Honorable Chief Guest – Respected Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Sir; Worthy Guest of Honor Dr Dilip Mahalanabis, Esteemed office bearers of Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) on the Dias – Executive Board members, Office bearers of different state and city branches, Distinguished guests of the evening – including President of American Academy of Pediatrics Dr Thomas McInerny, National Neonatology Forum President-elect Dr Ajay Gambhir, Respected Past presidents of IAP, Honorable teachers of Pediatrics, Dearest members of the Academy, Guests from SAARC countries, Dear delegates and PG students, Friends from Media, Ladies and gentlemen: It is my profound privilege to welcome you all to this 50th Conference of Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) – The Golden Jubilee PEDICON.

Indian Academy of Pediatrics is relentlessly working for the children of this nation for last 50 years and I am proud to say it has contributed immensely to bring down the infant mortality rate of the country from 144 in the year of its inception to only 44 per 1000 live births after a long struggle. This is a momentous and proud occasion for all of us and I am thankful to you all for being here to share this joy and happiness. I take the privilege of welcoming and honoring the revered guests of the evening Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and Dr Dilip Mahalanabis, on behalf of more than 20,000 members of Indian Academy of Pediatrics. Let us all give them a big hand.

Friends, at the outset, I would love to express my deepest gratitude to every member of IAP for reposing faith in me by electing me to the highest post of the Academy in its Golden Jubilee Year. This has given me a chance to march towards my dreams for children of India – which I have been cherishing since last 25 years.

I pay my thanks to almighty to award me an opportunity to address Honorable Bharat Ratna Shri APJ Abdul Kalam sir an institution in himself and affectionately known as “the people’s president” or “missile man of India.” You just cannot guess my pleasure of occupying a seat next to a man who has more national and international awards than counting the ridges you have in fingers of your both hands. Amazingly, his journey is still on. Friends – stirred by presence of Dr Kalam Sir – I appeal you all that let us emerge as the strongest partner of Government of India in all child related programs and policies. Let us all strive hard to behave like a true advocate of child population – let Indian children recognize us as their own body – dedicated to their welfare, ensuring them justice and safe, quality life. Remember, that by definition, child means 0-18 years of age – so we have to take care of every child from birth till the end of adolescent period.

WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED SO FAR?

We are celebrating our golden jubilee – the small plant roped in 1963 by our 169 seniors from the entire country under guidance of “Father of Indian Pediatrics” Dr George Coelho. Today it is a full grown very healthy tree carrying 21,000 leaves, 328 small branches, 42 strong (state) branches and three offshoots – like a Banyan tree. Sir, we are always focussed on our goals. We have contributed our bit in bringing zero polio status to India, promoting ORS and zinc, strengthening routine immunization, working for child rights, caring for the newborn and ensuring first effective breath for every newborn through NRP FGM Project, and caring for adolescent health. There has been progress in overall indicators: IMR is down, child survival is up, literacy rates have improved and school dropout rates have fallen. We have always been surging ahead for providing updated knowledge and skills to our fellow members who are serving deep in inaccessible areas. However, still the decline in neonatal mortality rate (NMR) is very slow and early NMR is almost stagnant. Though progress has been made but it is distributed unequally.

Sir, now I would like to have your attention to peep into some of our future plans.

IAP ACTION PLAN 2013

IAP, as a community of pediatricians, has been, and will
continue its three pronged strategy of targeting child health care:

• Firstly, to target the community as a whole. To sensitize them towards the growing and changing needs of the children of today;

• Secondly, we shall be targeting the children directly; and

• Lastly, we shall continue to target our fellow pediatricians by updating them with the recent researches and motivating them to settle for nothing but the best for the children.

This has been the motive of year 2013 Action Plan. Considering success stories and still deficient areas, IAP has set certain targets for us through various national programs. We may best have a bird’s eye view of them:

1. IAP Mission Uday: For Better Child Survival

It is demoralizing to note that nearly 76 lac children are likely to die globally this year before they reach their 5th birthday, and out of them 17 lac are estimated to be contributed by India alone. Sadly, most of these deaths are due to causes that are preventable. With your help, IAP wishes to send a passionate message to world leaders:

No child should die from preventable causes, and we must give every child the best possible start in life, bring equity and quality in Child Care, and above all now the time has reached when we should start talking about—only child survival but quality of life and development.

Friends, we have enough manpower, technical resources, vision and think tanks. We wish to hit targets in prescribed time frame of 3 years for Mission Uday. I appeal to all concerned government offices and departments, all global and local NGOs and all individuals to join us financially and logistically to succeed in this pious mission.

2. IAP Mission Kishore Uday

With more than one-third of its population below 18 years, India has the largest young population in the world. Adolescent health could not get due recognition because of a single belief which is not correct to a large extent...that this age is the healthiest age forgetting that mental and psychological issues are also part of human health. They might be healthy organically but data related to suicide, depression and anxiety, AIDS, obesity, sex abuse, drug abuse, school drop outs, early marriages, drunken driving, and road accidents are alarming and require to be worked on. Damini taught us many lessons— we will have to protect and nurture our adolescents in such a way that they do not harm themselves and let nobody harm them. Mission “Kishore Uday” is aimed at that.

3. Preventing Neonatal Deaths--IAP NRP-FGM (Neonatal Resuscitation Program - First Golden Minute)

It is our prestigious project that addresses neonatal care both basic and advanced. I am happy to say that today this project has assumed to be the biggest child survival project of world. World class Advanced NRP training has been developed by the team NRP India—and we are soon going to have its kick start in this year. Basic NRP will continue but with more vigor and enthusiasm. The contributions especially of Dr Naveen Thacker, Dr Panna Choudhary and Dr Vineet Saxena in bringing it to its present stature deserve mention.

4. Other Programs

We are going to launch 4 other community awareness programs, namely: Anemia control and Prevention – to prevent anemia; BLS for health care personnel and mass awareness – making Basic Life Support – the CPR more popular; Media Training – to equip us for dealing media appropriately; and Help Line – for answering the queries of parents and teens. For our Fellow Members, we will be launching the following programs:

a) ACPP (Acute Care Management for Practicing Pediatricians) – for updating skills in acute care management of level II care;

b) GEM – to teach beyond PALS and emergencies in office practice;

c) IAP TOUCH (Training of Untrained Child Health workers) – For paramedics;

d) Info Vac – For updating knowledge and answering queries of members of academy immediately;

e) Doctors Indemnity – professional insurance scheme for Pediatricians;

f) Making e-learning and telemedicine possible; and

g) Child India – our new e-news bulletin – another dream project – I am so happy that the first issue is being released today.

Apart from these I am also committed to continue all those projects which have been widely acclaimed by the members – we intend to bring a new flavor to them.

I welcome you all for the Golden Jubilee Dream Run— scheduled tomorrow—with a slogan to Prevent Teen Suicide in world’s Teen Suicide Capital West Bengal—