

TB Anywhere is TB Everywhere! Parliamentarians call to Stop TB

A meeting between a visiting delegation of six British MPs and members of the Indian Medical Parliamentarians' Forum (IMPF) was held on 27 March 2007, at the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, New Delhi. The meeting was chaired by Dr. M. Jagannath, MP, Chairperson of IMPF.

India has the world's largest TB burden with about 1.6 million new cases every year and an annual death causality of about 4.17 lakh patients. The Government of India has been implementing the revised national TB control programme since 1992. Since 1997, the programme has treated just over 6 million people, averting at least 1 million deaths. The meeting of Indo-British Parliamentarians took place in the context of the recently concluded World TB Day on the 24th of March.

“As people's representatives, it is our duty to press for action which will save 14 million lives worldwide,” said Nick Herbert, MP, Co-Chair of the UK All Parliamentary Party Group on TB. Speaking at the meeting with his Indian parliamentary colleagues, he continued: “As British MPs, we are keen to work with our colleagues from other countries to help persuade our governments to step up the fight against TB. This is a global disease that does not respect borders.”

The meeting between the parliamentary groups ended with both groups signing the International Call to Stop TB, urging more action on the part of all stakeholders to renew and continue the fight against TB.

Among the issues discussed, what figured prominently were improvement of the laboratory facilities and ensuring completion of treatment. The speakers on both sides were greatly concerned about the emergence of multi drug resistance and its consequences on the existing cost of the programme.

Speaking after the signing of the Call to Stop TB, Dr. R. Senthil, MP and Convener of the IMPF said: “We have to work on making TB control a priority in our constituencies. As leaders, it will be our responsibility to raise visibility for TB control within Parliament, and to keep a track of the programme to ensure that lives are saved.”

The British Parliamentarians consisted of Mr. Tom Clarke, Ms. Ann Cryer, Mr. Nick Herbert, Mr. Jermy Hunt, Dr. Ashok Kumar and Ms. Baroness Lindsay Northover. Their Indian counterparts were Dr. M. Jagannath, Dr. Shakeel Ahmad, Dr. Laxminarayan Pandey, Mr. Robert Kharshiing, and Dr. R. Senthil. Besides the Parliamentarians, the meeting was attended by media persons and members from Medical Sans Frontiers and Lawyers Collective.