

CII proposes strengthening of pharma, healthcare sectors amidst crisis

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The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has brought out action points for strengthening the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors for combating the Coronavirus crisis. The private sector can be support the Government in medical facilities, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment.

On healthcare, CII has recommended that hospitals in larger cities, and district hospitals in smaller cities and towns, should be identified or designated as 'COVID hospital' for testing and isolation of patients. Private sector hospitals can contribute to the required equipment and the manpower.

CII further suggested the adoption of widescale E-ICU/teleconsultation to tackle the spread of COVID-19, especially in its phase 3 and 4. CII has already set up the control centre and the backend systems required for E-ICU and these can be scaled up with the support of the Government, as necessary.

On pharmaceuticals, CII said that the current situation makes a compelling case for Indian Government to declare API as a strategic sector as most inputs are imported. Industry also suggests that firms for which capacity utilization is 40% may be permitted to produce API which are being imported. Approvals for new investments should be fast-tracked. CII has proposed that blanket environment permission be provided to manufacture any API on submission of self-certification to comply with pollution load requirement.

Other CII recommendations to strengthen API and intermediates production in the country include creation of large API parks with fiscal benefits for existing API and intermediates plants; supportive regulatory framework and common infrastructure facilitating single window clearances for API parks; boosting drug formulations from indigenous API and its intermediates; and providing incentives for new product development, processes and technology, among others.

CII stated that the outbreak could lead to significant shortage of supply in the medical technology sector as well, especially for critical medicines and medical devices such as thermometers, nebulizers, glucometers, etc. The medical devices market too is heavily import dependent, at around 70-80%, with imaging equipment (CT & MRI scanners), cardiac stents, orthopedic implants, glucometers, and critical care equipment cornering a large share. Many raw materials and components are

imported from China.

While the real impact on industry is likely to be visible only after April 2020, the local manufacturer's capacities will need to be bolstered, which would likely become reliable sources amidst global shortages, said CII.