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On the occasion of World Environment Day on May 5, union health and family welfare minister, Dr Harsh Vardhan, has announced his resolve for greening healthcare and converting All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi into a

"green hospital."

With environmental degradation and environmental risks emerging as the single biggest source of diseases from ordinary water borne diseases to cancers, the health minister has announced plans for setting up a network of capacity building institutions all over India modelled on the line of All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Kolkata, and the Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health in Delhi's Maulana Azad Medical College.

Addressing a distinguished gathering at Vigyan Bhavan, Dr Vardhan said that his plan to make AIIMS "green" is based on the government's determination to showcase its determination to fight climate change. For this to happen, the country's premier medical facility should move away from using conventional energy that is responsible for polluting environment and adding green house gases, Dr Vardhan said. Healthcare institutions should strive to reduce their energy consumption and maximise use of solar energy and other similar sources, he added.

Dr Harsh Vardhan stated that the new look of AIIMS will have water conservation and waste water recycling systems in place. There must be regular energy audits and a phased renewal plan must be developed with a view to making the buildings on the complex more energy efficient, he said. Its entire waste generation including medical waste generation must be brought down by an approach of reduce, reuse and recycling of waste. A scavenging system to deal with nitrous oxide and other waste anaesthetic gases is also the need of the hour, he added. The plantation around the hospital should be of a nature so as to capture particulate pollution preventing harm to the hospitalized patients, the Minister explained.

The health minister further added that it is not uncommon to see many buildings being singled out and awarded for their efforts for energy conservation but the hospitals are never seen in the list. Why shouldn't hospitals try to get such awards sending out positive signals and becoming the brand ambassadors for environmental protection and preservation adding to the improved health of community, he questioned.

"The unattractive facade of government hospitals should become a thing of past. We do not have to be ostentatious to do that. Beginning with AIIMS-New Delhi, I want all public hospitals to resonate with inclusivity and enlightenment," Dr Harsh Vardhan said.