

Address by the President of India on the occasion of presentation of National Florence Nightingale Awards for nursing personnel

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1. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be amidst you on the occasion of presentation of the National Florence Nightingale Awards for 2017. It is a fitting tribute to the iconic 'Lady with the Lamp'.

2. I congratulate all the award winners and extend my best wishes to the entire nursing community of our country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3. Nurses in India are at the forefront of our national healthcare system. Their contribution is central to its success. In a developing economy such as ours, nurses and midwives are crucial in delivering cost-effective and, at the same time, good quality healthcare. Our nation is proud of their services.

4. I welcome the guiding theme selected by the International Council of Nurses this year: "*Nurses: A Voice to Lead, Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals*". No doubt this is the most appropriate theme in the current situation.

5. The need to adapt our standards to the evolving demands of healthcare and update our capacities is self-evident. Our country needs to respond swiftly to healthcare challenges that keep coming up. I am glad to see that the National Health Policy, 2017 envisages a new momentum in innovation and nursing. As Indian nurses take on greater local, national and international roles, we need to ensure appropriate professional development and human resource policies in our country – and increased involvement of nurses in policy development. The complexity of medical and healthcare practices today demands that nurses are fully involved in the planning, implementation, research and evaluation that goes into the successful delivery of patient care. These functions come with responsibilities and accountability. The legal and policy framework of nursing protocols and standards of practice must facilitate optimal utilization of competencies.

6. Throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century, thanks to the improving quality of nursing services, significant gains have been made in increasing life expectancy and reducing child and maternal mortality in both urban as well as rural India.

7. It is, nevertheless necessary to be conscious that while most countries have a shortage of nurses, the situation continues to be quite acute in India, primarily due to the migration of the large number of nurses we produce from our institutions. India's low nurse to population ratio reminds us that much more capacity needs to be built with closer co-between States and the Central Government. I am glad that Government of India is addressing these concerns to strengthen the nursing sector in our country and that there has been a positive rate of growth in our training capacity over the past decade.

8. I call upon nurse educators to inculcate – if not surpass – the world's best, professional, nursing and midwifery educational standards. This endeavour will raise the quality of nursing education in India and also create paths for professional advancement in line with national, regional and global health needs.

9. As we recognize and honour the meritorious nursing professionals of India, I wish you all success. The nation is grateful for your services and compassionate selfless care. I am confident that the Florence Nightingale Awardees-2017 will inspire the entire nursing fraternity to rededicate themselves to quality healthcare. I take this opportunity to also extend my best wishes to the Hon'ble Union Health Minister, Ministers of State for Health and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for the success of their efforts towards improvement of healthcare services in the country.

JAI HIND!

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