

TAMIL NADU

Climate change, health should be part of professional education: PHFI chief



Health and nutrition are central for sustainable development, says K. Srinath Reddy

Considering that climate change has a profound impact on health, K. Srinath Reddy, cardiologist and president of Public Health Foundation of India, said climate change and health should become a part of professional health education and advocacy.

Delivering the fifth Ida S. Scudder Humanitarian Oration on the Founder's Day at Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore, on Friday, he said apart from global warming that led to a surge in heat-related deaths, there were natural disasters such as floods and droughts.

“Even as we belatedly acknowledge that planetary health and human health are intricately and inexorably interconnected, our actions are imperiling the planet through anthropogenic climate change,” he said. He went on to point out that it was clear that health and nutrition should be centrally placed in the integrated framework of sustainable development to survive and thrive as a species.

On poverty and ill-health, Dr. Reddy said that even as India's accelerated economic development was celebrated, it should be kept in that there was growing inequality with its adverse effects on the health of all sections of society. He pointed out that factors such as urbanization, trade, transnational transport of people, animals and goods, voluntary or forced migration and conflict play a major role in shaping human health condition in the contemporary world.

He stressed on the need for steps at the community level such as protection of public places and indoor workplaces from tobacco smoke, provision of safe pedestrian pathways and designated cycling lanes, safeguards against air pollution as they were essential public health measures. “Enlightened policy which promotes public health, is therefore, an essential and critical ally of personal health,” he added.

Doctors, he said, must respond to the need for public health policies and actions that protect and promote health at the population level. “We will not then be inert when tobacco control is debated or stay silent when air pollution is discussed. We will demonstrate social solidarity in demanding universal health coverage and worldwide access to essential drugs, vaccines, and life-saving technologies. We will not remain disengaged when collective societal action is required to counter climate change,” he added. He said that understanding and acknowledging the many determinants of health would enable them to become better care providers and counselors.

Sunil Thomas Chandy, director of CMC, was present.