

India, UK Set to Seal Health Deal

The agreement likely to be signed during the visit of British Prime Minister David Cameron

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Chennai: India is likely to sign a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United Kingdom (the UK) for cooperation on various avenues of the health sector, Union Additional Health Secretary, Keshav Desiraju, said here on Friday.

Addressing a press meet along with the UK Minister of Health Anna Soubry, on the sidelines of a UK-India diabetes summit, he said the MoU would focus on dealing with health issues such as a host of non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, primary healthcare, exchange of professionals and collaborative research.

The agreement is likely to be signed during the next visit of UK Prime Minister



GOING GLOBAL: The UK Minister for Public Health Anna Soubry and Union Additional Health Secretary Keshav Desiraju during a press conference in Chennai on Friday | P Ravikumar

David Cameron to India. Likewise, a parallel agreement between the National Institute of Clinical Excellence and Indian Council for Medical Research is also

likely to be penned.

Desiraju said while screening of diabetes was happening on a large scale in India, there were questions on the follow up being

done. One of the primary issues faced in this regard was inadequate number of trained personnel to intervene in places where it is necessary. "We have to date

screened more than 1 crore people in a national programme to identify those with diabetes. When we tell large number of people, who had earlier not known about their condition, that they have diabetes, we should also be providing them with the help to manage it. At the moment, what we have is inadequate in terms of infrastructure such as trained personnel," he said.

Desiraju said that there was also an issue of unavailability of enough doctors who would want to work in the rural areas. "We have to persuade the States to look at options to get doctors and other to the villages," he pointed out. On incentives that could be provided to induce the private sector to serve in the rural areas, he said in such a scenario, a

comprehensive regulatory mechanism had to be developed. However, he noted that the 12th plan had considerably increased allocation to the health sector and fighting non-communicable diseases was a major part.

While stating that technologically, India was now quite superior compared to UK in the health sector, Soubry said there was much that could be shared between the two countries. "India, especially TN and Kerala produce some of the best nurses in the world. We would like to exchange faculty and students from here so that we could understand what makes them the best," she said. On the other hand, Britain's concept of specialised community nursing could be something that India could take a leaf out of.