

Disruption caused by the pandemic must be seen as an opportunity to radically reform our health sector:
Vice President

Private sector must strengthen the hands of the government in its quest to deliver quality healthcare to the last citizen: VP

Calls for bridging the urban-rural divide in healthcare sector

Calls for the strengthening of the primary healthcare system in India

Asks Indian doctors working abroad to facilitate technology and skills transfer to India

India has potential to become the preferred health tourism destination of the world: VP

Calls for awareness generation among people about Non-Communicable Diseases

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must be seen as an opportunity to radically reform our health sector by effectively harnessing the power of digital technology and Artificial Intelligence powered tools.

He was addressing the 38th Annual Convocation of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) through video conferencing today.

Calling for the digitization of the health records and creation of a national platform to facilitate collection of comprehensive healthcare data across the country, Shri Naidu said that this will ensure that all the stakeholders in the health sector are digitally connected. He added that the analysis of data thus collected can produce valuable information, which can be used to improve the effectiveness of our health system.

The Vice President opined that as the world's second-most-populous country with a track record of rapid economic growth, India faces both unique challenges and unprecedented opportunities in the sphere of public health.

Speaking of the several milestones the nation has achieved in healthcare since independence, Shri Naidu said that India has dynamic pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, world-class scientists, including a burgeoning clinical trials industry and leading hospitals that attract foreign patients.

He added that India is now the pharmacy to the world and expressed hope that it would soon be the most preferred healthcare and health tourism destination to the world.

The Vice President said that Indian healthcare scenario was a spectrum of contrasting landscapes, at one end of which are state of the art, urban hospitals and research centres that are undertaking cutting edge research, driving healthcare industry forward and on the other end are rural healthcare institutions that need substantial improvement.

Asserting the need to deliver quality healthcare to all irrespective of where one is living, Shri Naidu said that healthcare and medical facilities should be accessible and affordable for all.

He cautioned that these challenges are not simple enough to be tackled by the government alone and called for concerted and coordinated efforts from both the private and public sectors. He asked private sector players, especially organizations like the AAPI to strengthen the hands of the government in its quest to deliver quality healthcare to the last citizen.

Observing that countries with strong primary healthcare systems have better health outcomes, the Vice President emphasized the need to strengthen India's primary healthcare system. "The private sector must collaborate with various state governments in establishing state-of-the-art primary healthcare facilities in each district", he said.

Stating that India is extremely proud of its doctors and healthcare professionals who are rendering invaluable services in countries across the globe, he urged these doctors and healthcare practitioners to devote some of their time and energy in helping to augment India's healthcare set up. He asked them to focus on medical education, mentoring, collaborative research and to work with medical professionals in India to upgrade healthcare facilities in the country.

He also wanted them to facilitate knowledge building and the transfer of cutting-edge technology and skills to India so that we may truly become 'Athmanirbhar' in this field.

Expressing concern over the rising incidence of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) or life style diseases, especially among the youth in India, Shri Naidu urged organizations like AAPI to collaborate with the government and private sector in India in their crusade against NCDs.

He called for collective efforts to promote awareness among the people, particularly school and college students, on the negative impact of sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy dietary habits.

The Vice President also highlighted the need to invest in providing timely and high-quality emergency health services in the country and the need to train every citizen in emergency first aid

and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

Shri Naidu asked NRI medical professionals to share the best practices followed by the nations of their residence in areas such as sanitation, cleanliness and nutrition and urged them to promote Yoga in those countries, not only to strengthen India's soft power but also to promote health and wellness world-wide.

He also urged organizations like AAPI to assist Indian government in accelerating the pace of technology adoption so as to take the benefits of affordable and quality healthcare to all.

Dr. Suresh Reddy, President, AAPI, Dr. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda, President elect, AAPI, Dr Seema Arora & Dr Sajani Shah, Members of AAPI, doctors and medical professionals attended the online event.

Following is the full text of the speech -

"Dear sisters and brothers,

It gives me great joy to greet all of you once again at the MINI Convention of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI). Let me extend my appreciation to AAPI for planning and executing such a momentous convention in spite of the exigencies caused by the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am happy to know that AAPI founded in 1982 is today the largest non-profit ethnic medical organisation in USA, protecting the interests of more than 70,000 practicing physicians and 20,000 medical students, residents and fellows of Indian origin.

I am really pleased to hear that AAPI has displayed its zeal and commitment in service of humanity during the current pandemic. I am told that AAPI became the first major organization to call for 'universal masking' and that AAPI has distributed free masks to thousands of health care workers since the start of the pandemic. Collaborating with the Indian Embassy in DC, AAPI has written more than 1000 prescriptions for Indian visitors who were stranded in the USA.

