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WIRES

Publication	PTI
Date	12 January
Edition	Online
Headline	Pharma industry seeks R&D sops, simplification of regulatory framework in Budget

Pharma industry seeks R&D sops, simplification of regulatory framework in Budget

NEW DELHI: (Jan 12) The government should look at offering globally competitive R&D incentives and fiscal support for clinical research to the domestic pharma industry in the upcoming Budget in order to help it transform into an innovation-led USD 130-billion sector by 2030, according to industry bodies.

The policymakers should also consider GST structure rationalisation, restoration of weighted R&D deduction and simplification of compliance and regulatory framework in the upcoming Union Budget for the financial year 2026-27.

"The industry seeks globally competitive R&D incentives that align with India's innovation ambitions, enhance the scientific ecosystem, and support the transition from a volume-driven model to an innovation-led pharmaceutical sector," Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) Secretary General Sudarshan Jain said in a statement.

Online and Trade

Publication	Biospectrum
Date	5th January
Edition	Online
Headline	Pre-Budget Expectations: GST Simplifications Key to Pharma and Life Sciences Growth"

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Pre-Budget Expectations: GST Simplifications Key to Pharma and Life Sciences Growth

All eyes are on the Union Budget 2026–27, to be presented on February 1, 2026, as the life sciences sector looks for decisive measures to strengthen India's position as a global hub for quality healthcare, innovation, and affordable access.

The Budget 2025–26 had provided a significant boost to the sector. The Department of Health and Family Welfare received Rs 95,957.87 crore, while the Department of Health Research was allocated Rs 3,900.69 crore. Additionally, Rs 20,000 crore was earmarked for the Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) initiative. The Biotechnology Research Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development (Bio-RIDE) scheme also received Rs 2,300 crore to promote biomanufacturing, research, and entrepreneurship in novel drugs and medical devices.

However, 2025 also brought global uncertainties, including geopolitical tensions and tariff-related pressures, particularly from the US. Against this backdrop, stakeholders are seeking policy stability, tax rationalisation, and regulatory reforms to help the sector remain competitive and resilient.

GST simplification and R&D incentives

A recurring expectation across the life sciences ecosystem is simplification of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, especially for pharmaceuticals and medical devices. The industry has long struggled with inverted duty structures, delayed refunds, and procedural complexities that strain working capital, particularly for MSMEs.

Sudarshan Jain, Secretary General, Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA), emphasises that the Budget must provide a strategic thrust to help the industry achieve its long-term ambitions of reaching $120 billion by 2030 and $450 billion by 2047. "Increasing healthcare spending toward the National Health Policy target of 2.5 per cent of GDP by 2026–27 is critical. Restoring weighted tax deductions for R&D, rationalising inverted GST structures, simplifying compliance for physician samples, and strengthening incentives for biopharmaceutical manufacturing will help offset current external stresses," he says.

The reinstatement of higher weighted tax deductions under Section 35(2AB) for in-house R&D remains one of the industry's strongest demands. According to ***BG Barve, Chairperson, Taxation Committee of Indian Drug Manufacturers' Association (IDMA) and Joint Managing Director, Blue Cross Laboratories,*** such a move would directly encourage innovation, new drug development, and technology upgrades. He also highlights the need for simplification of TDS rates and thresholds to reduce disputes and improve cash flows, along with restoring the 15 per cent concessional corporate tax rate under Section 115BAB for new manufacturing units.

Customs, compliance, and MSME relief

Beyond GST, the industry is seeking relief from long-standing customs and tax disputes. The IDMA has called for a Customs Amnesty Scheme, similar to Sabka Vishwas, to resolve legacy issues. Digitalisation of customs processes to reduce dependence on physical documentation and rationalisation of high import duties on certain medical devices (HSN 9018–9022) have also been proposed.

Tax and compliance complexity disproportionately impacts MSMEs. ***Dr Ranjeet Mehta, CEO and Secretary General, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry,*** stresses that honest taxpayers should not lose Input Tax Credit due to supplier non-compliance. Allowing flexibility in invoice matching and ensuring recovery efforts first target defaulting suppliers would help build trust and improve ease of doing business.

