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## EDITORIAL

### **Union Budget 2026–27: Realising the ‘Trinity of Mission in Healthcare’-Service, Education, Research- in India through Regional Medical Hubs & towards Viksit Bharat 2047**

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*The Union Budget 2026–27 is not merely an infrastructure initiative; it is the articulation of a Trinity of Missions essential for India’s transition towards a Viksit Bharat.*

**In healthcare**, nations do not become developed by spending more

alone—but by building systems where care heals, education sustains, and research propels the future. Union Budget 2026–27, for the first time in recent memory, places all three within a single national vision (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Union Budget 2026-27: Hon’ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi & Hon’ble Union Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman

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### Healthcare as National Infrastructure:

- What emerges from Union Budget 2026–27 is a reframing of healthcare—from a sectoral obligation to **national infrastructure**, comparable in importance to transport, energy, or digital networks. The *trinity of mission*—care, education, and research—provides the conceptual glue for this transformation.
- If implemented with institutional discipline, outcome-based monitoring, and federal cooperation, Regional Medical Hubs could become the **defining healthcare legacy of this decade**, anchoring India’s journey towards *Viksit Bharat* not merely as a healthier nation, but as a **knowledge-driven, globally competitive healthcare leader**.

### Why the Public-Private Partnership Model:

- The public sector anchors equity, regulation, and national priorities;
- The private sector further improves efficiency, capital, and innovation.



Figure 2. “Budget has special focus on mental health and combating mental illness...” Union Minister JP Nadda

Beyond incremental allocations and scheme expansions, Union Budget 2026–27 articulates a structural idea—one that brings together **Care Delivery, Knowledge Creation, & Innovation** into a single, scalable national architecture (Figure 2).

*At the heart of this vision lies the proposal to establish Regional Medical*

*Hubs, developed through public–private partnerships (PPPs) and conceived as **integrated healthcare complexes** combining **advanced medical care, medical education and training, and research and innovation.***

### From Fragmentation to Integration

India's healthcare system has historically evolved in silos. Clinical services, medical education, and research have often progressed independently—sometimes competitively, rarely synergistically. The Budget 2026–27 proposal seeks to reverse this fragmentation.

By embedding **tertiary and quaternary care hospitals, teaching institutions, and research ecosystems**

within a single hub, the government signals a shift towards **systems-based healthcare development**. This mirrors global best practices, where academic medical centres act as anchors for regional health, talent, and innovation ecosystems.

The Regional Medical Hub model thus represents a deliberate move away from stand-alone hospitals or isolated medical colleges towards **living healthcare ecosystems**.

***Union Budget 2026-27***  
**Highlights of the Healthcare Sector Gains & Strategic Priorities**

- 1. Record Healthcare Allocation**
  - For the first time, the healthcare budget crosses **₹1 lakh crore**, signalling healthcare as a priority in fiscal policy.
- 2. Affordable & Accessible Treatment**
  - **Customs duty waived** on 17 essential cancer drugs and **exemptions on medicines for 7 rare diseases**, reducing treatment costs for patients.
- 3. 'Biopharma Shakti' Initiative**
  - A **₹10,000 crore** programme to strengthen **biopharmaceutical manufacturing & innovation**, including biologics and biosimilars. The goal is to reduce dependency on imports, promote affordable drugs, and position India as a **global biotech hub**—all aligned with Viksit Bharat's economic and health security ambitions.
- 4. Healthcare Workforce Expansion**
  - The budget pledges the addition of **100,000 allied health professionals (AHPs)** — a significant boost to India's healthcare delivery capacity and quality.
- 5. Regional Medical Hubs for Medical Tourism**
- 6. Ayurveda & Traditional Medicine Support**
- 7. Education, Training & Research**
  - New institutions and training pathways for AHP disciplines.
  - Strengthened research ecosystem via **New Biopharma labs and allied health education initiatives** (e.g., courses and multi-skilled caregiver programs).
- 8. Focus on Mental Health**

## **Medical Education and Workforce Sustainability**

### ***The First Pillar: Advanced Medical Care***

The first pillar—**advanced medical care facilities**—addresses both domestic and global imperatives. For Indian citizens, these hubs promise access to high-end diagnostics, specialised interventions, post-acute care, and rehabilitation within regional geographies, reducing dependence on metropolitan centres.

