

Welcome Address

Air Marshal PC Sharda, AVSM, PHS

DGMS (Air) IAF & President Indian Society of Aerospace Medicine

Air Chief Marshal Kaul, Chief of the Air Staff, Prof. Bajaj, Member Planning Commission, Dr Stanley White, Chairman, International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine, distinguished dignitaries, Ladies and Gentlemen

As the head of the Medical Services of the Indian Air Force and the President of the Indian Society of Aerospace Medicine as well as that of the Organizing Committee of the 42nd ICASM, I consider it a matter of great pride and privilege to welcome Air Chief Marshal SK Kaul, Chief of the Air Staff, Dr Stanley White, President of the International Academy of Aviation & Space Medicine Dr Bajaj, Member Planning Commission of India, and all dignitaries and guests from abroad and India. I extend a warm welcome to past presidents of the Society, friends, colleagues, delegates, senior retired officers and their lady wives who have graced this momentous International Congress of Aviation and Space Medicine being held in India for the first time.

Chief of the Air Staff, who is also Patron of the Indian Society of Aerospace Medicine, willingly accepted our invitation to be with us today in spite of a very committed schedule. It only shows his genuine interest in Aviation Medicine. I am thankful to you, sir, for being with us this morning.

Indian participation in Aviation Medicine started in 1941 with the arrival of the then so-called modern aircraft of RAF and allied forces. Within a year, IAF Medical Officers got opportunities to gain first-hand practical knowledge in aeromedical problems. By 1944, training programme in Aviation Medicine for medical officers and paramedical staff was implemented. The growth in the field finally led to the estab-

lishment of the Indian Society of Aerospace Medicine in 1952.

It is perhaps an astrological auspicious coincidence that the Society in its 42nd year of existence is hosting the 42nd International Congress of Aviation and Space Medicine for which we made a bid five years back.

Over the years, the Society has provided a forum to express our contribution to all important aspects of aerospace medicine, from selection to assessment of aircrew, to development of indigenous aircraft, aeromedical equipment and evaluation of imported gadgetry. Apart from a few sister R&D organizations, the nodal points for the activities of the Society has been Institute of Aerospace Medicine located at Bangalore and Air Force Central Medical Establishment, New Delhi.

The Institute of Aerospace Medicine IAM, as it is popularly known, was established in 1957 as School of Aviation Medicine (SAM). Since then it has grown in stature performing the role of training, research and medical evaluation. Various simulators help in indoctrination of the aircrew (both military & civil) and train doctors including some from other countries. The Institute is recognized by the University of Bangalore for the 3-year postgraduate degree of MD in Aerospace Medicine and is open to our civilian counterparts. Research and development work carried out is of applied nature to solve the field problems in aviation medicine. The Institute as a whole was responsible for the selection of our cosmonaut candidates, one of whom finally went into space in April 1984. Later two scientists were selected to go as payload specialists for launching a satellite from the space shuttle. These two activities

were appreciated by both, erstwhile USSR and NASA, and they designated IAM as a recognized centre for selection of astronauts/cosmonauts. Today IAM is appropriately known as the Institute of Aerospace Medicine.

Multispeciality clinical evaluation centre existing at IAM and AF Central Medical Establishment carry out medical assessment of all military and civil aircrew in the country. These are comparable to the very best in the world.

We have been holding scientific meeting of the Indian Society of Aerospace Medicine every year to exchange notes on the work done and generate programmes for the future. This year by hosting the International Congress, we too have become global in keeping with activities in other fields in our country.

The galaxy of eminent scientists from India and nearly 25 other countries participating in this Congress is a recognition by itself. And

surely the rich scientific fare scheduled for the Congress and exchange of ideas at this International forum will be a welcome impetus to Aerospace Medicine.

Traditionally, an eminent scientist delivers an oration at such meetings. Today we have amongst us Prof. Bajaj, an internationally renowned Diabetologist and member of Planning Commission of India, who will deliver the Dr. Allard Memorial Lecture. A very special thank you, sir, for accepting to deliver this prestigious lecture. We are honoured by your presence.

I extend a special welcome to Dr. Stanley White, President of International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine.

Once again I welcome and thank all the delegates, guests, ladies and gentlemen to be here with us.

Thank you.