Integrate AYUSH with Modern Medicine for Holistic Health

What is the issue?

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AYUSH has to be combined with modern medicine for holistic health and to treat non-communicable diseases effectively.

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What is the current scenario of health in India?

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- India is facing double burden of under-nutrition and communicable diseases along with the non-communicable ailments affecting millions of people.
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- And the World Health Organisation Report for 2018 highlights that non-communicable diseases account for 63 per cent of deaths in India.
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- This is an alarming statistic and modern medicine alone is unlikely to provide the solutions.
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Why integration of medicines is the solution?

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- Unlike modern medicine, alternative systems follow a more holistic approach, with the objective of promoting overall well-being instead of focussing on curing illness alone.
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- Such an approach assumes greater significance in the case of non-communicable diseases which are difficult to treat once they have developed into chronic conditions.
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- Internationally, greater scientific evidence is becoming available regarding the health impact of alternative systems of medicine, especially Yoga.
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- Apart from a rich heritage in traditional medicine, India has nearly eight lakh registered Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) practitioners whose services can be better utilised for delivering healthcare to the population.
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What steps are taken by the government to promote AYUSH?

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- The government set up a dedicated ministry to promote AYUSH at the Central level in 2014.
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- Mainstreaming AYUSH was a clearly stated policy objective under the National Health Policy, 2017.
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- Another pioneering initiative is the establishment of a Centre for Integrative Medicine & Research by AIIMS, Delhi.
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- Several union ministries also plan to set up AYUSH units in the hospitals operated by them.
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- Further, AYUSH is one of the 12 champion services sectors promoted by the government through soft loans and interest subsidies to AYUSH establishments as well as 100% FDI.
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What is the way forward?

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- **Co-Location** - There is a need for co-location of AYUSH with facilities providing allopathic medicine.
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- The 'Strategy for New India @ 75' released by NITI Aayog sets out the explicit target of co-locating AYUSH services in at least 50 per cent of primary health centres, 70 per cent of community health centres and 100 per cent of district hospitals by 2022-23.
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- Co-location must also be achieved in the 1.5 lakh health and wellness centres announced in Union Budget 2018-19.

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- **Education & Research** - Investments in AYUSH education and research needs to be stepped up.
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- Mechanisms should be identified for integrating modern medicine and AYUSH curricula at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in educational institutions.
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- Developing a credible research base is critical to embed AYUSH within the overall framework of healthcare by addressing the lingering concerns around its effectiveness.
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- **Awareness** - Range of communication channels should be leveraged to popularise Ayurveda and Yoga and inform citizens about their preventive and curative properties.
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- While Yoga has gained immensely in popularity as a form of exercise, the full range of physical and mental health benefits it can yield must be propagated.
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- **Medicines** - Essential AYUSH medicines must be included in various national health programmes and guidelines should be developed for ensuring their quality.
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- The rich history of traditional medicine must be tapped to reduce the health burden affecting India and its growth.
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Source: The Business Line

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