

## **Futuristic position on healthcare**

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This is an unusual budget in an unusual era. In fact, this is not a budget which was presented in the normal times; we are facing an abnormal time and going on to a new normal situation. Even if the COVID is subside in, say, by the end of the year or early next year, even then, we will be entering into a new normal situation. This is called a new normal situation, 'Nava saadharanathvam'. Our finance minister, as presented in the budget, taking into consideration the abnormal situation and also what we should have in the new normal situation. Dr Thomas Isaac, when presented his budget, it appeared that we were on the verge of almost controlling the COVID pandemic. The cases per day was around 3000 plus and the death per day was around 20. But then the second wave, In other parts of India, as well as in Kerala the Delta radius of the bow the coronavirus is still present and, at one time the daily case as bought up to 41,000 and that death case is increasing, more than 200 per day. But in spite of the lock down the COVID cases are not coming down as we expected, but we hope that it will come down and there is a fear that there they make up usually pandemics come in waves and we think that the third wave come at any time. But a third wave does not come automatically, in fact, a third wave is created by us, you take appropriate policy measures, we can even prevent the occurrence of third wave.

Taking all this into consideration, Finance Minister, K.N. Balagopal has given, this is a COVID budget, actually, this should be called a COVID budget than anything else, because he has also set apart around Rs 20,000 crore for the second COVID package. Out of which Rs 2800 crore was set apart, there are nine projects, he has outlined here specific to health sector and these include infectious diseases. He has also mentioned about the upgrading of the intensive care units for the pediatric section. This is because we expect that children will be affected in the third wave. In the third wave, even though I am very doubtful about it because there are various scientific reasons why the children need not be affected. He has taken the a

precautionary position by improving the functioning of the pediatric ICU and of course oxygen supply is extremely important and liquid medical oxygen plants to be established. He has also mentioned about two very important project, one is that setting apart money for research, this is very extremely important. In fact, one positive thing that has emerged during the COVID period is that our research institutes are indulging in the research work, especially to develop new technologies, new diagnostic tools and new treatment technologies to manage the COVID. We have an International Biology Institute in Thonnackal, he has also set apart Rs 10 crore for research work there. There is an outlier here, this outlier here is the conversion of auto play setup to central surveyed supply department in the medical colleges. Now it may appear on the surface, that after all infection control is extremely important, but I would say that this is a extremely important and it has been mentioned in the budget. This is to prevent nosocomial infections. Nosocomial infections are hospital based infection the patients, develop the same function at the hospital in fact the black fungus is, one type of nosocomial infections. Now this is important because you know that large number of microorganisms developing resistance to existing antibiotics and antiviral medicines.

In fact we have multi drug resistant tuberculosis has already immersed in this format, the Kerala state is implementing what is called anti microbial program in Kerala. There is a national program based upon that Kerala has already prepared a project for strategic approach to control of antimicrobial resistance. So I think this is an outlier, an extremely important outlier, which has been mentioned here. I may have said that we have to see that these are not at the folk arrangements which he has done. All these setups will further improve the quality of the healthcare institutions in our state. Because infectious diseases are present in Kerala, that should we understand whether there is COVID or not, infectious disease are still present in Kerala, H1 N1, dengue fever, chikungunya, Japanese encephalitis even waterborne disease are there in Kerala. So Kerala is a highly more bits stayed with non communicable as well as infectious disease present in Kerala. In that situation establishing the infectious disease bar and blogs, are extremely important, as well as the case of pediatric ICU. I think what we have now to cut for to reduce infant mortality is look at the neonatal mortality. That is children below 40 days of their life, this is extremely important in fact it's not be above age group children who are affected, it is neonatal who are affected, and therefore these projects will be very valuable.

We may be saving thousand crores, since the central government has agreed to supply vaccines, we have set apart Rs 1000 crore for vaccine, so this can be used very effectively for a few other projects . There is a duplicated project here. The budget has allotted money to develop a project report for and Center for Disease Control Model Institute in Kerala. But already an institute for epidemiology and public health has been established in the medical university and therefore it may be a duplication and this is should be looked in.

Secondly, since we have about Rs 1000 crore with us now the post covid clinics have to be established already, we have established post covid clinics. Even Dr Thomas Isaac's budget mentions that starting from primary health centre to Medical College, but by now we know more about the post covid syndromes which needs a lot of input, so I would suggest to the Finance Minister to allot a few more amount for establishment of post covid things. Now the Finance Minister set apart funds for research in COVID products, but hardly any research has been done on the COVID situation in our state. Hence I would suggest that some amount may be set apart for COVID related research in our state, especially by the youngsters. So these are some of the points, I have to mention, but I should congratulate the Finance Minister that in the very short time available he has actually gone to the crust of the problem. Kerala state is facing the COVID situation is not really addressing the abnormal situation he has taken a futurist position of addressing the new normal which may emerge after the COVID pandemic.