said Balal.