

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

52nd National Conference of Indian Academy of Pediatrics 21-25 January, 2015, New Delhi

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Chief guest of the day, Shri. Lov Verma, Hon'ble Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, esteemed office bearers of *Indian Academy of Pediatrics* (IAP) on the dias, executive board members, distinguished guests of the evening – including IMA President Padmasree Dr Marthandan Pillai, President of American Academy of Pediatrics Dr. Sandra Hassink, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of Kerala University of Health Sciences, Dr MKC Nair, our own National President 2004, past presidents of IAP, senior members, teachers, organizers of this conference – Team Delhi, including the National Neonatology Forum President Dr Ajay Gambhir, dear delegates, invited guests, friends from media, ladies and gentlemen; At the outset, may I wish all of you a Happy and Healthy New year. May the year 2015 see many new beginnings and sparks of brilliance. On my part, I am honored and delighted to be here in Delhi, and humbled by the abiding faith you have reposed on me.

The Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) has been described in Wikipedia as “a unique association of paediatricians in India. Other organizations of medical specialties are often segmented. This association has been able to maintain unity amongst its members.” To lead an organization of this caliber is an unparalleled privilege and honor, and I am extremely grateful to each of the 23000 plus members of the IAP for their trust and faith in my abilities. I am immensely indebted to my predecessors who built this mammoth organization brick-by-brick in half a century – I take this opportunity to salute them. The very fact that there is an international recognition for our organization, described as “unity amongst its members,” is a magnificent tribute to the accomplishments of my predecessors. Their foresighted vision gave rise to the plethora of Action plans, Activities and Projects spread over the past five decades. These programs formed the cornerstone of the mission of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics. I am a humble worker of the IAP who toiled at the grass root level for implementation of these missions. It is time that we consolidate many of these projects into

concrete action on short-term and on long-term basis.

To this purpose of consolidation of IAP activities, I stand here to humbly propose an Action Plan with 3 major components: (i) Mission 20:20 for infant mortality rate (IMR); (ii) IAP to adopt village – “*gaaon ki baat, IAP ke saath*” – each branch to adopt a village; and (iii) capacity building of practitioners of Pediatrics.

India lives in its villages. For creating rapid changes in delivery of services, the new Government of India has enunciated concrete programs to reach the grass root level, for both rural and urban population. It is time that the professional organization of pediatricians of India also rise to the occasion and support this innovative call for social change.

Friends, On 28th May 2014, as rest of the Kerala was eagerly waiting for the monsoon rains, a distraught Veera Swami performed the last rites of his four-month-old son in Pagalayur village. It was the 28th infant death in last year in the picturesque Attapadi hills predominantly populated by tribals in Palakkad district. In the past 16 months, the people here have buried 52 infants. If this can happen in the tribal pocket of Kerala, what about rest of India! The cardinal background of this sad story is about ‘child survival’ in rural India. Maternal nutrition, attendance at child birth, childhood malnutrition, gender discrimination, unsafe source of drinking water, and – as our Prime Minister keeps reminding us – poor sanitation and lack of access to clean toilets are the factors that determine child survival, especially in rural India. This sad state of affairs must make our mighty organization contemplate on what we can do to strengthen the health sector in rural India. The current state of affairs invests us with an enormous responsibility to reach out to the poor villages and their inhabitants, in order to prevent similar sad stories of infant deaths.

MISSION 20:20 FOR INFANT MORTALITY RATE

We are proposing a Mission 20:20 (IMR 20 at 2020) by revising the earlier target. IAP hereby expresses

willingness to dedicate its efforts and human resources to reduce the IMR in our country, working hand-in-hand with appropriate Governmental and Non-governmental agencies, especially in rural India. UNICEF, using the Auto Regressive Intensive Moving Average Technique, has estimated the IMR of India to be 35 by 2020. However, acceleration is required, and now is the time to act! We require a comprehensive approach, including increasing the coverage of key child survival interventions.

Government of India is committed to achieve single digit Neonatal Mortality by 2030 and IMR of 27 at 2017. With the vision of our Honourable Prime Minister and the action plans of Health Ministry, as well as the State Governments, these targets can be raised. Hon'ble Secretary Shri Lov Verma, IAP will join hands with the Govt. of India and make every effort to bring down infant mortality rate (IMR) to 20 at 2020.

The Government of India has several ambitious projects like *Swachh Bharat*. The IAP will lend a helping hand to all such government projects. Recently the GOI has drafted the 2015 National Health Policy whereby 2.5% of GDP will be spent on health care. This will be groundbreaking as an investment in our population.

