## Prime Minister’s Dream of TB Free India by 2025

## Dr Harsh Vardhan chairs High Level Meet to review launch of Jan-Andolan against Tuberculosis“We wish to make 2021 the year of Tuberculosis”

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare today chaired a high-level meeting with senior officials of the Union Health Ministry and other Development Partners to launch a Jan-Andolan against Tuberculosis involving Advocacy, Communication and Social Mobilization (ACSM).
At the outset, Dr. Harsh Vardhan outlined the various steps taken by the Government of Indiaunder the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) in combating the disease of TB which were backed by bold commitments of both affirmative action and resources.“We wish to make 2021 the year of Tuberculosis,” stated the Minister as he outlined the tremendous progress in ensuring all patients, irrespective of where they seek care, received free-of-cost, high quality TB care in the last few years and expressed his confidence that these gains would feed into creating greater demand for services, de-stigmatize the disease and help realize the goal of a TB-free India by 2025.

Underscoring the importance of newer approaches to tackle the disease holistically and the need for accelerated and sustained focus to achieve the target of a TB Free India,the Minister said, “While the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme continues to augment efforts to further strengthen TB management and service delivery, it is only when the wider population uses the essence of democracy and the spirit of Jan Andolan through generation of awareness, encouragement of health care seeking behaviour within their communities, and de-stigmatization of TB, would the movement against the disease be a success.” He highlighted the importance of reaching maximum population quickly, ensuring full participation and cooperation of communities and community-based groups in various stages of TB response as the foundational pillars of his brainchild movement.

Drawing inspiration from lessons in COVID-19 management, whereIndia has not only successfully dealt with the pandemic, but emerged as a beacon of hopewith the world looking up to India for solutions, diagnostics, and vaccines, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said, “The pandemic has brought the focus back on the role of focused and rigorous messaging in creating an appetite for accurate information and appropriate behaviours and hygiene practices.   Similar nation-wide messaging on TB symptoms can drive notification levels up and build awareness on the precautionary behaviour related to control of TB infection in the country.” He recollected steps taken by him as Delhi’s Health Minister in generating awareness against Polio which involved the participation of neighbourhood chemist shops.

He chaired deliberations on a National Technical Support Unit (NTSU) that is proposed to be set up in collaboration with development partners to support the Government of India’s efforts, both nationally and in states, to help strengthen on-ground program delivery by employing various advocacy and communications approaches to generate demand and create awareness on the services available under the TB program.

Development partners working with the TB program attending the eventcommunicated the impact of their work in the past few years and shared their plans to support the proposed Jan Andolan movement.

Shri Rajesh Bhushan, Union Health Secretary, Smt. Arti Ahuja, Addl. Secretary (Health), Dr. Sunil Kumar, DGHS and other senior officials of the Ministry were present. Dr. Roderico Ofrin, Country Representative, India (WHO)and representatives of Development Partners like BMGF and USAID were also present at the event.

## Source

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