

Speech by Ambassador Anurag Bhushan
Global Newborn Society Conference – Stockholm, Sweden,
Theme: “A Promise for Every Newborn”
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“बालस्य जीवनं राष्ट्रस्य भविष्यति।”

Bālasya jīvanam rāṣṭrasya bhaviṣyati — The life of every child shapes the future of the nation.

Good evening,

Distinguished guests, esteemed colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you to Shri Akhil Maheshwari CEO and Founder of Global New 'born Society for inviting me and organising a seminar on the subject close to every parents heart.

It is an honour to address the inaugural conference of the Global Newborn Society — a gathering that unites the world's leading minds and hearts around one shared goal: ensuring that every child begins life with health, safety, and dignity.

In India, we believe that *every newborn is not only a blessing to a family, but a promise to humanity itself*. Guided by the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi — “*Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas*” — India's health policy places maternal and newborn well-being at the very centre of national development.

With a population exceeding **1.4 billion people**, India represents nearly one-sixth of humanity. Ensuring equitable, quality healthcare for every mother and child in such a vast and diverse country is no small challenge — and yet, our progress over the past decade has been both steady and inspiring.

Over the last decade, India has built one of the world's largest, most inclusive public health systems. Through **Ayushman Bharat**, more than **550 million people** now have access to free healthcare. Over **160,000 Health and Wellness Centres** deliver diagnostics, medicines, and screenings to the remotest corners of the country — from the Himalayas to the coastal plains — ensuring that no mother or child is left behind.

Our progress is measurable and meaningful. Since **2014**, India's **Maternal Mortality Ratio** has fallen from **130 to 93 per 100,000 live births**, the **Infant Mortality Rate** has dropped from **39 to 27 per 1,000 live births**, and the **Neonatal Mortality Rate** has declined from **26 to 19 per 1,000 live births** (as per the National Family Health Survey).

Behind these numbers lie stories of resilience and innovation. In the small town of Dantewada in Chhattisgarh, for example, community health workers trained under the **Home-Based Newborn Care programme** used simple digital thermometers and mobile tracking apps to identify early signs of neonatal sepsis — saving hundreds of lives that might otherwise have been lost to preventable causes.

In Tamil Nadu, the **Kangaroo Mother Care initiative** has transformed survival chances for premature infants. Mothers provide skin-to-skin contact, warmth, and exclusive breastfeeding, supported by low-cost “KMC wraps” designed by Indian innovators. These interventions have reduced neonatal deaths in district hospitals by over **25%** in just a few years.

At the national level, landmark programmes such as the **India Newborn Action Plan (INAP)**, **Janani Suraksha Yojana**, **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan**, and **LaQshya** have collectively raised the standards of care across 700+

districts. Today, more than **90% of births in India** occur in institutional settings — a dramatic shift that underscores both system readiness and community trust.

Our **2.5 million ASHA and Anganwadi workers** — the frontline champions of our health system — are the backbone of this transformation. With the help of **e-Sanjeevani**, India's telemedicine platform that has delivered over **140 million consultations**, even mothers in remote Himalayan villages can now connect with doctors in real time.

Parallel to these human efforts is the tremendous **expansion of healthcare infrastructure** across India. In the last decade, the number of **district hospitals, medical colleges, and community health centres** has grown exponentially. India has established over **1,100 new medical colleges and teaching hospitals**, and more than **25,000 Special Newborn Care Units (SNCUs)** and **Newborn Stabilization Units** now operate across the country. This remarkable growth reflects a deliberate and sustained investment in both infrastructure and training — ensuring that quality maternal and neonatal care is not limited to cities but extends deep into rural heartlands.

India is also sharing its experience globally — through **South–South Cooperation** partnerships that provide training and technical assistance to nations in Asia and Africa. Innovations such as portable infant warmers, solar-powered incubators, and smartphone-based monitoring tools are extending newborn care far beyond hospital walls.

Yet, we recognize that our task is far from complete. Every newborn lost to preventable causes is a reminder that progress must continue — that the promise we make to our children must be a global one.

As we look ahead to **2030**, India remains committed to achieving **single-digit neonatal mortality**, ending **preventable maternal deaths**, and building a future where every birth is met with safety, dignity, and hope.

Let us work together — governments, researchers, caregivers, and communities — to ensure that the first cry of every newborn, whether in **Delhi, Nairobi, or Stockholm**, echoes the same message: a promise fulfilled.

Thank you, and I wish this conference great success in shaping a healthier, more compassionate world for every newborn.