

# Centre will increase healthcare spending in next five years: Minister

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This year, the Centre has substantially increased healthcare spending and the Finance Commission has projected a massive increase in the health outlay in the next five years, said Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare.

He was speaking at the 32nd Convocation of Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education & Research, Chennai.

India has faced a lot of challenges since Independence, prominent among them be-

ing providing quality healthcare, adequate human resources, infrastructure and introducing changes in the healthcare system. "The government is poised to provide all these. India spends about 4.2 per cent of its GDP on healthcare and services compared to about 18 per cent by many developed nations," he said.

### Vaccination drive

The Covid-19 pandemic has showcased the government's contribution towards adequate healthcare – both intensive care and otherwise.



Health Minister Harsh Vardhan

The Centre is taking up the vaccination drive in a big way, he said.

Presently, the doctor-pa-

tient ratio is 1:1700. This should improve to 1:1000 as per WHO norms.

There is a definitive move to increase the number of medical colleges, almost one per each district, and also the number of medical graduates.

"We are steadily working in this direction," he said.

Similarly, the number of hospital beds available is 9 per 10,000 of the population. This needs to be raised immediately to 40 per 10,000.

The number of people covered under health insurance has to drastically in-

crease from the present 8-10 per cent, he added.

### Use of telemedicine

To ensure accessibility of quality treatment for Covid and non-Covid health issues in far-flung areas, telemedicine has been promoted in a big way. 'eSanjeevani', a web-based comprehensive telemedicine solution, has been extended to 23 states to ensure the reach of specialised healthcare services to masses in both rural areas and isolated communities. As of today, more than 11 lakh teleconsultations have been held on

this digital platform, he said. Under Ayushman Bharat, around 10.74 crore poor and vulnerable families have been identified as per socio-economic caste census, and they are entitled for a health cover of ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation.

With continued efforts to provide quality health care services, India has become a reputed destination for medical tourism. A number of patients from foreign countries seek health care services of international standards at an affordable cost here, he said.