

Sansad TV Perspective: Booster for Health Infra

In the series Sansad TV Perspective, we bring you an analysis of the discussion featured on the insightful programme 'Perspective' on Sansad TV, on various important topics affecting India and also the world. This analysis will help you immensely for the [IAS exam](#), especially the mains exam, where a well-rounded understanding of topics is a prerequisite for writing answers that fetch good marks.

In this article, we feature the discussion on the topic: Booster for Health Infra

Video link: <https://youtu.be/HjdVcTgrXFQ>

Anchor: Vishal Dahiya

Participants:

1. Preeti Sudan, Former Health Secretary, Gol
2. Dr. Naresh Trehan, Chairman and Managing Director, Medanta
3. Krishnan Ramachandran, MD & CEO, Max Bupa Health Insurance

Context:

The necessity of an improved healthcare system and infrastructure has been realised prominently as the COVID-19 pandemic emerged as a historic threat across the globe. In India, the healthcare sector is in dire need of development and funding inviting intense discussions by experts about what is expected from the upcoming Budget session which is looked upon by many as a hope.

A brief overview:

- The Government of India took active measures in the hour of crisis led by the pandemic and introduced various welfare schemes especially to improve the healthcare system in the country.
- The [PLI](#) (Production Linked Incentive) scheme has been associated with the domestic manufacturing of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients that enhanced the capacity of vaccine production.
- In order to create an integrated healthcare system for all that makes access to healthcare services easy, the [National Digital Health Mission](#) was launched in 2020.
- Presently, India spends 1.8% of its GDP on health.
- There are recommendations to increase the budget allocation for the healthcare sector with which there is an expectation that the centre will probably increase its expenditure on health. The [National Health Policy](#) of 2017 suggested to increase the expenditure on health to 2.5% of the GDP.

What are Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients?

- APIs are the substances that perform the intended pharmacological activity of a drug and are involved in diagnosis, cure and treatment of diseases.
- They are formulated with excipients that are pharmacologically inactive.
- In case of most of the COVID-19 vaccines, the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus acts as the API.



The Ayushman Bharat Yojana :

- The central government included the treatment of COVID-19 in the revolutionary scheme of [Ayushman Bharat](#) at the very onset of the pandemic.
- This is a flagship health insurance scheme by the central government to offer medical assistance to the poor.
- Over a period of time, the government expanded the purview of the scheme to facilitate oxygen supply and meet the cost of essential medicines for the treatment of COVID-19.

Outcome and benefits of the scheme:

- Under the provisions of Ayushman Bharat, 10 crore poor families have been benefited and insured.
- About 50 crore people get insurance up to Rs 5 lakhs per year.
- The scheme also ensured that the testing of COVID-19 is carried out free of cost in any private hospitals.
- The Private hospitals are empanelled under this scheme along with the government hospitals.

