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Centre reduces National Health Mission funding

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The flagship health programme of the government has received approval almost 20 percent lower than what the health ministry said was needed. The National Health Mission was renewed by the Finance Ministry in August with $20 billion of

funding between 2017- 2020. This figure was against the health ministry's estimated requirement of $25 billion.

It was stated that the finance ministry reduced planned funding because of other spending priorities and because of state governments' poor track record of spending the health budgets they've been allotted in the past.

The National Health Mission forms the backbone of the Indian public services and is one of the world's largest health programmes. It provides everything from free drugs to immunisation services to millions of rural poor.

The National Health Mission typically accounts for about half of the Union health budget and officials said the lower spending approval would make achieving the government's 2025 target more difficult.

The government is also concerned about states that do not have the governance capacity to spend large health budgets efficiently. A shortage of workers, bureaucratic bungling and slow procurement processes have plagued the states' health systems.

Previously, the health officials faced criticism from other government departments for the National Health Mission's inefficiencies and were asked to rework the renewal proposal for 2017-20 after they drew up spending estimates of $33 billion.