

2. Despite being a relatively new scheme, the **Economic Survey** estimates a **20% decline** in the **infant mortality rate** between 2015–16 and 2019–20 in States that **adopted PM-JAY**, compared to a 12% decline in States that did not.
3. It is important, therefore, to persist with this highly ambitious scheme and accelerate its roll-out as the ***absorptive and governance capacity of States improve***.

Resilience of health sector: Good water, vaccine coverage:

1. The substantive allocation for the newly launched **Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban)** is especially commendable as access to adequate, good quality water supply has major positive externalities for the health sector.
2. A report released by the **Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in 2019** suggested that **nearly one out of every 100 Indian children does not live to celebrate their fifth birthday on account of either diarrhoea or pneumonia.**
3. Suboptimal access to clean water and sanitation is directly linked to diseases such as **diarrhoea, polio and malaria.**
4. Moreover, water contaminated with heavy metals such as **arsenic increases the risk of developing heart ailments and cancer.**
5. Another important public health-related announcement in Budget 2021 was the government's decision to expand the coverage of the **pneumococcal vaccine** across the country.
6. **Pneumococcal pneumonia** is a major killer of children **under the age of five years.** Once universalised, this indigenously developed vaccine could save up to 50,000 lives annually.
7. The Finance Minister has also made a special allocation of Rs.35,000 crore for the COVID-19 vaccine in 2021–22, which could be increased if required.
8. **India has already delivered over eight million doses of the vaccine to health-care and frontline workers thus far the fastest vaccination drive in the world.**

Need to notice by everyone: Links between Health, Water and Sanitation:

With respect to the “**padding**” of the health Budget, with allocations for water, sanitation, nutrition and clean air, as pointed out by some commentators, it is important to appreciate that the presentation of a **combined ‘health and well-being’ budget**, which sets the tone for greater integration of these areas, is in fact a welcome step.