



**Address of Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad,**

**Hon'ble Minister of Health & Family Welfare,  
Government of India**

**At  
The Business Session of the AGM  
of  
The Indian Red Cross Society / St. John Ambulance, India**

**Dr. D.S. Kothari Auditorium  
DRDO Bhavan, New Delhi - 03.05.2013**



Dr. (Mrs.) Kamla Gidwani, Vice Chairperson St. John Ambulance (India),

Dr. S.P. Agarwal, Secretary General, Indian Red Cross Society and St. John Ambulance (India),

Members of the Managing Body and National Council of the two organizations,

State and District Secretaries of both organizations,

Observers, Volunteers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, on my and on behalf of all of us at the Indian Red Cross and St John Ambulance, I would like to convey sincere thanks to the Hon'ble President for hosting us this morning at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. It was indeed a great honour.

While we once again congratulate each of the branches and individuals who have been honoured today and applaud their success, we also recognize the many more committed volunteers and members, whose tireless work is reflected in the ethos of both the Red Cross and St. John Ambulance India.

Therefore, let me reiterate that each one of you is a winner today, whose work deserves our praise, our thanks and our encouragement.

One and a half years have passed since the last annual general meeting, which was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2011 here at DRDO Bhawan, and much has happened since our last meeting.

Allow me to highlight some of the important events and successes.

I am happy to inform that the Indian Red Cross Society has launched a programme through which "first medical responders (FMR)" are being trained and certified.

Here, I would like to thank the government of Uttarakhand for sanctioning an amount of 1 crore rupees through which the national headquarters has been able to successfully pilot this First Medical Responders programme in 2011.

I am happy to note that Uttarakhand now has more than 150 master trainers and over 4,500 certified first medical responders spread across its thirteen districts.

These first medical responders will of course support and work with the society's already established National and State Disaster Response Teams.







In the month of March, a national level training of master trainers was held here in the Disaster Management Centre of the national headquarters in New Delhi, through which 30 master trainers have been certified.

They will now be training instructors in their own branches, who will then train and certify selected volunteers in two districts of each State.

I commend the Indian Red Cross Society on this initiative and have no doubt in my mind that this programme will help in saving lives across India in times of disaster and other emergencies along with the trained volunteers of St. John Ambulance (India).

I am pleased to state that the national headquarters is now commencing a training programme of home health care attendants here in New Delhi.

Similar training initiatives by a number of other state and district branches in various parts of the country are helping to meet a growing need for trained care-givers for older and infirm members of the community and I commend all those who are involved in such training programmes.

I also congratulate national headquarters and all other state branches for providing vocational training in tailoring and needlework to women from among economically weaker sections of society, thus empowering them to improve their livelihoods.



St. John Ambulance too has seen a dramatic increase in trainings in recent years, both in frequency and quality and I am happy to note that St John Ambulance (India) has revised the standard first aid kit and the first aid manual to international levels.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today, modern communication methods offer the opportunity for both Indian Red Cross Society and St. John Ambulance (India) to manage emergency operations more efficiently and respond more rapidly than ever before.

I am pleased that the society is utilizing information communication technology, including video conferencing.

I encourage all our branches to use modern communication tools to their maximum potential for further expanding our humanitarian work.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

You may be aware of the historical positive changes in the health indicators in India that have been achieved through the various national health programme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

Our efforts, whether in polio eradication, maternal and child health or HIV/AIDS, have been lauded across the world.



In fact, I am extremely happy that Red Cross volunteers have been actively participating in several national programmes of the Health Ministry.

For instance, they have worked for social mobilisation in various states in the polio eradication efforts.

I am also delighted by the support given by the Society to the measles catch-up programme in 20 districts in U.P. and M.P.

Society has done commendable work in spreading awareness about the preventable diseases and benefits of vaccination. Volunteers have been assisting families and children at vaccination centres in.

I am happy to note that the Society's tuberculosis programme supplements the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme.



**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As you are all aware, it is the repeated non-remunerated voluntary blood donation which ensures the safest quality of blood.

During a number of functions related to honouring blood donors, I have been impressed to note, that there are several donors who have donated more than one hundred times at Indian Red Cross Society for the benefit of those in need.

There are others with more rare blood types, who remain on call to donate blood whenever required.



I believe that the act of donating this precious “gift of life” is an honour and privilege and call upon all our volunteers to keep up the good work and to continue to encourage your family, neighbours and community to give life by donating blood.

I am happy that the model blood bank at national headquarters collects nearly 30,000 units of blood through more than 300 blood donation camps annually and maintains records of about 50,000 potential donors to meet emergency requirements.

#### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The principle of voluntary service lies at the very heart of our humanitarian work. We can see this principle clearly embodied in many of the young volunteers of the Indian Red Cross Society.

Through the youth and junior Red Cross programmes, millions of young people gain an opportunity to continue their learning beyond schools and colleges, and to share what they learn for the betterment of their own communities.

