Lessons must be learnt from past experiences for reaching the target of 90% immunization coverage by 2018

*Full immunization against preventable childhood diseases is the right of every child*

**New Delhi, 10 November 2017:** About five lakh children die in India every year due to vaccine preventable diseases. Another 89 lakh children are at risk due to incomplete or absent vaccination, according to statistics. The Universal Immunization Programme or UIP was relaunched in the year 2014 as ‘Mission Indradhanush’. The target was to achieve 90% immunization coverage by 2020, which has recently been changed to 2018 by the hon’ble Prime Minister.

One of the world’s largest health programmes, Mission Indradhanush believes that full immunization against preventable childhood diseases is every child’s right. Under this mission, vaccines against 12 vaccine-preventable diseases are provided to children and pregnant women. Thus far, about 2.47 crore children have been vaccinated, of which 55 lakh have been fully immunized. Apart from this, 67 lakh pregnant women have also been vaccinated.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, “Immunization is necessary for one and all. Often, people assume that it is not necessary because their children appear healthy or do not fall sick often. In other cases, health workers may not be able to reach out to some families due to non-availability of members at a certain point. There is a need to create awareness on the importance of immunization particularly for children and expectant mothers. Doing so will help us play a role in the larger good of the nation and achieve the government’s target also in a timely manner. Apart from this, there is also a need to scale up manpower, supplies, budget, and other resources to speed up the process.”

Mission Indradhanush, depicting seven colours of the rainbow, targets to immunize all children against seven vaccine preventable diseases namely Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Childhood Tuberculosis, Polio, Hepatitis B and Measles. In addition to this, vaccines for JE (Japanese Encephalitis) and Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type B) are also being provided in selected states.
Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “If the coverage is not sustainable year on year, it will ultimately lead to fatigue. If the mission is intensified, the efforts ahead also need to be at par. There is still reluctance, opposition, and slow acceptance of vaccination apart from other operational challenges. The challenges faced in delivering lifesaving vaccines need to be addressed from the existing knowledge and lessons must be learnt from past experiences.”

The Vaccination Schedule under the UIP is as follows.

- BCG (Bacillus Calmette Guerin) 1 dose at Birth (upto 1 year if not given earlier)
- DPT (Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus Toxoid) 5 doses; Three primary doses at 6 weeks, 10 weeks and 14 weeks and two booster doses at 16-24 months and 5 Years of age
- OPV (Oral Polio Vaccine) 5 doses; 0 dose at birth, three primary doses at 6, 10 and 14 weeks and one booster dose at 16-24 months of age
- Hepatitis B vaccine 4 doses; 0 dose within 24 hours of birth and three doses at 6, 10 and 14 weeks of age.
- Measles 2 doses; first dose at 9-12 months and second dose at 16-24 months of age
- TT (Tetanus Toxoid) 2 doses at 10 years and 16 years of age
- TT – for pregnant woman two doses or one dose if previously vaccinated within 3 Year
- In addition, Japanese Encephalitis (JE vaccine) vaccine was introduced in 112 endemic districts in campaign mode in phased manner from 2006-10 and has now been incorporated under the Routine Immunisation Programme.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarters in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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