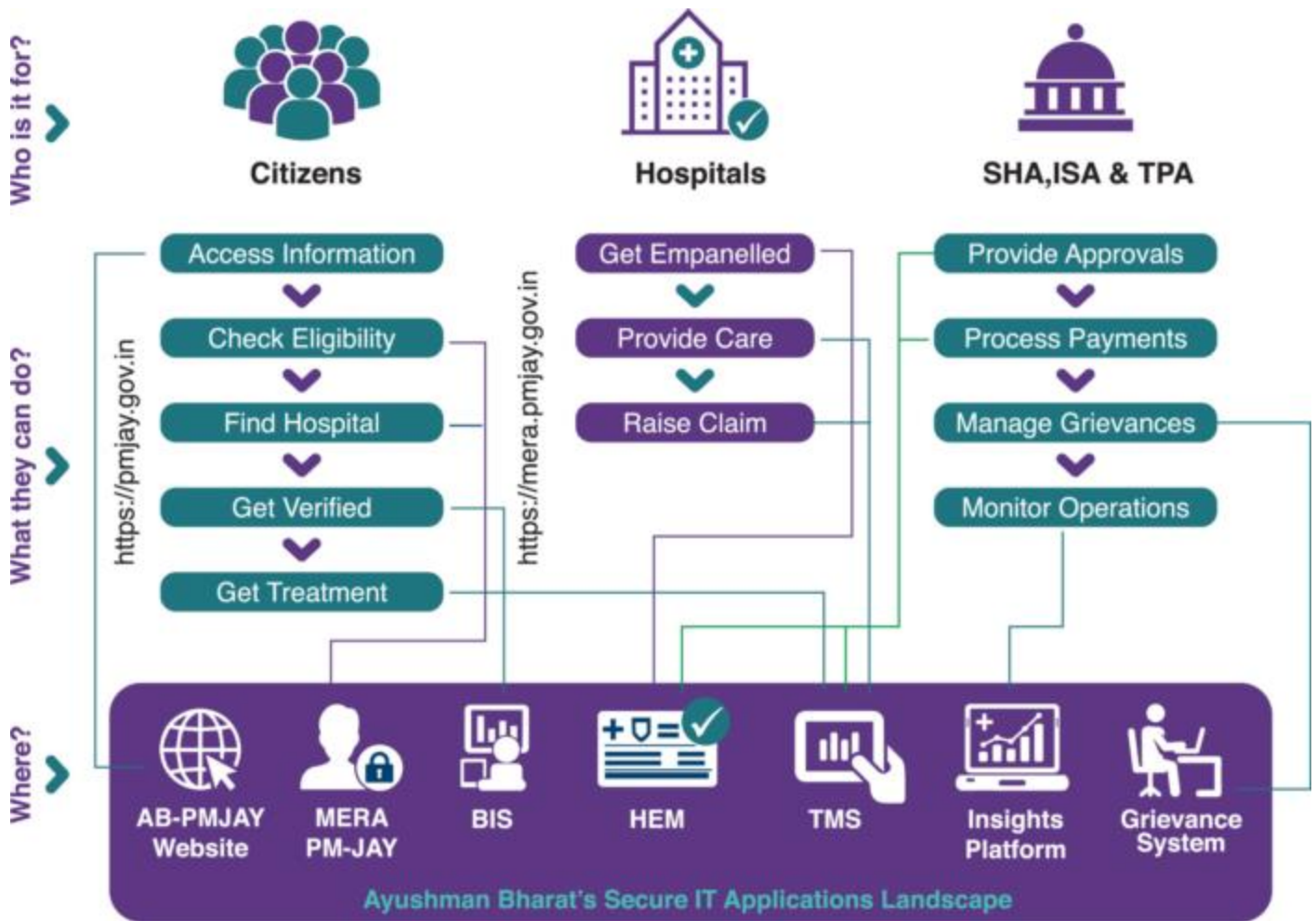


Image Source: PM JAY

Challenges:

Despite a series of welfare schemes released by the government, there are multiple issues when it comes to healthcare facilities and services in the country. India faces the following challenges concerning the healthcare sector:

- India's healthcare service does not reach the rural population properly with severe shortages of doctors in the rural areas.
- Preventive, pro-motive, rehabilitative and public health measures have been neglected.
- Insufficient funding of the facilities has led to poor health infrastructure.
- Out of the pocket expenditure is a major problem in India which becomes a heavy burden on the common people.
- Social inequalities have resulted in huge gaps between different sections of the society in availing modern and advanced medical treatment.
- Lack of awareness among people about health was more evident with the rising problem of vaccine hesitancy due to prejudices and preconceived notions.

Ways Suggested:

- Alternative methods of medicine like the National AYUSH Mission ([NAM](#)) should be encouraged by the government to increase the affordability of treatment for the common people.
- The problems can be prevented by effective planning and allocation of more funds.
- Medical research in the country needs to be boosted with adequate financial assistance along with the prioritisation of drugs and vaccine development for tropical diseases. This was also suggested by the National Health Policy 2002.
- There is a requirement of significant reform in medical education that demands adequate investments in improving the infrastructure of medical institutions.
- A public private partnership model can be employed to capitalise the resources which can transform the healthcare sector into a well equipped, resilient and responsive system.
- Experts suggest that India's potential human capital must be used in the most effective way possible that can bring revolutionary outcomes to deal with the challenges like the pandemic.
- Experts and the health industry aspire to welcome a Budget that is framed with flexibility of fund allocation with enormous emphasis on bridging the gap between healthcare services in urban and rural areas.
- The entire healthcare system of a welfare country like India needs to operate in an inclusive manner with an equitable distribution of wealth that looks after the demands of every section of the population.
- Comprehensive capacity building in the healthcare sector with considerable investments on public health, diagnostics, medical facilities and vaccine research is recommended as a sustainable method towards an inclusive and progressive healthcare system.

Read more about [Affordable Healthcare](#) in the linked article