

**Speech of Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence
and Minister for Rodrigues at the inauguration
ceremony of Aegle Clinic**

Central Flacq

Wednesday 25 April 2018 – 11 h 00

Honourable Ministers,

Parliamentary Private Secretaries,

The Chairperson of Flacq District Council,

The Director and Chairperson of Aegle Clinic,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, I wish to thank Dr Pankaj Wadhwa for inviting me and giving me the wonderful privilege of being here with you for the inauguration of this state-of-the art multispecialty private medical institution.

I accepted the invitation from Dr Pankaj Wadhwa without any hesitation because I know he loves Mauritius, he promotes excellence in medicine and he wants Mauritius to be endowed with the latest high tech medical facilities and services.

For many years now, Mauritius set the objective of emerging as a medical hub for the region, especially with many countries in mainland Africa registering high level economic growth and fast expanding demand for specialized healthcare and wellness therapies. This vision is yet to be achieved but I am confident that with the arrival of prestigious internationally recognised institutions in our medical landscape, we are surely moving towards reaching our goal.

Indeed, the presence of reputed medical flagships like Fortis, Dr Agarwal's Eye Hospital, now Aegle Clinic, together with our own high quality private medical institutions, enhances the attractiveness of Mauritius as a medical treatment centre of excellence. To date, there are 28 private clinics including 11 specialised ones and also 20 private medical laboratories, operating in Mauritius.

Alongside private investments in the health and wellness sector, Government is injecting more than Rs 7 billion rupees in the setting up of state-of-the art ENT Hospital, New Eye Hospital, New Flacq Hospital and a Cancer Centre.

These massive public investments stem from our firm belief that investing in health is an investment in the future of the economy and of the people. We want to provide quality health services to everyone, not just for those who can afford it. This principle of fairness and equity is at the heart of all our endeavours in Government.

Moreover, Mauritius aims at showcasing the very best in terms of infrastructure, facilities and services in both the public and private health sectors.

The healthcare sector in Mauritius now consists of an integrated cluster supported by a core group of high-value activities such as hi-tech medicine, medical tourism, medical education, research and wellness. The sector's contribution to Gross Domestic Product stands at 4.4 percent. It employs 8,500 persons.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although Mauritius is very far from the medical tourism giants like Thailand, Singapore and India, interestingly we have carved ourselves a reputation of being an up-market tourism destination.

The country is presently successfully offering advanced medical treatments to foreign patients in areas that include hair grafting, cosmetic and plastic surgery, cardiology and fertility.

Investment opportunities exist in the fields of High Tech Medical Diagnostics Centres, Collaborative Medical Research, Endocrinology and Geriatrics, Wellness Centres and Health Resorts.

To promote investment in the health sector, a number of incentives are already available to investors. Some of the main ones are as follows:

- Exemption of registration duty on the purchase/lease of land for the construction of infrastructure in the medical field;
- VAT Exemption on medical, surgical and dental equipment;
- VAT exemption on construction of purpose-built facilities for health services as well as nursing homes under the Private Health Institutions Act and residential care homes under the Residential Care Homes Act;
- No customs duty on selected equipment, machinery and furniture;
- Free repatriation of profits, dividends and capital;
- No capital gains tax.

In view of our ambition to become a major regional service provider in high tech medicine, the setting up of Aegle Clinic in Mauritius is most welcomed. Especially, as Aegle Clinic is the first private health clinic to serve the East part of the island.

I am informed, that besides being the third largest in Mauritius in terms of bed capacity, it operates a comprehensive spine and pain management department. This further enhances the scope of specialized services being provided in our country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish now to highlight that Health care is viewed as a human rights issue. It is, therefore, imperative that health providers indulge in continuous quality improvement as part of their mission in upholding patient care. Every action of medical staff should be geared towards delivering effective, safe and patient-centred care.

Medical and Nursing staff should also uphold professional integrity, intellectual honesty and clinical competence.

The patient's health, dignity and confidentiality have to be preserved at all times.

Besides delivering clinical duties, it is important to develop effective communication with the patient at every stage of treatment. The opinion of the patient about the level of care extended should be recorded to help fine-tune and make adjustment for continuous improvement. It is in that spirit that measures have been taken to set up Help Desks at the main regional hospitals to help and guide patients calling at the hospital.

With the assistance of the Mauritius Institute of Health (MIH), arrangements have been made to conduct training on customer care.

The obligations of stakeholders, the roles and responsibilities of the health care professionals have been clearly spelt out in the Customer Charter released by Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. This Charter is an essential tool to elaborate on the diverse facilities and range of services available free of charge for the well-being of patients.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Healthy citizens and efficient health systems and a thriving health sector all play a crucial role in delivering jobs and growth.

This is why I would like to see a much stronger focus on disease prevention and health promotion.

The more so, as Mauritius is confronted with the challenges of non-communicable diseases which are taking their toll of human lives. We need to put primary care at the helm of our health agenda.

Indeed, in many countries, primary care is entering a new era. An era of team-based and coordinated care.

Care that works in multidisciplinary teams and through e-health solutions which should be given top priority. That should be our next challenge.

We should implement a system that assists and supports patients and people in making lifestyle choices and changes, and so avoid chronic, but preventable conditions.

But, whatever the system or the technology, it is the people working in the system, or with the technology, that actually makes them work.

This is perhaps even truer in healthcare than in almost any other field. And perhaps even more so in primary care than in any other area in healthcare.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I said earlier, there is not just a human element behind investing in health; there is also an economic reasoning. For me, spending on public health cannot be considered as expenditure; for me, health is an indispensable investment.

Without healthy people, without well-functioning health systems, there can be no growth, no economic success.

With this message, I once again welcome the initiative of Dr. Pankaj Wadhwa to set up Aegle Clinic in Mauritius.

I wish him success in his new undertaking and assure him of my constant support in bringing quality healthcare to the People of Mauritius and to our cherished visitors who come here to seek specialized care in our medical institutions.

Thank you for your kind attention.