

Vice President Venkaiah Naidu pitches for organ donation

Organ donation is one of the noblest cause, he said while addressing the virtual valedictory program of the National Eye Donation Fortnight here.



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Vice President Venkaiah Naidu (Photo | EPS)

By [PTI](#)

NEW DELHI: Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday underlined the need to increase the number of eye donations in the country to help eradicate corneal blindness.

Organ donation is one of the noblest cause, he said while addressing the virtual valedictory program of the National Eye Donation Fortnight here.

Describing 'netra daan' (eye donation) as 'sreshth daan' (best donation), the vice president appealed to people to participate in eye donation and inspire others.

Terming visual impairment as one of the major health challenges, Naidu highlighted that around 46 lakh people suffer from blindness in India and most of them are in the 50 plus age group, an official statement said.

Terming corneal blindness as the second leading cause of blindness after cataract with about 20,000 cases every year, the vice president expressed concern as most of the people affected in this category were young adults and children.

Naidu called for adopting preventive measures, early treatment and corneal transplantation surgery to address the challenge.

Drawing attention to the low numbers of organ donors in the country, he called for changing this mindset by spreading awareness as well as building adequate medical infrastructure for organ harvesting and transplantation at the district level.

He cited the examples of king Shibi and sage Dadhichi who had donated their bodies for the welfare of others, and called for redefining the values and narratives in modern context to inspire people and promote organ donation.

By donating an organ, one sets an example for others to work towards the larger good of society, Naidu said and called upon every citizen, especially the youth, to overcome apprehensions and pledge to donate their organs.

Noting that time is a critical factor in harvesting an organ from a donor's body and transplanting it, the vice president emphasised the need to create storage infrastructure and expertise to conduct transplant surgeries at the local level so that people from smaller towns are not forced to travel to metros for organ transplant.

"These measures along with increased availability of donated organs would also help in curbing unethical medical practices," Naidu felt.

He also suggested that doctors working in government hospitals should devote some time and go to remote areas to provide eye care to rural people.

"Let us eliminate the blindness from the country," Naidu said.

Quoting the National Blindness survey (2015-19), he hailed the fact that the prevalence of blindness has been reduced to 0.36 percent as compared to one percent in the 2006-07 national survey.

India has also successfully met the goals of the 'WHO Global Action Plan for Universal Eye Health 2014-2019' which targeted a reduction in the prevalence of visual impairment by 25 percent by 2019 from the baseline level of 2010.

Data shows that over 64 lakh cataract operations were performed under a program in 2019-20, a total of 65,000 donated eyes were collected for corneal transplantation and 8.57 lakh free spectacles were given to school children.

The vice president also expressed happiness that eye banking activities have resumed in non-COVID hospitals after being adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

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