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Pre-declaration of package rates in mediclaim policy document not possible, says GIC

General insurance companies may not be able to pre-declare package rates in the mediclaim policy document, GIC's senior counsel Mr. Janak Dwarkadas informed the honourable Bombay High Court. Mr. Dwarkadas told Chief Justice Mohit Shah and Justice M S Sanklecha that it is impossible for insurers to provide standard rates for mediclaim policy. The High Court was hearing a PIL filed by activist Gaurang Damani on medical insurance problems.

There are too many variables involved in choice of hospitals and nursing homes and even reaction of patients to different treatment, Mr. Dwarkadas said. To prove his point, he also gave the instance of Ahmedabad, which is promoting medical tourism, saying hospitals actually advertise package rates to attract customers.

"In certain cases, they even tell the customer in advance what he is likely to be charged," said Dwarkadas.

The court observed that patients are asked if they have mediclaim policy during admission and accordingly charged. An average of general treatment rates could be worked out, the court said.

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) has agreed for pre-declaration of package rates, the activist argued. But GIC's counsel said, "To find if one size fits all is difficult when variables are involved."

Bajaj Allianz to unveil special campaign for lapsed policies

With a view to help policyholders renew their lapsed life insurance policies; private sector player Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance has unveiled a Special Revival Campaign. This campaign will assist policyholders get lapsed policies renewed easily.



The campaign which started on January 18 will continue till March 31, 2014. Under the campaign, lapsed policies that fall under the prescribed revival period can be



renewed with special benefits, such as 50% waiver of interest on traditional policies. The company has simplified the DGH (Declaration of Good Health) form and waived off the medical examination for policyholders aged up to 55 years.

The Bajaj Allianz customers are being informed about this unique initiative via SMS, Calls and Letters etc. The details of the scheme are also available on the Company's official website. This scheme is applicable to all individual Traditional and Unit Linked policies.

“Life Insurance is one of the most important risk protection tools, especially during uncertain times. We launched this campaign to reiterate the importance of renewing one's life insurance cover and help our policyholders revive their lapsed policies. To facilitate the same, we have relaxed our underwriting norms and have extended special benefits”, said Ms. Jasleen Kohli, Head (Operations), Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance.

“Revival of life insurance policy gives the policyholder crucial benefits such as continuance of life cover, tax advantages, and other policy benefits. It is, therefore, in the best interest of the customer to keep their policy in force”, Ms. Kohli added.

Govt. clarifies FII, NRI investment policy in insurance sector

The Congress led UPA government has cleared that the 26% cap on foreign investment in the insurance sector will also be applicable to intermediaries such as brokers, third party administrators and surveyors.

As per a press note, released by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion on Wednesday, in case of insurance

companies, the 26 % cap will include foreign direct investment (FDI), foreign institutional investments (FIIs) and investments from non-resident Indians (NRIs) as well.



The earlier policy allowed up to 26% FDI in the insurance sector through the automatic route without clarifying if this included other foreign investments such as FII and NRI as well.

India's insurance regulator has set up a committee to study the option of allowing 100 percent FDI in insurance intermediaries, third-party administrators, surveyors and loss assessors. But action on this, too, would have to wait.

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA), has formed a committee to look into a possibility to allow 100% FDI in insurance intermediaries such as brokers, third-party administrators (TPAs), surveyors and loss assessors.

The Insurance (Amendment) Bill, which proposes to raise FDI in the sector to 49 %, has already been approved by the Union Cabinet. But, it's been pending in the Rajya Sabha since December 2008, as the Standing Committee on Finance, headed by senior BJP leader Yashwant Sinha, didn't support it. The Committee, in its report, had argued that raising the FDI ceiling to 49% would expose the sector to global vulnerability.

J & K govt to provide free insurance cover to Amarnath pilgrims

In compliance with the order of Jammu & Kashmir Governor and Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) Chairman Mr. N.N. Vohra, SASB Chairman Mr. Navin K Choudhary has announced that all pilgrims that hold valid permits for this year's Amarnath Yatra will be provided a free insurance cover of Rs 1,00,000 against accidental death within the state during the entire 'Yatra' period.

Under the scheme, which will be free for all pilgrims having valid permits, will provide coverage one week ahead of the commencement of the pilgrimage and will end one week after its conclusion. "It will cover any accidental death which takes place anywhere in the state while travelling to the 'Yatra' base camps or while heading for the shrine", Mr. Choudhary said.

He has also appealed to all pilgrims that it is in their interest to obtain valid registration cards after securing a compulsory health certificate. It is in the interest of all pilgrims to undergo a proper medical check-up before registering themselves, for which elaborate arrangements have been made by the Shrine Board, he added.

This year's Amarnath Yatra will commence on 28th June and end on 10th August. The registration for the 'Yatra' will start on 11th March.



ICICI Lombard's cashless OPD health insurance plan launched

Private sector general insurance player ICICI Lombard General Insurance yesterday announced the launch of a first-of-its kind cashless outpatient department health insurance plan, 'i-Health Cashless OPD'.



This new offering of ICICI Lombard will be initially available for group health insurance customers and later, will be extended to the entire retail customer base. The 'i-Health Card', provided by the insurer to its customers can be swiped at any of 75 plus OPD centres across the seven metros to avail cashless treatment. Customers can avail consultation without any charges multiple times in a year depending on the plan availed.

"The OPD segment, despite comprising 60% of healthcare expenses, faces a dearth of relevant insurance offerings. ICICI Lombard's cashless OPD is best suited to meet customer needs towards payment of OPD expenses", said Mr. Sanjay Datta, Chief-Underwriting and Claims, ICICI Lombard.

Max Bupa to enter into bancassurance tie-up with Standard Chartered

Standalone health insurer Max Bupa has tied-up with Standard Chartered Bank to distribute its health insurance products to bank's customers under bancassurance arrangement. At present Standard Chartered Bank has about 99 branches spread over 42 cities across the country.

"This relationship is an important milestone for us as bancassurance is an important part of our growth strategy," Max Bupa CEO Mr. Manasije Mishra said in a release.



Max Bupa will work with Standard Chartered Bank to ensure sales training, product support and smooth operational processes in order to offer health insurance products to customers seeking a health cover.

"This arrangement will enable us to further augment the comprehensive range of third party products and services by offering Max Bupa health insurance solutions. We are confident that this will be a mutually beneficial relationship", said Mr. Sanjeeb Chaudhuri, Regional Head (South Asia) and Chief Marketing Officer (Consumer Banking), Standard Chartered Bank.

Private sector insurance player Max Bupa Health Insurance Company Limited is a joint venture between diversified business firm Max India and Bupa Finance plc, a UK-based international healthcare provider.

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