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Ministers from South-East Asia meet in Dili to set health priorities

02 September 2015 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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Health Ministers of the 11 countries of WHO's South-East Asia Region are meeting in Dili, Timor-Leste, from 7-11 September to set health priorities and discuss the health agenda for the region.

Coming close on the heels of the earthquakes in Nepal and the spread of MERS Coronavirus, strengthening response to emergencies and outbreaks and building capacities under the International Health Regulation (IHR) 2005 will be one of the key areas for discussion at the Sixty-eighth Session of the Regional Committee Meeting of WHO South-East Asia.

The Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, Dr Rui Maria de AraÃ?Âºjo, will inaugurate the meeting. WHO South-East Asia Regional Director, Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, WHO experts and senior officials from health ministries of member countries will be present.

Among the topics on the agenda will be: accelerating efforts to protect people against tobacco, advocating for health in the post-2015 Global Sustainable Development Goals, and expanding effective services with stronger health workforce.

The Regional Committee, the highest policy making body of WHO in the Region, will also deliberate on anti-microbial resistance, an issue which needs urgent attention and action.

Eliminating neglected tropical diseases like kala-azar, leprosy, yaws, filariasis and schistosomiasis; adapting and implementing the End TB strategy; the way forward for preventing and controlling cancer; and sustainable universal health coverage will be other areas of focus at the meeting.

The status of measles elimination and control of rubella in the Region by 2020, polio eradication initiatives, effective management of medicines and health information systems, will also be discussed in the meeting.

The Regional Committee meets annually and is hosted by one of the 11 member countries of South-East Asia. This is the first time that the Regional Committee is meeting in Timor-Leste.

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.