

Budget allocated to health 'unprecedented,' reflects our commitment: PM

By TIOL News Service

NEW DELHI, FEB 23, 2021: PRIME Minister Mr Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that the Rs. 2,23,846 crore allocation for health and wellbeing in Budget 2021-22 reflects the government's approach to improving the sector.

"The budget allocated for the health sector this year is unprecedented. It shows our commitment to provide better health services to every citizen," said the PM while addressing a webinar on the budget's provisions for the sector.

Referring to the difficulties faced worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he said,

"COVID-19 has taught us a lesson to be prepared to not only fight the pandemic of today but to also prepare the country for such challenges in the future. That is why it is important to strengthen every aspect related to healthcare."

Mr Modi said that the government is focussing on "four fronts" of the sector which need to perform for the well-being of the people.

"The first front is to prevention of illness and promotion of wellness. The second front is to provide cheap and effective treatment to the poorest of the poor. The third front is to increase the quantity and quality of health infrastructure and healthcare professionals. And the fourth front is to work on mission mode to overcome obstacles," he summarised.

The country has to focus on everything from medical equipment to medicines, ventilators to vaccines, scientific research to surveillance infrastructure, from doctors to epidemiologists so that we are better prepared in case of the next health crisis, he said.

Schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Aatmanirbhar Swasth Bharat , Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendra will help in achieving the goals. The extension of Mission Indradhanush 3.0 vaccination programme for pregnant women and children, has been extended to far-flung and tribal areas under the fourth front.

He said the world has noted India's strengths and resilience in the health sector during the pandemic.

"Today, India's health sector's reputation and trust is at a new level all over the world,"

the PM said, adding this is the time to take accessibility and affordability to the next step.

"In the coming days, the world's dependence on India will only go up. India's medical education, Indian doctors, nurses will soon be in high demand. We need to keep this in mind," he explained.

Drawing a parallel between COVID-19 and tuberculosis, he said similar protocols could be adopted in preventing the aerial transmission of TB, therefore advancing India's target for eradicating the disease.

"If the same preventive measures are taken against TB, we will be able to free India from TB by 2025 as TB too spreads from the droplets of an infected person," he said.

The previous financial year's allocation under the health tab had been Rs. 94,452 crore, making this year's Rs. 2.23 lakh crore allocation a 137 per cent increase. Further, Finance Minister Ms Nirmala Sitharaman had indicated that the government was willing to commit more funds, if required, for the COVID-19 vaccines.