

Affordable medicines our top priority: Minister

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Delivering the keynote address at the 11th India Health Summit organized by CII on the theme "Health for All: Call for Action" on December 18, 2014, Mr Shripad Yesso Naik highlighted the initiatives of his ministry in providing healthcare in the country, including achievements under the National Health Mission, the Universal Immunisation Programme for the children, providing healthcare services for mother and child, and addressing challenges posed by non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cancer, hypertension etc. Naik stated that significant achievements have been achieved in addressing TB and Malaria, while there are concerted efforts being made to eliminate Filariasis and Kala Azar.

The minister said that efforts are being made to reduce the Out of Pocket expenses on healthcare by the common man in the country, which are substantial. The National Health Assurance Mission is a noteworthy step in this direction, he mentioned. Naik stated that technology can be effectively used to bridge the geographical distance. Telemedicine is being used to address the constraints and challenges of the terrain in the country, he informed.

The Health Summit is a timely opportunity to talk on the topic of "Health for All", the minister said. He added that all stakeholders in the healthcare sector need to work towards this aim.

Mr Lov Verma, secretary, ministry of health and family Welfare, in his address highlighted the primary pillars of the National Health Assurance Mission which include preventive and promotive healthcare; provisioning of free essential drugs, diagnostics and healthcare services; and strengthening the tertiary tier. The key concerns in healthcare in the country are equity, affordability, accessibility and quality, he noted. He stated that while we are ahead on the global parameters in MMR, we are well on way to achieve the MDG milestone for IMR and below-five mortality rates.

The summit will have panel discussions and presentations on topics such as economics of healthcare delivery; challenges of sustainability in quality healthcare delivery; real solutions in virtual healthcare; preparing workforce for meeting the challenges in healthcare; Make in India: unlocking the potential in healthcare sector; and Swachh and Swastha Bharat: laying the foundation of a healthier India.

Present during the inaugural session of the two-day 11th India Health Summit were Dr Naresh Trehan, Chairman, CII National Committee on Healthcare; Shri Harpal Singh, Chairman Emeritus Fortis Healthcare Ltd., and Shri Rahul Khosla, Co-Chairman, CII National Committee on Healthcare.