



**Address of
Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad,
Hon'ble Minister of Health & Family Welfare, GoI
&
Chairman, Indian Red Cross Society and St. John Ambulance (India)**

**CEREMONIAL SESSION
of
Annual General Meeting
of
Indian Red Cross Society and St. John Ambulance (India)**

12:15 PM on 03 MAY 2013

RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN, NEW DELHI



Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Hon'ble President of India and President of Indian Red Cross Society and St. John Ambulance (India),

Hon'ble Governors,

Shri Deepender Singh Hooda, Vice Chairman of Indian Red Cross Society,

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

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

Mr. Azmat Ullah, Head of the regional delegations of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies,

Ms. Mary Werntz, Head of the regional delegations of the International Committee of the Red Cross,

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

Invited representatives of the Partner Organizations and National Societies,

Awardees,

Observers,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to join you here today for the ceremonial session of the annual general meeting of both the Indian Red Cross Society and St. John Ambulance (India).



At the outset, on my and on behalf of millions of members and volunteers of both Indian Red Cross Society and St. John Ambulance, I would like to thank Hon'ble President for taking time out from his very busy schedule and agreeing to preside over this ceremonial session.

Sir, we are privileged to have a visionary like yourself as head of the family and are honoured that you are hosting the ceremonial session of the annual general meeting of the two organizations here at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Your presence is a source of inspiration and encouragement to all of us and to the countless volunteers who are selflessly serving their communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,



I congratulate all the branches, centers and individuals who are being honoured today.

Today, we are recognizing not only the Awardees, who have competed to gain the maximum number of members and donors, but also the efforts of the thousands of volunteers for substantial humanitarian action in communities, especially assistance rendered to the vulnerable and the deprived.

This is in keeping with the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and I have no hesitation in saying, that our volunteers are the real heroes and the lifeblood of our organization, making us proud every single day.



Respected Rashtrapati ji,

Here, I would like to present some of the most important achievements of both organizations in recent years, in particular since the last general body meeting.

Indian Red Cross Society, through its more than 700 branches across the states and union territories is engaged in multiple activities, ranging from disaster management, blood services, services for disabled, vocational training, and maternity and child welfare schemes.

The junior and youth wing of the Indian Red Cross Society is the backbone of the organization, holding Youth Camps across the country, where young people are trained on subjects such as

climate change, first aid, HIV/AIDS education, humanitarian values, and health promotion through ayurveda and yoga.

The society also offers a one-year post graduate diploma course on disaster preparedness and rehabilitation in New Delhi and has so far qualified six batches of disaster managers.

Sir, I am happy to inform you that Indian Red Cross Society is contributing 10% of the total blood collections in the country through its 166 blood banks across the country and 86% of these donations are made on a voluntary basis.

Sir, the model blood bank at our national headquarters at New Delhi collects nearly 30,000 blood units through more than 300 blood donation camps every year.

As many as 900 thalassemia patients as well as government hospitals have been supplied blood free of charge, by the national headquarters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Besides blood services, Indian Red Cross Society is also supplementing the efforts of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare through a number of other health programmes, such as tuberculosis control in 7 States and the measles catch-up programme through social mobilization in M.P. and U.P.

It is also a matter of great satisfaction that our Secretary General, Dr. SP Agarwal, is the current chairperson of the International Federation's "Sustainable Development and Health Advisory Body".

Therefore, we are now guiding the work of the entire membership of the International Federation; consisting of 187 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world.

Across the globe, including India, communities remain vulnerable to disasters, which are unpredictable and affect all aspects of life.

Recognizing this, Indian Red Cross Society has been training its volunteers in disaster response, such as the National and State Disaster Response Teams, as well as further specialized teams such as the National Disaster Water and Sanitation Response Teams since 2005.

Now, the society is taking the next step, by initiating a programme which certifies First Medical Responders, prepared to respond to a variety of needs during disaster situations and not just medical needs.

Initially piloted in Uttarakhand, the programme is now rolling out across 14 state branches, and I hope that soon we will see this community focused initiative in all 35 state and union territory branches.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since our last AGM, the society has been called on to support the authorities in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Sikkim, severe flooding in Assam and in the wake of cyclone Nilam in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.

I am glad that the society is making use of the latest response tools, including emergency response units, mobile disaster units and medical disaster units in such situations.

Of course, the work of Indian Red Cross sometimes goes beyond disaster response since communities also need assistance to rebuild their livelihoods after such crises.

Ladies and Gentlemen,



I will now turn to the important work being done by St. John Ambulance (India)

In March, 1904, the Order of St. John organized the Silver Challenge Shield Railway competitions in Jabalpur and since then, St. John Ambulance has been active in the country.

It now trains about 6 to 7 lakh people in First-Aid every year and the Brigade Wing runs ambulance services in many places throughout the country, saving precious lives.

The activities of St. John Ambulance (India) are progressing very well, with its 2,478 brigade divisions consisting of thousands of trained volunteers.

St. John Ambulances' timely intervention in times of accident, religious congregations and rallies are fine examples of selfless service in saving precious human life.



In this regard, I am happy to note that the common First Aid Manual for St. John Ambulance and Indian Red Cross has been updated with the latest information.

It is heartening to see the two organization's embrace modern information and communication methods, to ensure, that they remain at the forefront of emergency medical assistance throughout our communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, I would like to once again thank our Hon'ble President of India for his firm and valuable support to both the organizations.

Many of you may not be aware that our President himself has been a blood donor and a great force in motivating others to donate blood voluntarily.

We are indeed fortunate to have him leading and guiding the Indian Red Cross and St. John Ambulance (India).

I once again congratulate and whole heartedly thank all the branches and volunteers for the tremendous work being done each and every day to assist those who are in need.

Thank you and Jai Hind.







