

Medical Tourism in India

Mains: GS II – *Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources*

Why in News?

Recently, India witnessed an increase in foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) for medical purposes between January and April 2025, highlighting a sharp surge in medical tourism as per data from the Ministry of Tourism.

What is medical tourism?

- **Definition** – It refers to the practice of traveling to another country to receive medical, dental, or other healthcare services.
- **Process**

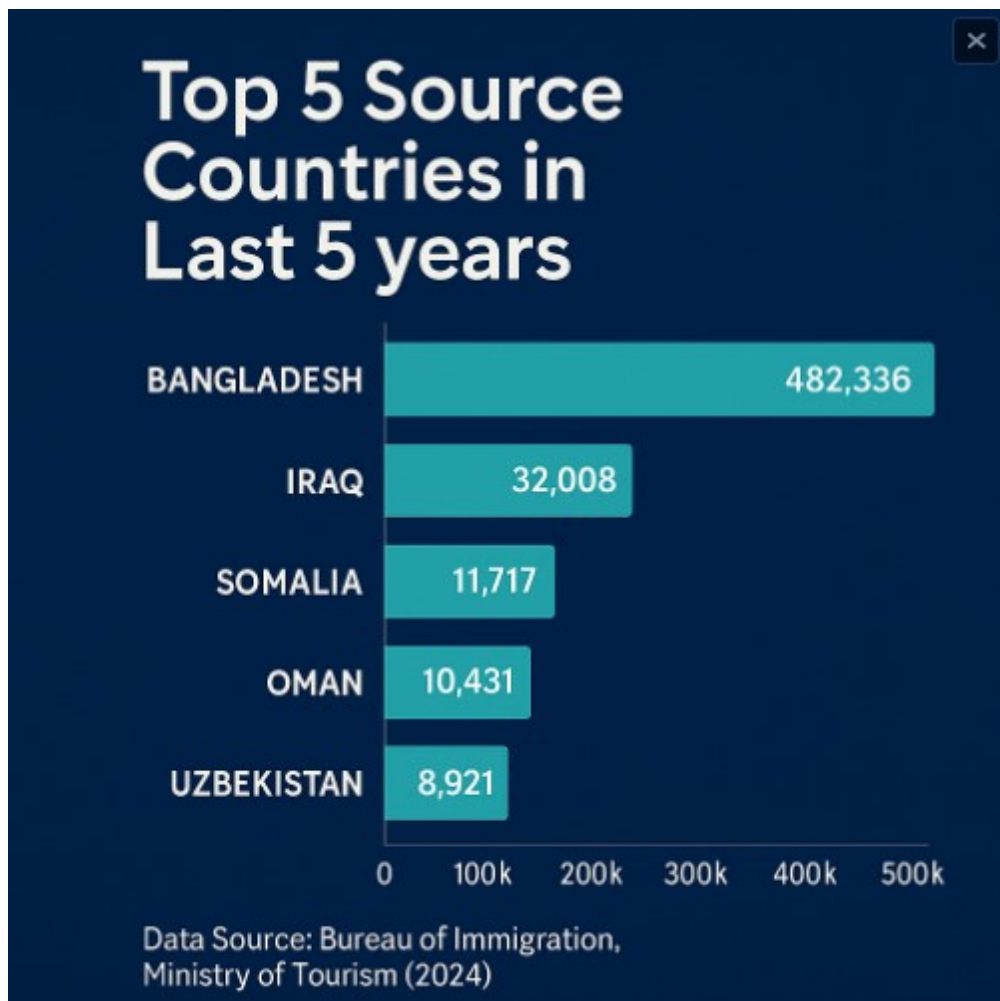


What is the status of medical tourism in India?

