

Press Information Bureau

Government of India

**Need to rebuild, restructure and reinvent our healthcare systems for post-pandemic era –
Vice President**

There is a pressing need to increase public expenditure in health – Vice President

VP suggests leveraging our strengths in ICT for improving the healthcare in remote areas

**Indigenous development of vaccines and over 180 crore doses, a stupendous achievement –
Vice President**

**VP urges urged health experts and cultural icons to create awareness about the increasing
graph of lifestyle diseases**

Vice President addresses 8th Annual Summit of the NATHEALTH

New Delhi, March 28, 2022

The Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu today emphasised the need to rebuild, restructure and reinvent our healthcare systems for the post-pandemic era of the 21st century. He wanted all stakeholders—public, private and people to join together in this humongous task of strengthening India’s health infrastructure and ensure the well-being of the people.

Addressing the 8th Annual Summit of the NATHEALTH through a pre-recorded video message, the Vice President said that over the course of the pandemic, we have learnt many valuable lessons related to the challenges in our healthcare system and called for using this experience towards re-imagining a resilient healthcare system for a new phase in the post-COVID era.

Recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the healthcare systems world over, the Vice President said that India, as a team, fought back admirably and showed great resilience in the face of adversity. “This is reflected in the indigenous development of vaccines and administration of over 180 Crore doses, which is a stupendous achievement and a global benchmark,” he added. Shri Naidu also praised the commitment and sacrifices of Indian healthcare workers- both in the public and private sectors.

Noting the pressing need to increase public expenditure in health, the Vice President wanted this increase in spending to go hand-in-hand with capacity building, such as increasing the doctor-to-population ratio, as per WHO standards.

Calling for urgently bridging the spatial disparity in healthcare facilities between the urban and rural areas, Shri Naidu stressed the need for immediate impetus to primary healthcare in rural

India. Talking about the need to bring down high out-of-pocket expenditure on health in India, he appreciated various government programs in this regard including Ayushman Bharat, Jan Aushadhi Kendras and the proposal to increase the number of district hospitals among others.

The Vice President also said that COVID-19 pandemic has shown the potential of using digital technologies and suggested leveraging our strengths in ICT for improving healthcare. “Digital health and Telehealth services must be expanded to remote rural areas to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare,” he said.

Shri Naidu also called for greater focus on curbing the worrying trend of increasing Non-Communicable Diseases in India, which account for around 60 percent of deaths in the country. Stressing the need to create greater awareness among people on these ‘lifestyle diseases’, he urged health experts and cultural icons to take the lead in this regard.

The Vice President congratulated NATHEALTH for bringing together key stakeholders onto one platform to discuss the important topic of public health, and conveyed his best wishes to the organizers, participants and the members of the Healthcare Federation of India for their sterling efforts.

Following is the full text of the speech:

Sisters and brothers,

I am very happy to know that NATHEALTH is organizing its 8th Annual Summit for two days on March 28-29, 2022. Over the years, the Annual Summit has been successful in bringing together various stakeholders in the Indian healthcare industry and in carrying out meaningful discussions. My best wishes to the organizers, participants and the members of the Healthcare Federation of India for their sterling efforts.

Sisters and brothers,

The COVID-19 pandemic which hit the world two years ago has challenged healthcare systems everywhere. Even in India, the pandemic reinforced the need to strengthen our healthcare infrastructure.

I am happy to note that India, as a team, fought back admirably and showed great resilience in the face of adversity. This is reflected in the indigenous development of vaccines and administration of over 180 crore doses, which is a stupendous achievement and a global benchmark. On a parallel footing, the rapid scaling up of diagnostic facilities and the ramping up of healthcare infrastructure bear testimony to our collective resolve to meet this grave, unforeseen challenge. All of this would not have been possible without the sheer resolve of our healthcare workers- both in the public and private sectors.

Over the course of the pandemic, we have also learnt many valuable lessons related to the challenges in our healthcare system—the deficiencies in infrastructure, the limited penetration of

digital health, last-mile delivery of health services and regional disparities in health, among other issues.

All these lessons learned from the pandemic strengthened our commitment towards re-building, re-structuring and re-imagining a resilient healthcare system for a new phase—the post-COVID era.

First, there is a pressing need to increase public expenditure in health. The government has set a target of 2.5 percent of GDP by 2025 in the National Health Policy, 2017. The increase in spending must go hand-in-hand with capacity building too, such as increasing the doctor-to-population ratio, as per WHO standards.

We must also urgently bridge the spatial disparity in healthcare between the urban, semi-urban and rural areas. Primary health, which will bring healthcare in the most holistic, comprehensive and cost-effective way to rural India, needs the biggest immediate impetus from all stakeholders.

A related aspect is that of high out-of-pocket expenditure in India. The government has already taken several steps in this direction. These include increasing public health insurance through Ayushman Bharat, establishing Jan Aushadhi Kendras, increasing the number of district hospitals with critical care, and several other initiatives.

We must strive hard to reduce out-of-pocket expenditure because high health expenses push marginalized sections deeper into poverty.

COVID-19 has also shown the potential of using digital technologies in healthcare. I suggest that we also leverage our strengths in Information & Communication Technologies (ICT) for improving our healthcare. Digital health and Telehealth services must be expanded to remote rural areas to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare.

Finally, going forward, we must focus on curbing the worrying trend of increasing Non-Communicable Diseases in India, which account for around 60 percent of deaths in the country. We need to create greater awareness among people on these 'lifestyle diseases'. I urge health experts and cultural icons to take the lead in this regard.

Sisters and brothers,

Our aim to improve the public health situation in India cannot be achieved by only state-led, single-point solutions. With the diversity and scale of our healthcare demands, we need to involve all stakeholders—public, private and people to build and strengthen India's health and wellbeing.

This is the time to come together to rebuild, restructure, reinvent and improvise our healthcare systems for the post-pandemic era of the 21st century. I congratulate NATHEALTH for bringing together key stakeholders to discuss and achieve this important objective.

Jai Hind!

MS/RK