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Medical Tourism

India's medical tourism industry could grow up to \$9 bn by 2020 (Ministry of Tourism). This is due to the increase in the number of medical tourists coming from Africa, West Asia, etc.

The easier Visa regime, availability of highly skilled doctors, high-quality treatment at low cost, and treatment through traditional therapies like Ayurveda make India a favorable destination for medical tourism.

However, there is a great disparity in terms of the:

- **Affordability** is low as the cost is high combined with high out-of-pocket expenditure (at nearly 65%). Most of the drugs are sold at very high prices.
- **Availability of healthcare** is concentrated in urban areas leaving rural folks dependent on quacks or state-run health facilities.
- **Accessibility of high-end hospitals for tertiary healthcare** is absent. There is a rising trend for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) which can be treated in a healthcare facility having requisite medical equipment, devices, and machines e.g. MRI scan, X-Ray, Ultrasound machine etc.

Government's steps:

- PM Ayushman Bharat for the health insurance cover of Rs 5 Lac/ family for 10.74 cr families from economically backward sections. And ~1.5Lac Health and Wellness Centres at the grass root level.
- Jan Aushadhi Kendras for generic medicines at affordable rates. Universal Immunisation Programme for free essential vaccines to all children.
- Several schemes like Janani Suraksha Yojan, PM Matru Vandana Yojna, and PM Surakshit Maitritva Abhiyan.

India is well poised to gain rich dividends and recent measures by the government are expected to mitigate the ill effects of medical tourism.

Shibaji biswas