

ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE VALEDICTORY FUNCTION OF 50TH MESU CAMP AT
KRISHNAGIRI ON 06.02.2018

Thiru Kathiravan, District Collector

Dr S.S. Badrinath

DrVasanthiBadrinath

Thiru Paneesh Rao

Prof. V Jagadeesh Kumar

Dr K.S. Vasan

Distinguished Invitees

Friends from the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Words cannot express the joy I experience in taking part in the Valedictory Function of the 50th Cataract Surgical Camp being conducted through the Mobile Eye Surgical Unit (MESU). The unit is a partnership of SankaraNethralaya and IIT Madras who deserve my highest appreciation. My thanks are also due to L & T Technology Services, who have played a key role in organising the camp.

The happiness that springs from within on seeing the availability of quality medical care in a remote corner of Tamil Nadu knows no bounds. L & T, IIT Madras and SankaraNethralaya are household names in Tamil Nadu, reputed for their professional abilities, sincerity and depth of knowledge and expertise. I am sure that this partnership that has emerged by their joint efforts is going to see more and more success in the coming years.

Stationary eye camps have been organized in rural areas for many years now. The speciality of today's function is that the eye operations are being performed in a mobile surgical unit. The Mobile Eye Surgical Unit received the sanction and approval of the Union Health Ministry in 2015 to operate on a nation-wide basis. With this sanction, it has travelled far and wide into the most remote and inaccessible regions of the country, bringing the joy of vision to thousands of visually-impaired people who lacked the resources to get themselves treated in an eye hospital.

The mobile eye camps mainly treat the condition of cataract. Cataract is the clouding of the lens in the eye, leading to decrease in vision. Since cataract surgery facilities are not readily available, more than 2 crore people across the world have gone blind. Of these, a very substantial number reside in the rural areas of Asia, South America and Africa.

MESU has organized camps in remote places. Some examples of this are the inaccessible hilly regions of Vallimalai which are otherwise historically remembered for the caverns once inhabited by Digambar Jain munis and places like Chunampet, a remote hamlet in the Cheyyur taluk of Kanchipuram

district. The camps mainly cater to landless labourers and poor farmers who would otherwise have lost their vision.

The concept of mobile medical camps, ingenious in character, is unambiguously aimed at helping the poor and needy. The three institutions deserve kudos for this excellent initiative. To be able to provide the highest quality of medical care in a mobile unit and perform cataract surgery without compromising on standards of clinical hygiene requires a great deal of planning, uncompromising execution and application. The successful score of half a century in this regard shows that SankaraNethralaya Medical Research Foundation along with IIT, Madras has set a benchmark in ophthalmic medical care.

NaniPalkiwala, the famous jurist used to say that SankaraNethralaya is the best managed charitable organisation in India. SankaraNethralaya is a not for profit missionary institution dedicated to ophthalmic care. I am informed that the organization was created in 1978 by Dr. S.S. Badrinath, who acted on the advice of Sankaracharya of KanchiKamakotiPeetam to set up an eye hospital to the benefit of the poor and middle class people, who could not afford high cost eye care in private hospitals.

It has always been part of the tradition of India to care for the weak, the poor and the suffering. Swami Vivekananda feelingly spoke of '*Daridhra Narayana*', which basically means that service to the poor is equivalent in importance and piety to service to God. Veda Vyasa also brings out the greatness of helping people by stating succinctly in two words – '*paropakarahpunyaya*' – *Helping others is the best virtue*.

The great Tamil poet Thiruvalluvarhas beautifully summed it up in two lines

'Variyaarkondrueevatheegaimatrelaamkuriyethirppaineerathudaithu'

Translated this means stated, giving to the poor is charity, all else have the quality of expecting a return.

The inauguration of the 50th Camp of MESU gives me the hope that in the coming months there will be many more such camps conducted in various backward parts of Tamil Nadu helping the disadvantaged and the downtrodden. No stone should be left unturned in the pursuit of this noble programme which provides the gift of vision to the visually impaired.

I call upon the SankaraNethralaya and all those assembled here to redouble their efforts and expand the coverage of their operations as much as possible so as to reach out and offer cataract operations not only in Tamil Nadu but also all over India.

I am sure that there will be many more well-intentioned philanthropists like L & T to support this initiative. While assuring them all my support, I extend my best wishes to the team of doctors under Dr. S.S. Badrinath and exhort them to go wider, deeper and farther.

Nandri Vanakkam

Jai Hind Jai Tamil Nadu