

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT AT THE CEREMONIAL SESSION OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE INDIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY AND ST. JOHN AMBULANCE (INDIA)

Rashtrapati Bhavan: August 30, 2016

1. I have immense pleasure in welcoming you to the Annual General Meeting of the Indian Red Cross Society and St. John Ambulance (India).
2. I join the distinguished speakers who spoke before me in condoling the sad demise of Dr. S.P. Agarwal, Former Secretary General of the Indian Red Cross Society and St. John Ambulance (India). Both these organizations and the people that he has served will long remember him for his contribution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. I would also like to congratulate the winners of the awards conferred today. These awards are a fitting recognition of the outstanding work of individuals and organizations in relief and rescue, promoting health, providing care to the vulnerable and advancing these objectives by educating communities.
4. Chairman, of the Red Cross Society and St John Ambulance India, H'ble Shri J P Nadda, has presented a comprehensive Annual Report. What stands out is the dedication and commitment of the workers of both the Red Cross and the St John Ambulance. They have taken several commendable initiatives, taking their ongoing programmes to new levels of service and success. In many challenging situations, their timely assistance has robustly supplemented the efforts of Government.
5. For all that they have done, they have earned the admiration and gratitude of our whole society.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. We live in an age when so called 'Man-made disasters' are the order of the day. The work of the Red Cross in risk reduction, capacity building, humanitarian logistics, development work, disaster and crisis management has been invaluable in providing relief and succor across the world. Migration - whether internal or across borders is always a cause of concern. In such situations the need is - not only of material relief and involvement of well-trained volunteers - but also for hands-on support by society at large - delivered in a sensitive and humane manner.
7. In our country, especially, where economic, educational and social diversities often present difficulties in implementation of national developmental programmes, the involvement of volunteers and voluntary organizations in addressing these challenges is very helpful indeed.
8. Therefore, I am happy that the cadre of First Medical Responders created by the Red Cross at community level is now available in 18 states.
9. I would, however, stress that our vast country needs more numbers – more skilled human resources - not only for times of trouble but also when normalcy prevails - to help bring our Government's social programmes within the reach of the target communities. In this context, I laud the exercise made by Indian Red Cross Society to join the "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" programme and the "Swachh Bharat" initiative.
10. The Indian Red Cross' Post Graduate Diploma Course in Disaster Preparedness and Rehabilitation is, similarly, a very good initiative. A network of manpower, ready for deployment is a boon when disasters occur – and can help to develop preparedness for mitigating the effects when catastrophe strikes.
11. Equally important is the Maternity and Child Welfare programme of the Red Cross – which has been particularly effective and popular in remote parts of our country. Its '*Universal Immunisation - Catch up programme*' and '*Mission Indradhanush*' have also been very successful.
12. I would like to see these programmes being constantly reviewed and updated to preserve their relevance and efficiency.

13. I would also encourage involvement of the younger generations in programmes for small children and the aged. With greater numbers of students joining the Indian Red Cross and the St John Ambulance, a key aspect of their overall education will be achieved. Capacity development at school level should inculcate, at a tender age, the values of selfless service to society; these values should make our children sensitive and alert to social ills so that they can focus on these in a positive way and contribute to the development of innovative solutions.
14. I am happy to learn that both organizations – the Indian Red Cross Society well as St John Ambulance (India) are financially sound; nevertheless, I would emphasise the need for corporate and philanthropic organizations to lend their support at all levels.
15. With regard to the new projects that have been mentioned, I am delighted to note that over the last two years, the Indian Red Cross Society and St John Ambulance have trained almost seven and a half lakh volunteers in first aid. I am also glad to learn that they now have plans to create a world class centre of excellence in First Aid near Delhi.
16. In the meanwhile, I am told, 2500 brigade divisions of St John Ambulance, continue to attend to casualties and save lives on a daily basis. Their presence at religious congregations, celebrations of national days and rallies are examples of the wide scope of their hard work.
17. For all their efforts, I thank the Indian Red Cross and St John Ambulance (India) and for their work and vision, for instituting the awards conferred today and for their contribution to humanitarian work in our country.
18. I commend the Red Cross for its wide network of blood banks – including the Model Blood Bank at its National Headquarters. They have successfully been promoting voluntary blood donation across our nation.
19. I also welcome their initiative of paying special attention to the training and enrollment of the future generations of volunteer

members - and their efforts to ensure at least one trained 'first aider' in every family.

20. Last but not the least, I would also like to recognize the thousands of unsung heroes who have not received awards today but whose invaluable work and commitment have been vital saving lives and helping the needy all over India. They are the ones, who, at the grassroots make it possible to realize the many lofty achievements of these organisations.

21. As I wish you all greater success in your endeavours in the service of the nation, I would like to leave with you the inspiring words of Mahatma Gandhi which come to my mind:

Quote:

“Consciously or unconsciously, every one of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger and will make not only for our own happiness but that of the world at large.” Unquote. A drop from you voluntarily can convert the drop into an ocean and if we have this approach there will be no dearth for creating an ocean of kindness, sympathy and understanding for the more vulnerable sections of the society.

Thank you.
Jai Hind.
