

## India needs to invest in protective gear ecosystem

21 July 2023 | Views | By Hemant Sapra, President of Sales and Marketing, Karam Group

**Urgent need for enhanced infrastructure within the medical protective gear ecosystem in India cannot be overstated**



The outbreak of COVID-19 has starkly exposed the urgent requirement for robust and reliable medical protective gear. The unprecedented number of cases has exposed flaws in the current infrastructure, resulting in a deficiency and inadequate supply of vital Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves, gowns, and face shields. This overwhelming demand has reinforced the critical need for dependable structures that can ensure an uninterrupted and sufficient supply of medical protective gear during times of crisis.

The safety and well-being of healthcare workers stand as paramount concerns. Without proper protective gear, these frontline heroes are left vulnerable to dangerous diseases and infections. To safeguard their health, prevent the spread of infection, and maintain an efficient healthcare workforce, it is imperative to provide high-grade protective gear. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it abundantly clear that fortifying healthcare infrastructure is crucial to prepare for future health emergencies. To enhance our capacity for effective response, it is vital to invest in the protective gear ecosystem, which includes stockpiling essential equipment, optimising supply chains, and adopting modern manufacturing techniques.

Ensuring the quality and upholding of standards regarding medical protective gear is of utmost importance to ensure the safety of healthcare providers and patients alike. Strengthening regulatory frameworks, implementing quality control measures, and encouraging standardized testing and certification processes are crucial steps in laying the groundwork for improved infrastructure. These actions will pave the way for the production and distribution of reliable protective gear that meets international norms.

Investing in the improvement of infrastructure within the medical protective gear ecosystem, along with research and development and advanced manufacturing technologies, will foster growth and innovation within the Indian medical industry. Such efforts will be instrumental in creating cost-effective solutions, which can stimulate the growth of the domestic medical industry, generate employment opportunities, and reduce dependency on imports.

The domestic demand for medical protective gear has witnessed a substantial increase, driven by heightened healthcare awareness and accessibility. As India's healthcare infrastructure continues to develop and the significance of disease prevention is elevated, this demand is expected to further expand. However, meeting this expanding requirement could pose challenges if there is insufficient domestic capacity.

Strengthening India's medical protective gear ecosystem aligns with the country's broader objectives of achieving strategic independence and preparedness in healthcare. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the pitfalls of relying heavily on international sources for essential supplies like masks, gloves, gowns, and face shields. The impact of such reliance includes disruptions in supply chains, delays, and rising costs due to transportation, taxes, and currency rates. Developing a self-reliant infrastructure within India can help reduce expenditures while making critical protective materials more accessible for medical practitioners, hospitals, and patients. This strategic move will further enhance India's capability to act swiftly during crises while mitigating associated risks posed by global challenges.

During times of uncertainty, easy access to superior medical protective gear is crucial for the safety of healthcare workers and patients. India can enhance its framework within the industry to make production, distribution, and quality assurance more efficient, thereby ensuring quicker access to vital materials and reducing reliance on external sources.

Moreover, developing domestic infrastructure for medical protective gear can benefit both healthcare needs and economic growth. By establishing manufacturing capabilities, creating robust supply chains, and investing in research and development within the sector, we have the potential to improve job opportunities and foster a more sustainable economy.

The urgent need for enhanced infrastructure within the medical protective gear ecosystem in India cannot be overstated. It is imperative to reduce dependence on external sources, ensure supply chain resilience, meet domestic demand, improve cost efficiency and affordability, ensure timely availability and quality control, bolster strategic independence and preparedness, and create job opportunities while fostering economic growth. Embracing this transformative approach will enable the medical gear sector to stay ahead of the curve and meet the challenges of the future head-on.

***Hemant Sapra, President of Sales and Marketing, Karam Group***