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The Lakshmi Mittal and Family  
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Dear Friends,

We are delighted to present to you the February edition of the monthly newsletter by the [Lancet Citizens' Commission on Reimagining India's Health System](#). This month's newsletter highlights the Union Budget 2025-26, with ₹799,858.56 crore allocated to the Health Ministry, focusing on medical tourism and daycare cancer centres. The Population Foundation of India called it a missed opportunity for Viksit Bharat, citing overlooked demographic priorities. With paperless patient care gaining importance, resistance to digital health records remains a challenge. A Lancet study reports a 30% drop in India's suicide death rate (1990–2021). Under the 100-day campaign, 5.1 lakh TB cases notified. Experts discuss on health insurance, menstrual and menopause health, and elderly care among migrants and non-migrants.

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## Views & Opinions

[Union budget 2025: 799,858.56 cr](#)



### [allocated to health ministry, medical tourism, daycare cancer centres among top highlights](#)

The Union Budget 2025–26 prioritizes healthcare, allocating ₹99,858.56 crore to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare—a 191% increase since 2014–15. This substantial rise highlights the government's commitment to enhancing the nation's health and well-being. In her budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman emphasized that Viksit Bharat envisions a future with zero poverty, universal quality education, and comprehensive healthcare.



### [Budget & beyond: Paperless patient care holds the key now to reaping the fruits of broadband](#)

If there was one line in the budget speech of Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, that carried an extraordinary weight, it was about providing broadband connectivity to primary health centres in rural areas under the BharatNet project. “The future of primary care is not about getting doctors to remote areas but in getting access to these physicians from remote locations and therefore the announcement made by the finance minister is not just much-needed measure but one that was long overdue,” says *Nachiket Mor*.



### [Budget 2025-26: PFI Calls It A Missed Chance For Viksit Bharat](#)

The budget continues to fall short on critical investments in health, women's empowerment, and India's ageing population—key areas that are essential for long-term demographic and economic sustainability. While the total health budget increased by 10.8 per cent (Rs 95,957.87 crore), this remains insufficient to address India's growing healthcare needs, particularly public health infrastructure, primary healthcare, and non-communicable diseases. “We need transformative change, not incremental steps. We must address the historical shortfalls in the health budgets over the years,” says *Poonam Muttreja*.



### [Healthcare providers not accepting digital health records because they do not want to be accountable](#)

Resistance to digitisation of patient health records by many healthcare providers is because they do not want to be accountable, said Indu Bhushan, former chairman of National Health Authority and former CEO of Ayushman Bharat. Speaking at a panel discussion on “Future of Care: Revolutionising Healthcare Through Digital Innovation and Collaboration” at the Global Investors' Meet, Dr. Bhushan cited an example of doctors who prescribe investigation tests and





antibiotics unnecessarily. “They also do not want to be accountable, because, in response, there is no benefit. Instead, it increases their workload,” says *Indu Bhushan*.

### [How Healthy is Health Insurance?](#)

State-sponsored health insurance schemes are growing by leaps and bounds in India. Ensuring that they serve the public interest rather than private profit is a major challenge. Insurance apart, what India needs is a radical expansion and improvement of public health services. The last ten years have seen a quiet but major change in India's healthcare system: the rapid growth of state-sponsored health insurance. Ten years ago, only a few of India's 20 major states (mainly in the southern and western regions) had a broad health insurance scheme for the general population. Today, all of them have one, with the partial exception of Bihar, write *Anfaz Abdul Vahab and Jean Drèze*.



### [Since launch of 100-day campaign, over 5.1 lakh TB patients notified across India](#)

Since the launch of the 100-day Intensified TB-Mukt Bharat Abhiyan on December 7, 2024, by the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Jagat Prakash Nadda, over 5.1 lakh notifications have been recorded across India, said a statement from Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. A new strategy was designed for early identification of TB by offering X-rays as a screening tool for the population at higher risk of developing TB.



### [Why public health programmes should step up and address menopause in India](#)

Public health programmes for women in India have predominantly centred on family planning, maternal health, and safe childbirth, and for good reason. Over the past decade, there has also been progress in menstrual hygiene management interventions for adolescents. Additionally, national programmes for non-communicable diseases (NCDs), cancers affecting women, and mental health are being implemented under the National Health Mission (NHM) to support screening, early detection, and treatment. However, it is striking that menopause has been overlooked and left unaddressed, even though it is linked to these health issues and more, writes *Arundhati Muralidharan*.

### [India's suicide death rate drops 30% from 1990 to 2021: Lancet study](#)

A recent study has highlighted a notable 30 per



cent decline in India's suicide death rate from 1990 to 2021. The findings, published in The Lancet Public Health and accessed by The Indian Express, are based on data from the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2021. In 1990, India's suicide death rate was recorded at 18.9 per 100,000 population. By 2019, this figure had decreased to 13.1 per 100,000 and by 2021, it further dropped to 13 per 100,000 population. This represents an overall reduction of 31.5 per cent over three decades, writes *Prateek Shukla*.

## Resources

### [Reconceptualizing menstrual health and hygiene among young women in India](#)

This study advances the understanding of menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) by integrating access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities and period product usage. Using a cross-sectional design and data from the National Family Health Survey-5 ( $n = 205,861$  women aged 15–24 years), we examined factors associated with adequate MHH access and its geographical distribution across Indian districts via bivariate and multivariate logistic regression and Fairlie decomposition. We found substantial geographical disparities in access, ranging from 2.3% to 89.4%, write *Mahashweta Chakrabarty, Karan Babbar & Aditya Singh*.



### [Differences in health related quality of life among older migrants and nonmigrants in India](#)

Increasing age with migration status might have a double risk of vulnerability to poor health outcomes. There is a lack of population-based studies on health-related quality of life (HRQoL) of older migrants in India. [...] Over half of the older persons (55.9%) were growing older at destination places in India. The migrants showed a higher prevalence of poor HRQoL (44.5%) than non-migrants (34.8%). Further, the adjusted logistic regression result shows that migrants were likelier to have poor HRQoL [AOR 1.15; CI 1.09–1.22] than non-migrants. The migrants with 0–9 years of duration and migration at age 60 and above were significantly more likely to have poor HRQoL [AOR 1.20; CI 1.03–1.39] and [AOR 1.20; CI 1.04–1.39], respectively, than non-migrants, write *Vasim Ahamad & Ram B. Bhagat*.

## Featured Partner

**Population Foundation of India** is a leading NGO in the fields of population dynamics, gender equity, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH). It addresses population





issues within the context of empowering women, men, and young people, enabling them to make informed decisions about their fertility, health, and well-being. Population Foundation of India also collaborates closely with and provides technical support to both national and state governments, as well as other NGOs.



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