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The union minister of health and family welfare, Ghulam Nabi Azad and Dr Li Bin, newly appointed minister of health and population, people's republic of China met in Geneva on May 22, 2013. The meeting happened on the sidelines of World Health Assembly to discuss the strengthening of bilateral cooperation between the two countries in healthcare sector.

Speaking on the occasion, Azad said the two countries can learn a lot from each other considering the fact that both countries have huge populations to look after and attained independence at the same time. In this context, he drew attention of his Chinese counterpart towards the bilateral agreement of 1994 relating to health sector and emphasized the need to hasten the work in the areas identified for bilateral cooperation.

Responding to Azad, the Chinese Health Minister Dr Li Bin stressed to have a more broad-based cooperation in healthcare sector and suggested to formulate a comprehensive framework after mutual consultations to give further impetus to bilateral ties.

Both the sides were of the opinion to have a closer cooperation in specific areas like maternal and child health, infectious diseases, geriatrics, emerging health challenges, besides collaboration in specific projects. It was also realized that Working Groups should meet more frequently to do the groundwork for more intense and meaningful cooperation.

The Chinese health minister was especially enthusiastic to forge collaboration for dealing with the threat posed by leukemia. She also offered to have joint research projects in this area. In this regard, Azad drew her attention towards the cost-effective medicines that China can access from India for the treatment of leukemia.

Pointing towards the strength of both the countries in traditional medicines, Azad noted that the two countries being great proponents of traditional medicines can fruitfully collaborate in this area for mutual benefit. Given the fact that India is one of the largest suppliers of quality generic medicines, he said China can reduce healthcare costs and out-of pocket expenses by sourcing medicines from India. He especially drew attention of Chinese health minister towards the dilatory and cumbersome registration process of medicines in China and urged her to take steps for making it smooth.

The Chinese health minister informed that a separate ministry of food and drugs has been constituted recently and she would convey the views expressed by him to her colleague in China.