

## Budget 2024: Allocation for health falls short of expectations; customs duty exemption on three cancer drugs and X-ray components

On 23rd July 2024, in the Budget Session, the Government announced a full customs duty exemption for three cancer medicines—Trastuzumab Deruxtecan, Osimertinib, and Durvalumab—as part of the Union Budget for 2024-25. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in the Lok Sabha. The exemption was welcomed by doctors, who noted that the high cost of life-saving drugs, especially for cancer patients undergoing long-term treatment, made this move crucial.

Trastuzumab Deruxtecan treats HER2-positive breast cancer and is being explored for other cancers. Osimertinib targets specific mutations in non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), and Durvalumab is an immunotherapy used for NSCLC and bladder cancer. Experts estimated that the exemption could lower the cost of these drugs by 10-20%. In addition to the cancer drug exemption, the budget also included customs duty relief on X-ray tube components and digital detectors, which was seen as supportive of domestic manufacturing. This move was praised for encouraging local production and aligning with the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative.

Despite a 12.59% increase in the health ministry's budget to ₹90,658.63 crore and ₹3,200 crore allocated to the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission, the industry felt the budget did not adequately address broader healthcare challenges.





## USAID and Takeda initiate campaign to prevent Dengue

USAID and Takeda Biopharmaceuticals India have introduced a campaign, “Haarega Dengue, Haraenge Hum (We Will Together Defeat Dengue),” to combat dengue amidst climate change challenges. The initiative aims to educate school children and communities in Maharashtra, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh on preventive actions against dengue and encourage habits to reduce vector-borne diseases.

Warren Harrity, Acting Mission Director of USAID, emphasized strengthening health systems by identifying climate-sensitive disease patterns, enhancing preparedness, and implementing climate-smart health policies. The campaign addresses the rising prevalence of vector-borne diseases due to increased temperature and rainfall, exacerbating stress on health systems already impacted by the pandemic.

Yamashita Yuta, Health Attaché at the Japanese Embassy in India, highlighted the collaboration’s significance in global health and the Indo-Japan relationship, stressing the urgency of addressing dengue. Annapurna Das, General Manager of Takeda Biopharmaceuticals India, reaffirmed the commitment to working with various stakeholders for a Dengue-free India.

Neeraj Jain, CEO of the Centre for Health Research and Innovation (CHRI), noted the partnership’s focus on innovative approaches to combat climate-sensitive infectious diseases, aligning with 2024’s theme of Climate and Health Action. The campaign was launched at the “Call to Action for Climate Sensitive Infectious Diseases” event, organized by CHRI under USAID’s Sustainable Action for Climate and Health (SACH) Initiative.



## FSSAI mandates bold labels for salt, sugar, and fat on packaged foods

On 6th July 2024, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) approved changes to nutritional information labelling on packaged food items. The new regulations mandated that total salt, sugar, and saturated fat be displayed in bold letters and larger font sizes. This decision was made during the 44th FSSAI meeting, chaired by Apurva Chandra, and aimed to enhance consumer understanding of nutritional content and promote healthier choices. The amendment to the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2020, required that information on the percentage contribution to Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) for these nutrients be highlighted in bold.

The FSSAI stated that the amendment would support efforts to combat Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and improve public health. The draft notification for the amendment was to be released for public feedback. Additionally, FSSAI issued advisories to prevent misleading claims on food labels, including those related to terms like 'Health Drink' and '100% fruit juices.' The meeting included officials from various ministries, industry representatives, and consumer organizations.



## Health Ministry urges hospitals to promote organ donation, identify brain-dead patients

On 8th July 2024, the Central Government instructed hospitals and medical colleges across India to expedite the identification and declaration of brain-dead patients to enhance organ donation. In preparation for Indian Organ Donation Day on 3rd August, Health Secretary Apurva Chandra emphasized the importance of this initiative for “humanity.” Her letter to stakeholders dated 24th June 2024 highlighted that facilitating organ donation was a top government priority and noted the significant gap between patients needing transplants and available donors.

The National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO) celebrates Indian Organ Donation Day annually to raise awareness and encourage organ donation. This year, the Health Ministry launched the Angdaan Jan Jagrukta Abhiyaan campaign, which aimed to address myths about organ donation and promote deceased donations instead of predominantly living donations.

The campaign also sought to increase online registrations for organ donation pledges through NOTTO’s web portal, utilizing various communication methods, including social media and street plays. It encouraged participation from students and local communities, including village-level registrations. Sunayna Singh of NGO Organ India praised the initiative but stressed the need for year-round efforts to maintain momentum and effectively engage the public.

