Ayushman Bharat Programme

Why in news?

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The Government has announced two major initiatives in health sector, as part of newly announced Ayushman Bharat programme.

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What are the provisions?

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- The programme is aimed at making interventions to address health holistically, in primary, secondary and tertiary care systems.
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- The initiatives under the programme are:
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i. Health and Wellness Centre
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ii. National Health Protection Scheme
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- **Health and Wellness Centre** - National Health Policy, 2017 envisioned Health and Wellness Centres as the foundation of India’s health system.
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- Under this, 1.5 lakh centres will bring health care system closer to the homes of people.
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- The centres will provide comprehensive health care, including for non-communicable diseases and maternal and child health services.
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- These will also provide free essential drugs and diagnostic services.
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- Contribution of private sector through CSR and philanthropic institutions in adopting these centres is also envisaged.
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- **National Health Protection Scheme** - This will cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families.
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- This would translate to around 50 crore beneficiaries.
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- The scheme provides coverage of upto Rs. 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
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- This is said to be the world's largest government funded health care programme.
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- **Besides,** 24 new Government Medical Colleges and Hospitals will be set up, by up-grading existing district hospitals in the country.
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- This would ensure that there is at least 1 Medical College for every 3 Parliamentary Constituencies.
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- Also, at least 1 Government Medical College in each State of the country.
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- This is to further enhance accessibility of quality medical education and health care.
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What is the significance?

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- Lakhs of families, at present, borrow or sell assets to receive inpatient treatment.
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- The concern of the consequent impoverishment of poor and vulnerable families is a continuing one.
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- Under the existing Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), poor families get an annual coverage of Rs. 30,000.
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- Several State governments have implemented or supplemented health protection schemes that provide varying coverage.
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- The present initiatives will supplement these in taking health care to a larger

mass.
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- Higher health insurance cover is also seen as leading to a higher life expectancy.
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- The scheme could potentially ensure enhanced productivity and well being, averting wage loss and impoverishment.
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Source: The Hindu

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