

**Speech of the President on
10th Knowledge Millennium Summit
16th January, 2013**

1. It is my privilege to inaugurate the ASSOCHAM 10th Knowledge Millennium Summit on the theme of “Curing the Incurables: Sharing of Innovations”. I congratulate ASSOCHAM for organizing this very timely Summit focusing on the need to scale up innovations in the field of healthcare.

2. The Indian subcontinent is home to 16.5% of the world’s population and at any point of time, it is estimated that there are over 2 million people with incurable and other chronic diseases. A majority of Indian patients have late-stage incurable diseases (75% to 80%) when first diagnosed. In recent years cancer killed approximately 5, 56,000 people in India. This is predicted to rise by 2030, to nearly 1.5 million deaths annually.

3. The silver lining, however, is that the life expectancy is continuously on the rise since past several decades. It currently stands at approximately 64 years and is expected to rise even more taking into account the better healthcare facilities that India hopes to deliver in the coming years. World Health Organisation (WHO) data currently suggest that in India, only 35% people have access to essential medicines and Health care. Costs paid to hospitals, physicians, nursing homes, diagnostic laboratories, pharmacies, medical device manufacturers

and other components of the health care system, consumed 14.6 % of the GDP of the United States whereas India spent 6.1 % of its GDP which is even lower than the global weighted average of 6.2 %. Therefore, innovative healthcare coverage that assures access to medicines and treatment at affordable prices is an urgent necessity.

4. Knowledge is the driver of today's world. While we stand at the cusp of greatness in several fields on the global platform, our innovation in the field of healthcare and medical sciences is yet to scale the required heights. India needs to leap to the frontiers of innovative solutions in health care, discovering new cures, harnessing existing and emerging technologies for affordable healthcare, using our abundant heritage of traditional medicines and exploring new paradigms for preventing disease and creating wellness.

5. Health care has always been rich in evidence-based innovations, yet even when such innovations are implemented successfully in one location, they often disseminate slowly. Diffusion of innovations is a major challenge in all health care. We should conceptualize these innovations and form a brotherhood to collectively analyze these innovations and scale them up so as to reach the un-reached.

6. Ensuring universal health care is a major concern of governments the world over and that is true for our country also. The rapid growth of high end technologies for diagnosis and treatment, and the fact that people are living longer and are more likely to need health support when they age, has become a challenge.

7. This in turn presents opportunities for the medical community, insurers and other service providers. Innovative technologies, processes and partnerships forged by the Indian government and private companies have already begun bridging the health care gap. The Government is keen to continue to encourage private investment in the healthcare sector and is now developing Public – Private Partnerships i.e. PPP models to improve availability of healthcare services and provide healthcare financing. There is also growing interest among foreign players to enter India's healthcare sector through capital investments, technology tie-ups, and collaborative ventures across various segments, including diagnostics, medical equipment, big hospital chains, education and training.

8. Advances are underway on several fronts, from expanding health insurance coverage for the poor and building hospitals in smaller towns, to using technology for safer drinking water and improving treatment outcomes. We should take pride in the fact that heart

surgeries in India cost less than a tenth of what they would in the United States.

9. But there is still no denying that the Healthcare delivery gap is huge in India. It is estimated that 64% of the poorest population in India become indebted every year to pay for the medical care they need. 85% of the Indian workforce working in the informal sector do not have any kind of insurance and lack access to effective social protection schemes.

10. Newer technologies like Information and Communications Technology (ICT) can play a major role in improving health care delivery. One solution is telemedicine - the remote diagnosis, monitoring and treatment of patients via videoconferencing or the Internet.

11. Provision of universal health care is a matter of faith for the Government. The Government is looking to scale up public investment on health from the current level of 1.2% of GDP to 2.5% of GDP by 2017 i.e. the end of 12th Plan and 3% by 2022 i.e. end of 13th Plan. For this, the public health system must be greatly expanded and strengthened across the Nation. We need to take health services closer to the homes of the families. We need out of the box managerial and administrative reforms in the health departments at the state and central level. We need to develop effective models of healthcare for the ever-

increasing urban population and at the same time not ignore rural healthcare needs. The foundation of India's national health system must be strong, sensitive and efficient.

12. The challenges that the Indian healthcare sector faces are substantial, but the opportunities equally compelling. For companies that view the Indian healthcare sector as a glass half full, the potential is enormous as India is one of the few locations in the world with the latest in healthcare technologies including automation, surgical robotics, modular operating theatres, minimal access surgery systems, telemedicine, radiology, etc.

To conclude, the time has come for Indian Healthcare System to revolutionize itself and make India self-reliant in its Healthcare requirements.

Jai Hind. Thank You.