

Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh to join as WHO Regional Director

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Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh joins as WHO Regional Director



Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh was nominated as regional director for the WHO South-East Asia Region on September 12, 2013. She was nominated to the post of Regional Director (RD) for a five-year term by the 11 Member States of the Region. The 32 member Executive Board of the World Health Organization is expected to appoint Dr Khetrpal Singh as Regional Director in January 2014, in Geneva. Dr Khetrpal Singh is expected to take office as the RD at the Regional Office in New Delhi on 1 February 2014.

Speaking after the election, the union health and family welfare minister said the election of the regional director is an opportunity to strengthen India's commitment to perform its role in health and development with World Health Organisation (WHO) as a key partner. He further added that Dr Poonam Singh is an acknowledged public health specialist and administrator with vast experience and recognition in public health and the UN system. She would be able to contribute to regional as well as global initiatives and further strengthen cooperation amongst South East Asian Regional Organisation (SEARO members states, Azad noted.

As the regional director, Dr Khetrpal Singh brings a vast repertoire of experience, having worked in the health sector for over three decades at both national and international levels. She served with WHO for the past 15 years. She is the first woman to be nominated to this post in the Region.

She started her WHO career in 1998 as a member of Dr Gro Harlem Brundland's cabinet who was WHO Director-General at the time. Dr Khetrpal Singh served as the Executive Director for Sustainable Development and Healthy Environments in Geneva. From 2000 to 2013, as the Deputy Regional Director for WHO's South-East Asia Region, she served as the principal adviser to the Regional Director, providing managerial, technical and programmatic support for WHO's programmes.

Dr Khetrpal Singh served as a senior civil servant in India as a member of the Indian Administrative Services. She was Secretary and Joint Secretary Health and Family Welfare. She has also served with Health, Population and Nutrition (PHN) with the World Bank Mission in India, where she worked to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of health services.

Recently she has been working as an Adviser in International health to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in the Government of India.

WHO's South-East Asia Region comprises the following 11 Member States: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste.