

Following is the full text of the speech:

“I would like to begin by extending my heartiest congratulations to the renowned pulmonologist, hospital administrator and Director of AIIMS, Dr. Randeep Guleria, recipient of the 22nd Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award for Excellence: 2021. I cannot think of a worthier recipient for this distinguished award instituted in the name of one of the greatest sons of India.

Friends,

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri ji was an iconic leader with an extraordinary vision for our great nation. Soft-natured, yet firm in resolve, Shastri Ji was universally known for his austere lifestyle, humility and impeccable integrity. The exemplary standards of morality in public life set by him have remained unmatched. As we know, Shastri Ji took accountability for his actions, which is a very rare quality in our public life. Though it was by no stretch of imagination his fault, he resigned on moral grounds as Minister of Railways following a train accident which occurred due to technical failure. Shastri Ji’s action, including his insistence on the acceptance of his resignation is seen to this day as the gold standard in probity in our public life.

During his short span as Prime Minister of India, Shastri Ji took some exceptionally bold decisions. In 1965, even while India was in the thick of a major war with Pakistan, on the one hand, and an acute food crisis on the other, the United States threatened to cut off food supplies to India. Shastri Ji did not flinch—instead, in a spirit which is in resonance with Atma Nirbhar Bharat of today, he promoted self-reliance rather than importing food supplies from other countries.

For Shastri Ji, austerity and simplicity began at home. A very famous anecdote relates to his idea of conserving food supplies as one of the ways to address the problem of famine in the country. Before he asked his countrymen to fast for one day in a week, Shastri Ji put this principle into action at home. He wanted to see for himself whether his children could bear hunger with fortitude. We have his son Shri Anil Shastri here amongst us, who would vouch for me. Shastri Ji asked his wife one day not to give food to their children, all of whom were not as yet fully grown adults. True to their inherited mettle, the children stayed hungry for the day. It was only then that he exhorted

his fellow countrymen to remain hungry for a day every week to address the challenge of countrywide famine.

Sisters and Brothers,

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri was indeed a very powerful leader who led the country during a very difficult period. And yet he added a new dimension to his statesmanship with his courageous decisions while taking on Pakistan in a full-fledged War in 1965. It was in this context of food crisis and armed conflict with Pakistan that Shastri Ji gave the immortal slogan 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan', with which we associate him. A frail man standing 5 feet 2 inches tall, whom the world saw as soft-spoken and extremely humble, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri showed his steely resolve during the 1965 War. In a historic decision, he authorised the Indian armed forces to expand the scope of the conflict beyond Jammu and Kashmir across the international border with Pakistan. With the Indian Army aiming at Lahore and Sialkot, a surprised Pakistan was forced to withdraw its forces from the Chhamb-Akhnoor sector. This move effectively forced Pakistan, which aimed at Kashmir, to go on the defensive. It was indeed Shastri Ji's bold leadership which changed the course of history. The international community, for the first time after Independence, saw glimpses of a new Bharat. Shastri Ji's courageous leadership sent a strong message to the world, which can be eloquently summarised in these lines penned by one of his distinguished successors in office, Late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee:

हार नहीं मानूंगा, रार नहीं ठानूंगा,

काल के कपाल पे

लिखता मिटाता हूँ

गीत नया गाता हूँ

Friends,

It is indeed encouraging to note that Shri Anil Shastri is actively involved in spreading the legacy of Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri among the youth of this country, through the Lal Bahadur Shastri Institute of Management, Delhi. Team LBSIM is extremely fortunate to be part of

this extraordinary heritage. Together, you should leave no stone unturned in helping the students of LBSIM imbibe the spirit of grit, determination, bravery, integrity and humility that Shastri Ji was synonymous with.

The Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award for Excellence upholds Shastri Ji's vision and values. I am glad that it recognises and honours people who have brought about profound transformation in their environment.

I am delighted to know that the 22nd Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award for Excellence for this year has been conferred upon Padma Shree Dr. Randeep Guleria, a renowned pulmonologist and incumbent Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi.

Dr Randeep Guleria needs no introduction. But some of you may not be aware that he is the second Guleria from Kangra to take the road less travelled up to AIIMS and to receive the fourth highest Civilian award of India – the first being his eminent father Padma Shree Dr J S Guleria.

Dr. Randeep Guleria's stellar role in creating awareness about the Pandemic in recent times has not only been reassuring for all of us but has also soothed the frayed nerves of every person who has met, seen or heard him speak on multiple forums on various aspects related to COVID 19. We see in him the commander-in-chief of India's dedicated army of frontline warriors who have been selflessly waging a tireless battle against Covid-19.

A recipient of several awards and accolades, Dr Randeep Guleria is also a prolific writer. Though his writings are mostly related to his area of specialisation, his recent book - Till We Win: India's Fight Against The COVID-19 Pandemic – which he has co-authored with Shri Chandrakant Lahariya and Shri Gagandeep Kang, is a must-read for everyone.

Dr Randeep Guleria is widely respected for his ground-breaking work in his chosen field and is known to be a highly efficient and dedicated hospital administrator, as well. The devotion with which he has nurtured the Department of Pulmonary Medicine and Sleep Disorders in AIIMS, makes one wonder at times whether it was part of God's

design that Dr. Guleria was there for us in these trying times of the pandemic.

I congratulate Dr Randeep Guleria once again on being conferred this prestigious award which he so richly deserves.

Thank you.

Jai Hind!”

MS/RK