

WORKS

Honorable Dr. Harsh Vardhan roped in a large number of people, social and philanthropic organizations to launch a 'polio eradication movement' in October 1994. More than 1.2 million children were immunized in one single day when the city was plagued with deadly plague, dispelling the prophecy of doomsayers who believed that such a campaign will be a non-starter in India. Taking cue from his success, the union ministry of health in India took up the programme as a national programme. The programme ultimately crossed the boundaries of India and spread to various other countries in the South East Asia Region.

The next on his hit list was 'tobacco'. As a specialist in ENT he was well aware of the conclusive evidence that had piled up in last forty years regarding the dangers which smoking creates for smokers, as well as non-smokers. As ENT specialist he saw, diagnosed and treated a large number of cases of laryngeal, as well as oral and lung cancers attributable to the use of tobacco and its products. He was actually aware of the magnitude of the 'tobacco related illness', which was on the rise in India due to a well designed marketing and sales promotion tactics of 'tobacco companies'.

To pick up a gauntlet against such powerful interest was fraught with risks. Taking cue from ancient Indian scriptures, which exhort individuals to pursue good deeds without any fear or want of any reward, he asked the officials of his ministry to draft a bill. Despite much hindrances, for the first time in the history of the nation a bill was adopted eventually in 1996 as 'the Delhi prohibition of smoking and non-smokers health protection act, 1996'. It is only now that the people are appreciating with pride the fact that such a rigorous and beneficial piece of legislation has not been enacted even in some developed countries. Several states in Indian union have introduced similar legislations and the central government in India is planning to introduce a bill on similar pattern.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan took up several issues which even though important, hitherto escaped the attention of planners. He actively promoted the 'Environment and Health', as well as safety and accident prevention by establishing a centre for Occupational and Environmental medicine in MAMC, the first such centre in a medical school in India. He is continuously contributing to plans to strengthen the centre further and to make it a centre of excellence.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan has launched multitude of schemes and campaigns based on international trends, World Health Organization guidelines and the priorities have been set by his administration after several brainstorming sessions with eminent health specialists, planners, management experts, non-governmental organizations and public interest groups. Leading scientists and health experts from across the globe continue to

call upon him knowing his penchant for accepting new challenges and trying out new and innovative ideas to improve health of all.

In addition to two of his most famous achievements in the field of polio eradication and tobacco, his administration had launched 'Matri Suraksha Programme' to strengthen reproductive health, 'Cancer Control Programme', 'Cataract Free Delhi Programme' and 'Shravan-Shakti Abhiyan' (for deafness affecting old and rehabilitation of elderly deaf) and special immunisation campaigns for children. His imaginative initiative led to the enactment of 'Delhi Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy Bill' and 'Delhi Artificial Insemination Act'.

His administration launched 'Healthy City Project', 'Hepatitis B Immunization Programme' and had set up a 'Delhi Research Centre for Modernized Promotion of Ayurveda', (the Indian System of Medicine). Dr. Harsh Vardhan has carried over the concept of health to schools in a big way by introducing 'Compulsory Yoga and Positive Health Education' in schools and by initiating a value based calendar to promote and inculcate moral values among children at a tender age. As minister of education in Delhi he had made 'Sports' a compulsory subject in Delhi Schools.

As a minister of health Dr. Harsh Vardhan launched the WHO Essential Drug Programme for the first time in India in the city of Delhi. The programme has now been accepted as a model by WHO and is known as the Delhi model and is being replicated and followed by about a dozen state Governments in India as well as by a number of countries like Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. The Delhi Society for Promotion of Rational use of Drugs is at the moment coordinating this effort in India and abroad in collaboration with WHO Geneva.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan has presented research papers in several national and international scientific conferences, published his research work in leading medical journals and has travelled widely inland and overseas, visiting centres of excellence to learn and transplant if feasible, their experience in India to improve the health and well being of its citizens.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan has given a new direction to the health in Delhi which is being emulated by other states as well as the central government. Perhaps it was this on the back of his mind when former prime minister of India shree Inder Kumar Gujral speaking before an international gathering pronounced 'If I have to single out one minister for an outstanding award in India, then my choice will be Dr. Harsh Vardhan'. Despite his immense achievements within a short span, Dr. Harsh Vardhan remains polite but firm and soft but determined. Not content with these accomplishments, Dr. Harsh Vardhan remains committed to launch and initiate many more projects to make Delhi a showpiece and a model not only in India, but on the planet.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan is at the moment concentrating all his efforts on achievement of the goal of polio eradication by the year 2000, not only in India but also in other parts of the south east Asia region-he is working as temporary advisor to Regional Director W.H.O. SEAR, Dr. Uton M. Rafaei. He is a member of the Global Technical Consultative Group

as well as member of the Technical Consultative Group of the South East Asia Region for drafting all policies and recommendations pertaining to polio eradication in the world.