Daily Editorial Analysis 24 June 2026

June 24, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com

Reconnect Public Health with People's Needs

Context

- **Public health policy** plays a vital role in improving **population health**, reducing inequalities, and enabling a country to harness its **demographic dividend**.
- In recent years, India has sought to advance **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** through initiatives such as the **Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs)** and the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission (ABDHM).**
- While these reforms aim to strengthen healthcare delivery, concerns remain regarding their ability to address the fundamental challenges of **healthcare access**, affordability, and quality.
- The growing emphasis on **wellness** and **digital health infrastructure** has often overshadowed the need to strengthen the country's healthcare delivery system.

Background: Evolution of the Wellness Approach

- The concept of **wellness** emerged as an expansion of traditional definitions of health.

- Initially associated with the absence of disease, it later evolved to include **mental**, **social**, **spiritual**, and environmental dimensions of well-being.
- This holistic perspective influenced modern healthcare thinking and encouraged attention to lifestyle and behavioural factors.
- However, public health traditionally focuses on **health promotion**, which recognises the role of **social determinants of health** such as income, education, housing, nutrition, sanitation, and environmental conditions.
- Unlike wellness, health promotion is more measurable and better suited to evaluating outcomes at the population level.

Key Concerns in Contemporary Public Health Policy

- **Shift from Population Health to Individual Well-being**
    - The transformation of existing healthcare institutions into **Health and Wellness Centres** reflects a broader policy shift from measurable population health outcomes to **individual well-being**.
    - Earlier assessments of health focused on access to preventive, promotive, curative, and rehabilitative services, including maternal and child healthcare, nutrition, safe drinking water, and chronic disease management.
    - The increasing focus on wellness may divert attention from these essential healthcare needs.
    - Since well-being is subjective and varies across individuals, it becomes difficult to measure and evaluate systematically.
- **Individualisation of Health Responsibility**
    - A significant consequence of the wellness narrative is the **individualisation of health**.
    - Health is increasingly portrayed as a result of personal choices and lifestyle decisions, leading to the rise of **health coaches**, wellness campaigns, and social media-driven health advice.
    - Such an approach risks overlooking structural barriers that influence health outcomes.
    - Factors such as poverty, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, poor living conditions, and unequal access to services cannot be addressed solely through individual behavioural changes.

Challenges in Measuring Wellness

- An important principle of governance is that effective policy requires measurable outcomes.
- While indicators exist for disease burden, healthcare utilisation, nutrition, and mortality, there are no universally accepted measures of wellness at the population level.
- Excessive reliance on an inherently subjective concept may weaken the ability of policymakers to identify unmet healthcare needs and evaluate the effectiveness of health interventions.

Critical Analysis of the Digital Health Mission

- The **Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission (ABDHM)** seeks to establish a comprehensive digital health ecosystem through **ABHA cards**, electronic health records, and registries of healthcare facilities and professionals.
- These initiatives can improve data management, coordination, and health system planning.
- However, digitalisation alone cannot resolve the problem of inadequate healthcare access.
- The existence of health records does not guarantee the availability of hospitals, doctors, medicines, or emergency services.
- Information systems are valuable tools, but they cannot substitute for a robust healthcare delivery mechanism.
- The effectiveness of digital health initiatives ultimately depends on the strength of healthcare institutions and service provisioning.

Structural Causes of Inadequate Healthcare Access

- India’s healthcare challenges are rooted primarily in the **unaffordability of private healthcare** and the inadequate quality of many public health facilities.
- Large sections of the population continue to face difficulties in obtaining timely and affordable treatment.
- Strengthening **Sub-Centres (SCs)**, **Primary Health Centres (PHCs)**, and **Community Health Centres (CHCs)** remains essential for improving healthcare access.
- These institutions constitute the backbone of the country’s **three-tier healthcare system** and are critical for delivering preventive, promotive, curative, and rehabilitative care.

The Way Forward

- A more balanced public health strategy should:
  - Prioritise **accessible**, **affordable**, and **quality healthcare**.
  - Strengthen public healthcare infrastructure and human resources.
  - Improve the functioning of SCs, PHCs, and CHCs.
  - Integrate digital health initiatives with service delivery reforms.
  - Address **social determinants of health** through inter-sectoral policies.
  - Focus on measurable health outcomes alongside broader well-being objectives.
  - Enhance accountability through evidence-based policy evaluation.

Conclusion

- The pursuit of **Universal Health Coverage** requires more than wellness-oriented narratives and digital databases.
- Sustainable improvements in health outcomes depend on strong public institutions, effective service delivery, and equitable access to care.
- While wellness and digitalisation can complement healthcare reforms, they cannot replace investments in healthcare infrastructure and population health measures.
- A public health system that prioritises accessibility, affordability, and quality remains the most effective pathway toward achieving better health outcomes for all citizens.

Reconnect Public Health with People’s Needs FAQs

Q1. What is the main objective of Universal Health Coverage (UHC)?

Ans. Universal Health Coverage aims to ensure that all individuals have access to necessary health services without facing financial hardship.

Q2. Why is the wellness approach criticised in public health policy?

Ans. The wellness approach is criticised because it is subjective, difficult to measure, and often overlooks the social determinants of health.

Q3. What is the primary purpose of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission (ABDHM)?

Ans. The primary purpose of ABDHM is to create a digital health ecosystem through ABHA cards, health records, and healthcare registries.

Q4. Why cannot digital health records alone improve healthcare access?

Ans. Digital health records alone cannot improve healthcare access because they do not provide hospitals, doctors, medicines, or healthcare infrastructure.

Q5. What is the most important requirement for improving healthcare access in India?

Ans. The most important requirement for improving healthcare access in India is strengthening public healthcare institutions and infrastructure at all levels.

Source: The Hindu

India’s Patchy Industrial Climate Strategy

Context

- India’s ambitions of **Make-in-India**, **Viksit Bharat 2047**, and **net-zero emissions** by 2070 require a careful balance between industrial growth and environmental sustainability.
- As manufacturing expands, energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions rise significantly.
- Since the industrial sector contributes a major share of national emissions, **industrial decarbonisation** has become central to India’s long-term climate strategy.
- However, achieving meaningful emission reductions requires addressing important gaps in the current policy framework.

Industrial Emissions and Economic Growth

- Industrial development remains a key driver of economic progress, employment generation, and infrastructure expansion.

- At the same time, it increases dependence on energy-intensive processes. According to India's **Biennial Transparency Report (BTR1)**, more than 20% of national emissions originate from industry.
- Of this, **manufacturing industries** and construction account for 13% through fuel consumption, while **industrial processes** and product use contribute another 9%.
- These figures highlight the significant role of industry in shaping India's overall **carbon footprint**. Consequently, reducing emissions from this sector is essential for meeting both development and climate objectives.

Existing Mitigation Policies

- India has adopted several market-based mechanisms to improve **energy efficiency** and reduce industrial emissions.
- The **Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT)** scheme targets energy-intensive sectors by encouraging efficient energy use.
- It is gradually transitioning into the **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)**, which focuses on reducing **emission intensity** in sectors such as aluminium, cement, fertilizers, iron and steel, petrochemicals, petroleum refining, pulp and paper, textiles, and chlor-alkali.
- These mechanisms establish benchmarks, create incentives for cleaner production, and support the transition toward a **low-carbon economy**. However, their effectiveness is limited by the sectors they cover.

The Policy Gap: Non-Specific Industries

- A major challenge lies in the large share of emissions classified under **non-specific industries**.
- Emissions data from manufacturing and construction indicate that identified industrial sectors account for slightly more than 55% of sectoral emissions, while over 40% fall under this broad and undefined category.
- The absence of clear **sub-sectoral** classification creates an administrative and regulatory blind spot.
- While sectors such as cement, steel, chemicals, and textiles are covered by PAT and CCTS, industries grouped under non-specific industries remain largely outside these frameworks.
- As a result, a substantial portion of India's industrial emissions is not subject to the same **emission-reduction targets**, monitoring mechanisms, or efficiency standards.
- This gap weakens the effectiveness of India's broader **climate strategy** and slows the country's **green transition**.

The Path Forward

- **Need to Identify Industries**
  - Achieving sustainable industrial growth requires greater **transparency**, detailed **emissions data**, and improved sectoral classification.
  - Breaking down the non-specific industries category is essential for identifying the exact **sub-sectors** responsible for emissions, understanding their **energy consumption patterns**, and locating emission-intensive stages within production chains.

  - Such information would enable policymakers to design targeted interventions, strengthen regulatory mechanisms, and expand mitigation measures to currently overlooked industries.
  - Accurate classification would also improve monitoring and facilitate more effective implementation of climate policies.

- **Transparency as a Policy Tool**

  - Transparency is not merely an international reporting requirement. It is a vital instrument for effective domestic policymaking.
  - Detailed and reliable data help governments evaluate policy outcomes, identify shortcomings, and make necessary corrections.
  - Without clear knowledge of emission sources, efforts to reduce industrial emissions remain incomplete.
  - Effective **climate reporting** provides the foundation for evidence-based decisions and long-term planning.

Conclusion

- While initiatives such as PAT and CCTS have strengthened emission management in major industries, a large share of emissions continues to originate from poorly defined non-specific industries.
- Bringing these sectors within the scope of mitigation policies through better data, transparency, and classification is essential for achieving **net-zero**, supporting **sustainable development**, and building a resilient low-carbon economy.
- A comprehensive and inclusive approach will ensure that industrial expansion and environmental responsibility progress together.

India’s Patchy Industrial Climate Strategy FAQs

Q1. Why is industrial decarbonisation important for India?
Ans. Industrial decarbonisation is important because it helps India achieve its climate goals while sustaining economic growth.

Q2. What percentage of India’s total emissions comes from the industrial sector?
Ans. More than 20% of India’s total emissions come from the industrial sector.

Q3. What are the two major mechanisms used to reduce industrial emissions?
Ans. The PAT scheme and the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) are the two major mechanisms used to reduce industrial emissions.

Q4. What is the main concern regarding non-specific industries?
Ans. Non-specific industries account for over 40% of industrial emissions but are not adequately covered by existing mitigation policies.

Q5. Why is transparency important in climate policymaking?
Ans. Transparency is important because it helps policymakers identify emission sources and design effective

climate interventions.

Source: The Hindu
