

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICES IN THE FIELD OF PREVENTION
OF ALCOHOLISM AND SUBSTANCE (DRUG) ABUSE**

Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi: 26-06-2013

I am indeed a privilege for me to be here to present the National Awards for Outstanding Services in the field of Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drug) Abuse.

2. This is the first time that these awards have been conferred in India. This is a well deserved recognition of institutions and individuals who, with a strong will and courage have achieved difficult goals while addressing a very challenging social problem. They have been recognized for making an outstanding contribution in the prevention of addiction, awareness generation, research and innovation, psychiatric treatment, rehabilitation and similar efforts to address the problem and related issues.

3. Ladies and Gentlemen, as we are aware, alcoholism and drug abuse is a psycho-social-medical problem requiring a holistic approach - from prevention and early detection to effective intervention, rehabilitation and social integration.

4. I congratulate the Awardees for their exemplary work.

5. The selection of this day to recognize them and their contribution is appropriate – as this is the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. It is indeed a fit occasion for us, as a society, to re-affirm our commitment to this cause.

6. Drug abuse and illicit trafficking in drugs continue to have a profoundly negative impact on social development and stability in societies across the world. Addiction to drugs and alcohol not only fells individuals, but it also deeply impacts the life and morale of all those connected to them. The worst sufferers are their families. Their preoccupation with a family member who has fallen prey to alcoholism or drug addiction is a curse; their misery weakens the very fibre of their society. For a nation like India, given

our demographic profile, alcoholism and drug abuse are a matter of serious concern. There is an urgent need for concerted efforts of all stakeholders to prevent and eradicate this menace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. The institution of these National Awards is indeed a manifestation of Government's commitment to address the issues and take effective steps against alcohol and drug abuse. The Constitution of India, in Article 47, specifically directs the State to prohibit the consumption of intoxicating drinks and drugs that are injurious to health. The Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act, 1985 makes stringent provisions for the control of illicit trafficking of drugs; it empowers Government to establish centres for the prevention and treatment, of drug addiction. Government of India's National Policy on Narcotics drugs and Psychotropic Substances is, therefore, aimed at prevention and supply control.

8. However, in addition to the policy framework, it is imperative for us to simultaneously improve our delivery mechanisms. Schemes and programmes should effectively reach the target groups - including through partnerships with the private sector and civil society. They should be in keeping with the evolving needs of the vulnerable sections of our society. We should have more outreach programs that bring to the youth the stark facts about substance abuse.

9. We need to make a greater effort to generate awareness of the deleterious effects of the drug abuse in a sustained, continuous and result oriented manner. While de-addiction and rehabilitation centers have an important role to play, appropriate and timely educational inputs would be most effective in steering the curious, or those at risk, away from such substances. In fact, efforts should be made to develop a nationwide, community-based system of prevention that connects stakeholders at every level. Together, and hand in hand with local organizations, they can deliver solutions that are responsive to the diverse and specific needs of the affected and the susceptible.

10. In conclusion, I call upon coalitions of teachers, faith-based groups, health care providers, law enforcement officials, and all community leaders to join together to address, in a comprehensive but sensitive manner, alcoholism and substance abuse in their respective areas. We can – each of us individually - and all of us together, make a valuable contribution that could be far reaching in its effect.

11. Once again, I congratulate the awardees and convey my appreciation to them for their efforts and achievements. You represent the spirit of hope and you will inspire many. I also extend my felicitations to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment whose initiative this is - and wish them success in their future endeavours.

Jai Hind!