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Vice President's Secretariat

Urban rural divide in providing medical care must end: Vice President**Working in rural areas for MBBS Graduates must be made mandatory before they get their first promotion;****Addresses the gathering at First Graduation Day function of Malla Reddy Institute of Medical Sciences & Dental Sciences**

Posted On: 21 APR 2018 8:18PM by PIB Delhi

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that urban rural divide in providing medical care must end adding that people living in rural areas must have access to affordable and quality healthcare. He was addressing the gathering at First Graduation Day function of Malla Reddy Institute of Medical Sciences & Malla Reddy Institute of Dental Sciences in Hyderabad, Telangana today.

Highlighting the shortage of doctors and nurses all over the country, the Vice President said that rural areas are under-served in terms of medical facilities and personnel. Working in rural areas for MBBS Graduates must be made mandatory before they get their first promotion, he added.

The Vice President said that India needs a multi-pronged strategy to improve the well-being of our people. He suggested the government to increase budgetary allocations for healthcare and address infrastructure and manpower shortages. Setting up more medical, dental and nursing colleges and providing affordable and accessible treatment as well as education is also crucial, he added.

Addressing the students, the Vice President said that medical students and doctors must ensure that their trust is never broken and maintain the highest credibility. He further said that not only credibility, they must also have empathy and compassion. They have taken up a noble profession where they don't distinguish between a poor and rich patient while providing treatment and a good human being will always make a good doctor too, he added.

The Vice President said that India needs to become world leader in education and reduce brain drain. He complimented the Union Government for launching 'Study in India' programme to promote India as a destination for higher studies and attract foreign students.

The Vice President said that in the modern times, certain aberrations have crept into our social life and we are witnessing barbaric incidents like rapes, female feticides and dowry killings. He further said that no civilized society can tolerate such inhuman acts and the most stringent punishments have to be meted out to criminals who perpetrate those crimes. Gender equality must begin at home and families play a big role in shaping the attitude of children and boys must be made to treat girls with respect, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am extremely pleased to attend the First Graduation Day function of the Malla Reddy Institute of Medical Sciences & Malla Reddy Institute of Dental Sciences and share my thoughts with all of you.

Dear students, all of you will be naturally elated to acquire the coveted medical degrees marking a milestone in your careers. I would like to congratulate all those who graduated today. Remember to uphold the Hippocrates oath as you step out of the corridors of this institution. From now on you will be serving the society and the country as a full-fledged healthcare professional—a doctor, who is treated as a demigod by the patients and their families. Therefore, ensure that their trust is never broken and maintain the highest credibility. Not only credibility, you must also have empathy and compassion. You have taken up a noble profession where you don't distinguish between a poor and rich patient while providing treatment. A good human being will always make a good doctor too.

As India transits from a developing nation to a developed nation with the country achieving remarkable progress in various fields, the health status of Indians too has improved over the years. The life expectancy which was around 40 years in 1960 has increased to 70 years now. We have also successfully eradicated some of the major communicable diseases like polio and tetanus. There has been steady decline in IMR and MMR rates, although there is wide variation between the States.

Today India has emerged as the sixth largest economy and the GDP growth rate is expected to be 7.4 per cent this year and 7.6 per cent next year. The Asian Development Bank has projected India to be the fastest growing economy in Asia. The World Bank too has forecast a growth rate of 7.3 per cent for India this year and said that the country's economy has recovered from the effects of demonetization and GST.

The GST collections were expected to touch Rs.93,000-Rs.95,000 crore by the end of last month as against the average of Rs.87,000 crore during the previous five months.

Even, the IMF praised India for using the right policies for lowering its level of debt to GDP ratio, which was quite high. On the other hand, IMF pointed out that China alone has contributed 43 per cent to the increase in global debt since 2007.

However, despite the economic progress, India has not done as well as it could have on various health indicators and there is scope for vast improvement.

The country is facing the twin burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases; the rural areas are under-served in terms of medical facilities and personnel; there is shortage of doctors and nurses all over the country. Although successive governments at the Centre and in various States have been trying to address this issue, we are still short of meeting the WHO norms of one doctor for every 1,000 people.

Our rural areas, where majority of the people live, are badly under-served in terms of medical professionals and facilities. Most of the urban areas are served by swanky, state-of-the-art private hospitals, apart from government hospitals. However, the situation is not the same in the rural areas and this urban-rural divide has to be bridged so that people living in villages are not deprived of timely medical care. In fact, former President, Dr. Abdul Kalam always used to stress upon the need to create urban facilities in rural areas under PURA (provision of urban amenities in rural areas) concept.

Dear students, we have to adopt multi-pronged strategy to improve the well-being of our people. Firstly, budgetary allocations for healthcare have to be stepped up by both the Central Government and various State Governments with focus on addressing infrastructure and manpower shortages. In fact, there has to be a pronounced bias for rural areas in policy making if we have to remedy the situation. Secondly, we need to set up more and more medical, dental and nursing colleges to ensure the availability of well qualified medical professionals. While facilitating the private sector to set up hospitals and colleges, the governments must ensure that the treatment as well as education provided by them is affordable and accessible.

As regards accessing medical care, it is estimated that about 62s per cent of healthcare costs in India are met through out-of-pocket expenses. As a result of high medical expenses, there have been instances where families from lower middle classes and middle classes were driven to penury. Lack of health insurance coverage is the main reason for this situation. I would like to compliment the Union Government for launching Aayushman Bharat and various State Governments for starting similar schemes. I am sure all these schemes will promote the well being of people and prevent poorer sections from slipping into penury.

Of course, the most important of all aspects is preventive healthcare. All stakeholders in the healthcare sector should launch multimedia campaigns to educate people on the dangers of lifestyle diseases. Modern lifestyles are the leading cause for the spurt in non-communicable diseases in the country. Unless people are made to give up physical inactivity, bad dietary habits, harmful use of alcohol and tobacco, the NCDs are bound to rise. From schools to offices, people have to be made aware of the importance of regular physical exercises.

Finally, as regards medical education, we have to ensure that the faculty constantly upgrades its knowledge and teaching skills. Special refresher courses for faculty need to be conducted wherever required so that the education is in tune with the evolving requirements of the modern society.

As you all are aware, India was known as 'Vishwaguru' in ancient times and the world's top learning centres like Nalanda, Takshashila, Pushpagiri and Vikramshila were located here. We need to become world leaders in education and reduce brain drain. In this connection, I would like to compliment the Union Government for launching 'Study in India' programme to promote India as a destination for higher studies and attract foreign students.

In the modern times, certain aberrations have crept into our social life and we are witnessing barbaric incidents like rapes, female feticides and dowry killings. No civilized society can tolerate such inhuman acts and the most stringent punishments have to be meted out to criminals who perpetrate those crimes. Gender equality must begin at home and girls must not be made to feel inferior to boys or ill-treated. Families play a big role in shaping the attitude of children and boys must be made to treat girls with respect.

Of late, we are witnessing a disturbing trend of young girls committing suicide unable to withstand pressure of studies.

JAI HIND!"

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