New Delhi, Nov 30 (PTI ) Despite being second only to USA in performing the highest number of organ transplants in the world, there is a huge gap in India between those requiring transplants and organs available from deceased donors, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Saturday.

He stressed on the need to create and enhance awareness about organ donation on a monumental scale to turn it into a mass movement so that people voluntarily pledge to donate their
organs. "India has a dismal 0.65 per million population (PMP) Organ Donation Rate and we need to improve this," the minister said while presiding over an event held here to mark the 10th Indian Organ Donation Day.

He said public representatives and public functionaries need to become torchbearers and ambassadors of this movement to not only spread awareness, but also dispel myths and apprehensions in communities regarding organ donation. Also, there is a need for simplification of processes for transparent harvesting and transplantation of organs, Vardhan said.

"India performs the second largest number of transplants in the world, next only to USA as per data available on the Global Observatory on Donation and Transplantation," he said. At the programme, organised by the National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO), the Health Minister felicitated several families of organ donors.

"You have inspired and motivated all of us through your act of strength and humanity in your saddest moments of life, and we salute all those brave hearts for being a source of life for the needy," he said as he honoured many donor families. Vardhan urged NGOs, Chief Science Officers (CSOs), non-state stakeholders, community and religious leaders and opinion influencers within communities to become ambassadors of organ donation and enthuse and inspire people about the "noble act" of pledging their organs for donation after death.

"Let medical colleges take a lead in this movement. Let us have national and regional events where we create massive awareness drives for organ donation," he stated. He added that India needs to institutionalise its best practices to create credibility in the system to inspire confidence in people.