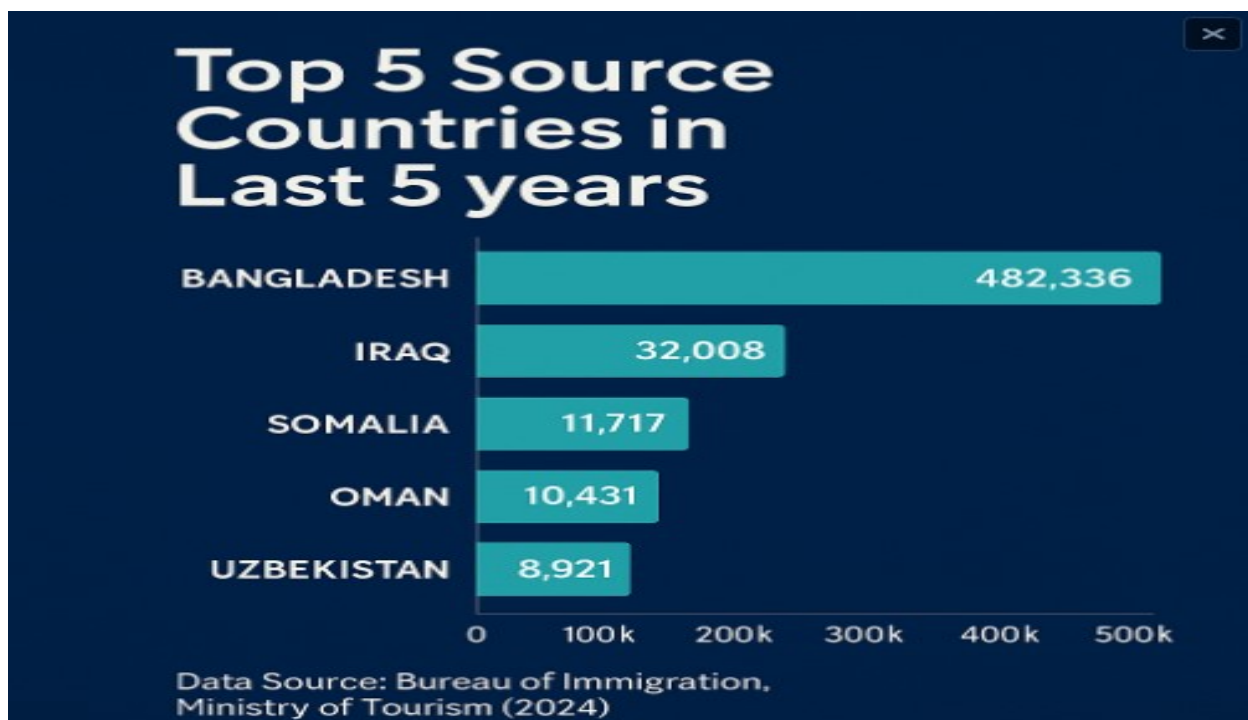
- **Increasing influxes** – India recorded 1, 31,856 foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) for medical purposes from January to April 2025, accounting for approximately 4.1% of

global total.

