

**Speech of the Hon'ble Governor for the Inaugural  
function of 17th Indian Association of Gastrointestinal  
Endosurgeons (IAGES) Conference at Srimanta  
Sankardeva International Auditorium on 7th Feb, 2020**

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Namaskar,

Minister of State for Health Pijush Hazarika ji, Justice, Bombay High Court Ujjal Bhuyan ji, President of Gastrointestinal Endosurgeons Dr Sayandev Dasgupta ji, President Elect, Dr Ramen Goel ji, Organizing Chairman Dr M Zaman Ahmed ji, Organizing Secretary of this conference Dr Subhash Khanna ji and all fellow Indian surgeons and invitees present here.

I am glad to be here at the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian association of Gastrointestinal Endosurgeons' Conference in this beautiful ambience of Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra. Your Association is more than just a platform of doctors and surgeons. It is a link between two vibrant pillars of our democratic society, both of which have addressed major public health challenges in their own way to ensure enduring smile to the patients.

This is perhaps the first mega events of Endoscopic Surgery being conducted in Guwahati, the gateway to North

East region of India where experts from across the country have assembled to share their knowledge, experiences and expertise to set an agenda for future line of action of the Association.

At the same time, I would also like to acknowledge the gesture of the Indian Association of Gastrointestinal Endosurgeons for choosing Guwahati to host this conference. I am told that leading surgeons Prof T Udwadia was instrumental in forming Indian Association of Gastrointestinal Endosurgeons way back in 1993. I am told Prof T Udwadia who is regarded as the Father of Laparoscopy in India performed first Lap Cholecystectomy in India.

I am also happy to know that our own Prof. Khanna is the immediate Past President of this august body. It is heartening to know that the professional-ism and goodwill radiated by the the Indian Association of Gastrointestinal Endosurgeons is giving lakhs of patients not only health but an enduring smile.

Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi said "A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members." Our Government draws deep inspiration from the wisdom of Bapu and aims to uplift the weakest of the weak of the society and help them to rise in the economic and social ladder.

I am very happy to note that our Government has been working exceedingly hard to provide delivery of holistic



healthcare to everybody. Under the leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, a series of initiatives have been taken by our government to address the health-care issues in the state.

Assam has a diverse geography including char areas, tea garden areas, hill districts and forest areas where health facilities are lacking. After we formed Government in 2016, we found that the major challenges to healthcare delivery in Assam are- insufficient medical facilities, non availability of free medicine including the life-saving drugs in health centres, improper sanitation facilities, contaminated drinking water, vulnerability of the State to annual floods and resultant water borne diseases such as Diarrhoea, Dysentery, Cholera, Gastroenteritis, prevalence of various vector borne diseases like malaria, Japanese encephalitis, dengue etc.

Our Government has taken major strides in the health care scenario through implementation of infrastructure development as well as various innovative schemes in addition to augmentation of quality manpower to ensure that health care facilities are easily accessible. It is an undeniable fact that there is huge shortage of doctors in the state.

To tide over this shortage, our Government gives importance to increasing the number of medical colleges and Nursing Institutions.

In our state construction of AIIMS is going on in full swing at Changsari near Guwahati. Further, to expand and reform medical education, eight new medical colleges are being set up in the state.

Our Government on 11th May 2017, launched Chief Ministers' Free Diagnostics Services to ensure availability of minimum set of diagnostics services at health institutions up to PHC level.

The North East Region has a very high cancer incidence and Assam accounts for a majority of these cancer patients. In the past two years, Government of Assam has taken several steps to address this.

Meanwhile, State Government has entered into a partnership with Tata Trusts for implementing a State-wide Cancer Care programme which is being implemented through Assam Cancer Care Foundation.

Government Medical Colleges and eleven District Hospitals are being strengthened to provide varying degrees of cancer care.

We have also come to realize that every year, large numbers of households are being pushed into poverty because they were forced to pay for out of their own pockets for treatment of a certain number of high cost diseases like cancer,



Heart, Kidney Disease, Neurological Disorder, Neonatal Diseases and Burns leading to catastrophic expenditures.

Our Government with an aim to provide a cover against such catastrophic health care expenditure for such high cost diseases has launched two innovative cashless health schemes namely, Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and 'Atal Amrit Abhyjan'. The Scheme aims at providing hassle-free and convenient cashless coverage to avail best treatment available.

Moreover, AMRIT Pharmacies where life-saving drugs and implants are given at subsidised rates have been set up in our state.

All these initiatives intend to make healthcare holistic and more affordable for all sections. These schemes are particularly aimed at those at the bottom of the pyramid – the less-than-privileged people of our society.

I take the pleasure of sharing with all our distinguished guests here this evening that the Act East Policy enunciated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made Guwahati the gateway to South East Asian countries. Many of ASEAN countries' capitals are within 2000 kilometer flying distance from Guwahati which is comparable to flying distance of Guwahati to many Indian cities.

Esteemed dignitaries, the reason I am referring this to you is ASEAN and BBIN countries together has thrown open a

market of 80 crore population. There is a huge possibility that with concerted efforts we can together play a key role in transforming our state into an epicentre of medical tourism.

I congratulate the organiser of this conference for putting in their thoughts and planned the conference in such a manner to give adequate knowledge sharing ground to the delegates and trainees. I hope the conference would serve as a learning curve for the trainees to gain the pre-conference workshops, lectures on current practices and newer horizons in Minimal Access Surgery shared by leading national and international faculty to help them to serve their patients in their respective cities.

With these words, I declare the conference inaugurated.

Thank you.

**Jai Hind**