

Govt may rework planned social welfare package

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A day after Congress president Rahul Gandhi announced a minimum income guarantee scheme, the central government has begun reworking its own social welfare package which is expected to be announced during the interim Budget.

Sources in the finance ministry and Niti Aayog have already claimed that the government was already working towards announcing universal basic income in the upcoming Budget, as reported by this paper on De-

cember 17.

However, the announcement made by the Congress ahead of the interim budget has proved to be a spoiler. "We have decided to come up with an initiative that no government across the world has ever done. The Congress after forming government will offer guarantee on minimum income in their bank accounts. No one will remain hungry or poor," Rahul Gandhi had said in a Raipur rally on Monday.

BJP spokesperson Srichand Sundrani however, said that

the announcement is due to fear on what BJP might declare in the upcoming budget. "His assertion is the outcome of the fear the Congress party nurtures on what PM Modi might declare in the upcoming budget," Sundrani had said.

Now, government sources claim that it is reworking its

own package. "Initially, the farm package was separate and the social security package was separate. But now, the team is working on a combined package. The government may change the model and is now considering announcing minimum income support, starting from farmers," a senior official

from the Finance Ministry told this publication.

While the budget team is already working on the finer details, experts also claim that giving income support is better than debt waiver. "(It) is a better option than debt waiver," India Ratings and Research said, adding that there is a likelihood that the union government may announce a relief package for farmers while presenting the vote on account for 2019-20 in line with the Rythu Bandhu scheme of the government of Telangana.

FARMER INCOME SUPPORT AN OPTION

In case the interim budget announces an income support of ₹8,000 per acre per annum for marginal and small farmers, a marginal farmer and a small farmer would receive ₹7,515 and ₹27,942 per annum on average respectively, according to India Ratings.