



Industry experts have had conflicting reactions to Finance Minister Nirmal Sitharaman's presentation of the Union budget on Tuesday. While the health, digital, and Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sectors have appreciated the budget, the travel industry and real estate sector are left disappointed.

Dr Malini Saba, Founder and Chairman of Saba Group and Anannke Foundations, and Psychologist, said she is encouraged by the government's renewed emphasis on preventive and curative health, as well as overall wellness.

"An open platform for the National Digital Health Ecosystem comprised of digital registries of health providers and health facilities, unique health identities, and universal access to health facilities will broaden access to health and wellness while driving a focus on preventive healthcare," Dr Malini said.

"A National Tele Mental Health program, particularly in rural areas, will greatly improve accessibility for patients in need of expert guidance for their mental health," she added.

Dr Surendra K Chikara, Founder and CEO of Bione, agreed with Saba and said, "The Centre had already taken big steps to establish a digital health ecosystem through the establishment of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission [ABDM]."

"We applaud the measures for high-quality healthcare. The burden of chronic diseases can decrease significantly with the use of advanced techniques like preventive genetic testing," he said.

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On digital drive

Neeti Sharma, Co-founder and President of TeamLease Edtech, saw many positives in the budget, including a proposal to establish a digital university.

"Along with an independent digital university, the government should allow many existing universities to offer courses digitally, enabling universities by creating a roadmap and budgets for digital content and infrastructure that universities can follow," she said.

She also expressed concern that television-based education might not be as effective as expected. "A combination of digital, physical, and on-the-job classrooms will maximise learning efficacy and even have the potential to improve completion rates."

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According to **Akash Sinha**, CEO and Co-founder of Cashfree Payments, the launch of digital currency by the RBI is both encouraging and critical in empowering digital native youth to take a transformational leap away from traditional currency tools.

"We've seen a rise in the use of blockchain technology to simplify and secure the consumer journey. This push was necessary to encourage innovation in this domain," he said, adding that the 5G spectrum technology and the scheme for fibre optics penetration across villages will boost the growth of rural and gig economies," Akash Sinha said.

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