

Press Release

Kerala Government serious about setting up drug manufacturing plant: Health Minister

Kochi, Sept 13 – The Government of Kerala will give serious consideration to proposals for setting up drug manufacturing plants in the state, said Shri V S Sivakumar, Hon'ble Minister for Health here today.

“The objective of the Government is to make available quality healthcare to all at affordable costs,” he said in his opening remarks at the sectoral session on “Healthcare Sector in Kerala: Emerging Scenario”, organised in connection with the Emerging Kerala Global Connect 2012.

The Government will also initiate work to formulate the Clinical Establishments Act to improve the quality of care to patients by regulating the functioning of hospitals and laboratories, he said even while expressing concern over emerging and re-emerging diseases in Kerala.

Referring to Ayurveda, the Minister said that it was not an alternative system of medicine as far as the state is concerned but a mainstream form of healing. Effective private sector investment in Ayurveda can help in giving it a global dimension, he added.

Shri Rajeev Sadanandan, Principal Secretary, GoK said that the Government is open to working with private partners to augment the overall functioning of healthcare sector in the state. “The healthcare sector is now so vast and complex that the Government can no longer meet the demands of the market alone. We are open to partnerships with the private sector, with due regulations,” he said.

He also pinpointed some specific concerns of healthcare sector in Kerala including the fact that economic prosperity has led to inequality and that the general tendency to bypass lower level facilities has increased costs at the tertiary level.

Vis-à-vis capacity building and increasing the pool of trained personnel, the Principal Secretary said that the Government will soon introduce a Masters programme in Public Health Administration in association with Public Health Foundation of India and a Post Graduate Course in Emergency Medicine at the Calicut Medical College.

Guest of Honour H.E Mr Mike Nithavrianakas, Hon'ble Deputy High Commissioner of UK said that his country and Kerala can work together both in profit and not-for-profit health sectors. “The association between UK and Kerala has been a two-way partnership, with UK benefiting and learning from Kerala.”

“Though we welcome bright Indian students coming to UK for higher medical learning, I would also hope for an association in which British students can pursue their undergraduate and post graduate learning in India. For such an association, Kerala would be high up on our priority list,” he said.

Mr Mark Knickrehm, Industry Managing Director (Health) of Accenture, Singapore in his theme presentation outlined the three dimensions of affordability, accessibility and quality in the design of a health system. “As countries get wealthier, their spending on health becomes higher,” he observed.

Mr Knickrehm also called for increasing the use of technology in healthcare through systems such as one patient-one record, remote monitoring and tele-medicine. Co-morbidities are an emerging area of concern as it calls for multiple levels of care and increased costs, he pointed out.

Mr P K Pradhan, Secretary, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in his keynote address, called upon Kerala to link primary, secondary and tertiary systems of medicine and keep away unnecessary procedures. “It is important that healthcare is equitable and accessible to all across all districts of Kerala.” He also called upon the State Government to implement an efficient system of drug procurement and emerge as a model state for universal healthcare.

Dr Francoise Cluzeau, Senior Advisor, NICE International, London, elaborated the aspect of quality and said that it encompasses effectiveness, efficiency, equitability, patient control, timeliness and safety. “Money should not be spent on unnecessary administration, inefficiencies and care that does not improve health,” she added.

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is collaborating with Kerala’s Health Department in evolving risk-reduction strategies and standard clinical guidelines for reducing maternal mortality in Kerala.

Dr P R Krishnakumar, Managing Director, Arya Vaidya Pharmacy, Coimbatore said that it is important that the state set up advanced Ayurvedic research centres in Kerala, which will not only help in tap the hidden potentials of Kerala but also will prevent the drain of students from Kerala who go to neighbouring states seeking education in Ayurveda.

Dr Philip Augustine, Managing Director and CEO, Lakeshore Hospital & Research Centre called for the setting up of a Special Economic Zone for equipment and drug manufacturing units in the state. He also spoke about the readiness of the healthcare sector in Kerala to adopt latest technologies.

Dr Azad Moopen, Director, Malabar Institute of Medical Sciences (MIMS), in his concluding remarks, said that there is a huge requirement for inclusive look at healthcare delivery by devising innovative schemes that will healthcare accessible to all sections of the population, including the BPL.

Shri K G Narendranath, Deputy Director, The Financial Express moderated the session.

#