

**ADDRESS OF SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD,
HON'BLE MINISTER OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE, GOI
& PRESIDENT OF AIIMS, NEW DELHI
AT THE 41s' CONVOCATION OF AIIMS ON 12th SEPTEMBER, 2013
NEW DELHI**

Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General, World Health Organization, Dr. R.C. Deka, Director, AIIMS, Mr. K.N. Desiraju, Secretary, Health

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, it gives me immense pleasure to extend a warm welcome to Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General, World Health Organization, who has kindly accepted our invitation to grace this occasion as Chief Guest and deliver the Convocation Address. Convocation is a very special occasion in the life of students passing out from any institute and, the presence of Dr. Margaret Chan on the 41st Convocation of AIIMS, New Delhi, is of great importance to me personally as well as to the entire AIIMS family. As you are aware, Dr. Margaret Chan is a towering professional in the area of Global Public Health. Being MD and Doctor of Science from the University of Ontario, Canada, Dr. Chan joined WHO in 2003 and was later elected unanimously to the post of Director General in 2006. Considering her outstanding leadership and sterling contributions to Global Public Health, the World Health Assembly re-elected Dr. Chan as the Director General for a second term commencing in July, 2012; a process with which India had the pleasure to be actively associated. Madam, we are privileged and honoured to have you grace this momentous occasion at AIIMS, New Delhi and I take this opportunity to thank you once again, for accepting our invitation.

I would like to inform you that the All India Institute of Medical Sciences was established in the year 1956 by our first Prime Minister Late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It was conceived as an institution of national importance through an Act of our Parliament. Right from the beginning, the Institute has focused on developing **high standards** of undergraduate and post-graduate medical education, so as to become a leader in the field of medical education and provide world-class faculty to the other medical colleges of the country. Subsequently, AIIMS expanded as a **premier institute** of patient care as well as of bio-medical and clinical research. Today, millions of people place their trust in the capable hands of its faculty and students.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are aware, a wide range of undergraduate, postgraduate, super-specialty and doctoral programmes and courses are conducted by the Institute under the supervision of highly experienced, dedicated and world renowned faculty. It is to their credit that AIIMS continues to produce a large number of super-specialists, specialists, Ph.D scholars, basic science experts, specialist nurses and paramedical professionals. It is a matter of great pride that the alumni of this Institute contribute to medical education, research and improved health care not only within this country but also in most developed countries including UK, Canada and USA and other countries in the Middle

East, Africa and the Far East.

Dear Students,

I sincerely hope that all 509 of you, on whom the degrees are being conferred today in various disciplines and branches of medicine and allied areas after successful completion of academic courses, would become torch-bearers of high quality medical education and research like your eminent predecessors. It is indeed, an exciting time to work in the field of medical education and research. In so far as medical education is concerned, path breaking changes initiated by my Ministry after May, 2009 have led to an unprecedented increase in the number of medical colleges and human resources at various levels. The availability of MBBS seats in the country has gone up by almost 55% and the number of PG seats has increased by almost 75%. Within this period, 97 new medical colleges, including six new AIIMS, have been established raising the number of Medical Colleges in the country from 290 to 387, which is an all-time high. The six new AIIMS have been established at Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Jodhpur, Patna, Raipur and Rishikesh, each with bed strength of **960 to 1000, which include 500 beds in specialities, 300 beds in super-specialities and 100 ICU and Trauma beds.**

I am pleased to inform that the Medical Colleges at the six new AIIMS have started functioning with admission of the second batch of MBBS and the first Batch of BSc Nursing students this year. I am happy that the AIIMS, New Delhi is playing a major role in mentoring the new AIIMS in academic and technical domains. We plan to start work on **the seventh AIIMS at Rae Bareli** very soon, with the land having been acquired and the tendering process in an advanced stage. The process of identifying land for **the eighth new AIIMS at Raiganj in North Bengal** is currently underway. I am sure that these new AIIMS would take care of a lot of patient load of the areas where they are located and, thereby reduce the immense pressure on AIIMS, New Delhi. Similarly, 19 Government Medical Colleges have been up-graded as super speciality hospitals. Together with the 6 new AIIMS, these 19 up-graded institutions would provide speciality and super-speciality care in all disciplines with a net addition of **11,390 beds** covering 27 locations spread across the country. We intend to take-up another 29 Govt. Medical Colleges for upgradation in the 12 Plan period.

