

To
Sh Narendra Modi
Honorable Prime Minister

Re; Concern regarding news of plan to slash health budget by 7000 cr

Sir

Medicos Legal Action Group comprises of Allopathic Doctors from all over the country who engage with the Government legally on issues which effect medical education, training and practice. We wish to to work with the Government on various health related issues.

We have recently come across a disturbing news item in the Hindu dated 27-11-2014 which states as follows—"The Finance Ministry is currently in the process of revising the budget estimates for allocations for 2014-15 across heads of expenditures and ministries. The health sector plan expenditure revised estimate is proposed to be Rs. 7,000 crore lower than originally envisaged in the budget."The amount originally envisaged was Rs. 30,000 crore. A cut of 7000 amounts to about 25% reduction.

Sir, already India's expenditure on health is a measly 1.76 % of its 17 lac crore budget. Reducing this by nearly ¼ th is fraught with dangerous slide in various health indices and other parameters where India is already precariously placed.

Sir, due to lack of funds we have only 27000 Primary Health Centres all over the country. We have posts of only 30000 MBBS doctors in these PHCs to give primary health care to the masses. The existing PHCs are in a abysmal state due to lack of repair and maintenance. An additional 40000 PHCs are needed to cater to existent need adequately. At least 50000 additional MBBS doctors need to be hired to man these PHCs to provide primary care to rural areas. Major Institutions eat up a major chunk of what is left in the health budget. A slashing of 7000 crore from the already low budget for health will adversely effect what limited healthcare is being provided to those who cannot afford private healthcare.

The Clinical Establishment Act , increasing judicial activism in cases of alleged medical negligence and sponsored violence against doctors and small hospitals as a political weapon are all shutting down small and medium healthcare establishments. The remaining private healthcare which is available in corporate hospitals is beyond the reach of the masses. Reducing Government expenditure on healthcare is hence a disaster in the making specially for the poor.

Sir, We understand the need to bridge the budget deficit. We also agree that all of us need to tighten our belts if India is to go on a growth trajectory envisaged by your good self. However this growth cannot and should not be at the cost of lives of the poor and needy. Providing healthcare to them free or at low cost is any Governments avowed duty. Abdication of this duty by cosmetic measures of

making laws to force private enterprise to do the Government's job will not hold true in short as well as long run. The growth may be slower but basic healthcare of the economically backward cannot be compromised and to do that funds are needed.

We request you to kindly drop the proposed slashing of budget for health and family welfare and raise resources from other non productive heads.

Yours sincerely

Dr Neeraj Nagpal
Convenor
Medicos Legal Action Group

27-11-2014