

Convocation Address of the Honourable Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu

Your Excellency,
the Governor of Tamil Nadu and
Chancellor of the Tamil Nadu Dr.MGR Medical University,

Dr.V.S.Vijay,
Hon'ble Minister for Health & Pro-Chancellor of the
University,

Hon'ble Ministers of the Government of Tamil Nadu,

Dr.Mayilvahanan Natarajan,
Vice-Chancellor of the University,

Members of the Governing Council,
Senate and Standing Academic Board,

Members of the Faculty,

DSc awardees,

Distinguished Guests, Graduates, Students,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to deliver the Convocation Address on the occasion of the 22nd Convocation of the Tamil Nadu Dr MGR Medical University. This is the third time I am participating in the Convocation of this august University. I am glad to learn that this University, which is named after our beloved Puratchi Thalaivar Dr MGR, has grown to become the second largest Medical University in India. It is also a matter of pride that this University has been responsible for regulation and maintenance of high standards of medical and allied health education in our State.

Good health plays a pivotal role in the all round development of Society. Only a healthy population can contribute meaningfully to the overall economic growth of the Country. Our State is committed to building a healthy society. It is our endeavour to provide quality medical facilities to every stratum of society. Our focus is also on preventive health care and holistic delivery of facilities to the people. Based on vital health indicators, Tamil Nadu is a front runner among the various States of India. The State is fast emerging as a good public health model for the rest of the country, especially in maternal and child care. 99.8% of all deliveries in the State are conducted in institutions by qualified and trained personnel. Various policy initiatives which were introduced by my Government between 2001-2006, such as 24 hour delivery care service in Primary Health Centres, upgradation of one Primary Health Centre in each block to a 30 bedded hospital with modern equipment, provision of emergency maternity and neonatal services in Government Hospitals; Birth Companion Programme and maternal death audit have been responsible for the consistent excellent performance of Tamil Nadu in this field.

A new initiative, the "Hospital on Wheels Scheme" will be launched by my Government to provide health care services at the doorstep in remote and far flung areas of the State. The existing 385 Mobile Medical Units will be strengthened with additional man power and lab facilities and medical teams will visit remote villages based on a fixed tour programme.

The State has always given prominence to the empowerment of women and children. As evidence of this priority, a number of health programmes focusing on women's welfare have been announced for implementation. The existing Dr.Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme has been strengthened to provide enhanced maternity assistance of 12,000 Rupees up to two deliveries for poor women. This scheme not only assists in ensuring the welfare of the mother, but also in providing immunisation to the new born. A new scheme for reducing reproductive tract infections in women by improving menstrual hygiene is being introduced under which rural adolescent girls will be given free supply of sanitary napkins.

Having recognized that health care in small urban towns needs urgent attention, my Government has decided to strengthen the primary care in these areas by opening 75 new Urban Primary Health Centres for the benefit of slum dwellers and the downtrodden sections of the population.

The people of Tamil Nadu, especially the poor and lower middle class, depend on the Government Hospitals for their healthcare needs. The World Bank assisted Tamil Nadu Health Systems Project has been used to upgrade the infrastructure available in the Taluk and District Hospitals so as to improve the services available to the public. Utilizing the funds allotted to the Project in the second phase, diagnostic services in all the District Head Quarters Hospitals will be upgraded with additional supply of diagnostic, therapeutic and life saving equipment. It is also proposed to set up state-of-the-art computer aided laboratory facilities in all the districts under the Public Private Partnership made in a phased manner.

My Government is committed to providing quality tertiary care to the people, especially to the poor and those living below the poverty line. A Super Specialty Hospital has already been set up with a modern Trauma Block in the Mohan Kumaramangalam Medical College Hospital, in Salem, and the establishment of a similar Specialty Hospital in the Government Rajaji Hospital at Madurai is in progress. It is now proposed to upgrade the Tiruchi Annal Gandhi Government Hospital as a Super Specialty Centre at a cost of 100 Crore rupees. This Centre will meet the health needs of this part of Tamil Nadu to an appreciable extent. To top all these efforts, my Government has decided to establish a Multi Super Specialty Hospital in the unutilised "A" Block building and, also a new Medical College in the "B" Block building constructed in the Omandurar Government Estate, Chennai. The proposed Multi Super Specialty Hospital will be thrown open to the public after carrying out suitable modifications to the building, appointing specialists and super specialists, nurses and technicians and procuring state-of-the-art medical equipment. This hospital will have all facilities on par with those of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi.

To further supplement the services available to the public, this Government has since formulated a new insurance scheme called the "Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme" which will be launched shortly. In the new scheme, the coverage and sum assured will be One Lakh rupees every year for a total period of four years i.e., 4 lakh rupees for each family, and the ceiling of One Lakh Rupees will be raised to 1.5 lakh rupees for certain identified procedures. The number of procedures covered will also be increased. The cost of diagnostic tests and medicines up to five days after discharge including travel expenses will form part of the insurance package. An effort will be made to intensify the involvement of Government Hospitals under the new scheme.

My Government is fully confident that the various measures proposed to be undertaken now in the health sector would definitely propel Tamil Nadu into the premium position in the Country in the provision of free quality health care to the entire population. However, these measures will not succeed unless adequate well trained medical and paramedical manpower is available in the State.

Thanks to good infrastructure in the public and private sectors, Tamil Nadu has made significant progress in medical, dental and allied health education. This University is playing a major role in maintaining the quality of education by providing regulatory support and upgrading the evaluation systems. I am happy to know that this University is in the process of using sophisticated marking and examination analysis computer programmes to ensure that assessment is fair, reliable and transparent in medical and para medical graduate and post graduate courses.

Keeping pace with the latest advances in the medical field, as the plethora of medical conditions in health care is becoming broader, the need for specialists in sub specialties and super specialties is growing. Medical Graduates are forced to go abroad to obtain specialized training in their chosen field. This University is one of the first Universities in India to offer Fellowship Programmes in Medical, Surgical and Dental sub and super specialties in order to make such specialized training

available within the State and Country, which is a laudable initiative.

I extend my warm congratulations to the eminent practitioners of medicine who have been awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) and the recipients of the Life Time Achievement Award.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate not only the prize winners but all the graduates of this University. Service to humanity is service to God. I request all the graduates today to extend their selfless service to the people, especially to the rural population of the State, and let their noble service reach the poorest of the poor, irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

The new graduates must remember that they should use their education productively to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and the needy. I look forward to whole hearted support from all the graduates present here today, as well as the entire medical fraternity in achieving the objective of making Tamil Nadu the top ranking State in health care in India.

Thank You.

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