PRESS RELEASE

World Health Day focuses on Universal Health Coverage

Patna, 7 April 2018: A regional consultation organized to mark the World Health Day 2018 by the World Health Organization Country Office for India and Patna Medical College and Hospital made a strong call for ensuring universal health coverage (UHC). Mr. Mangal Pandey, Hon'ble Health Minister of Bihar was the chief guest.

On the occasion of the World Health Day 2018, Dr Poonam Khetrapal 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 key issues discussed at the event included the various facets of UHC and way forward; role and engagement of civil society organisations in achieving UHC; and the role of WHO in helping achieve UHC goals.

Among other dignitaries present at the event were Mr. Lokesh Kumar Singh, Special Secretary Health-cum-Executive Director, State Health Society Bihar; Dr Prabhat Kumar Singh, Director, AIIMS Patna; Dr V. K. Gupta, Principal, Patna Medical College; Dr L. B. Singh, Mahavir Charitable Trust, Patna; faculty members of medical colleges; State Programme Officers of the State Health Society, representatives from Rotary, Indian Medical Association, Indian Academy of Pediatrics, WHO, civil society organisations, and other key stakeholders.

A number of students from various medical college and technical institutes participated in a debate and poster-making competition on UHC, the theme of the World Health Day, at the Patna Medical College and Hospital. Prize winners were awarded by the Hon'ble Health Minister.

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 (UHC) as the theme for this year's World Health Day. Celebrated every year on 7th 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.

Join the UHC conversation on Twitter by using #HealthForAll and #WorldHealthDay
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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/