

LOV VERMA STRESS ON THE NEED TO HIKE PUBLIC SPENDING ON BASIC HEALTHCARE

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Health Secretary Lov Verma with dignitaries at the launch of a study report by PHFI 'The Framework of Universal Health Coverage at the fuction

BS RAWAT

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Highlighting the health assurance for all to bring greater clarity of vision and stronger commitment to Universal Health Coverage (UHC), Union Health Secretary Lov Verma the Health Ministry will rope in private and semi-government firms to improve basic healthcare in India.

He emphasised that innovative and cost effective solutions are key to fulfilling the aspirations of a billion plus people and improve the quality, efficiency and accountability of public and private health

systems for the larger and common benefit of the people.

Lov Verma was participating in a debate on "Informing the 'How' Universal Health Assurance for India, Consultation on Policy and Practice" organised by Public health Foundation of India (PHFI) here today.

He said that an estimated 400 million people were covered by health insurance in 2012, and according to a World Bank report, health insurance coverage in India is expected to cross 630 million people or 50 per cent of the population by 2015.

The Health Secretary highlighted that his ministry's efforts to invest more in health insurance sector.

"Insurance has been one of the toughest call for the Government. Till now, only 1.4 per cent of the GDP was invested in the health insurance sector. But, this will soon be a priority for the Government. Even the Rastriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY) will be transferred from the Labour Ministry to the Health Ministry," he informed.

In order to make the citizens more aware, Verma said the Health Ministry has introduced courses on public health and have submitted it to the Medical Council of India for its approval (MCI).

"The public-private partnership (PPP) will be highlighted on every healthcare programme for the citizens in the country," he added.

UHC is a widely shared global agenda with two fundamental goals: maximising health impact of populations by reducing health inequality and gaps in coverage, and reducing impoverishment due to healthcare costs.

India's own commitment began with the 12th Five-Year Plan proposing a vision and framework for Universal Health Coverage for the country. Government's emphasis on 'Health Assurance for All' brings greater clarity of vision and stronger commitment to UHC in India.

Subsequent to the 12th Plan there has been renewed focus on 'how to deliver' UHC emphasizing on the quality and distribution of existing health programs, appropriate roles of the public and private sectors; local and central governments and entitlements for sick, healthy, rich and poor populations

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