

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE FOUNDATION STONE LAYING CEREMONY OF GLANIS
HOSPITAL, AT MADURAI ON 11.05.2018**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

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Distinguished Invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

I am happy to be here at T.Pudupatti in Madurai district for laying the foundation stone for the Glanis Hospital. This Hospital will be one more useful addition to the medical track of Tamil Nadu in its march toward improving Medical Care.

Tamil Nadu has always been an important centre for medical diagnosis and treatment. It was the first State to enact the Public Health Act. The Government General Hospital and the Government Eye Hospital in Chennai are among the oldest in Asia. The State enjoys an impressive record in the reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality rates. Private sector involvement in the establishment of hospitals for medical treatment has also been existent in Tamil Nadu for more than 100 years. The State ranks first in the country in terms of number of children immunized and takes pride in the thousands of eminent medical practitioners specialising in various fields of medicine. The Tamil Nadu model is the best prototype health care delivery

system in resource-limited settings in the country and is worthy of emulation by other states engaged in developing a better health care delivery system. It is therefore no wonder that Tamil Nadu serves as a hub for medical tourism in the eastern part of the globe.

Today the State attracts about 40% of those who come into India for medical treatment. It has been estimated by the Confederation of Indian Industry that about 15 lakh patients come into Tamil Nadu for diagnosis and treatment. The Confederation of Indian Industry has estimated that the annual growth of medical tourists coming into Tamil Nadu is more than 20%. The presence of a robust infrastructure coupled with specialised medical care provided by the doctors and para medical staff is one of the most important reasons for this heavy inflow into Tamil Nadu.

Another major reason as to why patients are drawn towards Tamil Nadu is the affordable cost of medical treatment. The American Medical Association has provided the cost comparisons. For example, a knee replacement surgery costs about 40,000 dollars in the USA and about 13,000 dollars in Singapore. In Tamil Nadu the cost is much lower. Similarly, for a bone marrow transplant, the cost is about 400,000 dollars in the US while in Tamil Nadu it is much much lower.

The huge growth in the number of Indian families residing in various parts of the world has also resulted in a greater flow of patients into Tamil Nadu from abroad. By coming back to their country of origin, the family members accompanying the patients are able to combine the medical procedure with other activities such as visiting their relatives or availing the benefits of a vacation by undertaking leisure activities. It has been assessed that most of the medical tourists into Tamil Nadu come from the Middle East, Africa and South East Asia.

Modern health care depends on groups of trained professionals and para professionals coming together to form inter-disciplinary teams. This includes professionals in medicine, psychology, nursing, physiotherapy, working along with many others such as community health workers, so as to

be able to provide the best health care services to the people. But it is also necessary to psychologically relate to the patient.

As Dr. Donald M. Berwick rightly said, “Those who suffer need you to be something more than a doctor; they need you to be a healer. And, to become a healer, you must do something even more difficult than putting on your white coat. You must recover, embrace and treasure the shared, frail humanity and the dignity in each and every soul.”

I was recently in Vellore for a function at the Christian Medical College for which the Hon'ble President of India was the Chief Guest. When Ida Scudder started the Christian Medical College, Vellore 100 years ago, the Doctor::Population ratio in India was 1:10,000. Today, it is 1: 1500. We are bridging the gap. There is still a considerable distance to cover if we compare it to the world average of 1: 800 and the World Health Organisation stipulation of achieving a ratio of atleast 1:1000. We are certain to achieve our goal if we move ahead with determination, confidence and commitment.

Our country has a great and glorious past in medical education and medical sciences.

Sushruta, Jivaka Kumarabhacca, and Charaka were famous medical experts who showed the world how to treat diseases and illnesses. At a time when surgeries in England were done primitively, the most complex surgeries were being performed in India by well trained surgeons.

Sushruta is credited with performing advanced surgeries, including plastic and reconstructive surgery. Sushruta was not just a great surgeon, but also a great teacher. He used to advise his students that however well-read they are, they are not competent to treat disease until they have practical, hand-on experience. He taught his students surgical skills by making incisions on the skin of fruits. He also taught them how to remove foreign bodies from flesh by demonstrating the extraction of seeds from fruits. His students were known to have practiced on dead animals and on leather bags filled with water, before they performed surgeries on patients.

It is a matter of great satisfaction and happiness to see that this hospital is being located in a rural area.

The 71st National Sample Survey (NSS) of 2014 found that out of the total hospitalisation cases in rural areas, 42% were in public hospitals and 58% in private facilities. The corresponding shares in urban areas were 32% in public and 68% in private. For some decades now, the trend has been to move towards private care facilities.

The Government of India has come out with the National Health Policy, 2017 which aims to ensure availability of free, comprehensive primary health care services, for reproductive, maternal, child and adolescent health and for communicable, non-communicable and occupational diseases. The policy also envisages optimum use of existing manpower and infrastructure as available in the health sector and advocates collaboration with the non-government sector on pro-bono basis for delivery of health care services linked to a health card. This will enable every family to have access to a doctor of their choice from amongst those volunteering their services. The Budget this year has incorporated these objectives in the announcements on health, including strengthening of primary care.

Today, with changes in lifestyle, we have an inversion of disease patterns: a significant burden of non-communicable diseases, and a lower but still formidable level of infectious diseases. Our interventions must therefore cover tuberculosis and malaria on the one side, as well as diabetes, chronic kidney disease, hypertension and rheumatic heart diseases on the other. If malnutrition is a major problem, so is pollution. Reports indicate that 55 per cent of Indian women between ages 15 and 49 have anemia or low blood count. There are many, many such health issues that need attention.

Let me summarise by saying that the mission before us is to make health care comprehensive, universal, affordable and qualitatively professional. For achieving this objective, the road ahead is going to be complex and arduous.

It is important for us to work together in a constructive manner to fight the common enemy i.e. disease. Distinctions based on public vs private sector, allopathy vs traditional systems and urban areas vs rural areas, should not be given any importance. We should all join hand in hand and march together so that we achieve success.

I appreciate the efforts of the hospital management who have shown enterprise in pioneering this effort of setting up a hospital, in a backward area. They deserve our praise and support. I wish to conclude by wishing them well. May success greet them at every step, in their journey whose quest is to bring quality medical care within the reach of the local community.

Nandri Vanakkam

Jai Hind...