

Regarding developing a National programme for Cancer screening

SHRI SRIBHARAT MATHUKUMILLI (VISAKHAPATNAM): Thank you, Madam, for giving me this opportunity in the Zero Hour. I want to speak about developing a national programme for cancer screening. I am a trustee of a non-profitable cancer hospital in Hyderabad. I know how much amount it costs to treat the cancer.

Unfortunately, our screening level is far lower than it should be. Our cervical cancer screening rate is about one per cent and the breast cancer screening rate is about two per cent of the total population. In the USA, the screening is about 70 to 80 per cent for cervical and breast cancer.

Why am I saying this? It is because the hospitalisation cost for cancer treatment is the highest of all the diseases. This cost is 50 per cent greater than cardio vascular disease. The average hospitalisation cost each time is about

Rs 70,000.

There is a new investment happening in the nanotechnology which, for the last 10 years, has not become as viable as it should be. The IIT Mumbai and Tata Memorial Cancer Hospital have together come out with a CAR T-cell therapy which is showing promising a result. But it is very expensive. We have still not done enough investment in cancer screening. As a trustee of the Basavatarakam Cancer Hospital, we do cancer screening through mobile cancer screening bus. But the challenges are that we are not able to reach the remote areas. There is also social stigma for women to come for checking breast cancer and other illness.

One thing which has been developing over the last decade in particular, has been the blood-based cancer tests, which today have come to be costly or slightly cheaper than Mammography, which is done traditionally in the hospitals. It costs about Rs 1,500. So, the blood-based cancer tests are becoming better and cheaper. I think we can take it as our national mission and scale up the cancer screening from one per cent to, maybe, 10 to 20 per cent, in the coming years. The Central Government needs to give a message to everybody to do that.

What is causing cancer? Is it microplastics? Is it lifestyle? I think, the Government should increase funding on research to know why the incidents of cancer are

increasing. This is going to be very important for the country. The investment into AI will help us to screen cancer at an early stage.

Thank you, Madam.