



## PRESS RELEASE

### World Health Day focuses on Universal Health Coverage

**Jammu, 7 April 2018:** A regional consultation organized to mark the World Health Day 2018 by the World Health Organization Country Office for India and the Department of Health and Medical Education, Government of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) made a strong call for ensuring universal health coverage (UHC).

The event was graced by Mr Bali Bhagat, Hon'ble Minister for Health and Medical Education, J&K.

On the occasion of the World Health Day 2018, Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region has said that the promise of UHC is bold: that all people can access quality health services, when and where they need them, without suffering financial hardship.

“Healthier populations in turn create more productive economies that raise living standards. UHC will help achieve a healthier, more equitable and secure South-East Asia Region,” she added.

“Achieving UHC has the potential to contribute to India’s social and economic growth,” says Dr Henk Bekedam, WHO Representative to India.

Commending the government for its recent bold initiatives, Dr Bekedam said, “India is firmly and steadily moving forward on the path to UHC and WHO as a partner is committed to working with the government and other stakeholders in successfully navigating this journey towards a *Swastha and Samriddha Bharat* (Healthy and Prosperous India).”

The different sessions during the event focused on UHC including ways of increasing access to health services and addressing inequities; the *Ayushman Bharat* programme and its implementation status in the state; and new initiatives of the state government to strengthen health care.

The event was also attended by Dr Pawan Kotwal, Principal Secretary to the Government, Health & Medical Education, J&K; Dr Samir Mattoo, Director, Family Welfare, MCH & Immunization, J&K; Dr Gurjeet Singh, Director Health Services, Jammu; Dr Yashpal Sharma, Mission Director, National Health Mission, J&K; Dr Dimple Singh, Deputy Director (Schemes), Jammu; Dr Chander Parkash, Deputy Director (HQ), Jammu; Dr J.P. Singh, Divisional Epidemiologist, Jammu; Dr Sunanda Raina, Principal, GMC Jammu; Dr Dinesh Kumar, HOD Community Medicine, GMC Jammu and Chief Medical Officers of Jammu Division, representatives from WHO, and key stakeholders.



### **India on the path to UHC**

The union budget has enunciated the landmark 'Ayushman Bharat' programme, which aims at addressing health holistically through two components: (i) the National Health Protection Mission (NHPM) will cover 100 million poor and vulnerable families up to INR 500 000 per year for secondary and tertiary care, and (ii) strengthening primary health care through 150 000 Health & Wellness Centres.

These twin initiatives are programmatic follow-up of the policy road-map provided by India's National Health Policy 2017, which clearly articulates UHC as a goal. The successful implementation of these programmes would accelerate India's journey towards ensuring health for all, especially, the most vulnerable who are pushed into poverty due to high out-of-pocket health expenditures.

### **About World Health Day 2018**

The WHO has declared Universal Health Coverage as the theme for this year's World Health Day. Celebrated every year on 7<sup>th</sup> April, in 2018, the WHO is calling on world leaders to live up to the pledges they made when they agreed the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, and commit to concrete steps to advance the health of all people. This means ensuring that everyone, everywhere can access essential quality health services without facing financial hardship.

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**For useful information on World Health Day 2018, visit:**

[http://www.searo.who.int/india/mediacentre/events/world\\_health\\_day/World\\_Health\\_Day\\_2018\\_WCO/en/](http://www.searo.who.int/india/mediacentre/events/world_health_day/World_Health_Day_2018_WCO/en/)