Patient-centric and trust-based healthcare growth

Industry bodies also expect the Budget to reinforce patient-centric healthcare delivery. ***Anil Matai, Director General, Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI),*** notes that India stands at a pivotal moment to build a world-class life sciences ecosystem anchored in patient safety, quality, and equitable access. "A forward-looking Budget can catalyse trust-based partnerships between government, industry, and healthcare providers, ultimately improving patient outcomes through access to innovative therapies and stronger public health programmes," he says.

Strengthening neurological & preventive care

Public health priorities are also shaping budget expectations. Stroke remains one of the leading causes of death and disability in India, affecting an estimated 1.8 million people annually. The Indian Stroke Association (ISA) is urging the government to strengthen neurological care infrastructure by setting up more dedicated stroke units, improving ambulance response times, and training emergency teams.

Dr Arvind Sharma, Stroke Specialist and Secretary, ISA, highlights the importance of expanding tele-neurology services to reach rural populations. He also calls for better insurance coverage for long-term neurological care, including physiotherapy, speech therapy, cognitive rehabilitation, and home-based support.

Preventive healthcare and early diagnosis are gaining increasing attention across sectors. Stakeholders believe higher budgetary allocations for screening programmes, subsidised diagnostics, and annual health check-ups could significantly reduce long-term healthcare costs.

Healthcare investment & regional expansion

Despite progress, India's healthcare spending remains low compared to many developing nations. Several experts argue that combined central and state healthcare expenditure should rise to at least 5 per cent of GDP to build a robust and equitable system.

Dr MI Sahadulla, National President, Association of Healthcare Providers – India (AHPI), advocates targeted tax incentives to encourage healthcare investments in underserved regions, particularly Tier II and Tier III cities. He also calls for enhanced support for oncology research, elderly care, and long-term treatment coverage under health insurance schemes.

Medical devices and diagnostics reforms

The medical devices and diagnostics segments are seeking focused reforms to reduce import dependence and improve domestic competitiveness. The Association of Indian Medical Device Industry (AiMeD) has proposed pragmatic tariff rationalisation to encourage local value addition while safeguarding investments made by Indian manufacturers.

Rajiv Nath, Forum Coordinator, AiMeD, suggests a calibrated tariff increase of 10–15 per cent, partially offset through a health cess, to generate funding for Ayushman Bharat without significantly burdening consumers. Imports currently dominate nearly two-thirds of India's medical device market, a trend the industry wants to reverse.

Similarly, the in-vitro diagnostics (IVD) sector has highlighted challenges such as inverted duty structures, limited export incentives, and high technology-transfer costs. ***Jatin Mahajan, President, Association of Diagnostics Manufacturers of India (ADMI),*** emphasises the need for sector-specific reforms, public–private R&D partnerships, and diagnostic hubs in Tier II and Tier III cities.

Regulatory streamlining & long-term reforms

Several experts have also called for regulatory restructuring. ***Joydeep Ghosh, Partner and Life Sciences & Health Care Industry Leader, Deloitte India,*** recommends exploring a single regulatory authority for pharmaceuticals and medical devices to streamline approvals and boost investor confidence. He also supports introducing a clear policy on refurbished medical devices, with safeguards to ensure safety and efficacy.

Looking ahead, stakeholders expect Budget 2026–27 to prioritise long-term reforms alongside immediate capacity building. ***Dr Milind Antani, Head, Pharmaceutical and Lifesciences Practice, Nishith Desai Associates,*** anticipates deeper support for health insurance penetration through reduced GST on premiums, higher tax-deduction limits, and expanded government-backed schemes.

Budget 2026 is expected to boost pharmaceuticals through expanded PLI schemes, export incentives, and tariff support to strengthen supply chains and global competitiveness. "The sector is likely to be positioned as a key growth engine, with strong focus on R&D, innovation, and affordable care for NCDs," says ***Bhanu Prakash Kalmath of Grant Thornton Bharat.***

Conclusion

The life sciences sector views Budget 2026–27 as a defining moment. Expectations range from GST simplification and R&D incentives to regulatory streamlining, tariff rationalisation, and stronger public health investment. With pharmaceuticals and healthcare emerging as key drivers of economic growth, innovation, and employment, a well-calibrated Budget can strengthen India's global competitiveness while making healthcare more affordable and accessible for millions. BS

