

Cabinet approves Modicare with budgetary support of Rs 160 bn for 2 years

Also gives nod for National Health Mission to complement insurance scheme

The Cabinet has approved the Ayushman Bharat or National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS, also referred to as ModiCare), with budgetary support of Rs 160 billion for 2018-19 and 2019-20. Proposed to be portable across India, the scheme is intended to provide health care for at least 40 per cent of the population or 107.4 million households (500 million people). Each family will be entitled to health cover up to Rs 500,000 a year.

The Cabinet also gave a nod to continuing the National Health Mission (NHM) till 2019-20, for a cost of Rs 852 billion. NHM provides free services to those below the poverty line and will complement the NHPS, said officials.

NHPS will replace the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), where the annual health cover is up to Rs 30,000. To bring down costs, state governments will calculate package rates for treatment under the scheme. The cabinet approval includes setting up of nodal agencies by states or even a trust to run it. The health minister will head the scheme and take all decisions on policy.

Coverage will be based on the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC), which identifies poor in seven defined categories of deprivation. Some, such as Rajasthan and Gujarat, cover people other than those listed in these categories. The Karnataka government recently announced it would cover all state residents in its health insurance scheme, while West Bengal has decided not to implement NHPS.

The Union health ministry and NITI Aayog had called state health secretaries to apprise them about NHPS. The Centre had earlier thought of an insurance scheme of Rs 100,000 but did not finalise it, as many states already had active schemes for more than that amount. Some states have provided insurance of around Rs 250,000 or even more in some cases. Transfer of funds will be through an escrow account directly, so that funds are transferred in an efficient and timely fashion, went an official statement. Transactions will be paperless and cashless. Private hospitals may also provide treatment under this scheme, once empanelled with the government, it added.

A big challenge is to integrate the central and state schemes. There could be large overlaps and cost ramifications, since SECC data are not seeded with Aadhaar, the citizen identification. There could also be a possibility of exclusion of beneficiaries. So, states would be provided the flexibility to expand their existing schemes till the time SECC data was seeded with Aadhaar, say experts.

Initially, the scheme was estimated to cost Rs 250 billion from both Centre and states for 2018-19 and 2019-20. This assumed Rs 650 per family from the Centre and Rs 432 from the states, including the administrative cost.

Existing energy norms to continue for 14 urea units

The government also allowed 14 urea units, which could not meet the new energy norms under the 2015 policy, to continue with the existing norms for a period of two years with token penalties.

Surrogacy Bill gets nod

The Cabinet also approved the surrogacy Bill, which aims to regulate the surrogacy market in India. The intention is non-commercialise surrogacy. Commercial surrogacy and sale and purchase will be prohibited.

Rs 21.61 billion for silk industry

The Cabinet approved “Integrated Scheme for Development of Silk Industry” for sericulture sector with an outlay of Rs 21.61 billion for three years ending March 31, 2020.

(Business Standard)