Madam,

You would be happy to know that, in addition to medical education and patient care, Faculty and Scientists of the Institute are actively engaged in cutting edge research activities, particularly in areas like human genomics, immuno-genetics with organ transplant programme, molecular medicine and structural biology.

The faculty of the Institute has also contributed to global health agenda as experts for agencies such as the World Health Organization, International Atomic Energy Agency and UNICEF. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the faculty of AIIMS has carried out research with an aim to address public health issues in India and neighbouring countries; especially during the 1950s and 1960s, when malnutrition and infectious diseases were perceived as the greatest challenges.

I would like to briefly outline here some of the **significant** research based outcomes achieved by the Institute in the **past six decades**:-

1. Link between malnutrition and suppression of immunity and resultant infections was established in a paper published in 1966.
2. Integrated Child Development Services programme was conceptualized by AIIMS in 1970s, which over the years has become the largest Childhood Nutritional Programme in the world.
3. Iodine deficiency research resulted in universal iodization of salt in India and other South Asian countries.
4. Control of diarrheal diseases in developing countries.
5. Fluorosis Control for safe drinking water.
6. PCR technology for diagnosis of brain and meningeal tuberculosis was first published in AIIMS.
7. Development of vaccines such as Rota virus and Typhoid vaccine Introduction of diagnostic tests against: Plague, Dengue, Human papilloma virus infection, Meningitis, Kala-azar, Hepatitis C, HIV- AIDS and Tuberculosis.

Faculty of AIIMS has also contributed to the National Tobacco Control Programme, National Blindness Control Programme, National Programme for Health Care of Elderly and *National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases* by providing evidence and assistance in policy formulation.

Due to the implicit faith of the people in the patient care services at this Institute, nearly 10,000 patients visit the AIIMS OPD every day from all parts of the country. Naturally, the infrastructure at AIIMS is under severe strain due to the enormous increase in patient load over the years, besides the expansion in teaching and research activities. Therefore, my Ministry has allocated additional financial resources not only for modernization of existing facilities, but also for the physical expansion of the Institute infrastructure.

A large parcel of land measuring 300 acres has been acquired at Jhajjar in the neighbouring province of Haryana, keeping in view the teaching and research requirements of AIIMS over the next 20 years. OPD facilities have been made functional at Jhajjar and the exercise for developing a Master Plan for the entire Jhajjar campus of AIIMS is underway. I am happy to state that a National Cancer Institute would be established there with state-of-art research and patient care facilities. This ambitious project is of crucial importance since the successful and effective implementation of several new initiatives and national programmes require greater **availability of trained and skilled human resources**, particularly to deal with rising burden of CVDs and Cancers. In this regard, I have great pleasure in announcing that only last week, the Central Government has approved funds for establishing **20 new stand-alone State Cancer Institutes, 23 new Tertiary Cancer Centres and strengthening of existing 27 Regional Cancer Care Centres, across the country.**

With this initiative, we will have an additional 70 state of the art tertiary cancer centres

in Government sector, when fully established.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, I would like to reiterate that the Government is committed to providing adequate financial assistance for the continued progress of the Institute and fostering its innate spirit of excellence.

I am absolutely confident that this Institute will persist in its quest of scientific enquiry and continue to inspire students to serve the medical and public health community with devotion.

I take this opportunity to once again congratulate the passing out students and to thank Dr. Margaret Chan for gracing the 41st Convocation of AIIMS, New Delhi and giving us the privilege to host her at this wonderful Institute.

We are indeed delighted to have you here and, like this distinguished gathering of doctors and students, I too am eagerly waiting to hear from you, having been inspired by your insightful and pertinent thoughts on several earlier occasions.

I thank you.

Sh. Ghulam Nabi Azad
Minister of Health & Family Welfare
Government of India
&
President, AIIMS, New Delhi