



HEALTH BUDGET

Rs 2,700-cr boost for Health, marginal hike for NRHM

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EVEN as the government hiked the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's allocation by Rs 2,700 crore for 2010-2011, the UPA's flagship programme National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) saw an increase of only 10 per cent over last year.

Saying there was a need to provide health facilities to both rural and urban households, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee said the allocation for the Health Ministry was being increased from Rs 19,534 crore to Rs 22,300 crore. He also announced that an annual health survey would be carried out to prepare district health profiles. "The findings of the survey should be of immense benefit in major public health initiatives, particularly the NRHM, which has success-

fully addressed the gaps in delivery of critical health services to rural areas."

However, the minor hike in the NRHM allocation, from Rs 13,930 crore last year to Rs 15,440 crore, has disappointed the ministry. The mission had been launched in 2005 to improve availability and access to quality healthcare for people living in remote areas, and it had been anticipating a major boost in funds to it.

While the overall health sector got a boost, the capital expenditure for the year 2010-2011 also saw a reduction of over Rs 390 crore. The main focus is on 18 states with weak public health infrastructure. The Budget simplifies the duty regime on medical equipments and appliances, prescribing a uniform, concessional basic duty of 5 per cent, with full exemption from special additional duty, on all medical equipment.

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