

Convocation Address by S. Parkash Singh Badal, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Punjab at the 47th Annual Conference of NAMS on the 27th October, 2007, Amritsar

Emeritus President, Prof. J.S. Bajaj, President, Dr. Prema Ramachandran, Immediate Past President, Prof. P.K. Dave, Chairman, Organizing Committee, Dr. Jai Rup Singh, Distinguished officers of the Academy on the dais, honourable guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased to have this opportunity of meeting such a large and distinguished gathering of medical scientists on the occasion of the 47th Annual Conference and Convocation of the National Academy of Medical Sciences. I understand that the Academy was set up in 1961 as an outcome of extensive deliberations and consultations with State Governments, Universities and professional bodies. It is gratifying to note that the promotion of knowledge of medical sciences in India and its application to seek realistic solutions of the problems concerning national health and welfare, are the primary objectives of the Academy.

I wish to congratulate all those who have received today scrolls as Fellows and Members of the Academy in recognition of their scientific contributions. I recognize that it is indeed a select band of outstanding biomedical Scientists and health professionals who have distinguished themselves through their academic contributions.

May I also extend my heartiest felicitations to the recipients of life time achievement award and other awards and medals. They are all recognized leaders of medical fraternity and deserve our deepest appreciation.

Medicine combines in itself the attributes of life sciences as well as of social sciences. It is in this context that the health professional has a dual role: both as a provider of healthcare as well as an instrument of behavioral change and social transformation. Health must be seen in the context of physical, behavioral and environmental interactions which affect man. Indeed, I may add to this triad a spiritual dimension also which is necessary for mental health and tranquility. Super-specialization of medical profession has created compartments wherein biological determinants of illness have been dissociated from the psycho-social and environmental influences that affect the humankind. The physician in order to succeed in the art of healing must be imbued with the sensitivity to appreciate the interaction of all such elements in a holistic manner.

Punjabis are fortunate that they are endowed with a genome that imparts physical strength and mental toughness, thus providing a strong physique and a stable mental disposition. Nevertheless, life style changes as a result of economic liberalization are resulting in health transition, with diseases like diabetes, heart ailments, and cancer showing a progressive increase. To this must be added scourge of drug dependence and substance abuse. While infectious diseases may be prevented by ensuring safe drinking water, clean environment and in some cases administration of vaccines, degenerative diseases and psychiatric illnesses are not amenable to these approaches. Health education is the most cost-effective remedial intervention and must play a major role in any system of health care.

It is in this context that continuing education of medical professionals plays a critical role. I am informed that the Academy organized a most successful academic programme yesterday wherein nearly 200 practicing physicians and surgeons learnt about the latest advances in the field of diabetes. I congratulate the organizers and request the Academy to conduct similar educational programme at the two other State Medical colleges situated at Patiala and Faridkot during the course of next one year.

In recent months, Punjab has embarked upon expansion, strengthening and consolidation of healthcare delivery system by providing major investments in both health care infrastructure and in the development of human resources for health. A Review Committee with Prof. Bajaj as the Chairman has been appointed to look into the structural organization and operational framework of

block level Community Health Centres, Sub-divisional Hospitals and District-level Hospitals. The aim is to plan and make necessary investments to fill critical gaps in building, equipment, diagnostic facilities and health manpower against recognized norms. It has also been decided to establish Drug Dependence Treatment Centres of 10-20 beds each at all District Hospitals in the State of Punjab. These will be interlinked with a State Level Drug Dependence Treatment Centre which is being established at Amritsar.

As I mentioned earlier, health care is a multidimensional activity, closely linked with provision of safe drinking water and adequate environmental sanitation. A plan outlay of nearly Rs. 2500 crores has been made to provide these amenities in far flung rural areas.

While sharply focusing on secondary and primary level healthcare, major emphasis is also being placed at the Tertiary Level Services which are presently being provided by the specialized hospitals attached to State Medical Colleges at Amritsar, Patiala and Faridkot. These Institutions besides providing support to the secondary level Healthcare System are also expected to carry out Research & Manpower Development to optimize delivery of health services of the State. Networking of these medical colleges with the District Hospitals through tele-education and telemedicine linkages with the PGI, Chandigarh is being supported by the Academy in partnership with the Punjab Government. I appreciate this assistance.

The Government Medical College Amritsar and Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital are the oldest and premier Medical Institutions in India. Medical College, Amritsar started as a Medical School in Lahore as far back as 1864, having been founded by the British Empire and continued there as a Medical School till 1920, when it was shifted to the Holy City of Amritsar. In 1943, the Government decided to upgrade it to Medical College, with the award of degree of MBBS. In addition to Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, several other hospitals such as TB & Chest Hospital, Children Hospital, Ram Lal Eye and ENT Hospital and Guru Nanak Dev Hospital are also attached to Medical College Amritsar and provide rich clinical experience to the undergraduate and postgraduate students.

A Steering Committee has been specially constituted to provide technical inputs and to ensure expeditious implementation regarding the construction of the new building of Guru Gobind Singh Medical College, Faridkot and the development of superspecialties including Trauma Centre, Department of Burns and Plastic Surgery and facilities for interventional cardiology at Amritsar. Steps have also been initiated for the construction of a Centre for Mother and Child Healthcare with state of art Labour rooms, Operation Theatres, Neonatal Care Unit and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for the newborn. Likewise a new Department of Pediatric Surgery is being developed. Finally, Punjab Institute of Medical Sciences nearly completed at a cost of approximately Rs. 110 crores at Jalandhar is likely to be operationalised during the next one year through a Public Private Partnership mode. It will have a Medical College with an initial admission capacity of 100 students per year who will be trained and educated in World-class Laboratories and in a new 500 bedded most modern hospital.

In all these activities, some of the distinguished Fellows and Emeritus Professors of the Academy such as Dr. Deshmukh, Dr. Dave and Dr. K.K. Talwar have been providing professional consultancy and expertise of the highest order. I shall like to publicly express my appreciation for the Academy and selfless dedication and valuable contributions of its distinguished Fellows.

As a token of our appreciation, I am pleased to present a grant of Rs. 10 lacs to the Academy on behalf of the Government of Punjab.

I do sincerely hope that there will be a continuing fruitful interaction of the National Academy of Medical Sciences with the growth and development of healthcare delivery services and enhanced quality of teaching and learning in the Medical Institutions in Punjab.

May I once again thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share with you some of my thoughts today, and to congratulate all of you for your achievements.