

Health sector seeks tax breaks for middle class in Budget

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The healthcare sector wants the government's interim Budget to include tax measures to help the middle class better mitigate health risks.

"Ayushman Bharat for the financially weaker section took centre stage in healthcare last year; however, the middle class is still at risk!," said Suneeta Reddy, managing director, Apollo Hospitals Group. "A first step to universal health coverage would be to increase deduction for medical insurance premium under section 80D for self, family and dependant parents. An enhancement in the medical allowance for salaried employees in line with inflation and a separate deduction in respect of preventive health checks would be de-



sirable," she said, speaking about the sector's expectations from the Budget.

"We look forward to zero-rating of GST for the sector, or for normalisation of the GST rates for services consumed by the healthcare service providers at 5%," Ms. Reddy added.

"We expect a reduction in the cost of medical equipment that will help in increasing the outreach of telemedicine and home healthcare facilities," said Ashutosh Tiwari, director and chairman, Vinoba

Bhave Research Institute. "This, in turn, will help in the preventive and timely treatment of non-communicable diseases that are expected to account for 75% of the country's diseases by 2025."

The last year had been a challenging one for India's private healthcare providers, with multiple headwinds impacting growth and profitability. The overall sector had become less attractive for investments, the absence of which had hindered growth significantly, asserted Arindam Halder, CEO, SRL Diagnostics.

However, given that more than two-thirds of the sector was driven by private operators, the government had to increase its willingness to partner with the private sector players, according to Mr. Halder.