

**Text of the Address by the Chief Guest , NITI Aayog Dr. Vinod Paul,  
delivered at the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Convocation on 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2021, at NAMS,  
New Delhi**

Good Evening

Dr. Sarooj Chooramani Gopal, President, National Academy of Medical Sciences

Past President, National Academy of Medical Sciences

Hon'ble Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Former Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare

Members of the Council of National Academy of Medical Sciences

Newly elected Fellows & Members of National Academy of Medical Sciences

Awardees and Orators

Fellows of National Academy of Medical Sciences

Ladies & Gentlemen

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It is a true privilege and honor for me to be invited to the 60<sup>th</sup> Convocation of the esteemed National Academy of Medical Sciences. To me, NAMS is the apex medical academy of our Nation. I get goosebumps when I read the names of people who were associated with the creation of the Academy. Prof. K.L. Wig, Prof. V. Ramalingaswami, Col. Sangam Lal, Col. B.L. Taneja, Dr. Vishwanathan, Dr. B.K. Anand, Dr. S.K. Sen and Col. Amir Chand. These great medical doctors were the first generation pioneers in Medical Sciences of Independent India.

They came together in 1961 to establish an academy, then named as the Indian Academy of Medical Sciences, with the noble objectives of:

- (i) Promotion to knowledge of medical sciences of India and its practical applications to problems of national welfare, and
- (ii) Recognition of merit in all branches of medical sciences.

Let us all salute the founding fathers of the National Academy of Medical Sciences for their foresight, leadership, and patriotism.

Let us also salute the extraordinary work done by the Academy in the last 60 years by its members and leaders.

Let us congratulate the present leadership of the Academy led by President Chooramani Gopal for advancing the mission of the Academy with exceptional energy and wide-ranging action.

I congratulate the candidates who have been conferred the coveted awards of the National Academy of Medical Sciences.

I specially congratulate Dr. Harsh Vardhan ji whom the Academy is honored to confer Fellowship today.

I also congratulate the candidates who have been presented the Fellowships and Memberships of the Academy. You epitomize excellence in medical sciences.

You are the flag-bearers of scientific and academic advancement in all branches of medicine in our country.

As a Fellow of the Academy, FAMS, I know how hard it is to earn this recognition. Your consistent and extraordinary contribution to medical sciences is an inspiration to the younger generation.

Let me make a suggestion here:

NAMS should chronicle, archive, exhibit and celebrate the contribution of Indian medical scientists since independence. Young people should have an opportunity to know and be inspired

by the path-breaking work contributed by Indian medical scientists. This can be done in multiple ways: electronic, print, exhibitions, as well as events that connect the present lot with the pioneers.

We are meeting today in challenging times faced by the country and the world. Covid-19 pandemic has inflicted an unprecedented human, social and economic cost. In fighting this pandemic, medical and health professionals of our nation have demonstrated the best of professional commitment and resilience. They risked their lives in providing care to sick patients. They toiled in wards, ICUs, clinics and laboratories in fighting an invisible enemy and a new disease about which not much was known; and in doing so, they risked their own lives.

Their efforts led to continuously improving outcomes of Covid-19 patients as our understanding of what works and what does not work improved. They shared experience and best practice with each other and helped improve the clinical management protocol as the new evidence accrued. They helped develop new vaccines on conventional as well as absolutely new platforms. Medical scientists and health professionals of our country have written a history in golden letters.

Let us pause for a moment to pay our heartfelt tribute to those of our medical and health fraternity who lost their lives in the line of duty during the pandemic. I would like to suggest that the Academy should take lead in show-casing India's scientific contribution to the science of SARS Cov2- the virus, the disease and the solutions.

I would like to make four points for the kind consideration of the NAMS family:

First

The National Academy of Medical Sciences is unique as an organization. Its USP is that it transcends individual medical disciplines. The expanse of the scope of the National Academy of Medical Sciences ranges from basic bio-medical sciences, pre and para clinical sciences, public health sciences, and of course clinical sciences.

Ours is truly an umbrella academy of medical specialities.

This place is envisioned in the chapter of the Academy as an objective,

“To secure coordination between medical societies, associations, institutions and government medical departments and services.”

