

# Prioritising Well-being and Public Health in the 2024 Interim Budget

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## Organisations Advancing and Tackling India's Healthcare

In 2012, India initiated efforts toward Universal Health Coverage through its twelfth five-year plan, focusing on enhancing healthcare availability, quality, and affordability.

The 2018 launch of the [Ayushman Bharat program](#) reinforced this commitment by providing primary care through wellness initiatives and insurance coverage. The program targets the 10.74 crore economically weaker population, intending to discern occupational categories of urban workers according to the [Socio-Economic Caste Census \(SECC\)](#) data.

As an initiative under the National Health Protection Mission, the yojana will subsume the ongoing centrally sponsored schemes - [Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana \(RSBY\)](#) and the [Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme \(SCHIS\)](#).

India aims to increase government health spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP by 2025 to facilitate universal healthcare within its diverse healthcare system.

Notably, the Indian Medical Association advocates for increased public healthcare spending, while the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) focuses on biomedical research, innovation, and human resource development, albeit with criticism regarding its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, including questionable decisions on drug recommendations and a lack of transparency on data related to variants.

These organisations tackle different domains of healthcare delivery services, enabling higher accountability and transparency between the state and its citizens. Despite the repudiations, their initiatives also aid in painting a comprehensible picture of the state of public health, which in turn, is used to facilitate imperative modifications within the system.

In moving forward, addressing India's healthcare challenges is crucial for the nation's well-being and its global aspirations. The disparities in healthcare access, quality, and equity are stark and demand urgent action. The Rajasthan model can serve as a template for addressing disparities, focusing on government-funded public systems, drug distribution, and expanding outpatient services. India's journey towards universal healthcare and improved equity and quality necessitates sustained commitment and action. Recent schemes like Swachh Bharat and Ayushman Bharat set the foundation, but successful implementation is vital.

For effective planning and delivery, a statutory legislative framework is of utmost importance, and this has been explored in the fifth part.

As India aspires to global prominence and Vishwaguru status, its healthcare performance and safeguarding of people's well-being need stronger alignment with the nation's fiscal and economic development priorities. Ensuring access to affordable, quality public healthcare services for all citizens must be the government's principal focus in this budget and in its longer term fiscal developmental roadmap.

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