Healthy ageing focus of WHO activities on World Health Day

New Delhi, April 7 2012: Highlighting the importance of ‘healthy and active ageing’ on the occasion of the World Health Day 2012, Mr. P K Pradhan, Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India and Dr. Nata Menabde, WHO Representative to India flagged off a Walkathon by an enthusiastic group in the 60 plus age group at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

“I am delighted and enthused with the active participation of the elderly in the walkathon and other fitness related activities,” said Dr. Menabde.

Recognising that the ageing of the population has major implications for the Indian health system and society as a whole, WHO Country Office for India also supported a National level consultation organized by the Department of Geriatric Medicine, (AIIMS) to prepare strategies for ensuring “active and healthy ageing” for senior citizens of India.

The Consultation deliberated on the theme of World Health day, National Programme on Health Care of the Elderly, the new National Policy for Senior Citizens 2011, the civil society response to healthy ageing, among other issues impacting the elderly.

Speaking at the Consultation, Dr. Nata Menabde said, “With rising life expectancy more and more people will live longer in most of the countries and it is imperative to ensure their continued and active engagement in all spheres of life for the benefit of the society. This cannot be achieved without investing in healthy ageing throughout life course and ensuring adequate response to their health care needs. Finding the right models of long-term care for the rapidly ageing populations also becomes more urgent.”

“Countries and health systems will need to find innovative and sustainable ways to cope with the demographic shift,” she added.

In addition, WHO India has organized 19 state level meetings to sensitise policymakers, academicians, medical fraternity, the civil society and other stakeholders on the issues of a greying population.

In India, as all around the world, people are living longer. India’s population is ageing and will continue to age steadily in the next few decades. It is estimated that the population aged 60 years and above will grow from 77 million (7.4% of the total population) in 2001 up to 300 million (17%) by 2050.

On the World Health Day 2012, the WHO Country Office for India calls for greater attention and action towards promoting a society where the elderly live full, enriching and productive lives.

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