'The collaboration has potential to become a powerful symbiotic relationship'

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NASSCOM and NATHEALTH signed a MoU with an aim to synergise the endeavours of both the health and technology sectors and extend support to the Government of India and state governments to achieve its 'Universal Health Coverage' goals. Anjan Bose, Secretary General, NATHEALTH gives more details of the MoU and elaborates on its benefits to both healthcare and IT sectors in India, in an interaction with Lakshmipriya Nair

Gives us more details about the MoU with NASSCOM. What led to this move?
The MoU will try to address challenges in the healthcare sector that have been significantly impacted through the use of Information Technology (IT), for e.g., m-Health can be developed effectively to enable remote diagnostics and significantly raise the level of healthcare accessibility. This is of critical importance, considering that 45 per cent of Indian population travel more than 100 km to access a higher level of care. NATHEALTH was created with the vision to be the credible and unified voice in healthcare. Leading healthcare service providers, medical technology providers (devices and equipment), diagnostic service providers, health insurance companies, health education institutions, healthcare publishers and other stakeholders are coming together to build NATHEALTH as a common platform to power the next wave of progress in Indian healthcare. As part of the MoU, the collaboration will aim to leverage technology for innovative solutions which will help both the sectors. Emerging technologies like cloud, analytics, pervasive presence of mobile telephony and broadband penetration have created new opportunities for both sectors to collaborate and work towards enhancing healthcare quality, accessibility and affordability. Hence, this has the potential to become a powerful symbiotic relationship benefiting both the sectors and improving patient care.

healthcare. NATHEALTH is an inclusive institution that has representation of small and medium hospitals and nursing homes. For NASSCOM, therefore, NATHEALTH came as a natural partner to work with. For decades, there are companies working on their own to reach the tremendous potential that IT has in healthcare, there are many islands of excellence, but this is the first time that NASSCOM has found a collaboration partner which offers such a high level of diverse and proven competence in healthcare on one single platform.

What kind of technology would be a part of the deal and how would it be harnessed to deliver better healthcare?
Time will tell and sky is the limit. NASSCOM is committed to enabling and accelerating the transformative power possibilities of working together for win-win solutions.

What are the healthcare challenges that can be mitigated through good IT deployment?
There are many areas in healthcare where IT could be of great help. Technology and mobile health could significantly address the skill-set gap that is one of the biggest concerns in healthcare, particularly in the semi-urban and rural segments. Then there is the unresolved issue of database management which is another major concern in healthcare. IT could be of great help here. Electronic technology for India’s growth and development, particularly in the healthcare sector, by harnessing IT industry’s globally proven capabilities, along with the growing trend of innovation and entrepreneurship. On the other hand, healthcare sector in India has achieved capability, maturity and global recognition. India has now become a preferred global destination for advanced healthcare services at a most competitive and economical cost. Healthcare already has the benefits of health/medical record (EHR/EMR) is an unmet need even today. NATH-HEALTH/NASSCOM collaborative partnership could try to come out with pragmatic, scalable and cost-effective solutions in this critical area.

Are you looking at any other strategic alliances?
Yes we are, with a few other eminent Indian, as well as global institutions where there is a possibility of ‘meeting of minds’ and also aligned interest for common goals, coupled with complementary competencies.

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