# NASHA MUKTI INDRADHANUSH ABHIYAN INDIA



## Doctors lead 'Nasha Mukti Indradhanush Abhiyan' for addiction-free India

On 16th July 2024, the "Nasha Mukti Indradhanush Abhiyan India" campaign gained significant momentum in its effort to promote a tobacco-free and addiction-free future. Launched by the Asian Coalition for Health Empowerment (ACHE) in collaboration with Doctors Against Addiction (DAAD), the initiative engaged medical professionals and the public in advocating for better health. Over the past eight months, more than 1,000 doctors, public health experts, and medical students supported the campaign. Collected signatures were presented to health organizations and policymakers, including the Prime Minister's Office, to push for stringent measures against tobacco and other harmful addictions.

Narender Saini, former General Secretary of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), stated that the campaign for its comprehensive approach to combating tobacco addiction and promoting robust anti-substance abuse policies. The campaign addressed not only tobacco but also drugs, alcohol, and excessive smartphone use, aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 3 on health and well-being.

Pawan Gupta from BLK-MAX Super Speciality Hospital highlighted the campaign's global-local strategy for improving health policies. Sunaina Soni from Subharti Medical College emphasized the crucial role of community support in driving policy changes and moving towards an addiction-free future.

## Delhi Government launches real-time ICU bed availability dashboard

On 29th July 2024, the Delhi government's Health Department introduced a new online dashboard to provide real-time information on ICU bed availability across the city's hospitals. Accessible through the official website 'www.health.delhi.gov.in,' the dashboard aimed to assist patients and their families in making informed decisions during medical emergencies. As of late Saturday evening, the dashboard showed that 42.41 percent of the 389 ICU beds across 34 units in 17 government-run hospitals were available. This initiative addressed the difficulties patients and caregivers faced in finding available ICU facilities, especially during critical situations.

The development of the dashboard followed a recommendation from a committee established by the Delhi High Court, which had advocated for such a platform and a centralised command and control room to manage medical resources more effectively. Currently, the dashboard includes data from 17 hospitals, but the Health Department planned to expand it to cover all 25 government-run hospitals in Delhi, which together manage 1,058 ICU beds. The integration of data from the remaining hospitals was expected to be completed gradually. This initiative is anticipated to enhance accessibility to medical resources, improve patient outcomes, and streamline hospital operations.





## Indian pharma market grows over 8% in June 2024

In June 2024, the Indian pharmaceutical market (IPM) grew by 8.8%, as reported by market research firm Pharmarack. This growth was driven by positive value increases across major therapy areas, with respiratory, anti-infectives, and gastrointestinal therapies experiencing double-digit growth rates of 19.2%, 17.2%, and 10.7%, respectively. Sheetal Sapale, Vice-President (Commercial) at Pharmarack, noted that while most therapy areas showed positive growth, some typically see seasonal surges starting in June. The IPM's growth was attributed to new introductions, price-based growth, and volume increases.

Between July 2023 and June 2024, the moving annual turnover (MAT) for the IPM grew by 7.6%, reaching over Rs 2 trillion, despite a 0.1% dip in domestic market volumes. Leading therapies such as cardiac, anti-infectives, and gastrointestinal exhibited robust volume growth of 9%, 8.7%, and 8.4%, respectively. Notable top players like Fourrts, FDC, Aristo, Cipla, and Glenmark reported significant monthly value growth. Augmentin by GSK and Glycomet GP by USV were the top-selling medicines, with sales of Rs 76 crore and Rs 66 crore, respectively.

## Economic Survey: Pharma growth needs skill advancement and innovation

The Economic Survey 2023-24, presented in Parliament on 22nd July 2024, highlighted that the domestic pharmaceutical industry must advance skills, embrace innovation, and strengthen its supply chain to reach an estimated value of USD 130 billion by 2030. Currently valued at around USD 50 billion, India's pharmaceutical market is the third largest in the world by volume. The survey emphasized the need for skill development and technological innovation to drive the next growth phase.

India's pharmaceutical sector excels in producing cost-effective, off-patent drugs, known as generics, which play a crucial role in making medicines affordable. The survey stressed the importance of balancing innovation with the production of affordable drugs to enhance healthcare access and improve investment returns. It also noted that sustainable export growth could be achieved by enhancing biopharmaceutical manufacturing capabilities.

However, the survey pointed out that India remains heavily reliant on imports for many antibiotic Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) due to the lack of cost-effective domestic production options. While domestic infrastructure and R&D capabilities have improved, challenges persist. The survey underscored the need for ongoing innovation and strengthening the pharmaceutical supply chain to support future growth.



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