

《Xi: Public health should underpin all govt strategies》

President Xi Jinping has urged authorities at all levels to consider public health when drafting policies, as he spoke for the first time on the proposed Healthy China strategy at a top-level meeting.

The goal of "an all-around moderately prosperous society cannot be achieved without the people's all-around health", he said at the national meeting on health attended by all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

The meeting reached a consensus that health authorities alone cannot ensure a healthy populace, as there are many complex socioeconomic, policy and personal factors, such as the environment and education.

Xi called for comprehensive efforts to promote healthy lifestyles, strengthen medical services and disease prevention, and develop health-related industries.

Complicated risks resulting from China's industrialization, urbanization and aging population, combined with the negative changes in the environment and people's lifestyles, pose serious health challenges, he said.

"If these issues are not addressed effectively, the people's health may be seriously undermined, and economic development and social stability will be compromised," he said.

The Healthy China strategy was first proposed early last year, but the authorities are still discussing the fine details.

Wang Longde, chairman of China Preventive Medicine Association, said the CPC meeting ushered in a new era in which public health is given priority in the national development strategy.

Despite achievements such as longer life expectancy and universal health insurance, he said new challenges have emerged from rapid aging and the rise in chronic diseases.

Official statistics show 300 million people in China have been diagnosed with a chronic diseases, such as diabetes or hypertension. Half of them are aged under 65.

Liang Xiaofeng, deputy director the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said the problems cannot be solved by hospitals alone.

As 60 percent of chronic disease cases are related to unhealthy lifestyles, they could be averted, he said. "So prevention should be more important than treatment."

Premier Li Keqiang said at the meeting that more health resources should be allocated to rural and impoverished regions, with greater insurance support provided to relieve the burden of medical expenses on patients and their families.

Xi also called for innovation in promoting healthy living and stressed that efforts should focus on the grassroots level. The president urged local governments to draft health development plans suited to their local conditions, as well as to "systematically evaluate" all policies to gauge their influence on public health.

Among China's initiatives to boost public health, a system of family doctors is being rolled out nationwide. These doctors will advise communities on healthy living and disease prevention, with the aim to cover all citizens by 2020.

Liang welcomed the initiative, saying: "The doctors serve as a bridge. They empower people to be aware of, and capable of, staying fit."

Other agencies such as those responsible for education, urban planning, and food and drug safety should also work together to create healthy environments for people, he added, "such as guaranteeing them a smoke-free environment, clear air and more playgrounds for physical exercise."

