

Through collective endeavour

World Health Day



ANIL AGARWAL

Active participation from civil society, corporates and non-profit organisations could supplement government's efforts in ensuring universal well-being

May all be happy, may all be free from illness' (Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah, Sarve Santu Nir-Amayaah!), is an ancient Indian invocation that truly commemorates World Health Day, as the world recovers from an unprecedented pandemic.

COVID-19 challenged even the most advanced healthcare systems. Of course, it also brought out the best in doctors and healthcare personnel who battled the odds to save lives. It has brought healthcare to centre-stage in global policy. This World Health Day, we must pledge to address the inequities in access to quality and affordable healthcare for all.

The theme for this year is - 'Our Planet, Our Health'. Indeed, health-for-all can become a key driver for the socio-economic development of India.

The Government of India performed a stellar job in managing the Covid crisis. Driving the world's largest vaccination program with over 180 crore doses in record time has been a benchmark for the rest of the world. Even before Covid, pathbreaking initiatives like the Ayushman Bharat programme and Swachh Bharat have been instrumental in making India embark on a journey to become a healthier nation. This is the world's largest government-funded health care insurance programme with a focus on the poor and the vulnerable. Initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana is bringing affordable medicines to the masses.

Here I would like to compliment our Government for



Balco Medical Centre in Raipur, which runs in partnership with the state government, has catered to more than a lakh outpatients

taking a holistic view of healthcare - physical, mental as well as spiritual wellbeing. Thanks to our Prime Minister's efforts in regard to yoga and meditation, which originated in India thousands of years ago, are today being embraced by the world to build the perfect harmony between the body and the mind. Even our Ayurveda and traditional medicine systems are becoming popular globally in enhancing wellness.

As a nation, we need to take a closer look at the health progression in India's urban and rural populations. The lack of detailed data, infrastructural inadequacy and budget constraints are some of the impediments that need to be addressed on a priority basis. Moreover, allied issues such as rising pollution and climatic disturbances put further stress on the healthcare systems and

institutions.

The Central Government's decision to set up several AIIMS is commendable. The establishment of such advanced medical institutions in the far and wide corners of the country is a step towards closing the care gap. While the Government has its plans in place and has embarked on numerous initiatives and schemes, we, on our part, need to do our bit. Active participation of civil society and corporates is the need of the hour. I believe that apart from providing better healthcare, an advanced system can also create many jobs and contribute to the GDP of India. It is an economic opportunity and public good.

The focus must be on building public-private partnership models and encouraging private and non-profit

organisations to make initiatives in the right direction. One such example is our non-profit cancer care hospital, Balco Medical Centre (BMC) in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, which runs in partnership with the state government and has catered to more than 1 lakh outpatients, 60 per cent of beneficiaries who are from below poverty are treated under various government schemes.

I have a vision of providing quality healthcare and nutrition for all. I believe women and especially mothers need a far greater focus on health. Children are the future and it's our responsibility that we nurture them into healthy and strong individuals. With this belief, we have created modern Aanganwadis, called Nand Ghars, that provide quality healthcare, nutrition and education for children as well as

help women get economically empowered.

Our health system should be rejuvenated, and robust health infrastructure is the need of the hour in every district. In this direction, we at Vedanta, have taken up Swasth Gaon Abhiyan which aims to improve healthcare ecosystems in all districts of our business operations.

Crisis situations like pandemics and epidemics leave no facet of life untouched. But solutions that are worthy of these challenging times present opportunities to create long-term capabilities. Building a robust and responsive healthcare system will not only save lives but will also be the foundation for a resilient and stronger India.

The writer is the Chairman of Vedanta Resources Limited. Views expressed are personal

In view of India's health progression, lack of detailed data, infrastructural inadequacy and budget constraints are some of the impediments that need to be addressed on a priority basis

