

**Inaugural Address by CNS at 42nd ICMM World Congress on 20  
November 2017**

1. Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa, Chief of the Air Staff, General Bipin Rawat, Chief of the Army Staff, Shri Sanjay Mitra, Defence Secretary, Vice Chiefs, Distinguished guests from member nations of the International Committee of Military Medicine (ICMM), Senior Officers scientists and healthcare professionals, ladies and gentlemen.

2. It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning to deliver the inaugural address of the 42nd World Congress of the International Committee of Military Medicine.

3. This is a truly historic occasion as it marks the first time ever that a World Congress on Military Medicine is being held in India. My compliments to the Armed Forces Medical Services of India for this fine initiative.

4. I extend a very warm welcome to all the distinguished delegates representing member countries of the ICMM who have travelled great distances from across the globe to be here this morning and for this coming week.

5. The Army Medical Corps (AMC) is one of the oldest Corps of the Indian Armed Forces. The AFMS has been providing comprehensive healthcare through a dedicated, well trained cadre of medical, nursing, paramedical, ancillary and support staff using modern, well equipped Health Care Facilities.

6. The theme of this World Congress, 'Military Medicine in Transition' has been aptly selected by the organizers. The word transition implies 'a process of change' from one condition or state to another or a process of transformation, adaptation, and evolution.

7. Evolution and transformation are essential processes in the growth and progress of any speciality, organisation or society at large.

Transformation can be initiated from within or forced upon from the outside. Often it is an interplay of both kinds of forces and I feel that the field of Military Medicine is no different.

8. The medical profession is probably one of the finest examples of transformation and evolution. Advances in our understanding of the human body and the emergence of the 'concept of evidence based medicine' has changed the way many disease conditions are managed today. Since military medicine is practiced in the military environment, for it to be in transition exemplifies its dynamic evolving nature, which is truly heartening.

9. In addition to providing healthcare for serving personnel, veterans and their families and dependents, our medical services form a vital component of humanitarian aid and disaster relief operations. They are often at the forefront of such missions, even to the peril of their own lives. The scale and magnitude of devastation following such disasters can often overwhelm the resources of the affected nation.

10. It is our *commitment* to render aid and our intent to *cooperate* that will ensure that timely assistance reaches those in need. Such bonds of international cooperation are fostered at events like the present World Congress where experts from across the globe meet, exchange ideas, share best practices and become friends. I am pleased to note that the scientific programme has sessions dedicated to 'humanitarian aid and disaster relief'.

11. I must also emphasise the importance of international peace keeping operations in which India has been an active participant for decades. The Armed Forces Medical Services of India contributes to these international peace keeping operations, like many other countries. At present, over 500 AFMS personnel are deployed for providing medical cover to United Nations peacekeeping missions.

12. Participation in such international missions is an signifies the commitment of nations towards global peace and prosperity and India takes pride in discharging this international responsibility. The

experiences gained during such deployment must be shared amongst member nations so that lessons learnt can be disseminated and best practices adopted.

13. Armed conflict and terrorism are two scourges that civilised society is battling with at present. Responding to such acts of violence involves more than merely attending to horrific injuries, and preventing the loss of life and limb. While this is the first and foremost challenge faced by medical responders, the psychological effects of such dastardly events bear down not just on the victims but also on healthcare providers.

14. I take comfort from the fact that the scientific committee of the World Congress has recognised the importance of this issue. It has ensured that the scientific programme includes workshops on managing mass casualty situations, a plenary session on relief efforts in the aftermath of terrorist attacks and scientific sessions on 'mental health and medical ethics and law', in the context of military medicine.

15. I am sure the deliberations that take place will be enriching and fulfilling for all delegates.

16. Military medical services remain the most trusted and capable forces to tackle explosive infectious disease situations such as SARS, Avian influenza and similar looming epidemics. Such epidemics have afflicted military campaigns throughout history and have at many times decided its outcome. I am pleased to learn that a scientific session dedicated to discuss 'infectious diseases in the military context' forms part of the scientific programme. I am confident that this would provide all of you the opportunity to share your experiences and recommendations for shaping effective policies for our mutual benefit.

17. Ladies and Gentlemen, the ever advancing battle field technology has imposed a vast array of previously unrecognized challenges. Newer and non-conventional formats of warfare have added to the existing challenges.

What has not changed, of course, is human physiology and the capability of the human body to withstand and function in such challenging environments.

18. The medical services are expected to play a vital role in identifying these challenges, defining the limits of human tolerance and suggesting strategies to mitigate the adverse health effects of such environments. Examples of such environments are the extreme cold climate of high altitude, the isolated environment of deep sea operations, and the challenging aerospace environment.

19. Another important aspect of military medicine is 'medical logistics planning and casualty management strategies'. A mere provision of resources and medical equipment to peripheral medical facilities will not automatically translate into effective combat medical support. It is the technical competence of the human handling those resources that assumes vital importance.

20. Academic activities like this present World Congress assume great importance and relevance. I am indeed heartened to see the wide range of issues that will be deliberated and discussed over the next four days.

21. I compliment the Armed Forces Medical Services once again for taking the initiative of hosting this World Congress and for applying their minds into designing a very comprehensive programme. I am confident that delegates will go back from this '*scientific feast*' enriched with newer insights and emerging concepts in this fascinating field.

22. I wish the 42<sup>nd</sup> ICMM World Congress on Military Medicine all success.

Thank you