NAMS is truly envisioned as a banyan tree, ek *vat vrikhsha*, encompassing all medical sciences of in Nation.

I would like to see this role to be further delivered and nurtured. We should do more to be the glue to take along medical associations, speciality bodies and academies of diverse disciplines for the larger cause of advancing the knowledge and practice of medical sciences: basic scientists and clinicians, medical disciplines and surgical disciplines, clinicians and public health scientists. Can we also do more to bring together modern medical sciences and traditional medicine- especially Ayurveda and Sidha.

Likewise, going a step forward – NAMS is also a bridge between medical sciences and other sciences – physical, engineering, agriculture, environment and indeed social science, among others.

It is said that solutions to the mighty problems of humanity emerge when disciplines and sciences meet.

It is a key mandate of the NAMS to promote and maintain a liaison between medicine and other sciences.

NAMS should be a *sangam*, a confluence, where medical and non-medical scientists come together, meet, mix and mingle, in real, remote and virtual modes; learn from each other, share their knowledge, find connections, explore ideas and yes, collaborate to unravel knowledge, and

discover solutions. NAMS should be the melting pot of bioscience, Digitech, synthetic biology and precision medicine. Joint programs with scientific institutions and academics is the way forward in this regard.

Two

E must build on the illustrious contribution of NAMS so far and make this institution as the foremost think tank for health policy. NAMS has the stature and the convening capability to do so. Your leaders and fellows collectively represent the essence of India's medical intellect. Let us scientifically design pathways to address the challenges of the day and beyond. Future pandemics, antimicrobial resistance, animal-human health interphase, the silent epidemic of life-style disease, mental health and geriatric health. The Government would look forward to your ideas on expanding the scope and reach of Ayushman Bharat PM Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) in our endeavor to ensure Universal Health Coverage for all; your ideas on primary prevention of ill health through comprehensive primary healthcare; your ideas on digital health through the National Digital Health Mission; and your thoughts on how to make the new All India Institutes of Medical Sciences world-class hubs of medical research and not just tertiary care teaching institutions; and so on. Let us make NAMS as the catalyst for achieving the health SDG targets.

Three

Promotion of medical sciences in the medical colleges and teaching institutions should be an important part of our work at the academy. The academy should catalyze activities which are cross-cutting among disciplines. Activities that serve as tools for research and discovery. NAMS can take lead in promoting training of postgraduates and faculty in laboratory and clinical research methods. How can we provide opportunities to young faculty to receive first-hand exposure and learning experience in the best laboratories of the country and the world? How can we train clinical faculty in conducting quality clinical studies and trials, and make India a hub of drug development and translational science? How can we create a large collaborative of scientists in community-based research on disease epidemiology and public health interventions? How can we get more out of the research mentored by the faculty for post graduate thesis (over 50,000 of them each year)? How can train young faculty of teaching institutions to write quality research projects and complete for funds?

Four

The National Academy of Medical Sciences should nurture young people and take young medical scientists into our sphere of work beyond Membership. NAMS should institute fellowships, research schemes, grants, award at the postgraduate, early career and mid-career stages. We should create opportunities to induct younger generation into our organizational hierarchy and system. This will connect the 60-year young Academy to the next generation of leaders in medical sciences in the country. Young and mid-career medical scientists will not only enrich the vibrance of the academy, but also be the force-multipliers of our work and mission.

In the end, let me say that COVID-19 has brought the health sector at the centre-stage of our national discourse. Ensuring good health emerges as the core imperative citizens, and health emerges as the core priority of national development for this decade.

As we celebrate the 75 year of our Independence, medical science fraternity has a role and responsibility to help envision a Nation, within a decade, in which key health indicators compare with those in high income countries; A Nation in which comprehensive healthcare is accessible to all and no one is left behind;

A Nation in which healthcare is blend of family and specialty approach; and

A Nation which is at the frontlines of medical sciences offering novel medical therapies, diagnostics and technologies to the country and the world.

In this endeavour, the National Academy of Medical Sciences with its members and fellows of today and tomorrow, has the capability and strength to be the principal pace-maker and enabler of this transformation.

**Jai Hind**