

AIIMS director: Think big to tap the potential of biotechnology

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"This is the time to move forward towards the high-end devices. For that we have to realize the full potential of biotechnology not only for India but the global markets." This was stated by Dr Ramesh C Deka, director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) while speaking at the 6th annual Meditech Summit 2012, held on December 21, 2012 and organized by the Stanford India Biodesign at New Delhi.

Dr Deka mentioned that there is availability of funds from various agencies but the utilization is not happening as per requirement. "We are buying very huge and expensive technology from abroad. There have to be efforts towards the development of miniature technological devices indigenously," added Dr Deka.

AIIMS director further exhorted the young fellows who are part of the joint fellowship program to think big and be partners in the global change. "The initial focus on small scale medical devices is fine but why not explore the potential areas of vaccine and diagnostics for tackling the disease?" he asked.

The summit was earlier inaugurated by the minister of state for human resources development, Mr Shashi Tharoor. In his address to the participants, he underlined the need to do innovative research to contain the mortality rate. The medical devices are used by only 20% of the Indian population, but I hope that the scenario will change given the positive results shown by the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY). The IT-enabled technologies, smart cards are shifting the paradigm in the healthcare.

The minister also revealed that HRD ministry is pushing for the opening of new 14 centres of excellences to incorporate innovative incubation. Healthcare has to given utmost priority. Health issues are pushing poverty beyond limits. The cutting-edge biotech research happening in India can resolve lot of problems in long run," he added optimistically.

The event was attended by close to 200 delegates including various speakers from the government, industry and academia. The one-day summit saw the special lectures by eminent persons including Dr T Ramaswami, secretary, Department of

Science and Technology, government of India; Dr Anurag Mittal, associate director, Stanford-India Biodesign and Prof. Balram Bhargava, executive director, Stanford-India Biodesign. There were also two guest lectures by Dr Shailendra Vyakarnam, director, Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning, Cambridge University, United Kingdom and Dr Saurab Srivastava, member, National innovation Council.