

Affordable healthcare is a major concern area says VP

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The lack of extensive and adequately funded public health services pushes large numbers of people to incur heavy out of pocket expenditures on services purchased from the private sector," stated the vice president while addressing at "5th Foundation Day and 2nd Convocation of the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences" on January 14.

Mr Ansari said that healthcare infrastructure gaps remain substantial and are exacerbated by underutilisation of existing resources. The situation is further aggravated by the inequity in healthcare delivery across states and demographic segments. Rural areas are especially poorly served. Around seventy percent of our population lives in rural areas but only two percent qualified doctors are available in these areas.

The vice president expressed his concern that Healthcare workforce remains inadequate and underutilised. Regulatory standards for public and private hospitals are not adequately defined and, in any case, are ineffectively enforced. A well functioning and effective regulatory system is required to manage the large and diverse set of healthcare service providers. The problems outlined above and some more are likely to worsen in future. Healthcare costs are expected to rise because, with rising life expectancy, a larger proportion of our population will become vulnerable to chronic Non-Communicable Diseases which typically require expensive treatment.

Mr Ansari opined that the bulk of the population today relies upon private sector health providers, paying amounts which they cannot afford, because of the inadequate reach of the public sector. There must be substantial expansion and strengthening of the public sector health care system if we are to meet the health needs of rural and even urban areas. As supply in the public sector increases, it will free the vulnerable sections of society from dependence on high cost and often unreachable private sector health care.

He said that the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences is a fine example of what the public sector can do and must do in the actualization of our desired goal to have a universal health coverage and thereby ensure healthy and economically productive population. He complemented all members of the Governing Council of the ILBS, Dr Sarin and his entire team for making the coveted vision of establishing new super-speciality medical institute a reality. He hoped that the Institute would continue to deliver quality public and community health care for all in the future and set a worthy example for other institutions to follow.