

# From A 20-Year Journey of Regional Kala-azar Elimination Commitment and Innovation

Towards a Healthier South-East Asia through  
**Multi-Disease Elimination**



14 October 2025



18:00 – 19:30



Hotel Cinnamon Life



# Celebrating 20 Years of Regional Kala Azar Elimination Initiative



Kala-azar, or visceral leishmaniasis, has long been one of the most devastating neglected tropical diseases in South Asia, with Bangladesh, India, and Nepal carrying nearly 70% of the global disease burden two decades ago.

In 2005, high-level political commitment from these countries led to the launch of the Regional Kala-azar Elimination Initiative. Guided by WHO and supported by donors, research institutions, and development partners, the initiative drove advances in treatment, diagnostics, and vector control, while strengthening cross-border collaboration. As a result, kala-azar cases have fallen by 95% in the last decade, and 98% of endemic areas have reached elimination targets - a historic milestone in global neglected tropical disease control.

This side event marks the 20th anniversary of the Regional Kala-azar Elimination Initiative and provides an opportunity to reflect on two decades of progress. It will bring together government representatives, policymakers, researchers, funders, and public health experts from across South Asia and beyond to discuss key learnings, emerging challenges, and opportunities for continued collaboration.

This high-level dialogue will highlight success factors, and build consensus on advancing towards integrated, sustainable, and resilient public health systems and how to adapt these learnings for multi disease elimination in the region.





# Agenda

Time	Agenda item
18:00 – 18:05 (5 min)	Opening remarks – WHO-SEARO Leadership
18:05 – 18:11 (6 min)	Address by host countries (India, Nepal)
18:11 – 18:16 (5 min)	Video: Road to elimination of kala-azar in South-East Asia
18:16 – 18:23 (7 min)	<b>Keynote Address 1:</b> Journey towards the India sub-continent free from kala-azar – the power of regional partnership, lessons learnt and the way forward (Prof Nirmal Kumar Ganguly, Former DG, Indian Council of Medical Research)
18:23 – 18:43 (20 min)	<b>Panel Discussion Part 1:</b> Success factors, lessons learnt and the way forward to accelerate and sustain elimination of kala-azar in South-East Asia <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Country representatives (India, Bangladesh, Nepal)</li><li>- DNDi</li><li>- MSF</li></ul>
18:43 – 18:51 (8 min)	<b>Keynote Address 2:</b> <b>Regional Multi-Disease Elimination (MDE) Initiative</b> – Opportunities, challenges and the way forward (Dr Suman Rijal, WHO-SEARO)
18:51 – 19:11 (20 min)	<b>Panel Discussion Part 2:</b> Accelerating and sustaining elimination of kala-azar through multi-disease elimination approach in South-East Asia <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Country representatives (Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Thailand)</li><li>- Gates Foundation</li><li>- PATH</li></ul>
19:11 – 19:26 (15 min)	Open Floor / Q&A
19:26 – 19:30 (4 min)	Concluding Remarks by host country (India)