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Make in India can pave way for successfully implementing Ayushman Bharat

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Indian Medtech Industry an important driver for the roll-out of the scheme.

The recently concluded 11th Medtech Conference of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) brought together industry stalwarts and officials from the government machinery to deliberate on the past achievements and way forward for the medtech industry and its impact on the evolving healthcare scenario in India.

Delivering the keynote address, **Suresh Vazirani, Chairman & Managing Director, Transasia Bio-Medicals Ltd.** turned the spotlight on the recently launched, 'Ayushman Bharat Yojna'. Terming this Universal Healthcare Scheme as a historical landmark for mankind, he said, "The Ayushman Bharat scheme is a well-timed recognition for the health of its people. The government and industry need to now join hands to ensure that it is truly beneficial to the targeted 500 mn population."

In a country where 80% of the medical devices are imported, providing affordable healthcare poses a big challenge. "To ensure healthcare at an annual rate of Rs. 1200 for a family of five, we cannot depend on importing medical devices from developed countries where the average labour cost is Rs. 1200 per hour. That's the lacuna we need to address," emphasized Mr. Vazirani.

Sharing his perspective on the way forward, he further stated, "True patient care begins with accurate diagnosis. Currently we need to overcome the roadblocks of quality, affordability and reach. As a country we need to focus on 'Make in India' to bridge this gap. Certain policies such as inverted duty structure need to be revisited, in order to ensure the successful implementation of the 'Make in India' concept and the Ayushman Bharat scheme at large."

He cited China as an example of a country that used to rely heavily on imports, but with favourable policies they have now turned the tables; ensuring 80% indigenous manufacturing. "The world has its eyes set on the success of the Ayushman Bharat scheme. And I am positive that if in the next five years, we can Make in India, our medical devices, we will be in a position to drive this scheme to 4 billion people worldwide. That is the power of Make in India," he added.

As per available government data, for every 10,000 patients, there are only 7 doctors, 17 nurses/midwives, 1 dentist and 5 pharmaceutical personnel available. These numbers are far lower than the WHO benchmark of 2.5 doctors and nurses per 1000 people, which reflects the grim reality of Indian healthcare system. Experts believe that this poses a bigger threat to current establishment. However, the real challenge is unavailability of skilled manpower in the healthcare realm and underutilization of current resources is also creating havoc to the already existing talent crunch.

Ashish Jain, CEO, Healthcare Sector Skill Council, said "The Skill gap in the healthcare sector is well known. HSSC is working towards bridging this gap with active collaboration with industry. HSSC would invite medical device sector to work closely with HSSC so that Human Resource could be developed not only for India but for the world realising the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India; to make India Skill capital of the world."

Although government plans to open more medical colleges to improve the projected shortfall of resources, but experts believe that complexity of situation calls for more concrete steps beyond primary health level. Also, there is a misinformation that scarcity of skilled personnel is mainly in rural India and not in urban areas which is not entirely correct.

"With the government's prioritisation in healthcare, we are hopeful about the future ahead. Studies show that India could possibly be the largest supplier of healthcare workforce to the world. With such a demand, it is an opportunity for BD as a part of the industry to strengthen the capabilities of existing and future healthcare professionals", says **Pavan Mocherla, Managing Director, BD India & South Asia.**

The significant knowledge gap in the healthcare workers can ultimately compromise the quality of care provided by them, therefore, training and teaching them about management and prevention of diverse disease burden in India can help achieve the health goals to an extent. Well trained and well organised health professionals will play a substantial role in effective care management.