IAP TO ADOPT VILLAGE – “GAAON KI BAAT, IAP KE SAATH” – EACH BRANCH TO ADOPT A VILLAGE

The Constitution of India envisages transforming this country into a welfare state. Article 47 states that “it is the duty of the state to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living to improve public health.” The renewed agenda for public health in India includes the epidemiological transition. Rising burden of non-communicable diseases also relate to low birthweight, demographic transition in the geriatric population, and environmental changes. We still have the unfinished agenda of reducing maternal and child mortality. Based on the principles outlined in the Alma Ata Declaration in 1978, there is a need to revitalize health care in India.

This great organization of 23000 pediatricians can begin and sustain an Outreach Program of reaching out to villages through 350 of our local branches. Each branch adopting a village to begin with, we are also joining a current social movement of “Adopting a Village”. This can be a revolutionary Action Plan, sustainable over years to come. This can be a trail-blazing model for the entire developing world. In order to synergize various facets of resources, IAP needs to network using the Central and local contacts – political, financial and professional – to make this slogan “Gaaon ki baat, IAP ke saath,” a golden reality. Political resources should be used to the best of possibilities by involving the Governmental machinery

and politicians, Local *panchayats*, as well as Local self-help groups. Financial and infrastructural resources may be sourced from government and private organizations.

The professional contributions to the activities in the adopted villages must be liaised by the Local IAP branch, and in collaboration with other organizations such as IMA, FOGSI and NNF.

CAPACITY BUILDING OF PRACTITIONERS OF PEDIATRICS

- (a) IAP has started the “*Mission Kishore Uday*” for adolescents – the future parents.
- (b) Training for essential newborn care with Government of India – The NSSK will be an ongoing project.
- (c) No child should die of vaccine preventable disease, and therefore immunization training and awareness for general practitioners (GPs) and pediatricians will be done on a war footing.
- (d) For prevention of diarrheal disease and better child survival, we have the IAP “*Mission Uday*” which will be accelerated.
- (e) Nutrition in health and disease is also been taken on priority basis.
- (f) Protocol management/consensus statement for common pediatric problems along with the GOI is being planned. This will be a boon to resident doctors of Pediatrics and GPs, and will help them to standardize treatment.
- (g) To contribute to the redressal of burden of childhood disabilities, I intend to initiate a committee on ‘Disability’ from this year.
- (h) Online certificate course in Pediatric sub-specialties is on the anvil.
- (i) The Rational antibiotic therapy, including management of tuberculosis and webcasting program, initiated by immediate past President Dr Vijay Yewale, will be continued in right earnest.
- (j) National task force on non-communicable diseases is also planned.
- (k) Quality pediatric care which is beneficial to each child is another of my action plans.

My plans for 23000 pediatrician colleagues

- (a) *Family Benefit Scheme*: Anything can happen to any one of us at anytime, but the family should not suffer. I will promote Family Benefit Scheme of IAP to the maximum.
- (b) *IAP Women Wing*: The lady members of IAP have

often pointed out that they do not get a free platform to do activities at their own pace. Hence I am proposing to start IAP Women Wing, with focus on issues related to girl child and adolescents.

(c) *IAP Website*: I have always felt the need for a medium to communicate with each other at our own leisure time, and I am proposing an interactive IAP website.

(d) *IAP House*: Some of our most respected senior past presidents have mooted the idea of IAP house. I will explore all the possibilities of making this dream come true.

Have we realized the full potential of this Academy to influence the destiny of millions of children and adolescents of India? Former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam said: "Why are we in India so embarrassed to recognize our own strengths, our achievements. We are a great nation." We are a great Team, and I assure you that my activities will be guided by the principles of the IAP, and propelled by the energy of each IAP member. I am

open to new initiatives and I look forward to your concrete suggestions and cooperation. We require teamwork, partnerships and collaboration. Together we will build a better nation. Unity is strength as Wikipedia said about IAP, and when there is team work and collaboration, wonderful things can happen.

Let me take this opportunity to remember my teacher, *Guru* Dr Alladi Venkitesh, my parents, family and friends who made me what I am today.

Talent wins games, but team work wins championships. Together friends, we can win with motivation. Yes, we can.

I am grateful once again for the trust you have placed in me, and I will justify it to the best of my competence and capacity.

Long live IAP.

Jai Hind.

Thank you.