

WHO–IRCH Workshop on Safety, Regulation, and Efficacy of Herbal Medicines Concludes in Ghaziabad

Ministry of Ayush Showcases Digital Initiatives – Ayush Suraksha Portal and e-Aushadhi – for Strengthening Regulation

Participants from 17 Countries Engage in Technical Sessions, Training, and Cultural Exchange

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The Ministry of Ayush, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and supported by the Pharmacopoeia Commission for Indian Medicine & Homoeopathy (PCIM&H), organised a three-day WHO–International Regulatory Cooperation for Herbal Medicines (IRCH) workshop at Ghaziabad from 6th to 8th August, 2025.

The workshop was inaugurated by Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, and Dr. Kim Sungchol, Chairperson, WHO-IRCH, in the presence of senior officials from the Ministry of Ayush, WHO, and PCIM&H. Delegations from Bhutan, Brunei, Cuba, Ghana, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, Paraguay, Poland, Sri Lanka and Uganda participated physically, while Brazil, Egypt, and the USA joined virtually.

In his inaugural address, Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha highlighted India's leadership as the lead country for WHO-IRCH Working Group 1 on Safety & Regulation and Working Group 3 on Efficacy & Intended Use. He reaffirmed India's commitment to enhancing global regulatory cooperation in the herbal medicines sector. He also outlined key digital initiatives under the Ayush Grid, including the Ayush Suraksha Portal for real-time tracking of misleading advertisements and pharmacovigilance, and e-Aushadhi, an integrated IT platform for licensing of ASU&H medicines.

Technical Sessions

The workshop featured detailed country presentations on safety, regulation, efficacy, and intended use of herbal medicines. Expert lectures covered standardisation and quality control of herbal medicines, regulatory case studies, best practices in pre-clinical research, unique scenarios in herbal medicine research, WHO's Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034, registration of clinical trials, best practices in clinical trials, and pharmacovigilance from both WHO and Ayush perspectives. Sessions also included discussions on the WHO Global Benchmark Tool for Herbal Medicines and case studies on the safety of Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*).

Hands-on Training and Exposure Visits

Hands-on laboratory training at PCIM&H familiarised participants with herbal drug standardisation techniques, including pharmacognostical identification and heavy/toxic metal analysis. Exposure visits were

organised to the National Institute of Unani Medicine in Ghaziabad, herbal gardens, greenhouses, polyhouses, raw drug repositories, museums at PCIM&H, and the All India Institute of Ayurveda, offering insights into India's integrative health systems.

Cultural Exchange

A cultural evening showcased India's wellness and cultural heritage through Bharatanatyam performances by students of Natraha Nurtha Kala Kendram, Delhi, and yoga demonstrations by the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga. The event promoted mindfulness, wellness, and the preservation of traditional practices.

The valedictory session was chaired by Dr. Kim Sungchol, along with senior officials from the Ministry of Ayush, DGHS (Ayush Vertical), and PCIM&H. The workshop concluded with a reaffirmation of continued collaboration among WHO-IRCH member countries to promote safe, effective, and regulated use of herbal medicines worldwide.

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