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Health Ministry to accelerate tobacco control measures

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Ashwini Kumar Choubey inaugurated two-day national consultation on Accelerating Implementation of Tobacco Control Measures for achievement of Goals under National Health Policy.



Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare inaugurated the two-day National Consultation on Accelerating Implementation of Tobacco Control Measures for achievement of Goals under National Health Policy, 2017 in presence of Anupriya Patel, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare to commemorate the World No Tobacco Day, 2018.

Preeti Sudan, Secretary (Health), Sanjeeva Kumar, Additional Secretary and Promila Gupta, DGHS, Ms Payden, Acting Deputy WHO representative to India were also present at the occasion.

Addressing the participants, Ashwini Kumar Choubey said that we should have an addiction-free India that includes Tobacco-free India. He made an appeal for “NashaMuktiAbhiyaan”. He further added that we need community mobilization to encourage people to give up tobacco consumption. “Tobacco destroys families and communities. We need to start a nationwide abhiyaan- people’s movement, to combat tobacco use”, he said.

Choubey also made a strong call for accelerating tobacco control measures for achievement of the goals under National Health Policy, 2017. He observed that tobacco use is a leading cause of premature, NCD-associated mortality and morbidity, and a growing public health challenge. He further said that while many people are aware tobacco use increases the risk of cancer, there are alarming gaps in knowledge of the cardiovascular risks of tobacco use. “I look forward to the suggestions that will emerge from the two-day national consultation, to help us move forward in tobacco control measures”, Choubey elaborated.

Anupriya Patel said that tobacco epidemic is a major public health challenge in India, and flavored smokeless tobacco usage in India is very high. She stated that concerted strong political commitment and targeted action over the last decade have contributed to commendable achievements in pushing back the tobacco epidemic.

Highlighting the initiatives of the Health Ministry, Anupriya Patel said that a toll free Tobacco Cessation Quitline has been set up and m-Cessation services under the Be Healthy Be Mobile Initiative has been launched along with the Helpline for reporting specific violations of tobacco control laws. She stated that the large specified health warnings occupying 85% of the principal display areason both the sides of the packs have been implemented. “With the inclusion of National tobacco Quitline number in the health warning recently, it has been made more impactful. This will give tobacco users access to counseling services to effect behavior change,” Anupriya Patel added. She noted that we need to be alert to the threat of new and emerging products and to act swiftly and firmly against them. “We can win the battle only through synergy of our efforts, both within and beyond country,” she said.

The Ministers of State released the Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2 India Report, 2016-17 and guidelines for establishing tobacco cessation centres in dental colleges at the consultation and felicitated tobacco workers who have transitioned to other livelihood options. Tobacco survivors presented first-hand account of their struggles and their efforts to overcome the challenges.

The two-day consultation will focuson capacity-building of the National Tobacco Control Progamme Nodal Officers. Among the key areas of deliberation will be multi-sectoral engagement for implementation of WHO FCTC in India and synergizing tobacco control with new health initiatives.Tobacco is responsible for 4.5 lakh CardioVascularDiseases (CVD) deaths in the country. In 2011, the total economic cost attributable to tobacco use from all diseases in India for persons aged 35-69 years amounted to a staggering Rs. 1,04,500 crores ($22.4 billion).