Youth camps are being held all over the country teaching our youth climate change, first-aid, humanitarian values and yoga and meditation.

I am delighted to see that the number of children and young people who are guided by the values of the Indian Red Cross Society continues to grow.



Here, I would like to give an example of the effectiveness of working with and through young people.

The HIV programme in Andhra Pradesh supported by one of our long standing partners, the Hong Kong Red Cross, uses the youth peer education approach.

In the localities involved in this programme, there have been clear changes in attitudes towards people living with HIV and understanding of HIV itself.



**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am aware that our ties with several organizations have been strengthened.

Indian Red Cross Society and the National Institute of Disaster Management are collaborating to provide more effective services in emergencies.

The collaboration with the National Centre for Diseases Control for various programmes and particularly for the society's post graduate diploma course is similarly leading to commendable synergies.

Here, I would like to congratulate the Secretary General, Dr. SP Agarwal, for his success in forging new partnerships, such as with Belgian Red Cross (Flanders), with whom a long and fruitful partnership has begun, on new evidence-based activities among other issues.

A memorandum of understanding with the Turkish Red Crescent Society has also been signed illustrating a commitment from both sides to work together on a variety of mutual interest issues, particularly in disaster response and development.



The partnerships with several well-wishers from the corporate world, like Accenture, Coca Cola, Fed-Ex, Nestle and State Bank of India are very handy, not only in supporting us in times of disaster, but also in helping to build our capacity.

I look forward to seeing increased participation of corporates with the Indian Red Cross Society in more programme areas to further strengthen and enhance our response capacity and encourage the state branches to also explore opportunities to work together with corporate entities.



**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Within the Red Cross Movement, both the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have continued to work with Indian Red Cross Society to achieve greatest impact of our collective voluntary work.

The American Red Cross and DFID, UK, have long been our partners and have eagerly engaged with us in newer areas like the measles catch up programme.

I am very happy to inform that two of our other long term partners, the German and Spanish Red Cross societies, have now completed their tsunami rehabilitation work with the objective of building capacity of the communities.

The legacy of these projects will continue to be sustained in the assisted communities with the help of respective state branches and national headquarters.

Of course, we also work closely with UN agencies such as UNICEF and the WHO.

I am happy to inform that on his visit to New Delhi in May, 2012, UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon remarked that “Indian Red Cross, with its outreach and volunteers all over India is the ideal partner for the UN system to enhance its humanitarian and development activities.”

Our partnerships, whether new or already existing, are stronger today than ever before and I once again congratulate the Secretary General and his team for their success in strengthening such partnerships for the benefit of the organization and its programmes.



**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In recent years, the Indian Red Cross Society has raised its profile in humanitarian work, nationally, regionally and globally.

India is now the third largest donor to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies illustrating the commitment of our nation to humanitarian assistance and development.

I am delighted that Indian Red Cross is playing its part in humanitarian assistance throughout the region and beyond, and is seen as a key partner by sister agencies.

The recent visits of a large number of senior representatives of our Movement, such as the Director General of the ICRC, the President and Secretary General of Belgian Red Cross (Flanders), the Secretary General of Canadian Red Cross and the Under-Secretary General for development of the IFRC, contributed to the strengthening of cooperation within the global Red Cross and Red Crescent family.



#### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Moving on to financial and administrative matters, I am happy to inform that tax exemption for our donors as well as exemption of income tax for the national headquarters on perpetual basis have been obtained.

The state and district branches can also make efforts to avail of similar exemptions from their respective local income tax authorities.

There has been greater interaction between the national headquarters and the state branches and centres through convening four regional meetings of Indian Red Cross Society and the State Secretaries meetings of St. John Ambulance (India) during 2012. Such meetings bring us closer together and lead to collective humanitarian activities.

Here, I would like to commend the St. John Ambulance (India) for doing exceptionally good work, especially in the area of first aid trainings and providing of ambulance services through its two wings; St. John Association and St. John Brigade.

It has been training about six to seven lakhs of people in first aid every year and the brigade wing is running ambulance services in various parts of the country, saving precious lives.

Their participation during major public events, such as Republic Day, is much appreciated by local authorities since they establish first aid posts and keep their ambulances available on-site to quickly respond to medical care needs and transport people to hospitals, if required.



Before I conclude, I would like to once again congratulate and thank all our branches and each one of you for the tremendous humanitarian work you do each and every day to voluntarily assist those who are in need. The need of the hour is working together, irrespective of caste, creed and religion, for the benefit of humanity and I urge you to continue to set an example for the others to encourage them to contribute more to their communities, society and the nation.

I assure you that the efforts of our members and volunteers are not going un-noticed and, as I repeatedly say, you are indeed the true heroes of Indian Red Cross Society and St John Ambulance (India).

Thank you and jai Hind.







