Friends,

Greetings to you all on the occasion of 63rd Independence Day celebration of our republic. As you are aware, this is the most significant day in the history of our nation. We shall fail in our duty if we do not remember the great sons and daughters of our country, who sacrificed and suffered to get us independence. We are also fortunate to live in a democracy, thanks to the vision of the great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Lala Lajpat Rai, Subhash Chandra Bose, B.R. Ambedkar and others. Let us bow down our head in their memory.

Democracy gives us the dignity to live as proud citizens of a free country. It allows us the freedom to pursue our chosen vocation and to exploit our potential to the fullest extent. In other words, we have the freedom to grow and excel. Needless to underline that hard work and integrity of purpose are the key to wholesome growth both for an individual as well as the nation.

We are in a profession whose hallmark is hard work and dedication. A doctor has a very special identity in the society. We deal with human lives—the most precious thing in the god’s creation. We are expected to be hardworking, knowledgeable, skilled and sensitive. With all these attributes, we are also expected to remain cool, balanced and in readiness—all the time.

We are privileged to be part of the most prestigious medical institute of the country. Some of us have been associated with the institute for a long time, others may have a shorter association and there may be freshers among you. We all are part of a big family. I have taken the responsibility to lead the family. Like any other good family tradition, it should be our duty to support each other, to facilitate each other and be an active partner in the growth of this big family.

At this point, I would like to remember Pandit Nehru and Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur whose vision gave us this institute. I would also like to pay my tribute to Dr. B.B. Dikshit, the first Director of the institute, who laid the foundation for dedication, quality and excellence as defining
character of this institute. The successive Directors have tried to take this culture further. When each one of the family contributes in a synchronized manner and with a purpose, then the growth is more visible and satisfying.

I would like to emphasize here that the guiding principle for all our actions—in academic, research, patient-care or administration—should be excellence and utility. At the institute we are half-a-century old. At this point, it is imperative to prepare a feasible and sustainable growth model for the institute as also the road map. We must not forget that the Parliament has given us the mandate that AIIMS is to serve as a model for similar other institutes in the country. Any of our actions and decisions, affecting the institute, should be made to pass this acid test.

As we all know, medical science has undergone a sea change over the last 40 years or so. Technology has revolutionized the practice of medicine. Unfortunately, it has also distanced the common man from enjoying its benefits by boosting commercialization of medicine. Over the last two decades the private health sector has registered a significant growth and a large number of these hospitals have hi-tech facilities. However, limited studies suggest that this has neither improved the quality of care nor accessibility for the common man. The argument of course is the high investment cost. In other words, the technology-driven medicine is meant only for the rich. Can there be a meeting ground?

This is a growing concern for governments all over the world, particularly in the third-world countries. Public health planners and administrators find it difficult to reconcile between the technology and mass health delivery at an affordable cost.

Integration of new technology into the medical practice is important but it should not be adopted blindly. We must test the rationality and cost-effectiveness of the new technology. In any case, technology cannot and should not substitute the wisdom and human touch of a doctor. If that happens, then all of us would be substituted with robots and trained technicians would manage the show.

I believe, at AIIMS we have a great opportunity to offer an answer to such difficult issues. Let us put our heads and hands together. In the name of mother India, let us rededicate ourselves to the cause of the nation. JAI HIND