

A question mark on Assam health services?



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Assam Governor, Janaki Ballabh Pattanaik, who recently fell into the bathroom of Dibrugarh circuit house, had to go to All Indian Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi for treatment of the fracture. There successful surgery has been done on his ailment. Similarly, when the Chief Minister, Tarun Gogoi had to go for by-pass surgery, he was advised to go to Mumbai. It all makes the fun of the Assam's health and family welfare departments, which claims of providing 'world class' services in the healthcare sector. It is a question mark on state's health services?

If the publicity through the advertisements of the Assam government in media is to be believed, the state does not lag behind any other state of the country, so far the health services are concerned. Recently launched Sarathi 104, the revolutionary 24-hour health information helpline is in the service of the people. After Andhra Pradesh Assam is the only state in the country to implement this service. Any medical advice or health information is reachable through telephone round the clock from every nook and corner of the state. Mrityunjay 108 Ambulance services are now available throughout the state. Operation Smile is back in Assam and people can avail of surgical corrections for cleft lip and palate free of cost. The department of health and family welfare has been successful in bringing new smiles on the faces of 2030 children and their families in Assam so far. These are the achievements shown in the newspapers of Guwahati and other cities.

Now in harmony with the Government's effort to make quality healthcare services affordable and accessible, the Model Hospital Construction Scheme has been launched. Under this scheme 60 model hospitals with state-of-the art healthcare facilities would be provided to the people of the state. All this is being done for the welfare of the people by the department of health and family welfare, without improving the condition of already existing hospitals and healthcare centers. However, the VIPs lack faith on such services and prefer to go out of the state for better medical services.

It's strange that despite such claims, the conditions of the hospitals and medical colleges in the state are not able to bring much relief to the suffering patients from malaria, dengue, swine flu etc. Even the medicines in the hospitals are not given to the patients, who are asked to purchase the same from outside pharmacies. Absence of competent doctors and other staff members is very common incidence. In most of the healthcare centers physicians are found absent. The problems of the ordinary people go unheard. A few cases of service by Mrityunjoy 108 had been reported earlier, when the ambulance reached to pickup patient without having oxygen and other necessary materials.

The VIPs and affluent people can afford to go to big cities for treatment, but it's not possible for the common people. The state government should have planned to improve the services of the existing hospitals and take services of competent staff instead of laying too many foundation stones for new centers. The model hospital scheme has been started with foundation stone laying ceremonies and so far two foundation stones have been laid. Like many other schemes in the past a section of the society suspects that this scheme would also end with the foundation stones only.

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