

NEW DELHI: The pharma and healthcare industry has welcomed the government's decision to increase allocation for the sector, saying the move will provide greater access to medical care in the country. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday proposed Rs 2,23,846 crore budget outlay for health and wellbeing for 2021-22, compared to Rs 94,452 crore in the current fiscal, an increase of 137 per cent.

She also proposed Rs 35,000 crore outlay for COVID-19 vaccines for the next fiscal and announced the rollout of pneumococcal vaccines across the country to help save over 50,000 deaths annually.

"The hike of 137 per cent in budgetary outlays towards the healthcare sector is a welcome move. As the country continues to grapple with the pandemic, the outlay of Rs 35,000 crore towards vaccination will go a long way to stop the spread of COVID-19," Zydus Cadila Chairman Pankaj R Patel said in a statement.

The Prime Minister Aatmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana with a budgetary outlay of about Rs 64,180 crore over 6 years is also a timely step as the country needs to upgrade its healthcare infrastructure particularly the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, he added.

Expressing similar sentiments, Indian Drug Manufacturers' Association (IDMA) Executive Director Ashok Madan said, "Health sector as a pillar of the economy has been given its due share with increased allocations".

Allocation of Rs 50,000 crore for the National Research Foundation augurs well for R&D and innovation in the country. Allocation of Rs 35,000 crore for COVID vaccines and rolling of pneumococcal vaccine across the country shows the government's concern towards vaccination, he added.

In a similar vein, Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) Secretary-General Sudarshan Jain said, "The focus on healthcare infrastructure in FY22 Budget is a positive step towards growth with a 137 per cent increase in allocation to the sector at Rs 2,23,846 crore".

The allocation of Rs 64 thousand crore (over 6 years) on the PM Aatmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojna will help boost the healthcare infrastructure across primary, secondary and tertiary care, he added.

NATHEALTH Senior VP Harsh Mahajan said, "This budget is a game-changer which has made healthcare the centre-piece of the government's strategy for an Aatmanirbhar healthy and wealthy India".

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The focus on primary, secondary and tertiary care through the ambitious Swasth Bharat scheme, preventive healthcare in both urban and rural India through the wellness clinics, tackling infectious diseases through a new emphasis on diagnostics, increased outlay on research fueling young minds to venture into new startups and the endeavour to provide sanitation and safe drinking water to the entire population augur well for taking our nation forward on the path to becoming a five trillion dollar economy, he added.

SRL Diagnostics CEO Anand K also said, "The increase of 137 per cent YoY in health and wellbeing outlay in the present pandemic context will give the much-required impetus to the sector".

It is encouraging to see the government focus on strengthening the diagnostics network in the country by establishing integrated public health labs at the district level, he added.

Stating that the increase in total budget outlay for healthcare in the **Union Budget 2021** is a welcome move, MSD India Region MD Rehan A Khan said the introduction of Aatmanirbhar Health Yojana in addition to the **National Health Mission**, along with other announcements in the healthcare and pharma sector, showcase the government's renewed emphasis on preventive and curative health.

"The proposed initiatives, such as setting up health and wellness centres and integrated public health labs in each district, will support in further widening access to healthcare services in the remotest corners of the country whilst also navigating the focus on preventive health," he added.

Healthy India is core to India's economic growth, reflects in the 137 per cent increase in outlay for health at Rs 2,23,846 crore in the Budget 2021, Asia Healthcare Holding Executive Chairman Vishal Bali said.

The focus on healthcare with Aatmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana with an outlay of Rs 64,180 crore over 6 years shows that healthcare capacity building is now a key priority for the government, he added.

Entod Pharmaceuticals Executive Director Nikhil K Masurkar said that given the fact that India needs to inoculate a billion people to end the pandemic, adequate expenditure on procuring vaccines is a critical need of the time. It is not just a healthcare need but an economic need as well.

The government has allocated Rs 35,000 crore for vaccination. This allocation would be able to procure a sizable number of required vaccines this year along

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