

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF  
TAMIL NADU AT "THE DOYENS - GURDIANS OF HEALTHCARE, TAMILNADU"  
AT HOTEL FEATHERS MANAPAKKAM, ON 16/03/2018 AT 06.00 PM**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

**Thiru. C. Vijayabhaskar  
Minister for Health & Family Welfare**

**Thiru. N. Ram  
Chairman, The Hindu Group**

**Thiru. Gopal Krishna Gandhi  
Former Governor, West Bengal**

**Dr. J. Radha Krishnan  
Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department**

Distinguished Invitees

Friends from the Media

Ladies & Gentlemen

It gives me pleasure to be here at the function being organized by the HINDU group to felicitate the medical professionals who have made outstanding contributions for improving the quality of health care in India.

Health care is conventionally regarded as an important determinant in promoting the general physical and mental health and general wellbeing of people. It revolves around the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease, illness, injury and other physical and mental impairments in human beings.

The United Nations and the World Health Organisation have emphasized the need for universal healthcare coverage. But statistics reveal that access to health care varies across countries. Even among the OECD Countries, universal health coverage is not available in US and Mexico. The United States however enjoys the top position in terms of expenditure as calculated as the share of the health care industry in the nation's economy. 17.7% of the GDP of the USA is accounted for by the health care industry. In comparison, countries such as Switzerland, Germany and Netherlands, where

the healthcare industry accounts for about 11% of the GDP, have not only provided universal health coverage but also outdistanced the US in terms of life expectancy figures. It is therefore quite clear that it is not only important that more money should be allocated for healthcare but the money should also be effectively targeted so as to benefit the population better.

The delivery of modern healthcare depends on groups of trained professionals and para professionals coming together to form inter-disciplinary teams. This includes professionals in medicine, psychology, nursing, physiotherapy along with many others such as community health workers, so as to be able to provide the population best preventive, curative and rehabilitative care services to the people.

Primary healthcare is understood to be the first point of consultation for all patients. Depending on the nature of the health condition, patients may be referred for secondary or tertiary care. A primary care practitioner should possess a wide breadth of knowledge in many areas. Secondary care involves the treatment carried out for a short period of time for serious illness or injury and is normally administered in the emergency department or intensive care unit. This care requires skilled attention by specialists working along with allied health professionals such as dieticians, physiotherapists, etc. Tertiary care is specialised consultative healthcare for in-patients, who required advanced medical investigation and treatment such as in the case of cancer management, neurological surgery, cardiac surgery, etc. Quaternary care is an extension of tertiary care for treatment of uncommon diagnostic or surgical procedures wherein the treatment is highly specialised and not widely accessed.

India has made substantial progress in the last 7 decades as is evidenced by fundamental statistics. But a lot needs to be done to reduce inequalities across States.

Life expectancy at birth improved in the country from 59.7 years in 1990 to 70.3 years in 2016 for females, and from 58.3 years to 66.9 years for males. Yet, as the Indian Council of Medical Research says in its latest report, *India:*

*Health of the Nation's States*, there are continuing inequalities between states. Life expectancy ranges from 66.8 years in Uttar Pradesh to 78.7 years in Kerala for females, and from 63.6 years in Assam to 73.8 years in Kerala for males in 2016. This should make us reconsider our approaches.

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. There are about a million modern medicine (allopathic) doctors in the country. For a population of more than 120 crores the availability of doctors is not even 1 : 1000. And of these only around 10 per cent work in the public health sector, according to the National Health Profile 2017.

There is therefore a need to increase the number of trained doctors and motivate more doctors to serve in the rural areas and in the public health sector. The number of lives covered under health insurance is almost 36 crores, ie about 30 per cent of the total population. The National Health Protection Scheme aims to change this situation, and make health care coverage universal.

The Government of India has come out with the National Health Policy, 2017 which aims to strengthen and prioritize the role of the government in shaping health systems in all its dimensions – investments in health, organization of healthcare services, prevention of diseases and promotion of good health through cross sectoral actions, access to technologies, developing human resources, encouraging medical pluralism, building knowledge base, developing better financial protection strategies, strengthening regulation and health assurance.

The government's vision is clear, and what we need is effective implementation. The government is assuring 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.

Considerable improvement in health care can be brought about by the use of modern methods. Forming a National Knowledge Network and using it for Tele-education, Tele-CME (continuing medical education), Tele-consultations and creating a digital library are important.

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.

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 only the doyens of the healthcare industry assembled here who can show the way for us to be successful in our mission. The Hindu group of newspapers is to be appreciated for having chosen to honour those professionals who have contributed to the society and who can serve as guiding lights for the promotion of the welfare of the people at large in the future.

The Hindu has always been associated with noble missions in the past. I can recall from history that the Hindu Newspaper which was started as a weekly in 1878 campaigned for the elevation of an Indian Judge Shri Muthuswamy Iyer to the Bench of the Madras High Court, at a time when the

Anglican Press was doing its best to eliminate Indians from positions of high public office. It has come a long way since then. But the missionary zeal and the honourable objectives have always been held supreme by the Board of Management, be it under Shri Subramania Iyer and Shri Veeraraghavachary in the initial years or under Shri Kasturi Rangalyengar in the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and later under the present.

The newspaper has always been ethical in its approach, professional in its management and has always been known for the quality of its writings and the nobility of its editorials.

I am sure that the Hindu Group is not going to stop with this felicitation function. It should carry forward the message of healthcare all over the country. Being the second largest and most circulated newspaper in the country, the reach of the newspaper is far and wide. Taking advantage of its huge readership, it will be possible for the newspaper to make people aware about the need for healthcare, educate about the procedures to be followed to obtain healthcare and monitoring the quality of healthcare available in the private and public sector through close watch and journalistic supervision.

Following the footsteps of this newspaper group, I am sure that many more groups managing the newspapers and the television channels will come forward to help India achieve universal health coverage at the earliest.

The doyens of the healthcare industry have risen to their present position of eminence by their contributions. I applaud their efforts and admire their commitment to societal welfare.

It is a matter of pride and honour to be remembered as one who has utilised his talents and contributed to the betterment of the society and the nation through his efforts. In that manner these doyens of the healthcare industry have brought pride and glory to their families, their places of origin and their places of work.

I wish them all success in their endeavours.

I wish to conclude by thanking The Hindu Group for having given me this opportunity to associate myself with a function related to the healthcare

industry about which I am passionately attached and devoted to. I shall contribute in every manner possible towards making India and particularly Tamil Nadu achieve universal healthcare coverage.

Nandri

Vanakkam

Jai Hind

Jai Tamil Nadu