Budget 2017 – Health

What are the provisons in the budget for health?

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- Elimination of five infectious diseases,
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- Strengthening of rural sub-centres,
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- Recruitment of specialist doctors in govt hospitals,
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- Increased allocation for programmes for women and children, and
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- Free treatment for the elderly poor.
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What are the shortcomings?

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- Since Independence, a significant portion of the health budget has been allocated to infectious disease control programmes.
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- Now these diseases account for less than 10% of deaths and 15% of ill-health in the country.
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- Therefore there should be increased budgetary support **for the prevention and control for non-communicable diseases** like cancer, diabetes, hypertension etc., which are the major causes of sickness, disability and death in the country today.
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- It is debatable as elimination of these disease is an **unpredictable public health investment.**
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- Eliminating kala-azar and filariasis – now restricted to few areas – may be

feasible. **The epidemiology of leprosy and tuberculosis are so different** that financial investment for their elimination warrants caution.
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- The living conditions of urban slums provide the ideal environment for proliferation of infectious diseases, and could easily undo targets of eliminating tuberculosis. But it was not addressed in the budget.
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- The WHO has been pointing to the lack of integration of private practitioners with the national mission on tuberculosis for guaranteed access to drugs, and lack of continuous monitoring of such patients.
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- The health budget has retained the traditional approach.
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- But more innovative allocations, like the budgetary provision for the elderly poor, are required.
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Source: The Hindu & The Indian Express

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