I am also very happy learn that AAPI constantly supports charitable causes and relief activities both in the US and in India.

I congratulate the leadership and the members of AAPI for their remarkable service to India, their janmabhoomi and the United States, their karmabhoomi.

My dear sisters and brothers,

As the world's second-most-populous country with a track record of rapid economic growth, India faces both unique challenges and unprecedented opportunities in the sphere of public health.

India has seen massive gains in the reduction of Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and a huge improvement in average life expectancy, since independence. We have upgraded our healthcare infrastructure and infused qualified and trained human resource into the system.

India also has dynamic pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries; world-class scientists, including a burgeoning clinical trials industry; and leading hospitals that attract foreign patients.

India is now the pharmacy to the world and will soon be the most preferred healthcare and health tourism destination to the world.

Yet, there are quite a few formidable challenges.

I see the Indian healthcare scenario as a spectrum of contrasting landscapes.

At one end of the spectrum are state of the art, urban hospitals and research centres that are undertaking cutting edge research, driving our healthcare industry forward. At the other end are our rural healthcare institutions that need substantial improvement. There is still a huge gap.

We have to deliver quality healthcare to all irrespective of where one is living. The healthcare and medical facilities should be accessible and affordable.

These are not simple challenges that can be tackled by the government alone.

Concerted, coordinated, synergised efforts are the need of the hour.

I call upon the private sector, especially organizations like the AAPI to strengthen the hands of the government in its quest to deliver quality healthcare to the last citizen.

It is a known fact that countries with strong primary healthcare systems have better health outcomes and lower inequalities. We need to strengthen our primary healthcare system.

The creation of 1,50,000 health and wellness centres by 2022 by transforming existing sub-centres and primary health centres under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme is a major move in this direction. But much more needs to be done.

The private sector must collaborate with various state governments in establishing state-of-the-art primary healthcare facilities in each district of the country.

It has been estimated that there are 1.4 million physicians of Indian origin all over the world. India is extremely proud of our doctors and healthcare practitioners who are rendering invaluable healthcare services in countries across the globe.

I urge these doctors and healthcare practitioners to devote some of their time and energy in helping to augment India's healthcare set up. You can focus on medical education, mentoring, collaborative research and working with medical professionals in India to upgrade healthcare facilities in our country.

You can also facilitate the process of transfer of cutting-edge technology to India, skills transfer and knowledge building, so that we may truly become 'athmanirbhar'. This will help us bring down the costs of treatment, procedures, medicines, medical devices and thus make healthcare much more affordable.

The rising incidence of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) or life style diseases, especially among the youth is something that worries me greatly.

I urge organizations like AAPI to collaborate with the government and private sector in India in their crusade against NCDs.

There has to be a collective effort to promote awareness among the people, particularly school and college students, on the negative impact of sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy dietary habits.

Another area that deserves focus is emergency medicine. We have to invest in providing timely and high-quality Emergency Health Services in the country.

We must also train every citizen in emergency first aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

I would urge Indian doctors working abroad to build collaborations in Research and Development to address various health issues, including combating tropical diseases like Tuberculosis and Malaria. Such collaborations will provide a boost to India's quest to effectively and quickly eradicate these diseases.

You could also share the best practices followed by the nations of your residence in areas such as sanitation, cleanliness and nutrition.

I also urge you to promote Yoga in your country of residence, not only to strengthen India's soft power but also to promote health and wellness world-wide.

My dear sisters and brothers,

This pandemic has put to test our power of resilience. Like all other sectors, it has also affected the healthcare sector in several ways.

But I see this disruption as an opportunity to radically reform our health sector.

For this, we must effectively harness the power of digital technology and Artificial Intelligence powered tools. We must digitize our health records and create a national platform to facilitate collection of comprehensive healthcare data across the country.

This will ensure that all the stakeholders in the health sector are digitally connected. The analysis of data thus collected can produce valuable information, which can be used to improve the effectiveness of our health system.

I am hopeful that organizations like AAPI will assist the government of India to hasten the pace of technology adoption and will thus help in taking quality, affordable healthcare closer to those in real need.

This Mini Convention will see discussions, debates and deliberations that, I am sure, will help us develop strategies that will empower us not only to tide over the present crisis but also be better prepared to face the healthcare challenges in the future.

I wish AAPI and this convention all success.

Thank You!

Jai Hind!"

VRRK/MS

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