- **Top source countries**

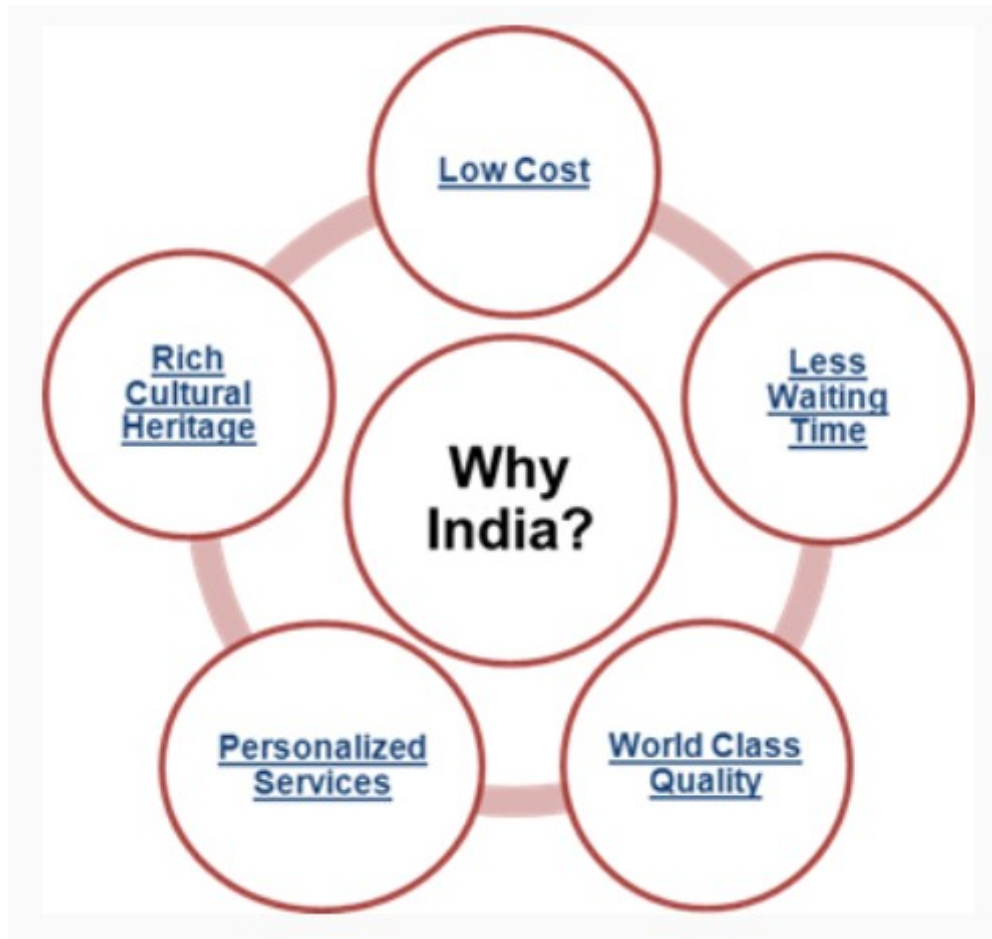


- **Future prospects**



What are the reasons for choosing India as a medical tourism destination?

- **Cost-Effectiveness** – India offers significantly lower costs for medical procedures compared to Western countries.
 - **For example**, heart bypass surgery can be 5-10 times cheaper in India than in the US or UK.



- **High-Quality Healthcare** – India has a well-established and growing healthcare infrastructure with internationally accredited hospitals and skilled medical professionals.
 - **For example**, Tamilnadu emerges as the top state in medical tourism due to best quality medical services.
- **Government Support** – The Indian government has implemented policies to promote and facilitate medical tourism.
 - **For example**, the Government of India has extended e-medical visa and e-medical attendant visa facilities to nationals of 171 countries.
- **Programmes and schemes** – The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is also actively promoting the 'Heal in India' campaign.
- It fosters public-private partnerships to enhance the medical tourism ecosystem, which includes hospitals, facilitators, hotels, airlines, and regulatory agencies.
- **International certifications** – Many hospitals in India has recognitions from international institutions.
- **State government initiatives** – In Gujarat, the state government is promoting medical tourism by

- Registering wellness retreats on the official Tourism Department website, supporting participation in wellness-focused events,
- Organizing familiarization trips for industry stakeholders,
- Promoting wellness centres through social media platforms.
- Showcasing its healthcare infrastructure globally
- Training paramedical staff to improve service quality
- Participating in international health and wellness events, exhibitions, and conferences.

What are the challenges?

- **Lack of promotion** - India is lacking in promoting and creating awareness about the state-of-the art facilities in India.
- **International competition** - India is witnessing strong competition from destinations like *Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Turkey, and South Korea with low-cost options.*
- **Lack of coordination** - There is a lack of *cohesiveness amongst the major players in the industry* to come together and represent India on a world platform to acquire newer geographies.
- **Unpredictable fees** - The inconsistent fee structure *confuses the international patients in choosing India.*
- **Lack of transparency** - In many hospitals there is a lack of transparency *in billing to foreign patients.*
- **Poor hygiene** - Certain hospitals in India has poor hygiene awareness in medical attendants, *unhygienic food handling, and lack of proper hospitality services.*

Reference

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