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Headline	Pharma trends that will shape 2026: Building a future-ready, patient-centric industry

MARKET

Pharma trends that will shape 2026: Building a future-ready, patient-centric industry

Anil Matai, Director General, OPPI, outlines the major pharmaceutical trends expected to shape 2026, detailing how digital health, AI-driven drug development, precision medicine and resilient supply chains will influence the industry's shift towards a future-ready, patient-centric ecosystem

As we move closer to 2026, the pharmaceutical ecosystem is undergoing a profound transformation driven by digital innovation, scientific advances, and a strengthened focus on patient-centricity. The last few years have set the stage for accelerated disruption—whether through AI-enabled drug discovery, genomics-driven precision medicine, or the rise of advanced digital health platforms. India's position in this global transition is particularly noteworthy. With the country emerging as a strategic hub for R&D, digital innovation, and quality manufacturing, 2026 promises to be a defining year for the sector.

Digital health roles become the new mainstream

The momentum around digital health is reshaping workforce needs and operating models across the industry. Telemedicine, digital therapeutics, virtual clinical trials, and AI-powered health apps are no longer peripheral innovations—they are central to patient engagement and real-time care delivery.

This shift is reflected in workforce trends as well. According to industry reports, jobs in India's healthcare and pharma sector grew 42 per cent year-on-year in March 2025, driven largely by roles in digital health, AI, and informatics. Companies are aggressively hiring professionals who can manage digital platforms, integrate technology with clinical workflows, and interpret digital health data for actionable insights.

In 2026, this trend will deepen further. We will see a significant rise in hybrid roles—digital medical advisors, AI-clinical analysts, virtual trial coordinators, data-driven pharmacovigilance specialists, and patient-experience technologists. These roles will bridge the gap between science and technology, enabling more personalised, accessible, and continuous healthcare for patients.

Genomics, precision medicine and companion diagnostics take center stage

Globally, precision medicine has moved from a niche concept to one of the most influential drivers of therapeutic innovation. Between 2019 and 2023, more than 10,000 oncology trials were initiated worldwide, with nearly 30 per cent focused on precision oncology approaches. This remarkable shift toward biomarker-driven research is reshaping pharma's talent landscape.

Companies increasingly require expertise in genomics, molecular biology, bioinformatics, data modeling, companion diagnostics development, biomarker validation, and precision-oncology trial design. With the rise of genomic profiling and targeted therapies, India has an opportunity to position itself as a global innovation hub. Strengthening genomic research infrastructure and digital biology capabilities will be critical to sustaining this growth.

As we enter 2026, we can expect rapid advancements in multi-omics research, cell and gene therapies, and diagnostics-led treatment pathways. The future of medicine will be increasingly customised—not just to a disease profile but to the unique genetic makeup of each patient.

AI-driven pharmacovigilance and drug safety analytics scale up

With a significant increase in global clinical trials and marketed products, the volume of safety data is expanding at an unprecedented pace. Traditional pharmacovigilance processes—which rely heavily on manual efforts—are evolving to incorporate automation and advanced analytics.

AI is now enhancing automated case processing, signal detection, risk prediction, adverse event classification through natural language processing, and real-time safety monitoring. In 2026, AI-powered pharmacovigilance will become foundational to regulatory submissions, safety updates, and post-marketing surveillance. This shift will enable drug safety teams to identify risks more rapidly, improve accuracy, and deliver more timely interventions.

AI-accelerated drug discovery becomes standard practice

Artificial intelligence has proven its potential to compress discovery timelines, enable novel molecule identification, and simulate clinical outcomes with remarkable precision. In 2026, AI adoption will deepen across the entire value chain—target identification, lead optimisation, toxicity prediction, and the use of digital twins in clinical trial design.

This evolution will help pharmaceutical companies reduce R&D costs, accelerate innovation cycles, and deliver life-changing therapies more efficiently. India, with its dynamic startup ecosystem, expanding pool of computational biologists, and diverse patient datasets, is well-positioned to lead this next phase of AI-driven drug innovation.