For the global community, these hubs strengthen India's position as a **medical value travel destination**,

supported by Medical Tourism Facilitation Centres, continuity-of-care infrastructure, and AYUSH integration. Healthcare here is not only a social service but also a **strategic export sector**.

### ***The Second Pillar: Medical Education and Training Institutions***

**These** are the most critical for long-term sustainability. India's healthcare expansion has repeatedly been constrained not by intent but by **human resource bottlenecks**.

**Embedding medical colleges, nursing schools, and allied health professional (AHP) training programmes within Regional Medical Hubs creates a virtuous cycle:**

- **Clinical load enriches training quality**
- **Training pipelines ensure workforce availability**
- **Workforce density improves care outcomes**

This model directly addresses the chronic imbalance between infrastructure creation and skilled manpower deployment.

### ***The Third Pillar***

#### ***From Periphery to Core***

The third pillar—**research and innovation infrastructure**—elevates healthcare from service delivery to **knowledge generation**. Clinical research units, biopharma linkages, digital health

platforms, and translational laboratories integrated within care environments shorten the distance between bench and bedside.

This is particularly relevant as India seeks leadership in **biologics, biosimilars, digital health, and precision medicine**. Research embedded in real-world clinical ecosystems is not only more relevant but also more equitable.

### ***Healthcare Gains in the Context of “Viksit Bharat”***

The *Viksit Bharat* vision—a long-term national development strategy converging economic growth, human capital, and resilience—is reflected in several healthcare components of the 2026-27 budget:

#### **A. Human Capital Development**

- Improved healthcare access and workforce expansion elevate productivity and life expectancy, which are core to a developed society.

#### **B. Economic Integration**

- Biopharma Shakti and medical tourism hubs tie healthcare with **manufacturing growth and services exports**, boosting GDP and global competitiveness.

#### **C. Affordability & Equity**

- Lower drug costs and expanded care infrastructure support equitable health outcomes, reducing catastrophic health spending and widening insurance reach.

#### **D. Innovation & Research**

- Prioritization of biopharma, allied health training institutions, and integrated ecosystems accelerates innovation—a pillar in India’s *Viksit Bharat* socio-economic blueprint.

### **PPPs as Enablers, Not Substitutes**

The emphasis on **public–private partnerships** deserves careful interpretation. The Budget does not envisage PPPs as a withdrawal of the state but as a **capacity multiplier**.

If governed transparently and aligned with public health goals, PPP-led Regional Medical Hubs can avoid the pitfalls of commercialisation while retaining the benefits of scale and speed.

### **Mental Health and Regional Equity: Deepening the Vision**

Complementing the hub-based approach, the Budget’s announcement of **NIMHANS-2** and the upgradation of national mental health institutes as regional apex centres signals a broader understanding of healthcare as **human capital protection**.

### **Regional Equity and Inclusive Development**

The focused attention on **Purvodaya States and the North-East** further aligns healthcare expansion with regional equity and employment generation.

The Union Budget 2026–27 initiatives ensure that integration is not confined to disciplines, but extends to **geographies and populations** historically underserved.

A focused emphasis has been placed on **Purvodaya States and the North-Eastern Region**, with the objective of:

- Empowering vulnerable populations to access quality mental health and trauma care
- Addressing regional disparities in specialist healthcare availability
- Accelerating local development through **health-led employment generation**

### **Contribution to *Viksit Bharat***

Collectively, these initiatives:

- Integrate healthcare delivery with education, research, and tourism
- Advance mental health as a core component of human capital
- Promote balanced regional development
- Position healthcare as both a **social good and an economic growth engine**

The Union Budget 2026–27 thus operationalises the *Viksit Bharat* vision by embedding healthcare within India's long-term strategy for productivity, resilience, and global leadership.