

## Experts deliberate on health priorities, unveil roadmap 2025

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With the vision to help make our country a healthy India, the apex healthcare sector body NATHEALTH, released a white paper 'AAROGYA BHARAT 2025' in collaboration with Bain & Company at its 2nd annual event held in New Delhi on January 21.

Speaking on the occasion Mr Shivinder Mohan Singh, president, NATHEALTH remarked, "This 'White Paper' is an effort by NATHEALTH with collaboration of Bain & Company to drive thought leadership as we move towards a healthier, 'Aarogya' India over the next decade. Total spending on healthcare is anticipated to reach about 6 percent of GDP by 2025. Private insurance is expected to grow at a compounded annual rate of about 25 percent to cover the top 25 percent of the population, by income level. Public insurance will provide essential care to 60 percent of the population by 2025."

According to the paper, 70 percent of India's population has no health insurance and is short by 2 million beds compared with the global benchmark. India requires US\$ 3 Trillion in cumulative funding and has the potential to generate 15 to 20 million jobs by 2025.

Besides Mr Shivender Singh, the additional secretary and DG, CGHS Department, Mr Navreet Singh Kang, chairman, Apollo Hospitals, Dr Prathap C Reddy and Mr Anjan Bose, secretary general, NATHEALTH unveiled the white paper. The key industry association also introduced a unique initiative of an 'Ethics Pledge', a declaration by the industry leaders across diverse healthcare segments in partnership with IMA, to build a robust and transparent platform to promote ethical practices in the healthcare ecosystem.

Mr Anjan Bose said, "India can adopt universal access to essential healthcare driven by private sector-led provision with the Government playing the role of primary payer and provider in remote and underserved areas. To facilitate 'Make in India' innovations, the Government can look to further incentivize domestic innovation and manufacturing. This will also have a ripple effect in terms of increased FDI and will generate employment."

### **Recommendations:**

The white paper recommends the expansion of the supply of healthcare talent in critical roles, rejuvenation of AYUSH, (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) and encouragement of private investment in education.

NATHEALTH has urged the government to increase public spending on healthcare to 2.5 percent to 3 percent of GDP, apportion a greater share of public spending to prevention, including mass screenings and primary care coverage by 2025. Additionally, the Government should focus on being a payer, not a provider and demand and support quality outcomes.

A key recommendation of the White Paper is an appeal to the government to increase tax exemption on premiums of health insurance and incentivize private sector participation in medical education.

Mr Karan Singh, partner, Bain & Company informed that Capex spending will grow from current levels of less than 10 percent to 15 percent of overall healthcare spending. Expanding infrastructure will lead to 1.7 million additional functional beds thus improving the density of beds from 0.9 per thousand today to 2.0 per thousand in 2025.

Mr Shivinder Singh further said, "Despite evolution on multiple fronts, India still struggles with substantial issues and gaps in its healthcare system. At 1.3 percent of GDP, public spending on healthcare in India is amongst the lowest across developing countries and affects the poor and inaccessible rural areas the most."

In order to develop a holistic and sustainable healthcare system, our immediate priority is to ensure that the government assigns national priority to the healthcare agenda, commits to spending more on public health and define a framework for India's health system. Additionally, the Government should enable a paradigm shift to healthy living via greater public spending on prevention Mr. Singh added.

Dr Prathap C Reddy, founder president, NATHEALTH mentioned, "The sole responsibility does not lie with the government. The private players in the healthcare industry have a significant role to play to bridge the demand-supply gap and to build a healthier India. Members of NATHEALTH, with the right incentives, should aspire to invest in expanding the supply of affordable care, especially in rural areas and in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

Further Secretary General, NATHEALTH, Mr Bose, said "The Government could focus on the role of a payer while investing in public health and leading the provision of care in underserved areas. Additionally, it should drive policy consensus among the centre and the states to ensure that appropriate priority is given to delivering high quality healthcare.