

Women now account for nearly 48% of Ayushman hospitalisations

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New Delhi: Women account for nearly 48% of authorised hospitalisations under Ayushman Bharat-PM Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), data accessed by TOI show.

Top officials in National Health Authority (NHA), implementing agency of the scheme, told TOI that since its launch in 2018, 6.5 crore hospitalisations have been made under the scheme which involved treatment cost of Rs 81,979 crore. Of this, 3.2 crore hospitalisations for Rs 39,349 crore involved women.

Officials said scheme utilisation by women beneficiaries has been higher than that of men in 10 states/UTs — Meghalaya (68%), Arunachal Pradesh (57%), Chhattisgarh (56%), Mizoram (54%), Nagaland (53%), Jharkhand (51%), Tripura (51%) and J&K (50%).

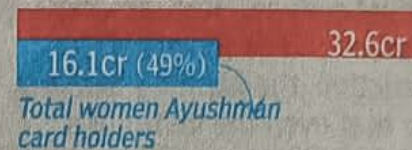
According to NHA documents, top specialties under PMJAY which were utilised more by women than men are — cancer (56%), ophthalmology (54%), otorhinolaryngology or ENT-related (51%), and neonatal care packages (57%).

“Enrolment under AB-PMJAY scheme is steered by thousands of ASHA and anganwadi workers across states/UTs. Women also constitute a significant percentage of healthcare providers at local units (AB-Health Wellness Centres). This has helped increase utilisation of the scheme among women, who have traditionally lagged behind in health-seeking behaviour,” a senior health ministry official said.

He added that another key change brought in by the scheme which helped increase women’s involvement in healthcare scheme was individual enrollment.

32.6CR AYUSHMAN CARDS ISSUED

Number of Ayushman cards issued till date



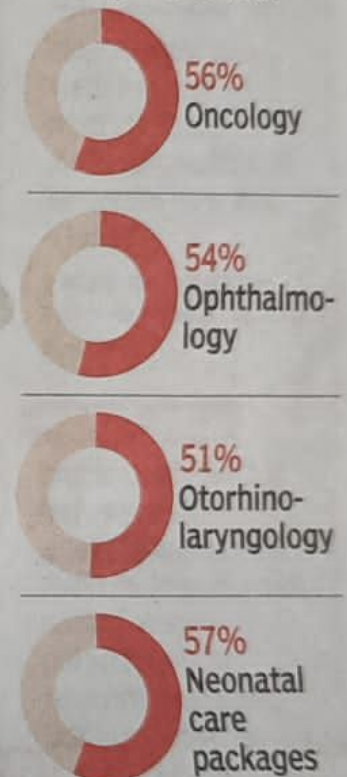
Number of hospitalisations under AB-PMJAY



Top packages utilised by women:

- Chronic hemodialysis
- Acute febrile illness
- Acute gastroenteritis with moderate dehydration
- Severe anaemia

Top specialties where scheme utilisation is higher among women as compared to men



India-EFTA deal: In a first, govt agrees to include sustainability

► From P 1

While cut and polished diamonds are on the list of products that will see customs duty cuts, there will be no concessions from India on gold and major farm and dairy products. In return, companies from these countries will invest \$100 billion in India over 15 years, billed as a first in trade deals, with India having the option to reverse the tariff cuts in case the amount is significantly lower than the promised level. The investment is expected to result in creation of around a million jobs with the European companies seen to be using India as a base to export to other parts of the world.

In another first, govt also agreed to a sustainability chapter, which includes aspects such as labour, human rights, environment and gender, hitherto no-go areas for New Delhi. An EFTA official said there were no penal provisions under the agreement, unlike the agreements that

DUTY REDUCTION PLAN

Sugar | 50% tariff reduction in 10 years

Cut & polished diamonds | Reduction to 2.5% or 50% duty in 5 years

Gold | Bound rate to be lowered to 39% from 40%, no reduction in 15% effective rate

Wines (CIF value of 750 ml bottles)

Under \$5 | No concession

\$5 to under \$15 | 150% to 100% in 1st year, to be lowered to 50% in 10 yrs

\$15 or more | To be halved to 75% in 1st year, to be cut to 25% in 10 yrs



Source: GTRI

EU signs, and India is already a signatory to the agreements mentioned in the chapter.

