

India has ended polio and will use a similar intensified effort to end TB also

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J P Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, today reaffirmed India's commitment to eliminating TB by 2025 at 1st WHO Global Ministerial Conference on Ending TB in Sustainable Development Era' at Moscow, Russia. The Ministerial and High-Level meetings offer participating nations the potential to strengthen and energize the discourse on TB and are perhaps the biggest window for global action on TB in the foreseeable future. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is also organizing a side event at the conference on 'Ending TB: Our Promise to Our People' assisted by Global Coalition against TB to be attended by 7 MPs and other world leaders. Speaking at the first high level plenary, Shri Nadda said that India has ended polio and will use a similar intensified effort to end TB also. The National Strategic Plan for TB elimination in India has essentially four pillars to address the major challenges for TB control, namely- "Detect, Treat, Build and Prevent". "This plan requires a significant increase in the budget compared to previous NSP and I am happy to share with you that this plan is fully funded and most of this is through domestic resources," Shri Nadda elaborated. The Union Health Minister pointed out that since the major challenges for TB control in India are many; the government's first priority is reaching the unreached. "The government will ensure access to care for some vulnerable populations such as tribals, people in urban slums etc. Early diagnosis of all patients and putting them on the right treatment and ensuring their complete treatment is crucial" Shri Nadda emphasized. Shri Nadda informed the participants that the Indian government has given top priority to addressing the quality of care for patient's. 25% of the budget is earmarked for direct interventions in this area. This include free diagnosis with rapid molecular tests, free treatment with best quality drugs and regimens, financial and nutritional support to patients, online TB notification systems, mobile technology based adherence monitoring system, interphase agencies for better private sector engagements, policy for transparent service purchase schemes, stronger community engagements, communication campaigns, regulatory systems to capture information on all those consuming anti-TB drugs etc. Highlighting India's commitment further, Shri Nadda stated that to provide access to patients in difficult to reach areas, both socially and geographically, the government has started active TB case finding campaigns in selected areas. "We have already completed two such campaigns covering 257 districts and screened over 30 million vulnerable persons and detected over 15,000 additional TB cases. We are planning the next campaign in December this year. We will now be mounting interventions for TB in urban slum areas through the urban health mission," Shri Nadda said. Shri Nadda also said that India is a major manufacturer of anti-TB drugs for the world having almost an 80% global market share. "We give only the best quality drugs to our patients, whether within the country or abroad. There is a wide scope for us to sit together and discuss seriously about promoting generic drugs for TB patients all over the world, I have no doubt that together we can make TB treatment affordable to all in the world. We owe it to the millions of TB patients and we owe it to ourselves," Shri Nadda stated. The top thematic priorities of this conference based on the SDGs and the UNGA high level health themes include Universal Health Coverage, Increased and Sustainable Financing and Scientific Research and Innovation.

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