

# Health care cheer

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT 19/5

**New Delhi, Aug. 5:** India's three-year-old National Rural Health Mission is correcting past imbalances in national health spending, the head of an international panel of experts said after a review of the mission today.

It has emerged an enormous government initiative in public health after a long period of under-investment, said Jeffrey Sachs, the director of Earth Institute at Columbia University in the US and head of the review panel.

The mission was launched in April 2005 with an initial investment of Rs 6,700 crore. It will spend Rs 10,700 crore this year. The funds are used to upgrade village and district health centres, recruit doctors, nurses and paramedical staff and train and support an army of some 6.2 lakh community health workers.

Sachs, a Harvard-trained economist, said India's rural health system before the mission was "drastically deficient". The mission is helping renew confidence in the public health system in rural areas. The government needs to significantly scale up investment in health, he added.