"It marks India's first modern FTA with the first set of European nations... It is the culmination of nearly 16 years of negotiations. The last nine to 10 months have seen very intense negotiations to complete a balanced and equitable free trade agreement that factors the sensitivities of all countries. India stands to benefit in terms of investment, innovation and R&D," commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal told reporters.

As part of the trade and economic partnership agree-

ment, which will kick in after a few months, countries such as Switzerland have offered to open up over 120 of 156 services, including audit and accounting, legal, IT and healthcare for Indian companies, with easier visa rules allowed for workers and professionals from the country.

Besides, there are provisions for mutual recognition agreements for nursing, chartered accountants and architects, allowing Indian and EFTA qualifications to be recognised by each other. An official said govt has stuck to the FDI cap for sectors under the services chapter.

Given India's concerns on patents, especially for medicines, the EFTA members agreed not to press for additional commitments on intellectual property rights that go beyond obligations at WTO.

As part of the agreement, India will offer duty cuts on 82.7% of its products, covering 95.3% of EFTA exports of which more than 80% is gold. The four members of the trading bloc are offering 92.2% products, covering 99.6% of India's exports, which were estimated at \$1.9 billion last year.

Because of high gold imports, estimated at \$12.6 billion last fiscal, India had a trade deficit of almost \$15 billion on imports of \$16.7 billion. Within the bloc, Switzerland accounts for nearly 90% of the trade with India.

Govt is seeing EFTA nations as a base for its companies to provide services to other EU markets, while investments from companies from the four-nation bloc are likely to help India emerge as a production hub.

INS Tir participates in Exercise Cutlass Express in Seychelles

NEW DELHI, Mar 10 (PTI)

INS Tir, the lead ship of First Training Squadron (1TS) of the Indian Navy, participated in Exercise Cutlass Express in Seychelles, officials on Sunday said. The exercise was inaugurated by Seychelles President Wavel Ramkalawan with dignitaries from India, the US and African countries present on the occasion, they said.

As part of Exercise Cutlass Express, the Indian Navy actively engaged with participants from 16 friendly foreign countries.



INS Tir, the lead ship of First Training Squadron (1TS) participated in Exercise Cutlass Express - 24 (CE - 24) held at Port Victoria, Seychelles from 26 Feb - 08 Mar 24. The Indian Navy actively engaged with participants from 16 friendly foreign countries. (PTI)

\$100bn FDI linked to 9.5% nominal GDP growth

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It was only in Nov-end that Swiss officials came up with a proposal to “balance” India’s tariff cuts with a commitment to investment promotion. With zero industrial tariffs in Switzerland, Indian negotiators kept asking “what is in it for us” when it came to counting the gains.

TOI Explains

Almost a month later, a plan for \$40 billion FDI was put on the table. It took two months of intense negotiations, and exchange of spreadsheets over video calls for it to be scaled up to \$100 billion and create one million direct

jobs, although the employment target was lower than what India had sought. Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal and his Norwegian counterpart Jan Christian Vestre said this is the first time that such an approach was being used in a trade deal.

Is investment guaranteed?

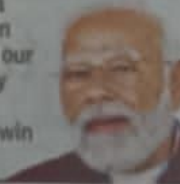
No. Since the funds have to come from the private sector, govts of EFTA nations—Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein—will act as facilitators to promote investment and will also open an office in India.

What are the milestones to meet the goal?

The starting point is \$10.7 bil-

lion, the investment level in 2022. There are no annual milestones as investments are unlikely to be linear and are expected to lag trade growth. After 10 years of the agreement, the countries are looking at \$50 billion investment in India and \$100 billion in 15 years. There are assumptions such as India’s annual GDP growth being 9.5% in nominal terms (including inflation) and other facilitation aspects.

“TEPA emphasises our steadfast commitment to shared prosperity and our drive to cultivate a stronger, more inclusive partnership between India and EFTA, furthering the aspirations of our people. Despite structural diversities in many aspects, our economies possess complementarities that promise to be a win-win situation for all nation — NARENDRA MODI | PM



Does the plan cover all investments?

The focus is on FDI from companies in the four EFTA member nations with investment by Norwegian funds, for instance, outside the ambit. Investment routed by companies via Mauritius or Singapore will be included in the calculations and so will be reinvested earnings by companies such as Swiss FMCG giant Nestle or Liechtenstein engi-

neering major Hilti into their Indian arms.

