

Remarks

by

***Dr Samlee Plianbangchang
Regional Director, WHO/SEARO***

at the

***Launch of books on Polio Eradication Programme in
India “A Tale of Two Drops” by Dr Harsh Vardhan***

***Mavalankar Auditorium, New Delhi, India
7 December 2004***

**Launch of books on
Polio Eradication Programme in India
“A Tale of Two Drops” by
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**Brief remarks by
Dr Samlee Plianbangchang
Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia**

Respected Mr Vajpayee;

Mr Advani;

Mr Bhagwat;

Mrs Swaraj; and

Dr Harsh Vardhan

- I am delighted to be at the launch of the publications, which so vividly and effectively capture the spirit of the polio eradication campaign in India.
- These books make compelling reading, because they are authored by a person who has been so deeply committed and involved in pursuing the goal of a polio-free India.
- I have worked closely with Dr Harsh Vardhan, am fully aware of his dedication and tireless efforts to achieve better health for all people.
- As many of us would recall, when WHO launched the polio eradication campaign in 1988, India reported 35,000 cases of poliomyelitis.
- Having gone through a long and difficult path, the campaign has produced commendable results.
- This year, as of now, only 98 cases of polio have been reported so far in India.
- Therefore, poliomyelitis is at the brink of eradication from this country.

- If present efforts are sustained and, perhaps accelerated, we can be confident that there will be no more cases of polio in India from next year onwards.
- India's success, as is well recognized, is crucial to the completion of the global eradication of this debilitating scourge.
- The success in the fight against polio in India is due, in a large part, to the dedication and hard work of health professionals, like Dr Harsh Vardhan.
- This is in addition to the commitment of leaders, like respected Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mrs Sushma Swaraj, who, during their tenures as Prime Minister and Health Minister respectively, spared no efforts to ensure full support to the campaign.
- I would also like to take this opportunity of placing on record WHO's deep appreciation of the efforts put in by thousands of health workers, NGOs, Rotary International, UN agencies and members of the community, for so successfully arranging the national and sub-national immunization days.
- The books "A Tale of Two Drops" record these events very eloquently, and provide close glimpse of the hard and meticulous tasks that has gone into the campaign.
- Once again I congratulate Dr Harsh Vardhan for his excellent work on polio eradication in India.
- The books, I am sure, will provide useful lessons to health professionals not only in India, but also in many other countries on how to organize a successful disease control programme that can help eradicate diseases.
- Finally, I wish Dr Harsh Vardhan all success in his future endeavours in the health arena.

Thank you.