

“Seems to me that there is a fine line between insanity and dedication... I call that line commitment” Jeremy Aldana

UNION CABINET APPROVED AYUSHMAN BHARAT - NATIONAL HEALTH PROTECTION MISSION

- Benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year
- More than 10 crore families to be covered
- RSBY and SCHIS to be subsumed under Ayushman Bharat - NHPS

The Union cabinet has approved the launch of a new Centrally Sponsored Ayushman Bharat - National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM) having central sector component under **Ayushman Bharat Mission** anchored in the **MoHFW**.

The scheme has the benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year. The target beneficiaries of the proposed scheme will be more than 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on SECC database. AB-NHPM will subsume the ongoing centrally sponsored schemes - RashtriyaSwasthyaBimaYojana (RSBY) and the Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS),

Salient Feature:

AB-NHPM will have a defined benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year.

This cover will take care of almost all secondary care and most of tertiary care procedures. To ensure that nobody is left out (especially women, children and elderly) there will be no cap on family size and age in the scheme. The benefit cover will also include pre and post-hospitalisation expenses. All pre-existing conditions will be covered from day one of the policy. A defined transport allowance per hospitalization will also be paid to the beneficiary.

Implementation Strategy:

At the national level to manage, an Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Agency (AB-NHPMA) would be put in place. States/ UTs would be advised to implement the scheme by a dedicated entity called State Health Agency (SHA).

They can either use an existing Trust/ Society/ Not for Profit Company/ State Nodal Agency (SNA) or set up a new entity to implement the scheme. States/ UTs can decide to implement the scheme through an insurance company or directly through the Trust/ Society or use an integrated model.

Major Impact:

In-patient hospitalization expenditure in India has increased nearly 300% during last ten years (NSSO 2015). More than 80% of the expenditure is met by out of pocket (OOP). Out of pocket (OOP) expenditure in India is over 60% which leads to nearly 6 million families getting into poverty due to catastrophic health expenditures. AB-NHPM will have major impact on reduction of Out Of Pocket (OOP) expenditure on ground of:

- Increased benefit cover to nearly 40% of the population, (the poorest & the vulnerable)
- Covering almost all secondary and many tertiary hospitalizations. (Except a negative list)
- Coverage of 5 lakh for each family, (no restriction of family size)

This will lead to increased access to quality health and medication. In addition, the unmet needs of the population which remained hidden due to lack of financial resources will be catered to. This will lead to timely treatments, improvements in health outcomes, patient satisfaction, improvement in productivity and efficiency, job creation thus leading to improvement in quality of life.

The expenditure incurred in premium payment will be shared between Central and State Governments in specified ratio as per Ministry of Finance guidelines in vogue.

The total expenditure will depend on actual market determined premium paid in States/ UTs where AB-NHPM will be implemented through insurance companies.

In States/ UTs where the scheme will be implemented in Trust/ Society mode, the central share of funds will be provided based on actual expenditure or premium ceiling

(whichever is lower) in the pre-determined ratio.

Number of Beneficiaries:

AB-NHPM will target about 10.74 crore poor, deprived rural families and identified occupational category of urban workers' families as per the latest Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data covering both rural and urban.

The scheme is designed to be dynamic and aspirational and it would take into account any future changes in the exclusion/ inclusion/ deprivation/ occupational criteria in the SECC data.

AB-NHPM will be rolled out across all States/UTs in all districts with an objective to cover all the targeted beneficiaries.

There is a critical need to converge these schemes, so as to achieve improved efficiency, reach and coverage.

INDIA JOINED THE COPERNICUS

India has joined Europe's mega global arrangement of sharing data from earth observation satellites, called Copernicus.

The space-based information will be used for (1) forecasting disasters, (2) providing emergency response and rescue of people during disasters, etc.

Data from a band of Indian remote sensing satellites will be available to the European Copernicus programme, while designated Indian institutional users will in return get to access free data from Europe's six Sentinel satellites and those of other space agencies that are part of the programme, at their cost.

The Department of Space will provide the Copernicus programme and its participating states with a free, full and open access to the data from ISRO's land, ocean and atmospheric series of civilian satellites (Oceansat-2, Megha Tropiques, Scatsat-1, SARAL, INSAT-3D, INSAT-3DR)

The Copernicus arrangement includes technical assistance for setting up high

bandwidth connections with ISRO sites, mirror servers, data storage and archival facilities.

Copernicus Programme:

Copernicus is the world's largest single earth observation programme and is directed by the European Commission in partnership with the European Space Agency (ESA)

It aims at achieving a global, continuous, autonomous, high quality, wide range Earth observation capacity. Providing accurate, timely and easily accessible information to, among other things, improve the management of the environment, understand and mitigate the effects of climate change, and ensure civil security

Copernicus is the new name for the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security programme, previously known as GMES.

This initiative is headed by the European Commission (EC) in partnership with the European Space Agency (ESA).

ESA coordinates the delivery of data from upwards of 30 satellites. The EC, acting on behalf of the European Union, is responsible for the overall initiative, setting requirements and managing the services.

Services provided by Copernicus: land management, the marine environment, atmosphere, emergency response, security and climate change.

Sentinel: ESA is developing a new family of satellites, called Sentinels, specifically for the operational needs of the Copernicus programme. The Sentinels will provide a unique set of observations, starting with the all-weather, day and night radar images.