What if the investment goal is not met?

There are *force majeure* provisions such as pandemics, conflicts or an economic crisis, which allow for exceptions. The first review will happen after 15 years and a full assessment will follow after 20 years. A three-tier review mechanism comprising experts, officials and ministers is likely, which will go into the reasons for a shortfall. A three-year correction period will be provided to “meet the deficit”, failing which India can reverse some of the tariff cuts under the trade pact in a “propor-

tionate and targeted” manner. But that will happen only after 20 years, by which time the tariff reductions would have taken place.

Are there focus sectors?

It is not defined in the agreement, but pharma, medical devices, services, engineering and machinery are potential areas for investment.

Is a bilateral investment protection agreement part of the deal?

It is not, although there are concerns over the model treaty that the Indian govt had put in place a few years ago. Negotiations for a new agreement are expected in the coming few months.

Maldives buys surveillance drones from Turkiye to patrol maritime area

Male: Maldives has for the first time acquired surveillance drones from Turkiye for patrolling its vast exclusive economic zone, according to reports Sunday. Efforts have begun by the state to establish a drone base in Noonu atoll Maafaru to operate the military drones to conduct monitoring of Maldives' ocean territories, Editon.mv news portal reported. Turkiye was the first country visited by Mohamed Muizzu after he was sworn in as president in Nov.

During his visit, he had seen the various military vehicles produced by the country and formed an agreement with a Turkish company to im-



On March 4, President Muizzu had announced that Maldives was working to establish a 24/7 monitoring system to ensure control of its Exclusive Economic Zone

port military drones into his country, the report said. However, Maldives govt has not disclosed details of the agreement. The drones from Turkish company Baykar TB2 drones were delivered on March 3, reports said. Muizzu, upon his return from China in Jan, had indicated his govt was looking to acquire surveillance drones. On March 4, Muizzu announced his country is wor-

king to establish a 24/7 monitoring system for Maldivian waters this month to ensure control of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) despite its significantly large area. Adhadhu news portal also reported that earlier this year, president's office amended Import Duty Waiver Procedure to give president the discretion to remove import duties on items for use by the security services. ൧൩

'PM Modi's outreach to Putin helped prevent nuclear attack'

WASHINGTON DC, Mar 10 (ANI)

AS THE Russia-Ukraine conflict raged in 2022, the United States started "preparing rigorously" for a potential nuclear strike by Moscow against Kyiv, in what would have been the first nuclear attack since the US dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki nearly eighty years before, 'CNN' reported citing two senior administration officials.

The report stated that outreach from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other countries also played an important role in averting the crisis.

The Biden administration was specifically concerned Russia might use a tactical or battlefield nuclear weapon, the officials said. Amid the fears, the US sought to enlist the help of non-allies including India, to



discourage Russia from such an attack, as reported by 'CNN'.

"One of the things we did was not only message them directly but strongly urge, press, encourage other countries, to whom they might be more attentive, to do the same thing," the senior administration official said.

US officials say that outreach and public statements from

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others helped avert a crisis. "I think we believe showing the international community the concern about this, particularly the concern from key countries for Russia and the Global South, was also a helpful, persuasive factor and showed them what the cost of all this could be," 'CNN' quoted a senior administration offi-

cial as saying. "I think the fact that we know, India weighed in, China weighed in, others weighed in, may have had some effect on their thinking," the senior administration official added. "I can't demonstrate this positively, but I think that's our assessment."

Regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, India has always condemned civilian killings and called for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

In a major statement, PM Modi told President Putin that "this is not the era of war" on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Uzbekistan last year. The statement even made to the G20 communique under the presidency of India.

During this period from late summer to fall 2022, the National Security Council convened a series of meetings to

put contingency plans in place "in the event of either a very clear indication that they were about to do something, attack with a nuclear weapon, or if they just did, how we would respond, how we would try to pre-empt it or deter it," the senior administration official said.

Notably, late summer 2022 was also proving a 'devastating period' for Russian forces in Ukraine. Ukrainian forces were advancing on Russian-occupied Kherson in the south, the city which had been Russia's biggest prize since the invasion. As these Ukrainian forces advanced, entire Russian units were in danger of being surrounded. The view inside the administration was that such a catastrophic loss could be a "potential trigger" for the use of nuclear weapons, according to 'CNN'.