Sustainable and resilient supply chains rise in priority

Geopolitical shifts, environmental disruptions, and the urgent need for supply chain independence are pushing pharma companies to build more sustainable, resilient, and technologically integrated systems. In 2026, predictive analytics for supply chain risk assessment, digitised manufacturing, and eco-friendly production processes will become increasingly important.

For India, this means continued investment in advanced manufacturing capabilities, the expansion of critical API production, and strengthening quality infrastructure to enhance global competitiveness.

Conclusion: A future built on innovation, trust & patient-centricity

The pharma industry in 2026 will be defined by scientific precision, digital acceleration, and a deepened commitment to patient well-being. For India, this moment presents a unique opportunity. The country is rapidly emerging as a global healthcare powerhouse—not only because of its strong manufacturing capabilities but also due to its expanding digital infrastructure, vibrant scientific talent pool, and commitment to innovation-driven growth. To fully harness this potential, the sector must continue investing in next-generation research, nurturing specialised talent in fields like bioinformatics and digital health, and fostering strong public–private collaboration.

Equally important is the need to maintain and reinforce regulatory excellence. As therapies become more complex and data volumes grow, robust, agile, and science-led regulatory frameworks will be essential to ensuring patient safety and accelerating access to cutting-edge treatments. We commend the Government for taking an Innovation-First approach. We see an improvement in IP protection with the on-going discussions on Regulatory Data Protection. Strengthening trust between stakeholders—patients, policymakers, healthcare providers, and industry—will be foundational to building a resilient and future-ready healthcare ecosystem.

Publication	Hindu Businessline
Date	12 January
Edition	Online
Headline	Pharma Industry Seeks R&D Sops, Simplification of Regulatory Framework in Budget

The Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI), which represents research-based global pharmaceutical companies in India, stated that there is an opportunity in the upcoming Budget to further strengthen the country's healthcare and life sciences ecosystem with a clear patient-first focus.

"From a fiscal standpoint, rationalisation of GST on medicines and medical products, clarity on input tax credits, greater targeted customs duty relief for critical raw materials and advanced manufacturing inputs would help ease cost pressures and improve affordability," OPPI Director General Anil Matai said.

Reintroducing or strengthening R&D-linked tax incentives and support for fiscal support clinical research can further encourage innovation-led growth and global competitiveness, he added.

"We also look forward to measures that improve regulatory predictability, encourage clinical research, and support advanced manufacturing, while ensuring that quality and safety remain paramount," Matai said.

Publication	The Week
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Publication	Rediff
Date	12 January
Edition	Online
Headline	Pharma Industry Budget Expectations: R&D, Regulations

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As the industry continues with the ethical business practices in alignment with the UCPMP, a trust-based and collaborative approach between government, industry, and healthcare stakeholders will be key to long-term progress, he added.

Publication	Express Pharma
Date	12 January
Edition	Online
Headline	Ahead of union budget, pharma industry seeks R&D boost, GST rationalisation

Anil Matai, Director General, OPPI:

"As India approaches the upcoming Union Budget, OPPI believes that there is an opportunity to further strengthen the country's healthcare and life sciences ecosystem with a clear patient-first focus. Sustained policy support over the past few years has laid a strong foundation for innovation, regulatory reforms, and improved access. The forthcoming Budget may have the potential to build on this by prioritising higher and more targeted investment in R&D and healthcare space. This will, in turn, foster a robust intellectual property environment, and enable a streamlined pathways for parallel and faster introduction of new medicines in India.

From a fiscal standpoint, rationalisation of GST on medicines and medical products, clarity on input tax credits, greater targeted customs duty relief for critical raw materials and advanced manufacturing inputs would help ease cost pressures and improve affordability. Reintroducing or strengthening R&D-linked tax incentives and support for fiscal support clinical research can further encourage innovation-led growth and global competitiveness.

We also look forward to measures that improve regulatory predictability, encourage clinical research, and support advanced manufacturing, while ensuring that quality and safety remain paramount. As the industry continues with the ethical business practices in alignment with the UCPMP, a trust-based and collaborative approach between government, industry, and healthcare stakeholders will be key to long-term progress. Ultimately, a patient-first Budget focused on innovation, access, and affordability can help deliver better health outcomes and position India as a globally competitive and responsible healthcare leader.