

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE
ON THE OCCASION OF DEDICATION OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF MENTAL HEALTH AND NEUROLOGICAL SCIENCES (NIMHANS),
BANGALORE TO THE NATION AS AN INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL
IMPORTANCE**

Bangalore, Karnataka : December 22, 2015

I am delighted to be here today on this historic occasion. The National Institute of Mental Health and Neurological Sciences – or NIMHANS, as we know it, has long been recognized for its outstanding contribution in the area of mental health. Beginning its journey as far back as in 1850, NIMHANS has, today, evolved into a foremost Institute of National Importance. NIMHANS has cut across boundaries and disciplines by integrating care with prevention and rehabilitation. It has taken the lead in integrating biological sciences with social and behavioural studies. At the very outset, I would like to congratulate all the founding members and successive Directors of this institution for their vision and leadership. They have developed this Institution into what it is today, and the nation appreciates their efforts and contribution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is only appropriate that NIMHANS, located in the IT City of Bangalore, should adopt modern, computer-based Hospital Information Systems to improve efficiencies in all its Centres. The use of information technology to invigorate health care delivery also helps in reducing costs,

optimising resource management and minimising paper work. The e-hospital and e-project programmes taken up by NIMHANS are, therefore, excellent initiatives, worthy of emulation by other institutions.

Our national indicators relating to the health sector in India remind us that health care is one of the positive contributors to the progress and development of our country. Today, there is an increasing realisation all over the world, that there can be no health without mental health. Our country's first comprehensive mental health policy was notified only as recently as last October on the occasion of World Mental Health Day. I am glad to note that it covers several aspects of mental health - including the rights of the mentally ill, the need to provide support to care givers, decriminalization of suicide - and other progressive policy initiatives. The policy, supported by the "Mental Health Action Plan 365", spells out the specific roles of the Central Government, the State Governments, local bodies and civil society.

A Bill on mental health-care, *currently under consideration in Parliament*, also seeks to provide a robust legislative framework that assures standardised mental health services.

I would stress that while formulating policy, our Government must always take care to ensure that due priority is given to human resource development in the field of mental healthcare and delivery. We also need to systematically devise innovative methods for enhancing the delivery of mental health care services. I am glad to see that the National Mental Health Policy of the Government of India seeks to speedily integrate mental health care services into general health care as part of non communicable

disease. It is also an important priority to address the stigma experienced by persons who are mentally ill. They should not continue to be subjected to neglect and marginalisation. The first-ever National Mental Health Survey that NIMHANS will undertake is a good step in this direction. I understand the Survey will cover a representative population across many States and Union Territories of India and that Phase 1 of the study has commenced in 12 States. It is also appropriate that the survey will not only include an assessment of mental health systems in each State but also the availability of adequate human resources for health services. The outcome of this survey will, no doubt, be valuable input for enhancement of the standards and quality of health services in the country.

I am glad that the current ongoing research into Mental Health and Neuroscience is in a promising phase of discovery and development. Findings in stem cell research, molecular genetics, and the availability of new methods of brain imaging, for example, have brought new hope for the treatment of brain disorders. It has been convincingly proven that a complex interaction of genes and environment predispose an individual to mental illness - and external influences contribute to its progression. It is apt that NIMHANS has, through its research, been able to provide empirical evidence of the benefits of yoga in building equanimity of the mind. I am confident that NIMHANS shall also contribute to the discovery of new drugs and new therapeutic modalities.

Indian mental health professionals have proven that community care of the mentally ill is a feasible and cost effective option. This is a route that leads to significant recovery. Several models have shown that integration of mental health with primary health care, training of health functionaries, easier availability of essential drugs and better management are increasing effectiveness within resource constraints in India.

I am also happy to learn that NIMHANS has taken a number of initiatives such as the “Brain bank”, the Free Legal Aid Clinic in its outpatient block, Centre for Well Being, Centre for Public Health and Centre for Addiction Medicine. I understand that about half the patients at NIMHANS pay only a nominal fee or avail the highly specialized services offered by NIMHANS free of cost. These models - as well as the NIMHANS Community Mental Health and Rehabilitation Centre and Neuro-biology Research Centre (NRC) are successful models that can be replicated in other parts of the country. Similarly, the MEG Research Centre is the first of its kind in India. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to inaugurate this facility today.

I am also pleased to inaugurate the NIMHANS heritage museum. I congratulate all those associated with its creation. Designating NIMHANS as the Institute of National Importance is a tribute to its various patient care activities, innovations, research and new initiatives. I have no doubt that NIMHANS will continue to inspire and support the development of the mental health sector at state, national and even international levels.

With these words, I once again congratulate NIMHANS and dedicate this Institute of National Importance to the nation.

JAI HIND