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"Import duty on medical instruments must be reduced"

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"Import duty on medical instruments must be reduced"



Q: What should be the top priorities for next government as far as healthcare is concerned?

The next government needs to foster a more investment friendly environment to build business confidence as many critical issues and archaic policies continue to bother current life sciences industry. Bills which have been passed by Lok Sabha must get clearances in Rajya Sabha at the earliest.

Healthcare spending is another area that requires immediate attention. For a country of over 1.2 billion people, India's healthcare spending by percentage of the GDP is abysmal. Increasing GDP spend to at least 2.5 percent from the current 1.4 percent will mean better healthcare delivery systems, as it will directly increase per capita healthcare spend, which is one of the lowest among developing economies.

India needs more doctors, especially super specialists and some changes are desired in the training and education of future medical professionals, including an increase in the number of post graduate medical seats throughout India.Â Indian medical equipment makers hold a lot of promise and we should promote the use of indigenous equipments by giving them tax benefits. Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) bill needs to be passed as India is a signatory to UN convention on biodiversity and Cartagena Protocol on bio safety which calls for a regulatory authority setup.

Finally, employers and in turn employees should be incentivised to remain healthy instead of reimbursing for acute care; India should strengthen the mandate for preventive health packages.

Q: What are your expectations from the next government for healthcare industry?

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We expect that the government will give infrastructure status to the healthcare sector so that hospitals can get access to long term funding at competitive rates. Import duty on medical equipments should be reduced. Access to healthcare in rural areas needs significant improvement and the government should strengthen the emergency services at the primary health centre level. We need more doctors in rural areas and more that we will need to incentivize doctors to work in rural centers.

We need less stringent norms for setting up medical college so that private players can establish medical colleges within existing setups.The scale and scope of the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) should be increased.
India can also further enhance its medical tourism prospects with fast track visa for medical tourism; the government can look

at launching special visas for medical tourists.

We also expect the government to roll out enhanced screening programs for Non Communicable Diseases through National Urban Health Mission (NUHM)