CENTRE TO DILUTE AFSPA

The Centre has recently announced its plan to water down the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958. A proposal is under consideration to make the Act more operationally effective and humane.

The AFSPA is in force in several northeastern States and J & K.

The decision came after the Home Ministry decided to reduce the number of Central

Armed Police Force personnel deployed in the northeastern States.

AFSPA:

AFSPA, enacted in 1958, gives powers to the army and state and central police forces to shoot to kill, search houses and destroy any property that is “likely” to be used by insurgents in areas declared as “disturbed” by the home ministry.

The Act provides army personnel with safeguards against malicious, vindictive and frivolous prosecution. Security forces can “arrest without warrant” a person, who has committed or even “about to commit a cognizable offence” even on “reasonable suspicion”.

Section (3) of the Afspa empowers the governor of the state or Union territory to issue an official notification in The Gazette of India, following which the Centre has the authority to send in armed forces for civilian aid. Once declared ‘disturbed’, the region has to maintain status quo for a minimum of three months, according to The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976.”

The state governments can suggest whether the act is required to be enforced or not. But under Section (3) of the act, their opinion can be overruled by the governor or the Centre.

Jeevan Reddy committee:

Another official said there was no final decision to repeal the AFSPA as of now, but the Jeevan Reddy Committee report, which recommended so, was taken into account.

The Centre appointed a five-member committee headed by Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy in November 2004 to review the AFSPA.

The committee recommended repealing of the AFSPA.

It recommended that the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, should be modified to specify the powers of the armed forces and the Central forces.

PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES ACT BEING MISUSED: SUPREME COURT

The anti-atrocities law, which protects Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from casteist slurs and discrimination, has become an instrument to “blackmail” innocent citizens and public servants, the Supreme Court observed in a judgment recently.

The past three decades have seen complainants — who belong to the marginalized sections of society — use the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989 to exact “vengeance” and satisfy vested interests.

Instead of blurring caste lines, the Act has been misused to file false complaints to promote caste hatred, the apex court said.

The current working of Atrocities Act may even “perpetuate casteism” if it is not brought in line and the court needs to intervene to check the “false implication of innocent citizens on caste lines.”

The 1989 Act penalises casteist insults and even denies anticipatory bail to the suspected offenders.

The law is therefore used to rob a person of his personal liberty merely on the unilateral word of the complainant, the court said.

Guidelines issued by the SC:

The SC has directed that public servants can only be arrested with the written permission of their appointing authority.

In the case of private employees, the Senior Superintendent of Police concerned should allow it.

Besides this precaution, a preliminary inquiry should be conducted before the FIR is registered to check whether the case falls within the parameters of the Atrocities Act and if it is frivolous or motivated.

CABINET APPROVES MOVING OFFICIAL AMENDMENTS IN THE SURROGACY BILL, 2016

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for moving official amendments in the "Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016".

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016 proposes to regulate surrogacy in India by establishing National Surrogacy Board at the central level and, State Surrogacy Boards and Appropriate Authorities in the States and Union Territories.

The proposed legislation ensures effective regulation of surrogacy, prohibit commercial surrogacy and allow altruistic surrogacy to the needy Indian infertile couples.

Once the Bill is enacted by the Parliament, the National Surrogacy Board will be constituted. The States and Union Territories shall constitute the State Surrogacy Board and State Appropriate Authorities within three months of the notification by the Central Government.

The Bill shall apply to whole of India, except the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

The "Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016", was introduced in the Lok Sabha on the 21st day of November 2016 which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare on the 12th of January 2017.

CABINET APPROVES CONTINUATION OF RUSA

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for continuation of Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA).

RUSA seeks to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio of the country to 30% by 2020, Improving access, equity and accessibility of higher education in states through reforms.

Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities of higher education to socially deprived communities; promote inclusion of women, minorities, SC/ST/OBCs and differently abled persons,

The project cost in the public funded institutions for all sub-components is shared between the Central Government and State Governments in the ratio of 90:10 for North-Eastern States, J&K, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, 60:40 for other States and UTs with Legislature and 100:0 for UTs without Legislature.

UGC GRANTED AUTONOMY TO SIXTY HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In a historic decision, the University Grants Commission has granted autonomy to sixty Higher Educational Institutions which have maintained high academic standards.

Autonomy is granted to institutes based on the parameters of excellence in academic performances, capability of self-governance and enhancement in the quality of education, and it can be seen as a great opportunity to meet the emerging and evolving needs, in sync with the industry.

These universities will remain within the ambit of UGC but will have the freedom to start new courses, off campus centers, skill development courses, research parks and any other new academic programs.

They will also have the freedom to hire foreign faculty, enroll foreign students, give incentive based emoluments to the faculty, enter into academic collaborations and run open distance learning programmes.

The eight autonomous colleges, granted autonomy, will be free to set their own syllabus, hold examinations, carry out evaluation as well as declare results. In this case, only the degree will be awarded by the respective university.

While expanding new horizons for higher education and strengthening the quality and relevance, autonomy can be considered a possible solution to enhance the quality of education and incorporate methods of skilling the students, thus contributing to creating a knowledge-based economy and paving the way to gear up the young workforce for Industry 4.0.

It is essential that Indian institutes are given the freedom to work with a greater agility in realizing the larger goals of the education space in the country. Government impetus for autonomy can propel the global ranking of Indian institutions and push India higher on the world charts for education. By bringing this into effect, there are high chances of reducing the brain drain, turning it into a brain gain.
