Importance of Primary healthcare in India

What is the issue?

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Developing health and wellness(H&W) centres is a well thought out step for renewing focus on comprehensive primary care.

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What is the importance of H&W centres towards ensuring primary care?

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- The Union government announced health and wellness centres under its Ayushman Bharat programme as the foundation for public health system in the country.
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- These centres are intended to provide outpatient care, immunisation, maternal and child health services, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and other services.
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- These centres will be linked to secondary and tertiary care and will be supplied with adequate drugs and diagnostic services.
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- Once developed, these centres will help ameliorating basic health problems including early diagnosis and treatment of NCDs, thereby avoiding complications in the latter stage.
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- This would translate into lower cost of treatments at the secondary and tertiary-care levels.
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What are the advantages of primary healthcare?

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- Achieving universal health coverage (UHC) with a comprehensive primary-

care approach will ensure healthcare with higher coverage and at lower cost.
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- Higher public spending in primary care alleviate household out-of-pocket expenditure(OOP) to a large extent.
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- It can contribute to realising SDG Goal 3 of promoting Good health and well-being to all with adequate financial protection.
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- Countries like UK have already achieved lower rate of mortality and better health outcomes by re-orienting their strategies towards primary care.
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What more does it need?

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- **Focus** - A higher percentage of primary care expenditure is on personalised, curative care, leaving a minimum amount for population-based primary preventive care.
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- Achieving comprehensive primary care requires a paradigm shift from disease-control vertical programmes(curative) to community-led, people-oriented primary care(preventive).
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- **Implementation** - Involving nurses and allied health professionals in primary care service delivery models can lower the burden of a low doctor-strength ratio.
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- The role of public health professionals assumes paramount importance.
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- They can help design outreach and preventive programmes and implement the continuing health programme effectively.
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- Also a trained pool of social workers, psychiatrists, counsellors with public health orientation can intensify the reach of public service delivery in India.
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- **Spending** - Approximately, 51% of total government expenditure on health is spent on primary care.
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- This needs to be stepped up to at least two-third of the government

expenditure as suggested in the national health policy.
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- **Role of states** - The states have higher responsibility than the Centre in matters related to health.
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- Hence, the blueprints of primary care can further be redefined by the states in view of their local needs.
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Source: Financial Express

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