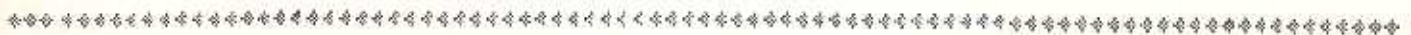




XXIV ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AERO MEDICAL SOCIETY OF INDIA

Inaugural Address *

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL DILBAGH SINGH PVSM AVSM VM



THE last two decades have witnessed tremendous advances in aviation and space technology. These advances have tended to produce aircraft whose performance far exceeds human tolerance. However, it is the man in the machine who continues to be the most important link in the man-machine complex. It is ultimately the pilot with his ability to weigh the pros and cons of the courses of action available who will have to use his judgement to successfully complete his mission in a demanding situation. In the field of Military Aviation, it is the aircrew who have to deliver the goods and, therefore, they must be the strongest force in the programme which aims at higher efficiency while ensuring greater safety of operation.

It costs the nation considerable sums of money to provide the Air Force with sophisticated aircraft. Training of an operational pilot takes about five to seven years and costs the exchequer several crores of rupees for each type of aircraft. While we can ill-afford to lose aircraft due to its high cost, it is more difficult to replace the trained operational pilot.

Flying produces various stresses on man. A scientific approach towards determining these physiological and psychological stresses and the means

to overcome them is, to my mind, one of the main tasks of the specialists in Aviation Medicine. Human behaviour can vary considerably in a demanding environment, such as in the event of an emergency in the air. We must be sure that we are not asking for superhuman skill and application from the aircrew in the circumstances. It should be our endeavour to ensure that all aircrew are in a state of physical and mental fitness and as a result of the constant training they undergo, they should be able to cope with the emergency and successfully complete their mission.

Rapid advances in aviation present big challenges to the specialists in Aviation Medicine. They have to ensure that human effort matches the sophisticated machines thus ensuring all round safety of operations and effectiveness. This is particularly so when due to aerodynamics of the very modern aircraft the pilot is more prone to disorientation even when the weather is clear and sufficient visual references are available. The aviators flying high performance aircraft are becoming increasingly exposed to environments beyond the human physiology. This is an area for aero medical research to enhance pilot capability and flight safety. I am aware that the Institute of Aviation Medicine has been doing good work along these lines towards the attainment of these goals.

* Air Marshal EPR Nair AVSM VSM, AOC-in-C, Training Command, IAF inaugurated the Meeting.

In the IAF, the flying stations are the centres of activity. This is where the young pilots have to master their tasks successfully to accomplish the mission. It is here that the Aviation Medicine specialists have the potential to render valuable service in identifying weak areas and close monitoring of individual aircrew, and suggest remedial action where necessary. Thus a squadron medical officer is an important link in the whole system of flight safety. The level of rapport of the doctor with the aircrew will determine the degree of success he achieves.

I am happy to note that the Aero Medical Society of India has amongst its members many eminent scientists and doctors who have made lasting contributions to the work of the Society through their knowledge, experience and research. Since its formation 29 years ago, the Society has expanded its area of activity and has been rendering valuable service to the Air Force and to the Civil Aviation.

We have a comprehensive programme of monitoring the health of flying personnel in our units. However, the day to day aeromedical care available to military aircrew is not yet available to the civil aircrew. At present, the members of the Aero Medical Society of India are associated only with the medical evaluation and certification of fitness for flying of civil aircrew. The civil aviation organisation might consider this aspect so that civil pilots benefit from the Aviation Medicine expertise availa-

ble in this country. This, in turn, will ensure higher standards of flight safety in civil aviation. The Institute of Aviation Medicine is already offering facilities for aero medical training of civilian doctors. I am sure any other assistance for training and research programmes required by the Civil Aviation Organisations can be made available by the Indian Air Force.

India is on the threshold of the space age and we expect to see Indian astronauts in space in the near future. As the only scientific body in the country with expertise in the field of Aero Space Medicine, it is appropriate that Aero Medical Society of India should so plan that they are able to accept the challenge of the space age.

In these two days of deliberations, you will be discussing various problems having a bearing on Aviation Safety. I wish you every success. I am happy to see a large number of service and civilian medical consultants with us this morning. Your continuing interest in the work of the Society is a source of pride and strength.

I welcome Dr Ahuja, an eminent specialist in the field of Medicine, who has consented to deliver the Air Marshal Subroto Mukerjee Memorial Oration this morning. I am sure the Aero Medical Society of India will be able to draw from his deep knowledge. I have now much pleasure in inaugurating the 24th Annual Meeting of the Aero Medical Society of India.

