

Pay hike to help 25 lakh Anganwadi workers, says Jaitley

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LAUDING THE government's move to increase the remuneration of Anganwadi and ASHA workers by almost 50 per cent, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said it would go a long way in addressing the grievances of these 25 lakh workers.

In a Facebook post, Jaitley said there had been a long-time demand of Anganwadi workers and their helpers for a reasonable remuneration. He said that governments in the past had refrained from giving benefits to them, ostensibly on revenue considerations.

"Notwithstanding the pressure on the Budget, the Government has given almost a 50 per cent hike in the first go to these workers. This will go a long way in addressing the grievance of these workers," he wrote.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier this week announced an increase in the monthly honorarium for ASHA and Anganwadi workers from October. The remuneration of Anganwadi workers has been raised from Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,500 per month; mini Anganwadi workers' pay has been hiked from Rs 2,250 to Rs 3,500. Remuneration of Anganwadi helpers has been increased from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,250 per month. They will also get an incentive of Rs 500 per month and Rs 250 per month respectively on the basis of real-time monitoring of performance.

Stating that Anganwadi workers are the mainstay of the National Nutrition Mission, Jaitley said in the post titled 'Two successful initiatives of the Central Government' that these benefits would be available to approximately 12.9 lakh Anganwadi workers and 11.6 lakh Anganwadi helpers and it would be helpful to their families.

He also praised the PM-initiated Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. "The principal reason for this is that either the benefits don't reach the targeted or that the projected parameters are never achieved. However, there are schemes with a difference. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is arguably the most successful one," he said.

According to Jaitley the Swachhata campaign announced by Modi in his Independence Day speech of 2014 has taken rural sanitation coverage of India from 39 per cent to 92 per cent now. Taking a swipe at critics, Jaitley said that when the PM announced a target that India be made 'open-defecation free' by the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, some believed the scheme would only be a photo opportunity. But it turned into a 'people's movement'.