

PRESS NOTE

ASHA ka SPARSH – Touch of Hope: Care for Cancer

A Community Movement for Cancer Awareness, Prevention, Early Detection, Care and Hope

Lucknow, 15 July 2026

In a significant step towards addressing the growing burden of cancer in India, **Uttar Kshetriya Samaj Vikas Kendra (UKSVK), Agra**, the Regional Forum of Social Apostolate, officially launched **ASHA ka SPARSH – Touch of Hope: Care for Cancer**, a community-based initiative dedicated to promoting cancer awareness, prevention, early detection, facilitating access to healthcare, and building compassionate support systems for individuals and families affected by cancer.

The launch programme was inaugurated by **Shri Brajesh Pathak, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Medical Health & Family Welfare, Government of Uttar Pradesh**, as the **Chief Guest**, while **Most Rev. Dr. Raphy Manjaly, Archbishop of Agra**, graced the occasion as the **Guest of Honour**.

Among those present were **Shri D. Prakash, IPS; Most Rev. Albert D'Souza, Archbishop Emeritus of Agra; Most Rev. Dr. Gerald John Mathias, Bishop of Lucknow; Most Rev. Bhaskar Jesuraj, Bishop of Meerut; Most Rev. Dr. Ignatius D'Souza, Bishop of Bareilly; Rev. Fr. Jessudass, Executive Director, Caritas India; Rev. Fr. Julian Fernando, Administrator, Caritas India; Mr. N. B. Singh, Chief Medical Officer, Lucknow; Dr. U. S. Pal, King George's Medical University (KGMU), Lucknow; Dr. Sr. Victoria Kavungal; Rev. Fr. Johnson Francis, Executive Director, UKSVK**; along with bishops, priests, religious sisters, doctors, healthcare professionals, principals, directors of diocesan social service societies, social workers, media representatives, and community leaders from across Uttar Pradesh.

Addressing the gathering, **Shri Brajesh Pathak** emphasized that a healthy India can only be built through healthy citizens. He urged people to adopt healthy lifestyles, eat nutritious food, engage in regular physical activity, avoid tobacco and alcohol, and undergo periodic health check-ups and cancer screening. He appreciated **ASHA ka SPARSH** as a timely initiative that complements the Government's commitment to preventive healthcare and public health awareness.

Delivering an inspiring address, **Most Rev. Dr. Raphy Manjaly** shared his personal journey of overcoming cancer. He spoke about how faith, timely medical treatment, inner strength, and the support of family and well-wishers helped him recover from the disease. Encouraging patients and families, he reminded them that cancer can be fought with courage, hope, and community support, inspiring everyone present with his testimony of resilience.

In his address, **Shri D. Prakash, IPS**, reflected on the healing ministry of Jesus Christ, who touched the lives of countless people with compassion and restored hope to those who were suffering. He said that **ASHA ka SPARSH – Touch of Hope** should become a movement that carries forward the same spirit of healing, compassion, and service by reaching out to cancer patients with care, dignity, and hope. He called upon every individual and institution to become instruments of hope for those battling cancer.

Cancer continues to be one of the leading causes of illness and death in India. Recognizing that many cancers can be prevented or successfully treated through awareness and early diagnosis, **ASHA ka SPARSH** seeks to empower communities, encourage healthy lifestyles, promote regular screening, facilitate access to treatment, and strengthen community-based support for patients and survivors.

The campaign is built on four guiding pillars:

- **Awareness** – Empowering communities to recognize cancer risk factors, warning signs, and the importance of early diagnosis.
- **Prevention** – Promoting healthy lifestyles, reducing risk factors, and encouraging regular screening for common cancers.
- **Support** – Providing guidance, counselling, referrals, and compassionate community-based care for cancer patients and their families.
- **Hope** – Restoring confidence, dignity, and resilience by ensuring that no one faces cancer alone.

The **ASHA ka SPARSH – Touch of Hope: Care for Cancer** campaign has been conceptualized and spearheaded by **Rev. Fr. Johnson Francis, Executive Director, Uttar Kshetriya Samaj Vikas Kendra (UKSVK), Agra**, with the vision of creating a sustainable community movement against cancer across Uttar Pradesh. The launch programme was organized in collaboration with the **Diocesan Social Welfare Society (DSWS), Lucknow**, under the leadership of **Rev. Fr. Ronald D'Souza**, whose team coordinated the local arrangements and ensured the smooth and successful conduct of the programme.

The campaign aims to mobilize diocesan institutions, healthcare professionals, educational institutions, volunteers, and community organizations to create cancer-aware and compassionate communities where every individual has access to timely information, early detection, quality healthcare, and emotional support.

The programme concluded with a collective appeal to government agencies, healthcare institutions, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, educational institutions, media, and citizens to join hands in the fight against cancer and work together to build a healthier and more compassionate society.

"Every Life Matters. Every Touch Brings Hope."

Issued by:

Fr. Johnson Francis

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Regional Forum of Social Apostolate