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Building a Wellness Economy India's Strategy for Growth and Employment

India's emergence as a global centre for wellness is underpinned by the strength of its healthcare system and growing international confidence. With a doctor-to-population ratio of 1:811, exceeding the benchmark set by the World Health Organization, access to trained medical professionals has improved significantly. The presence of over 1.38 million allopathic doctors, supported by a large AYUSH workforce, has enabled the development of an integrated system that combines modern medicine with traditional practices.

Two Pillars: Medical and Wellness Tourism

India's medical value travel ecosystem rests on two complementary pillars:

- Medical tourism focuses on curative care, including complex surgeries, organ transplants and advanced diagnostics delivered through specialised institutions.
- Wellness tourism emphasises preventive and holistic health through Yoga, Ayurveda, Naturopathy and other AYUSH systems.

Together, these pillars address both immediate treatment requirements and the growing global preference for preventive healthcare.

Growth, Scale and Global Standing

India's global rankings reflect this combined strength. It is placed 10th in medical tourism and 12th in wellness tourism, with the sector valued at approximately USD 8.7 billion in 2025 and projected to reach USD 16.2 billion by 2030. In the same year, the country recorded 9.15 million foreign tourist arrivals, including over 507,000 medical visitors, accounting for about 5.5 per cent of the total. A large share of these patients comes from countries such as Bangladesh, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Somalia, Turkmenistan, Oman and Kenya.

Patients travel to India for a wide spectrum of treatments, including:

- Cardiac and orthopaedic procedures
- Cancer care and organ transplants
- Fertility and dental services
- AYUSH-based wellness therapies

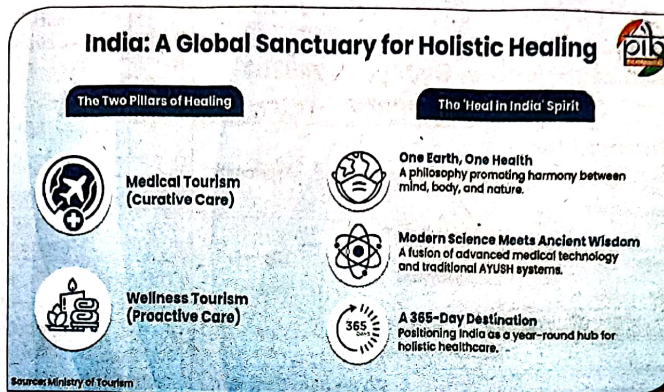
Drivers of Competitiveness

India's position as a preferred destination is shaped by several factors:

- Cost-effective treatment without compromising clinical standards
- A large and skilled pool of medical professionals
- English as a widely used language in healthcare delivery
- Adherence to global accreditation and quality benchmarks
- A distinctive wellness heritage rooted in AYUSH systems.
- Government support through initiatives such as Heal in India and streamlined visa processes.

Strengthening Medical Education and Infrastructure

Sustained investments in medical education and infrastructure are reinforcing



this growth. The expansion of medical colleges, increased availability of undergraduate and postgraduate seats, and the upgradation of existing institutions are enhancing training capacity. Proposals such as regional medical hubs aim to integrate healthcare, education and research, while curriculum reforms are improving practical training and aligning the workforce with evolving healthcare needs.

Integration and Promotion of AYUSH Systems

Traditional systems of medicine are being further integrated into the broader healthcare framework through targeted policy measures. Dedicated AYUSH visa facilities have improved access for international patients, while the adoption of international quality standards and expanded insurance coverage has strengthened credibility. Capacity-building initiatives and global collaborations are also helping position AYUSH systems within the international wellness market.

Wellness, Culture and Global Outreach

Wellness tourism in India is closely linked to its cultural heritage, with practices such as yoga, meditation and Ayurveda offering a holistic approach to health. Global initiatives, including the International Day of Yoga, have reinforced India's identity as a destination for preventive and lifestyle-based healthcare. Improved facilitation measures have made it easier for international visitors to access these services.

Economic Contribution, Employment Generation and Skilling

The expansion of medical and wellness tourism is emerging as a major driver of employment and skill development across sectors. As part of the wider travel and tourism industry, which contributed 5.22 per cent to India's GDP in FY24 and supported around 8.46 crore jobs (approximately 13.3 per cent of total employment), medical value travel is generating opportunities not only within hospitals but across the broader service

economy. This includes roles for doctors, nurses, paramedics and AYUSH practitioners, as well as jobs in hospital administration, wellness centres, patient facilitation, interpretation services, hospitality and transport.

This employment growth is supported by a parallel expansion in medical education and training capacity. As of April 2025, India has over 1.29 lakh MBBS seats and more than 75,000 postgraduate seats, ensuring a steady pipeline of trained professionals. In addition, 157 new medical colleges have been approved-131 of which are already functional-while 22 AIIMS institutions have been sanctioned, with 19 operational. These developments are significantly increasing both the scale and geographical spread of medical education.

Skill development initiatives are also being aligned with the needs of a global patient base. Under various government programmes, doctors are being upskilled to address specialist shortages, while paramedical and support staff are trained in foreign languages and cross-cultural communication. Targeted initiatives, such as training programmes for tourism facilitators and healthcare support staff, are further strengthening service quality for international patients.

The integration of AYUSH systems is creating additional employment avenues within the wellness segment. The proposed establishment of three new All India Institutes of Ayurveda, along with capacity-building efforts through sector skill councils, is expanding opportunities in traditional medicine, therapy and wellness services.

The combined expansion of infrastructure, education and skilling is ensuring that the growth of medical value travel is backed by a large, trained and adaptable workforce, while simultaneously generating substantial employment across healthcare, wellness and allied sectors.

Policy Support and Future Direction

Recent policy measures, particularly those outlined in the Union Budget

2026-27, reflect a coordinated effort to strengthen India's position in medical value travel. A key focus is on expanding infrastructure through the proposed establishment of five Regional Medical Hubs, designed as integrated centres combining healthcare delivery, medical education and research, along with dedicated AYUSH and patient facilitation services. These are complemented by continued investments in super-specialty facilities and the expansion of medical institutions.

Governance and quality assurance are being reinforced through a structured framework led by bodies such as the National Medical & Wellness Tourism Promotion Board, which facilitates coordination between central ministries, state governments and private stakeholders. At the same time, accreditation systems for hospitals and wellness centres are being strengthened to align with global standards and enhance international trust.

Digital facilitation is another critical area of reform. The government has expanded e-Medical and e-Medical Attendant visas to over 170 countries, alongside the introduction of e-AYUSH visas for



traditional therapies. The upgradation of a comprehensive Medical Value Travel portal is enabling end-to-end support-from treatment discovery and booking to payments and post-care follow-up-while proposed airport facilitation services aim to further streamline the patient experience.

In parallel, skill development and capacity-building initiatives are being scaled up to ensure service readiness across the value chain. Training programmes for healthcare workers, facilitators and support staff are improving both technical capability and patient handling, particularly for international visitors.

Taken together, these measures are creating a more structured, transparent and globally competitive ecosystem. They reinforce India's transition into a comprehensive hub for both advanced medical treatment and preventive wellness, while also supporting employment generation and sustained economic growth.

(Compiled by EN Team with inputs from PIB)

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