

Environment gets more funds, but cut on Project Tiger

New Delhi, The Environment Ministry is proposed to be allocated Rs 2,675.42 crore in the 2017-18 Union Budget, an increase of Rs 399.42 crore over the last fiscal. In 2016-17, the ministry had got a hike of over Rs 600 crore, about 39 per cent over the previous year and a budget of Rs 2327.51 crore (revised estimate). The 2017-18 budget proposals seem less promising vis-a-vis the ministry, as a crucial department like the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau received Rs 10.04 crore, the same as last fiscal, while some projects and departments received even less.

Project Tiger, National Green Tribunal, Central Pollution Control Board, Animal Welfare Board and Climate Change Action Plan also saw reductions in their allocations. Funds proposed to be allocated to Project Tiger dropped from Rs 365 crore (budgetary allocation of Rs 375 crore) last fiscal to Rs 345

crore for the current financial year. However, the hike in 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitat' for the next fiscal shows the aim is to improve the green corridors and overall conservation efforts.

Reflecting the government's commitment to international goals, the ministry will get extra funds for pollution abatement (Rs 11.6 crore hike), hazardous

substance management (Rs 18.82 crore hike), new and renewable energy (Rs 155.56 crore hike) and the National River Conservation Programme. However, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, who presented the budget proposals in the Lok Sabha, focused more on clean economy and better working environment but missed specific mention.

Abhishek Jawkar, Sonali Barthwal to do a web series together

New Delhi, Filmmaker Abhishek Jawkar and model Sonali Barthwal, who are rumoured to be dating each other, will play the lead couple in a travel web series "Travelove". "Travelove" will be the first of its kind to showcase a couple's take and will feature several offbeat locations.

"A lot of travel based web shows are scorching the internet, however 'Travelove'

will be the first of its kind to showcase a couple's love and enthusiasm for travel. "We have added the element of love to the travel diary," Mayur Goswami, content and production head, said in a statement. While Sonali Barthwal is a super model with several brands to her credit, Jawkar debuted as a director with Hindi feature film "Missing on a Weekend". "I have directed several

Archbishop apologises for reporting 'child abuser'

London, The Archbishop of Canterbury has issued an "unreserved and unequivocal" apology on behalf of the Church of England for not reporting a child abuser to the police in the 1970s, a media report said.

Archbishop Reverend Justin Welby apologised after admitting that he had worked at the holiday camps where teenage boys

were groomed for abuse, the Telegraph reported. Welby said on Wednesday the Church had "failed terribly" by not reporting John Smyth QC to the police.

Smyth, the head of a Christian charity that ran summer camps, was accused of carrying out a string of "horrific" sado-masochistic attacks in the late Seventies.

The report also said that the Channel 4 News will on Thursday broadcast allegations of Smyth's use of the camps.

The boys from some of Britain's leading public schools attended these camps. Smyth used them to gain access to teenagers, whom he forced to strip naked before subjecting them to savage beatings.

Alternative mechanism to FIPB will be far simpler: Jaitley

New Delhi, Announcing the abolition of the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) during his budget speech, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Wednesday said that the alternative mechanism will be far simpler.

"If there is an Information & Broadcasting Ministry or any other ministry related proposal, the ministry concerned can look into it. It is one of the possible mechanisms that can be considered," Jaitley told media persons at a post-budget press conference.

"It could be the ministry concerned's mechanism that can be considered. The alternative mechanism will be far simpler," he added.

Jaitley, in the budget speech, said that with the government undertaking substantive reforms in the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy, more than 90 per cent of the total inflows are now through the automatic route.

"The Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) has successfully implemented e-filing and online processing of FDI applications. We have now reached a stage where FIPB can be phased out," he said.

"We have, therefore, decided to abolish the FIPB in 2017-18. A roadmap for the same will be announced in the next few months," he added.

In the meantime, further liberalisation of the FDI

policy is under consideration and necessary announcements will be made in due course, the Finance Minister said.

India Inc lauded the government's move to phase out FIPB and added that it would lead to further ease of doing business.

Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (Assocham) President Sunil Kanoria said: "Abolition of the FIPB is a great signal to the foreign investors about furthering of reforms and ease of doing business in India."

Naushad Forbes, President, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), said: "The economic reforms agenda continues at a rapid pace with the abolition of FIPB."

Health budget 'unclear' and 'under funded', say experts

New Delhi, Even as Finance Minister Arun Jaitley allocated Rs 48,853 crore to the health sector, and assured of adding 5,000 post graduate medical seats every year, health experts and hospital owners on Wednesday called the health budget "unclear" and "under funded".

Although the experts hailed the announcement to set up All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Jharkhand and Gujarat, they said there is a need for the government to announce more for screening and preventive measures to check the growing tuberculosis (TB) burden.

"We were hopeful that health care would be accorded a national priority sector status," said Prathap C. Reddy, Chairman, Apollo Hospitals Group.

The budget allocation for the health sector for 2017-18 is Rs 48,853 crore, 23 per cent higher than last year, which stood at Rs 39,688 crore.

Stating that he is satisfied with the structural re-

forms in medical education, in particular the increase in the number of post graduate medical seats, Reddy said: "I do hope that the health policies will address the large unmet need for quality health care infrastructure and in particular the need to wage a war against non-communicable diseases which the health sector has been focusing on." Jaitley in his budget speech announced 5,000 new post graduate medical seats every year in the medical colleges of India. He also said that the government will take steps to roll out Diplomate of National Budget (DNB) courses in big district hospitals.

Commenting on the budget, S.P. Yadav, Urologist and MD of Gurugram's Pushpanjali Hospital, said: "The budget 2017-18 did not discuss the health care sector in detail because of which there is no clarity as to what structural reforms the government proposes to bring in health care and medical practice."

The government also

proposed to amend the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules to ensure availability of drugs at reasonable prices and promote use of generic medicines.

Yadav said: "The prices of various drugs and health care devices are totally dependent on the formation of GST Bill. However, the government has taken a wise step by turning 1.5 lakh health sub centres to health wellness centres, which is necessary in view of the fact that health care in India will become expensive in days to come." According to the government, it has announced an action plan to eliminate Kala-Azar and Filariasis by 2017, Leprosy by 2018 and Measles by 2020. Elimination of TB by 2025 is also targeted.

Rajit Mehta, MD and CEO, Max Health care, said the announcement of the goal of eradicating TB from India by 2025 is welcome.

"However, I am disappointed to note that the health care outlay in the budget hasn't been properly touched upon and it re-

mains largely under-funded. There is no announcement regarding granting health care industry the status of infrastructure industry, a long standing demand of the sector," Mehta said.

"There is still a greater need to invest in screening and preventive measures for addressing the growing TB burden. Non-Communicable Diseases that account for 53 per cent of the disease burden should have been prioritised," said Varun Khanna, Chairman of AdvaMed India Working Group. AdvaMed is a medical device company.

Anjan Bose, Secretary General, NATHEALTH -- a forum for advocating better healthcare -- said: "The budget clearly focuses on improving health care access for the less privileged and on 'preventive and wellness', both of which are very encouraging.

"The target of transforming 1.5 lakh health sub-centres into health wellness centres is in line with the need of the hour for the Indian citizens."



Research professor Christopher Whittier captured the unusual sight whilst taking a break from veterinary work in the Central African Republic to visit the famed Dzanga Bai forest clearing. The golden elephant was one of around 150 endangered African forest elephants that came to visit the clearing. Mr Whittier, who lives in Grafton, Massachusetts in the United States, said that the elephants had made a 'nice mud bath' in a particularly yellow patch of soil.

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